

Community Bulletin #1

**The Roehampton Residence and 55-65 Broadway
August 11, 2020**

This is the first Community Bulletin for the temporary shelter activated to support physical distancing in response to COVID-19 – the Roehampton Residence at 808 Mount Pleasant Avenue and the interim housing site at 55/65 Broadway Avenue. These Bulletins are intended to share key information and updates about the sites based on the frequently raised community comments, questions, and concerns that have been shared via project e-mail, voicemail, and the online feedback form at [Toronto.ca/PhysicalDistancingShelters](https://toronto.ca/PhysicalDistancingShelters). They are not intended to answer every community submission. Follow-up Community Bulletins will provide more information and project-related details, and we encourage you to continue sharing your feedback with us.

These community bulletins will be issued regularly and posted on the project website. If you'd like to sign up to receive the Bulletins and/or share your questions, comments, and/or feedback with us:

- Send us an email to: clc.roehampton.residence@gmail.com;
- Leave us a voicemail at: 416-479-0243; or
- Updates, as well as a feedback form can be found at: [Toronto.ca/PhysicalDistancingShelters](https://toronto.ca/PhysicalDistancingShelters)

This Bulletin was developed by City staff and Swerhun Inc, a third-party community facilitator retained by the Shelter, Support, and Housing Administration Division at the City of Toronto as part of the community engagement process for the Roehampton Residence at 808 Mount Pleasant Avenue.

This Bulletin contains three sections and provides the following info:

- 1. Important Notices**
- 2. Background on the Roehampton Residence and 55-65 Broadway Avenue**
- 3. FAQ based on community feedback received from July 19 to August 5, 2020**

All feedback received through the project email, voicemail and online feedback form is being tracked and shared with City staff for consideration. This first Community Bulletin summarizes frequently submitted comments, questions, and concerns shared by community and provides responses from the City of Toronto.

1. Important Notices

Upcoming Online/ Telephone Information Session

The purpose of this session is to share information about the temporary shelter activated to support physical distancing in response to COVID-19 at the Roehampton Hotel and the interim housing site at 55/65 Broadway Avenue, answer community questions, and address some of the key community concerns.

Date: August 19, 2020

Time: 6 – 8 p.m.

How to join: Meeting link will be available on the project website www.toronto.ca/PhysicalDistancingShelters; and the information on how to participate via the phone will be available on the project voicemail one week prior to August 19.

The session will be recorded and available after. Residents are encouraged to send in questions in advance via project contact information above.

2. Background on the Roehampton Residence and 55-65 Broadway Avenue

The Roehampton Residence, located at 808 Mount Pleasant Road, opened on July 3, 2020, to clients as part of the City of Toronto’s three-tiered COVID-19 response. The City has leased the Roehampton Hotel for two years (with an option to extend for a third year) from the property owner. This site has 109 units for up to 174 clients. The Roehampton Residence currently serves about 140 clients. The City’s Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) operates the Roehampton Residence.

As part of the City’s COVID-19 response, there is also a shorter-term arrangement at 55/65 Broadway Avenue to provide interim housing. The work at 55/65 Broadway includes a rapid rehousing program that works with clients to find long-term or permanent housing. **The Broadway Residences are anticipated to close on September 6, 2020.** Broadway clients will be rehoused and/or relocated to other sites across the City.

Since mid-March, the City of Toronto has moved almost 3,900 people throughout its emergency shelter system, including more than 1,500 individuals who have been transitioned to permanent housing, to achieve physical distancing of two meters between shelter beds, in accordance with Ministry of Health guidance for congregate living settings. The City took these urgent actions, which included opening these two programs, to save lives and protect vulnerable people, who are at greater risk of COVID-19 related harms.

More information about the City of Toronto’s homelessness services COVID-19 response can be found at www.toronto.ca/PhysicalDistancingShelters.

3. Frequently Asked Questions

Between July 19 to August 5, 2020, the Community Engagement Facilitators received 102 e-mails, 11 voicemails, and 41 submissions via the online feedback form.

