

# COMMUNITY BULLETIN #2

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT FACILITATION TEAM

We are Maria Crawford and Violetta Ilkiw from Barnes Management Group, and we are pleased to introduce ourselves to you as the Community Engagement Facilitation Team for the 76 Church Street shelter site. We come with backgrounds in community engagement, process facilitation, and experience with shelters and City systems.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ROLES

The City typically engages the community in advance of opening a new shelter to provide information about the program and support its success of the service into the community. This has not been possible for the program at 76 Church St due to the speed at which the City had to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic. The City worked quickly to save lives, protect the more vulnerable, and minimize the spread of COVID-19 in the shelters and community. Our role in the engagement process is to gather feedback on key issues, to ensure stakeholders are informed of the plans for the site, and to foster a good relationship between the shelter and its neighbours, in order to ensure the success of the future shelter service.

## COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT ACTIVITIES

We have had the pleasure of meeting with many community residents, business owners, property owners, resident groups, local business improvement areas (BIAs), agencies, and associations. These stakeholder meetings provide an opportunity to share information about the site and the broader plan for the George Street Revitalization (GSR) project. These meetings also provide an opportunity for the City to learn about and mitigate any arising issues or service gaps.

The Community Feedback Session was held May 3, 2021, from 7:00-9:00pm. About 60 people participated. The session was recorded and can be viewed on the [76 Church Street project website](#). The recording is closed captioned.

We could not respond to all questions that were asked during the Q&A portion of the session, so we will provide responses to some of these questions below. More responses will be included in the next Community Bulletin.

**We will issue regular community updates and post them to the project website at:**

**[76 Church Street](#)**

**To ask to receive regular updates for the 76 Church Street shelter site or to provide us with comments, feedback, or questions:**

**Send us an email**  
**[clc.76church@gmail.com](mailto:clc.76church@gmail.com)**

**Call to leave a voicemail**  
**(416) 800-2914 ext. 202**

## Q&As FROM THE COMMUNITY FEEDBACK SESSION

### Shelter Programming

#### **1. What education is provided to residents about gathering and behaviour on private and public property in the area?**

All new incoming shelter residents complete a lengthy intake before being assigned a room and bed. The intake includes COVID-19 screening, basic information/history of shelter resident, and a review of rules of the shelter, which includes rights and responsibilities while residing at 76 Church Street. This includes behaving with respect for the community. Staff usually expand on this when reviewing this section of rules, rights and responsibilities.

#### **2. Many services are provided to residents – housing, meals, laundry, social and other services. What responsibilities do shelter residents have?**

Shelter residents are provided with a counsellor 72 hours after intake to engage in a plan of action regarding housing, employment, and/or other areas of need and interest. Meals, social programming, and other services are voluntary in use and participation. Staff definitely encourage shelter residents to participate, but understand that shelter residents may have other priorities outside the shelter. We also request that shelter residents keep their space clean in their room and also respect the space of their roommates.

#### **3. Regarding access to employment, are residents being considered for work in the agricultural sector where there is a need?**

We have an Employability Specialist Worker who comes to the shelter approximately 3 days per week. His focus is to produce any open opportunity (apprenticeship, job training, and life skills) in order to assist shelter residents who are ready to work. Many of the shelter residents meet with the specialist and voice what they're looking for in employment opportunities, and he will connect with his contacts to see if the request is feasible.

These are some programming and employment statistics from November 2020 to April 2021 for the shelter:

- Approximately 40 referrals to Pre-Employment and Skill Training Programs
- 23 have secured full-time employment and 18 have secured part-time employment.
- 25 residents met with their caseworkers via webcam from February 2021 to March 2021, receiving support for a wide variety of issues, including employment and training.

