

EC 30.7: Review of an Enhanced Cooling Centre System

Office of Emergency Management
Toronto Public Health
Shelter Support & Housing Administration





Overview of the City of Toronto's 2022 Heat Relief Strategy

May 30th, 2022

Background

- In 2020 and 2021, the Heat Relief Network was unavailable due to COVID-19 restrictions
- The City relied on COVID-19 response specific emergency cooling centres to provide heat relief
- Now that restrictions have been lifted, the City is promoting the Heat Relief Network once again
- The City will continue to follow the guidance of Environment & Climate Change Canada as the authority for issuing Heat Warnings

Heat Relief Strategy

- Operating the Heat Relief Network
- Reaching out to individuals experiencing homelessness through Streets to Homes and partners
- Educating landlords & residents on the City's Heat By-law
- Providing public messaging on tips to 'beat the heat' via traditional and social media
- Employing an “All Summer” approach – most services will be available regardless of a Heat Warning in effect

Heat Relief Network Rationale

- Due to climate change, Toronto is expected to experience an increase in the intensity and duration of extreme heat and hot weather days
- Data collected from emergency cooling centres indicates they were not well attended
- A Heat Relief Network is more protective by providing many locations, on an every day basis
- Other North American cities (e.g., New York, Phoenix, etc.) have also transitioned to a Heat Relief Network

Heat Relief Network

- A network of cool spaces accessible to the public, including vulnerable populations
- The network consists of a variety of publicly-accessible air-conditioned and other cool spaces, such as:
 - Libraries
 - Community and senior centres
 - Recreational water facilities (e.g., pools, splash pads, etc.)
 - Malls
 - YMCAs
 - Daytime drop-ins

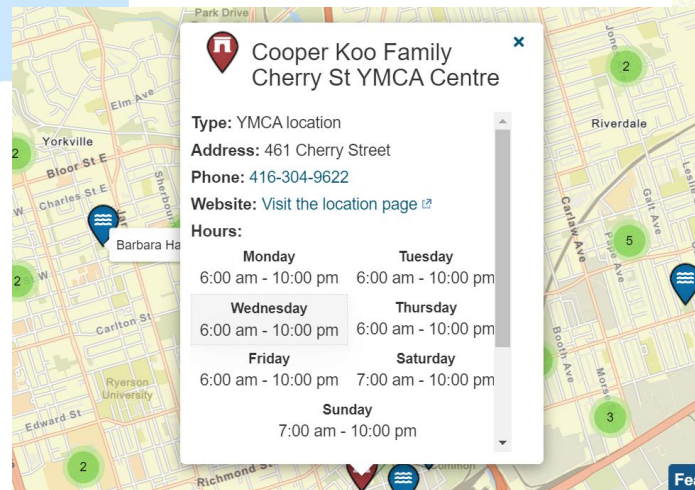
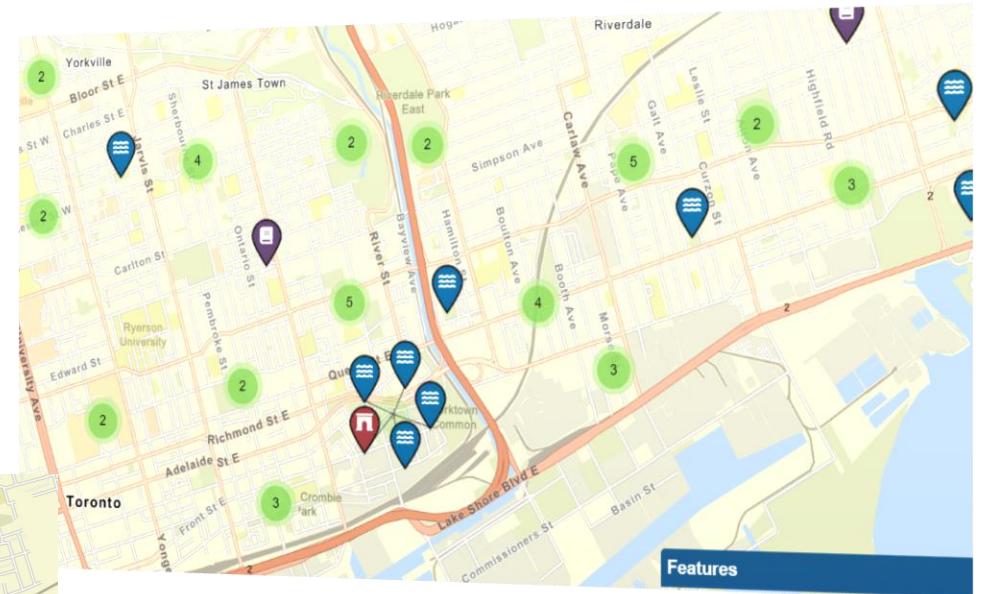
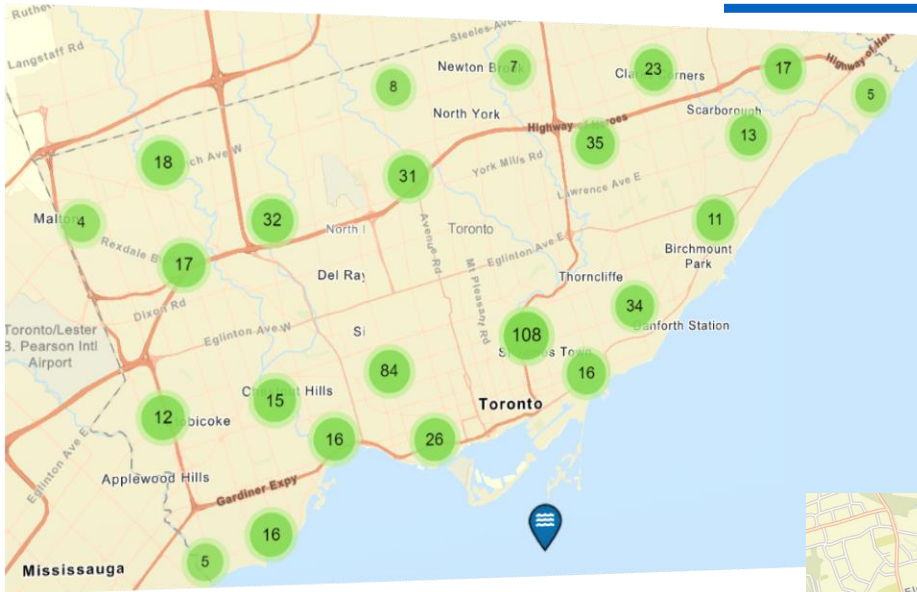
Heat Relief Network