This section summarizes frequently submitted comments, questions, and concerns shared by community members. Responses from the City of Toronto are noted in *italics*. The feedback from the community is summarized and organized into key categories below. Click on the topic of your interest below to read more:

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A. GENERAL SAFETY AND CRIME IN THE COMMUNITY

The majority of community questions, comments, and concerns received related to safety and crime in the community. Many community members indicated that they have seen and are concerned about an increase in crime, public drug use and drug paraphernalia in public parks and spaces, public urination and defecation, and litter. Some of the questions and comments representing commonly raised community concerns include:

- There are schools and daycares close to the shelter, and we have concerns about the safety of our children. Will there be extra precautions put in place once schools are back in September to keep children safe?
- There has been an increase in crime, drug use and violence in the community. What is the City's plan to ensure safety and curb violence and damage to properties?
- Our buildings have been broken into and stuff has been stolen multiple times. What will be done about this?
- We have witnessed public urination and defecation on public and private property. Who will clean and prevent this?
- What is the City doing to make us feel safe again? We don't feel safe and have stopped walking in the neighbourhood, especially at night. People have been harassed, including being yelled at and chased.
- What are you doing to ensure the local business have the resources they need to protect their property from crime?
- With the stabbing of a trained City social worker, how is the rest of the community supposed to protect themselves (especially women, children and elderly) where we don't have 24/7 security guards.
- Consider distributing information to the school children, teachers, daycare staff, and parents on what to do if they see needles or feces in school yards and public property and how to interact with shelter clients. Members of the public are not trained to know how to deal with mental health concerns and drug use.
- People experiencing homelessness are members of our community and deserve and have a right to safe housing. It is clear, though, that many of the clients of the Roehampton Residence are managing chronic abuse issues, and require social and mental health supports that are not currently readily available to them. This highlights safety gaps that exist in the current location.

This week the two midtown properties have been the subject of much public attention following several incidents at the Broadway Ave. program including an overdose death of a client, a City employee being stabbed by a client and a fire. The Broadway Ave. program is scheduled to close at the end of this month and the City is working to re-house all residents from this site.

The City recognizes that these incidents, along with other unacceptable incidents in the community, are upsetting to residents and businesses.

The City has taken a number of steps to address concerns at both sites by increasing community safety teams, Toronto Police patrols and holding clients accountable for disruptive

behaviour that puts others at risk. City shelters maintain conduct expectations for all clients. When clients fail to comply with expectations, they face consequences, including forfeiture of their spot in that location and being discharged to another location. The City will continue to monitor the situation and take further action as required. The City, and its staff take your concerns seriously and have taken a number of actions to minimize or mitigate impacts on the community

The City is engaging with local schools to develop a safety and security plan for when school resumes.

The community safety initiatives and enhancements to-date include the following:

- **Community Safety Teams (CST)** – who do outreach in the area on a 24/7 basis to patrol the sites and surrounding community and respond to immediate non-police or non-EMS related matters when made aware by the community. Teams will also be checking and patrolling “hotspots” identified by the community. The Shift Leader, at the Roehampton Residence, can be called at 437-247-2287 to be advised of concerning activity and they will dispatch a team to the location. Team members can also be identified by their bright coloured vests.

The CSTs consist of seven team members: one team of two are assigned to the Roehampton area; one team of two are assigned to the Broadway area; one team of two are floaters and can be assigned to areas outside of the immediate area (boundaries are flexible but approximately within a 1.5 km radius of the site); and one team member is assigned to the immediate property of Roehampton to monitor, clean up and engage clients.