**4. Some of the people who need shelter experience mental illness.****Is medical support/mental health support part of the program?**

The staff at 76 Church try to take a holistic approach with the residents at 76 Church. In addition to food and lodging, residents have access to mental health supports, and residents are linked to longer term health and mental health supports in the community such as through referrals to the Inner City Family Health Team, employment support, income support, long term housing, harm reduction and crisis management support. The shelter consistently reinforces their commitment to being good neighbours and have a Good Neighbours' policy that they review with and remind their residents about.

In summary, the shelter at 76 Church Street is staffed 24 hours per day, seven days a week and provides wrap-around supports for residents including:

- All meals and laundry.
- Access to mental and physical health supports through Inner City Family Health Team (ICFHT), including weekly on-site supports from an RN (nurse) and Social Worker who specialize in substance use and mental health. These partners also link clients up to their main Family Health Team site, which offers in depth health/mental health supports, including primary care and allied health.
- Access to harm reduction supplies and supports to reduce potential harms related to substance use, including a range of services supported through Toronto Public Health - The Works.
- Case managers and Housing workers on-site to assist shelter residents in developing a permanent housing plan, obtaining personal documents, as well as accessing employment and other community supports.

**COVID-19****5. What precautions are being taken to prevent or reduce the spread of COVID-19 in the shelter and the community?**

The City continues to follow current public health guidance regarding physical distancing. All shelter operations, shelter residents, and staff are priority groups to receive vaccinations for COVID-19, and many have already been vaccinated.

Since the onset of COVID-19, Toronto Public Health has worked closely with staff in the City's Shelter Support Housing and Administration (SSHA) division to prevent spread among people experiencing homelessness. SSHA has and will continue to implement comprehensive infection prevention and control measures in all shelters, including the 76 Church Street site. Information is shared with shelter residents on how to protect themselves and others.

Shelter residents are expected to follow all physical distancing guidelines and by-laws while outside the shelter, like any other community member. Disposable masks are available to shelter residents if they are unable to get their own masks. Shelters use Toronto Public Health signage and educational materials on physical distancing. Areas within the shelter have floor markings, and each room is set up for physical distancing.

**6. Are shelter users required to take COVID-19 test prior to moving into the shelter? How do you know they are not infected already?**

There is active monitoring and screening of current shelter residents, and the City has a standard screening process using Ontario Public Health guidelines at all points of entry by phone or in-person for those needing shelter. City staff operating the program at the 76 Church Street site are actively engaged with Toronto Public Health and community health partners to conduct universal testing if needed.

**7. What steps are taken if someone in the shelter tests positive for COVID-19?**

All individuals experiencing homelessness who are under investigation for or confirmed positive for COVID-19 are cared for by healthcare providers in facilities that provide safe isolation and observation consistent with public health direction.

**Health Issues****8. Please ask a panelist to explain what iPHARE contributes and if they are part of 76 Church St.?**

iPHARE stands for Integrated Prevention & Harm Reduction Initiative, a City and community agency led effort to address opioid-related deaths in Toronto's shelter system. Services started to roll out in December 2020. This includes providing harm reduction measures in all shelter locations, including at the 76 Church Street site. For more information on iPHARE, please visit the [City website for this initiative](#).

**9. Regarding harm reduction supplies and supports, what does this comprise of? Are drugs supplied to shelter residents? Does this program have an objective of eliminating dependency?**

The shelter's support programs focus on supporting people to limit the harmful effects of drugs and alcohol. Education and supports are provided to shelter residents based on their needs and case plans.

The site is a harm reduction shelter, which means the City supports shelter residents at whatever stage they are. This may include access to harm reduction supplies and counselling. As part of the response to the opioid epidemic in the City of Toronto, naloxone will be made available to shelter residents on-site and can also be administered by shelter staff.

The City of Toronto's Drug Strategy works toward a public health approach to drugs and drug use. The City's approach is based on four integrated parts: prevention, harm reduction, treatment, and enforcement. The City is continuously working with communities to address the larger structural issues that require longer term solutions. For more information on the Toronto Drug Strategy, please visit the [Toronto Drug Strategy – City of Toronto](#) web page.