- As of 2022, there are over 300 cool spaces available to the public
- Heat Relief Network partners are provided with signage to indicate that specific facilities are participating in the network



Heat Relief Network Map

- Participating facilities can be found on a new web-based tool at www.toronto.ca/keepcool



Heat Relief Network Timelines

Year/Hot Weather Season	Activity
2018	The City piloted the Heat Relief Network
2019	The City established the Heat Relief Network as an improvement to the use of emergency cooling centres
2020-2021	The Heat Relief Network could not be operated due to provincial restrictions to mitigate the spread of COVID-19. Emergency cooling centres were operated only as an interim strategy to heat relief
2022	The City resumed the Heat Relief Network

Serving People Experiencing Homelessness

- During Heat Warnings, people experiencing homelessness are able to access cool spaces through the Heat Relief Network.
- In addition, the homelessness services system provides access to cool spaces in shelters and 24-hour respite sites through the City. Anyone experiencing homelessness and requiring emergency shelter can contact Central Intake to be referred to available shelter spaces.
- SSHA's 24/7 Duty Office releases a system-wide alert via Shelter Management Information System about heat warnings/extreme weather to staff and partners in the shelter system.
- TTC tokens/single ride tickets are provided at drop-ins during extreme heat.

Outreach Efforts

- **Streets to Homes and partners provide 24/7 street outreach to assist people experiencing homelessness and sleeping outdoors**
- **In the event of a Heat Warning, Streets to Homes and outreach partners increases the number of outreach teams across all shifts**
- **Fred Victor Centre operates a targeted outreach initiative, during Heat Warnings between May 15 – September 30.**
- **When Streets to Homes is informed of flooding or high water in areas with known encampments or clients, teams do outreach.**