- **Corporate Security Mobile Patrol** – Corporate security guards visit the site and the neighbourhood twice per day in marked City of Toronto vehicles. These mobile team identify, document and forward any concerns noted during their patrols.
- **Security Guards** – There are four security guards at both the Roehampton and Broadway sites 24-hours a day, seven days a week, to monitor all cameras, respond to any security issues and conduct perimeter patrols of the area immediately surrounding the Roehampton and Broadway properties.
- **Camera installation and monitoring** – A total of 33 security cameras are on site at the Roehampton Residence to monitor the building and provide a live view of the exterior of the property, as well as the two properties immediately surrounding the site. The cameras will allow guards to capture and respond to any security concerns; as well as identify individuals if required.
- **Support services provided to clients** – The City has engaged Inner City Health Associates and others to provide physical and mental health supports on site. Toronto Public Health – The Works, which provides harm reduction services, is also on site twice per week to provide support in addition to what staff provide 24/7 on the site. Case Managers are also on-site who will be responsible to provide clients with case management services and supports. The case managers meet with clients at a minimum

once per week to develop and implement a housing case plan and provide needed supports and referrals.

- **Outdoor space at Roehampton Residence** – The exterior pool at the Roehampton Hotel will be covered to provide an outdoor space for residents and an area to congregate and smoke. This will reduce the number of individuals gathering outside of the building. The City will also be installing a fence at 820 Mt. Pleasant.
- **Community Liaison Committee** – a CLC is being formed with various community stakeholders, including resident associations, Police Division 53, BIAs, etc.. City of Toronto staff who are part of the SSHA Community Engagement Team will be reaching out to form this committee in August and September.
- **Client Education and Coordination with the Toronto Police Division 53:**
 - Upon intake/admission to the shelter all clients provided with information about the rules within the shelter and their responsibilities while staying at the shelter.
 - Clients identified in any negative behaviours or criminal acts within the community are held accountable, up to and including discharge from the program.
 - Shelter resident meetings are being held regularly, which include going over the Good Neighbours Policy, their responsibilities, and consequences for not adhering to responsibilities. This includes, the importance of social distancing and wearing masks; masks are also provided to shelter clients as needed.
 - Shelter staff have been meeting with clients one on one to discuss their responsibilities of being good neighbours;
 - Educational signs have been posted in the building regarding conduct in the neighbourhood; and
 - The Toronto Police Service community response unit is visiting the site regularly. Conversations with TPS are ongoing on how they can further support and/or provide enhanced community safety measures to the surrounding community.

It is important to remember that people using shelter services are equal citizens of the city, they can move around communities and use amenities such as parks, public benches like all Toronto residents. And like all residents, they are also expected to conduct themselves within the rules/laws and bylaws. If anyone witnesses illegal activity or an emergency situation, please contact the police. If you find needles or have concerns about a possible client in the community that is a non-emergency situation please contact the shelter directly and they can dispatch a Community Safety Team.

B. URGENT NEED FOR TEMPORARY HOUSING PROGRAMS

There were many questions, comments, and concerns about how decisions were made to open the temporary shelters activated in response to COVID-19.

- Who made the decision? Under what specific authority / legislation did City staff open the Roehampton Residence with a 2-year lease and option to extend for a third year?
- Were there any other locations considered? What ultimately led to the decision that these specific locations were suitable?
- Proximity to schools and daycares should be considered when evaluating new shelter locations and should have prevented shelters from being located in this area.
- Where are the other 30+ shelter sites and how long are the leases for each site?
- What is the total cost to the City of Toronto for providing these services?

The City made the decision and acted to open these sites to save lives and protect vulnerable people, who are at greater risk of COVID-19 related harms. Since mid-March, the City of Toronto has moved almost 3,900 people throughout its emergency shelter system, including more than 1,500 individuals who have been transitioned to permanent housing, to achieve physical distancing of two meters between shelter beds, in accordance with Ministry of Health guidance for congregate living settings.

The City conducted an exhaustive search for shelter space and consulted with property managers, developers and landlords to secure safe spaces that were available, affordable, of suitable size, accessible and close to transit and services. Shelter, Support & Housing Administration had the authority to open these sites as part of our response to the emergency situation caused by the pandemic. A map detailing the approximate location of the other sites opened as part of our response to COVID-19 will be on our website in the next few weeks.

