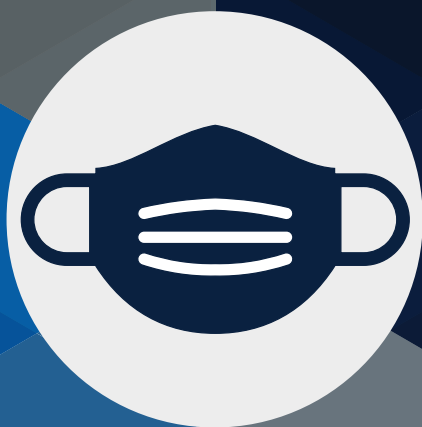


— 2021 —

SSHA

Annual Report



A faint, light gray map of Toronto serves as the background for the left page. It shows the city's street grid, major roads, and the surrounding water bodies like Lake Ontario and the Humber River.

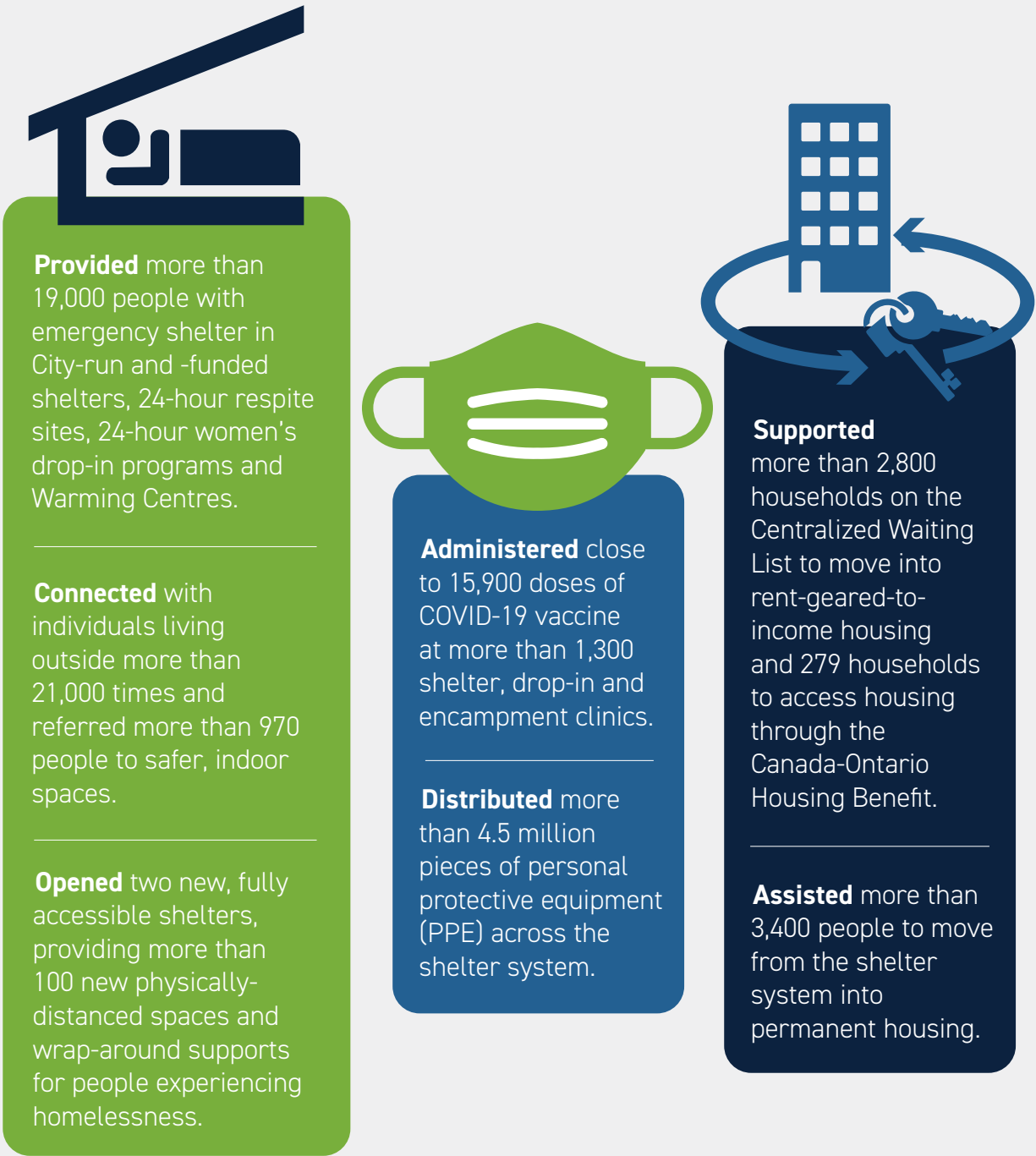
Land Acknowledgment for Toronto


We acknowledge that our work takes place on the traditional territory of many nations including the Mississaugas of the Credit, the Anishnabeg, the Chippewa, the Haudenosaunee and the Wendat peoples and is now home to many diverse First Nations, Inuit and Métis peoples. We also acknowledge that Toronto is covered by Treaty 13 signed with the Mississaugas of the Credit, and the Williams Treaty signed with multiple Mississaugas and Chippewa bands.

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2021 Accomplishments



 **Completed** the Street Needs Assessment, a City-wide point-in-time count and survey of people experiencing homelessness, and SSHA's Homelessness Solutions Service Plan to help guide our work and priorities over the next three years

Acting GM Message



Our collective resilience was tested again in 2021 as we responded and adapted to the ongoing pandemic and its many challenges. Information was rapidly changing but one constant remained – my deep and profound appreciation for each and every staff member, service provider and partner supporting our important work. Together, we provided much needed shelter and support to more than 19,000 people, and continued to respond to significant demand for housing-related services and community outreach.

Alongside the pandemic, the opioid poisoning crisis persisted – a crisis that has had a devastating impact on the shelter system and the broader community. Thanks to harm reduction measures put in place and the quick action of staff, we saved many lives, but staff and clients remain deeply affected by this ongoing public health issue and the loss of community members.

Despite these many challenges, we rose together to achieve so many notable things, many of which are outlined in the following pages.

Early in 2021 we had just begun providing vaccines to shelter residents. By the end of the year, with the support of our health partners and Peer Champions, close to 15,900 doses had been delivered.

We also completed important foundational work like the fifth Street Needs Assessment, as well as the Homelessness Solutions Service Plan, which will guide our work over the next three years.

