

Overview of the Shelter Design & Technical Guidelines

Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee

Wednesday, June 2, 2021

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Background



- An architecture firm, Hilditch Architect Inc., was selected to create best practice design guidelines for Toronto's shelters
- The development of the guidelines was led by an interdisciplinary team of architects and consultants who engaged in a collaborative, human-centred engagement process with a diverse group of stakeholders including groups over-represented in the shelter system
- The consultation sought expertise and perspectives on shelter use, needs that should be addressed in shelter design, and best practices that could be applied in future shelters
- 13 stakeholder consultation sessions were held, including with the disability community
- Reviewed site plans and space analysis reports of 65 existing sites, and conducted site visits of 20 representative shelters
- The guidelines were released in 2021 and outline evolving best practices for the planning and design of new shelters and design decisions in the renovation of existing shelters.

Welcoming Environment



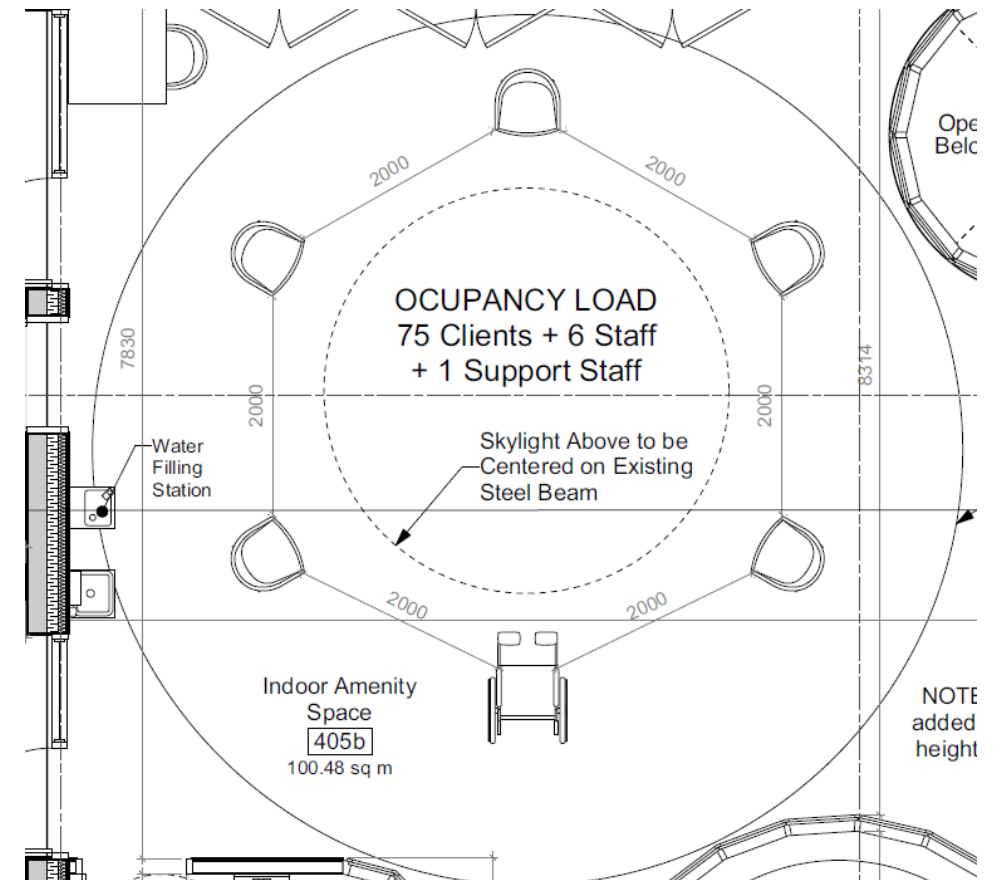
- Based on user-centred design to serve the needs of shelter-users and staff in an environment that promotes dignity, comfort, and choice
- Designed to create attractive and welcoming environments (home-like and not institutional)
- Promote connectedness to the natural world including allowing in daylight and use of natural materials
- Accommodation of pets both indoors and outdoors
- Where possible include shared community space
- Amenity spaces that are restorative and encourage informal gathering and programs



Inclusive Design Approach



- Shelter design should empower equity deserving groups and serve specialized needs
- Inclusive design approach that considers culture, gender, race, disability, sexual identity, life experiences and other identities
- Provide spaces that support traditional, cultural and spiritual practices
- Colours, art and symbols to make people from different backgrounds feel welcome
- 20% of spaces in new shelters are being designed to be accessible
- City of Toronto Accessibility Design Guidelines (TADG) is expected to be the prime reference in the design of new shelters



Trauma-Informed Design



- Consider mental, physical, social, emotional, and spiritual well-being of shelter residents
- Reduce or remove known adverse stimuli and create a calming environment
- Provide privacy and places for people to go to avoid stressors
- Promote agency and allow individuals to exhibit their self-reliance and independence
- Create environments where occupants feel safe with clear lines of sights and alternative routes
- Enhance positive interactions between shelter-users and avoid enhancing power dynamics or institutional relationships with staff



Sustainability, Durability and Resiliency



- Shelters should be in compliance with codes and standards such as the Ontario Building Code, the Toronto Shelter Standards, Environmental Control Best Practices, Toronto Green Standard, and all applicable laws
- Shelters will be effective in minimizing energy use, which will reduce operating costs in a capital cost-effective manner
 - Reduce greenhouse gas emissions and work towards net zero emissions
 - Reduce and conserve use of resources such as water
- Shelters will be designed to be durable, resilient and repairable to ensure the facility continues to provide for the needs of its occupants on an ongoing basis

Health and Wellness



- Shelters should support the provision of health services on site in flexible spaces including on-site counselling, examinations or treatment by health practitioners
- Support harm reduction approaches to service delivery including making sharps disposal containers accessible in washrooms
- Support measures for infection prevention and control including interim shelter guidelines for COVID-19
 - Increasing spacing for admission screening
 - Increased physical separation between individuals, including shelter-users, staff and visitors



Ongoing Consultation



- The guidelines were shared on the City's website in early 2021
- The guidelines are a living document - It will be regularly reviewed and updated to reflect the evolving state of best practice in the design of shelters
- The City remains committed to ensuring feedback from people with lived experience of disability will continue to be included in future updates
- During 2021, this document will be reviewed and updated every six months in the first year and annual thereafter to ensure best practices are kept current
- Email for feedback: ShelterDesignGuidelines@toronto.ca

Thank you

Questions and Answer