These sites have been opened all across the city; and all across the city we have schools and daycares. The City understands the challenges and concerns for students and is actively engaging with our colleagues at the school boards, Children's Services, and private operators for an ongoing collaboration and coordination to address any negative impacts.

C. LACK OF COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND NOTICE PRIOR TO OPENING THE SITES

There were also many questions, comments, and concerns about the lack of community engagement and notice prior to opening the shelter to clients at the Roehampton Residence. Community members asked/said:

- Why wasn't there any engagement or notice prior to using this site as a homeless shelter?
- Why doesn't SSHA consult on the opening of new shelter locations?
- How do I get more information about the shelter?

- We feel that our neighbourhood pride is being disrespected.
- Community participation in this initiative is the only way for the program to be a success.

While our Council-approved engagement process for the community in advance is preferred, the rapid nature of the response and critical need to protect people experiencing homelessness – some of the most vulnerable residents in our City – did not allow for it. Since the emergency opening, the City has moved as quickly as possible to provide supports for clients and the community. The fast pace of establishing this site has led to frustration for some residents and the City is actively working to address concerns raised by the community to ensure the safety of local residents, businesses, clients and staff at the sites.

City Council has previously delegated authority to staff to find and select new locations for shelters. The City is not required to seek community input or permission on the location of new shelter sites. However, the City is committed to engaging communities and the focus of the engagement process is how best to support and integrate the shelter as part of the neighbourhood.

In the past three weeks, the City took the following engagement related actions and steps:

1. *Hired a third-party community facilitation team from Swerhun Inc. Yulia Pak and Matthew Wheatley are working to connect with the community and helping SSHA to establish and implement a community engagement process.*
2. *Mailed more than 30,000 flyers within approximately 750 m radius of Roehampton Residence and 55/65 Broadway.*
3. *Established the following communications channels to collect community feedback and questions, including:*
 - *Project e-mail: clc.roehampton.residence@gmail.com*
 - *Project voicemail: 416-479-0243*
 - *Online feedback form: www.toronto.ca/PhysicalDistancingShelters*
4. *Established a process to respond to community feedback and questions through regular Community Bulletins. This answer is part of Community Bulletin #1. Bulletins will continue to be developed and made available online regularly.*
5. *Scheduled the **Online/Telephone Community Information Session on August 19th from 6:00 to 8:00 pm** for the community to learn more about the sites, answer community questions, and address some of the key community concerns. The link to the online session and the call-in number will be available on the project website and on the project voicemail one week before the meeting. The session will be recorded and available after. Residents are encouraged to send in questions in advance of the session via project e-mail, voicemail or the project online feedback form.*
6. *Started community outreach through one-on-one and small group discussions, including local Resident Associations, BIAs, Schools, Toronto Police Services at 53 Division, and Tiny Tots Daycare. Any group interested in connecting with the community engagement*

team to better understand and contribute to the community engagement process is welcome to get in touch via any of the project channels.

- 7. Started a process of establishing a Community Liaison Committee (CLC). The CLC will include representatives of residents, businesses, and community organizations interested in identifying, communicating, and problem-solving concerns and challenges related to the shelter in collaboration with shelter operators and City staff to ensure successful integration of the shelter into the community. Additional details about the CLC, including how to apply to become a member will be available on the project website at www.toronto.ca/PhysicalDistancingShelters. Anyone interested in joining the CLC can also get in touch via any of the project channels.*

Site staff at Roehampton and Broadway have been working hard to develop relationships in the neighbourhood and take action to address some of the challenges.

D. INFORMATION ABOUT THE CLIENTS

In general, community members would like to learn more about the residents at the Roehampton Hotel and 55-65 Broadway. Some of the commonly asked questions and comments include:

- Who lives at the shelter? What is the demographic it serves? Can the demographics be changed to not serve people who use drugs?
- Do you perform criminal background checks before accepting clients?
- Are there any registered sex offenders or drug dealers staying at the shelter?
- Do clients have a curfew and/or a code of conduct?