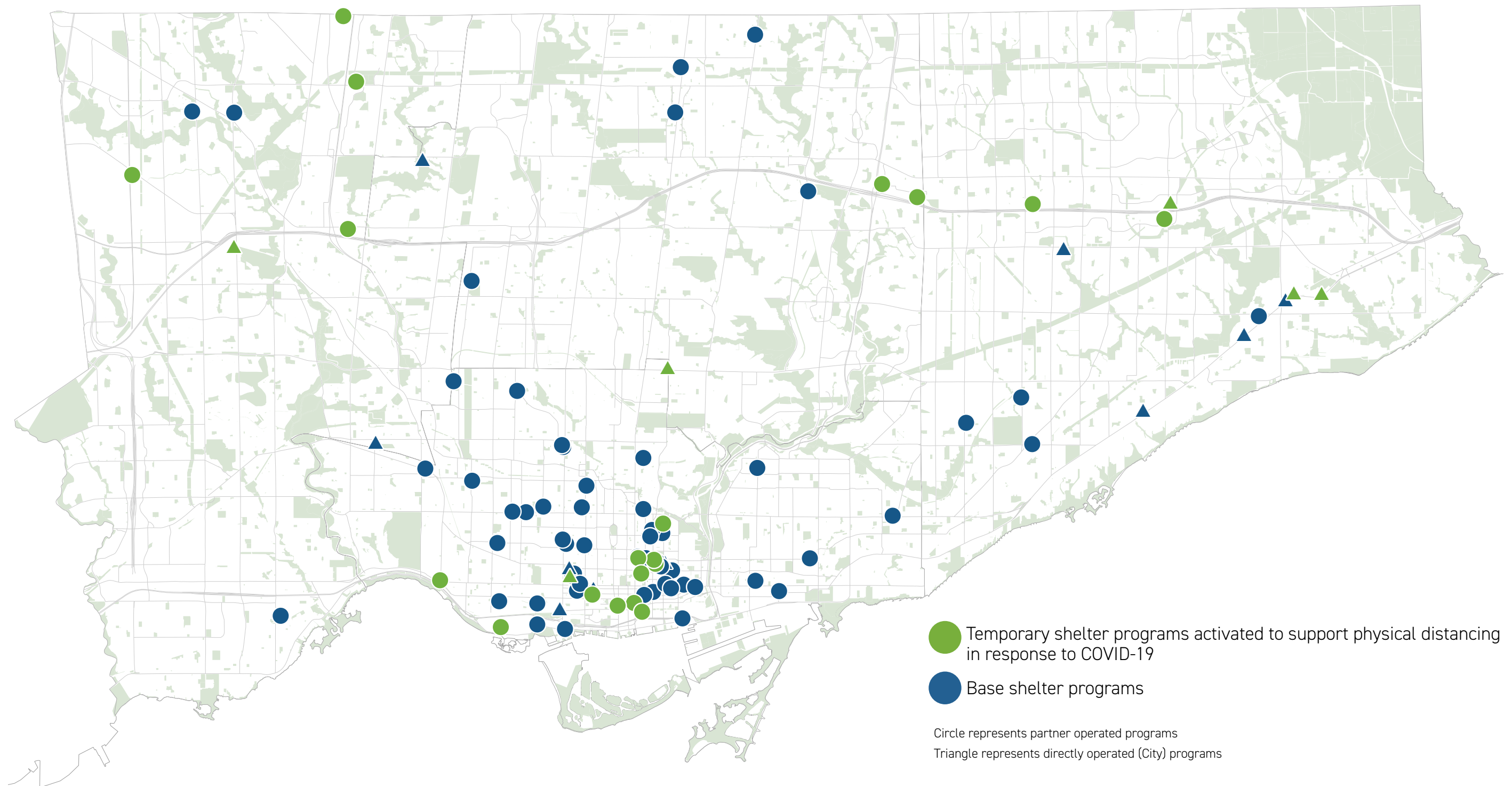
We continued our commitment to Confronting Anti-Black Racism and the Meeting in the Middle strategy to help address systemic barriers faced by both staff and those accessing our emergency services.

These items are just a snapshot of the important work outlined in these pages that would not be possible without the unwavering dedication of staff, community agencies and partners who support us along the way, for which I am deeply grateful. I look forward to continuing to work together to achieve our shared goal of ending chronic homelessness.

Regards,

Gord Tanner
Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA)

Shelter Services in Toronto



Who We Serve and Support

Helping people experiencing homelessness to develop a housing plan and find a place they can call home continues to be at the forefront of our work. Here are some stories of those we helped in 2021.

Michael



After 13 years on the street, Michael decided to enter the City's shelter system. What he's discovered there is a safe space to dive deeper into his art, which is helping him to heal from depression and continue his journey of reclaiming the Manitoulin Island Ojibway culture stolen from his grandmother. Michael's life-giving art reflects his Ojibway identity.

His favourite painting is his interpretation of The Medicine Wheel, symbolizing health and the cycles of life. Now fully engaged in painting, Michael looks forward to taking the next step of applying for housing with the support of the shelter's housing counsellor.

Barbara



Last year, Barbara was living in a park. Through a connection with the Streets to Homes team, Barbara was able to move into a temporary shelter hotel, followed by her own apartment.

Because she has a home, Barbara was able to reconnect with her family and grandchildren, and find her new love – her fur baby, Wrinkles.

While finding employment during COVID-19 wasn't easy, Barbara was able to find cleaning jobs that she hopes provides new opportunities. With a new place to study, she also aspires to complete her GED.

Joseph



It was a long five years for Joseph, who was living on the street and had no place to call home. Injured in a car accident and battling depression, Joseph was also coping with the loss of close friends.

Anyone who has experienced grief will know that there can be dark days and the wrong series of events can be devastating. Despite these challenges, Joseph worked with Malcolm, a Street Outreach Counsellor, to find permanent supportive housing.