The program is run by City of Toronto staff and provides services to couples and singles, all genders, including supports with case management, housing help, meals, harm reduction and recreational programming.

This Roehampton Residence has 109 units to serve up to 174 clients. We are currently serving about 140 clients at this site.

Background checks are not conducted prior to accepting clients. Police are engaged with operators of both sites and have advised that if there is a public safety concern, they are obligated to notify the community. This has not yet been required.

Resident meetings are being held regularly, which includes going over the Good Neighbours Policy and their responsibilities. Staff have been meeting with clients one on one to discuss their responsibilities of being good neighbours. And educational signs have been posted in the building regarding conduct in the neighbourhood.

Violence or aggressive behaviour, whether to staff or other clients, will lead to an immediate discharge along with a call to the police. A discharge can also be triggered if/when a client is continually non-compliant with program rules and/or other case management plan. Clients are

never discharged to the street; they are always provided with an alternative shelter space to go to.

E. COVID-19 AND PUBLIC HEALTH RECOMMENDATIONS

Some community members shared concerns that shelter clients are congregating in large groups and not wearing masks, going into local businesses without following social distancing rules, and refusing to put masks on. Some of the common comments include:

- Are people required to get a COVID-10 test before they are admitted to a program?
- What is the shelter doing to reduce/prevent the spread of COVID-19 within the shelter and in the community?
- Moving people who essentially live outside into a confined space together seems contradictory to the distancing measures that are recommended by the governments.
- We are noticing that people are gathering in large groups and not wearing masks (on the shelter property, in the local community, and in local businesses). This goes against the public health recommendations put in place to reduce the spread of COVID-19.

While there is no requirement to get a COVID-19 test to be admitted to a shelter, all shelter clients are screened daily for COVID-19 symptoms. Mobile COVID-19 testing is happening across the shelter system and Toronto Public Health, community health partners and shelter providers are conducting universal testing in shelters. When someone using our shelter system tests positive, TPH notifies SSHA and the shelter or respite provider and arrangements are made to transport that person and any close contacts to an isolation and recovery program.

Outreach workers also continue to proactively connect with potential and existing clients to provide support, referrals to shelter and housing, provide COVID-19 education, screening for COVID-19, referral to testing at a Provincial COVID-19 Assessment Centre, and to assess safety. SSHA has implemented comprehensive infection prevention and control measures at all sites including the Roehampton. These measures include:

- *Information sharing with clients on how to protect themselves and others.*
- *The use of Toronto Public Health signage and educational materials on physical distancing.*
- *Areas within the site have floor markings and occupancy limits and each room for physical distancing.*
- *Disposable masks are available to clients if they are unable to acquire their own masks.*

All shelter sites offer infection prevention and control measures, including access to running water and soap, face masks, and the 2m space to practice physical distancing, which are not always available when living outside.

It is made clear to our clients that they are expected to follow all physical distancing guidelines and bylaws while outside the site like any other community member. We

remind them that they are subject to the same bylaws enforced by the City bylaw officers when they are outside.

To provide an outdoor space on the property for the Roehampton residents to spend time outdoors and smoke without having to be in front of the building, SSHA is working on covering the exterior pool on the hotel premises. The City will also be installing a fence at 820 Mt. Pleasant.

F. SERVICES AND SUPPORTS AVAILABLE TO CLIENTS

A big concern in the community relates to the lack of services to support the residents. Many community members wanted more information about what services and supports are available to shelter clients at the Roehampton Residence. Commonly raised questions and comments include:

- What services and support are available to shelter clients?
- What resources are you providing these vulnerable populations when giving them this housing? Homelessness is not just a housing problem, it is enforced by larger complex, systematic issues that require resources like safe injection sites, food banks, and other useful social services.
- What is being done for those experiencing mental health challenges and addictions?
- Are clients served meals at the shelter?

Shelters in the City of Toronto follow a housing first model and focus on getting people housed as quickly as possible in conjunction with providing necessary services and supports to ensure successful transition to permanent housing.