Finding a home is great on its own, but the real icing on the cake was that Joseph was able to move into his new home just a few days before his 36th birthday.

Albertha



Albertha found herself evicted by a landlord and ended up staying outdoors and occasionally with friends and family.

Dealing with multiple health issues, Albertha reached out to the City and worked closely with Street Outreach Counsellor Andrea to secure a unit through the Rapid Rehousing program in an area close to her ongoing medical supports.

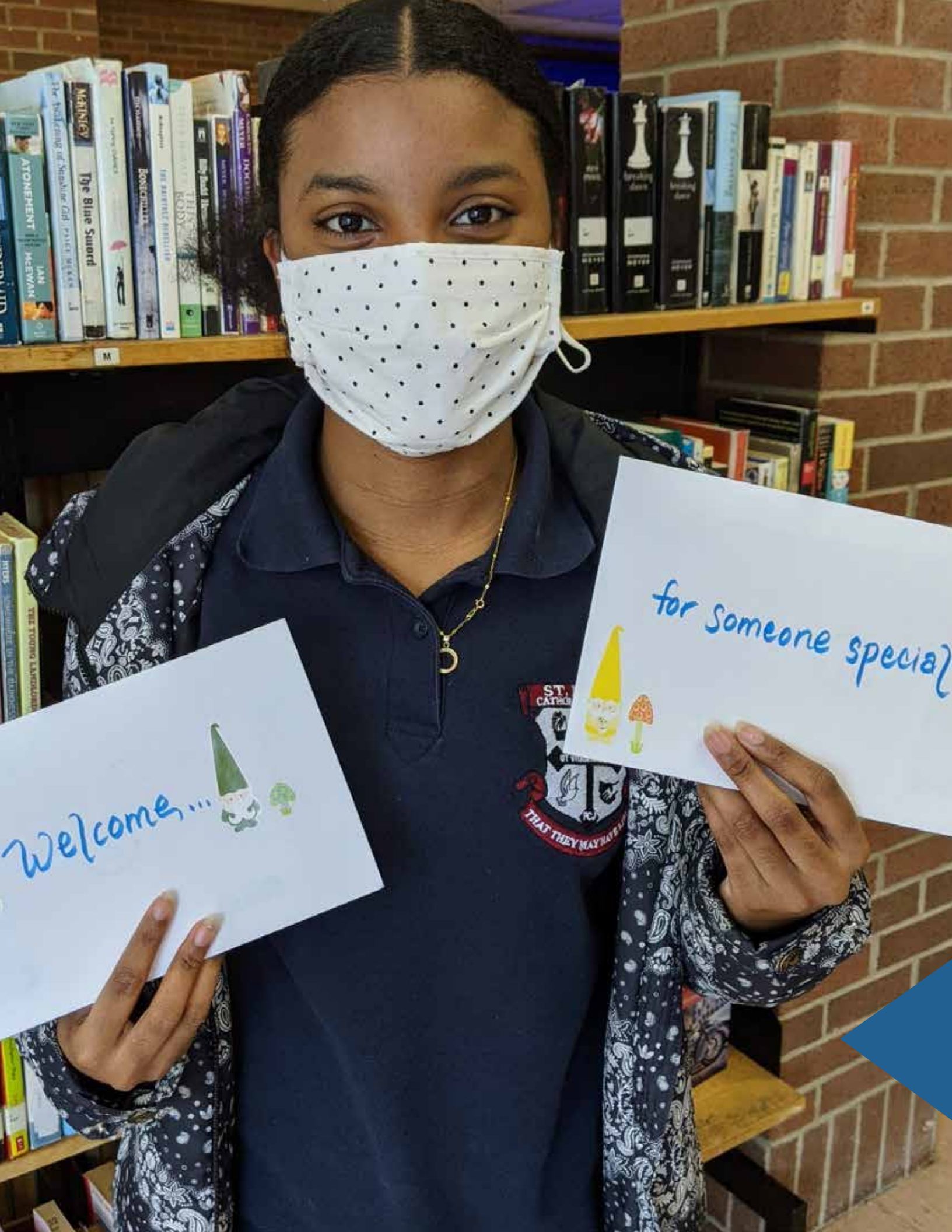
Albertha is seen smiling in the kitchen of her new place and loves that almost everything she needs is within walking distance of her new apartment.