Since the Roehampton Residence opened its doors on July 3, 2020, the City has done the following to provide more supports and services:

- *Engaged Inner City Health Associates, a group of more than 100 physicians, to develop a robust health plan to support clients, including on-site nursing staff 5 days a week, and transitional primary care, psychiatry and palliative care services starting the week of August 17, 2020;*
- *Partnered with Toronto Public Health – The Works, which provides harm reduction services on-site twice per week;*
- *Engaged Toronto North Support Services (TNSS), a community-based, multi-service agency for enhanced mental health support and counselling programs;*
- *Hired additional housing workers to be assigned full-time to the site. These workers will provide individualized supports and housing search assistance while referring clients to mental health professionals, employment services, skills training, harm reduction and addictions counselling, and other supports as needed.*

Clients are not allowed to use illegal substances or consume alcohol on shelter property. We are currently setting up partnerships with other community agencies that could also provide

supports to clients and exploring opportunities for further on-site harm reduction services to be made available for shelter residents only.

Staff are always available on site to support clients 24/7.

G. DONATIONS AND COMMUNITY SUPPORT

Some community members expressed strong support for the City of Toronto's efforts to help the most vulnerable people and made inquiries about how they can provide donations and/or volunteer. Some of the shared comments include:

- The shelter is a great idea because there's way too many people sleeping in the streets. It's good to see the City providing people with decent shelter during the pandemic. We live in the neighbourhood and welcome the presence of these shelters.
- Toronto is a rich city and people need to be housed. I hope that the shelter stays after COVID-19 and that the City continues to help the homeless, especially young people in poor health.
- Projects like this are important reminders that everyone deserves dignity and we need to keep an open mind. By extending a helping hand, or in this case welcoming others into our great neighborhood, we have an opportunity to learn, grow and make a lasting impact in real people's lives.
- I am supportive of this temporary program and other necessary measures to protect our most vulnerable. The location is right. To be reflexively against it is un-Canadian. Compassion is in short supply. We need it now.
- Are you accepting donations? I would like to know how I could help this program and what the best way is to provide a donation.
- The City should encourage people in the community to be more positive about the project and that we are going to make the shelter work. It is going to be a model of how we're going to help people and provide them a place to live.

The City knows that community engagement and collaboration is key to ensuring successful integration of such programs into the neighbourhood and the community. People who are experiencing homelessness need the support of others in the community as they move toward secure housing and independence.

At other sites, staff have set up an ongoing community committee to meet regularly and plan different initiatives for the community to support shelter residents.

Opportunities for volunteering and providing donations will be discussed and determined through the Community Liaison Committee (CLC), which is now being established as part of the ongoing community engagement process.

We encourage members of the community groups and organizations to apply to be part of this committee. If you are interested to learn more about CLC and/or would like to share your ideas for support, please send an email to the Community Engagement Facilitator at clc.roehampton.residence@gmail.com.

H. OTHER FEEDBACK

Community members also shared other feedback:

- **Non-digital ways to participate in the Information Session.** The flyer about the upcoming Information Session instructs people to go to a website to get the phone number to participate in the Information Session, but not everyone has a computer especially in this area where there's a lot of seniors. It leaves a lot of people out this process. The City should send another notice telling us what the phone number is to participate in the Information Session without a computer.

The telephone number to call in and join the meeting will be available on the project voicemail one week prior to the session. Please call 416-479-0243 to obtain the call-in number as of Wednesday, August 12th

- **Any other shelters coming to Midtown?** We have heard they will be another homeless shelter opening on the north side of Broadway between Mt. Pleasant and Redpath. Is this true?

Currently, there are no other shelters and/or temporary housing programs planned or considered in the midtown area.

- **More police presence will not solve anything.** Rather it will cause more people to get arrested and taken out of the area, instead of providing them with services. These reactions to crime are counterproductive, racist, classist and ableist. Solving homelessness is complex.

Thank you for sharing this feedback.