Celebrating Frontline Workers

Our frontline staff continue to be true heroes, working tirelessly to adapt and respond to the COVID-19 pandemic in order to deliver essential services to those experiencing homelessness. To recognize this work, the Mayor declared January 25 to 31, 2021 the first ever Emergency Shelter and Homelessness Service Worker Appreciation Week.

Our leadership team also painted murals at various shelter locations across the city as a small token of their deep appreciation.





Partnerships

We work closely with more than 200 community service providers and sector partners to deliver a range of services. We regularly engage community partners and seek advice and guidance on program development and collaborative service planning through our advisory bodies such as the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH), Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board (TICAB) and Toronto Shelter Network (TSN).

We also work closely with many divisions within the City of Toronto, whose collaboration and support is invaluable to advancing our work.

We regularly engage people with lived experience of homelessness and services users for feedback and input into program and service delivery through surveys, user testing and feedback, consultation processes, as well as formal engagement through groups like the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness People With Lived Experience (PWLE) Caucus. We are committed to building on and expanding these approaches to collaboration and coordination with sector partners and people with lived experience.

In addition, we engage with the public and broader community, particularly related to opening of new homelessness services. This engagement is intended to facilitate information sharing, address concerns and increase public awareness about the causes and solutions to homelessness.

We extend our sincere thanks to our many partners for helping us to advance our important work in 2021.

Students in a group called Rebel Girls from St. Mary's Catholic Academy created personalized cards to welcome women staying at Fatima House to their newly renovated shelter site. As one student remarked, "I hope the cards make the women feel happy, and I hope they know that there are other women looking after them in the community."

SECTION 1

COVID-19 RESPONSE

Since the start of the pandemic, we have implemented a comprehensive response to COVID-19 for people experiencing homelessness, which is focused on infection prevention, recovery and housing. In 2021, we continued to work closely with Toronto Public Health, service providers and partners to protect and prioritize people experiencing homelessness through stringent infection prevention and control (IPAC) measures. Working closely with service providers and staff, we implemented enhanced cleaning measures at all sites; invested in improved ventilation; distributed more than 4.5 million pieces of PPE; and conducted ongoing quality assurance visits and remediation. We also continued to operate an isolation and recovery site with supports for clients with complex health needs to recover from COVID-19, as well as 27 temporary shelter sites that were opened to provide additional space for physical distancing and people to move indoors from encampments.



Ongoing Infection Prevention and Control and Quality Assurance

We continued to implement stringent infection prevention and control measures and enhanced cleaning protocols as the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic impacted our operations in 2021. All agencies received support for enhanced IPAC measures, PPE and wage enhancements and to help increase vaccine uptake. Staff throughout the sector were kept up-to-date with current measures through **online and in-person training**, as well as frequent communication updates and regular sector-wide webinars.

We engaged Practice Health Check (PHC), IPAC specialists, to strengthen the knowledge and practices of infection prevention and control in the homeless service system. Practice Health Check conducted 136 audits of all shelter and 24-hour respite sites, including directions for remediation, and offered 430 training sessions to 1,883 leadership, frontline and property services staff in all City-funded operations, including COVID-19 expansion sites.

Additional IPAC measures included:

- issuing guidance for improvements to indoor air quality
- investing in initiatives to improve ventilation, such as higher-quality HVAC filters or portable air filters
 - The City also made an additional investment of \$1.5 million to purchase 660 portable HEPA filters for 65 shelters
- communicating regularly with homelessness sector partners to share the current status of the response and the latest guidance
- requiring every shelter to identify an IPAC lead to coordinate IPAC work and focus on continuous improvements
- confirming compliance with physical distancing requirements to ensure previously approved spacing in client sleeping/resting spaces were being maintained and continued



Vaccination

Through partnerships with Inner City Health Associates (ICHA), Ontario Health Teams, Indigenous Health Teams, Ontario Health Toronto, local hospitals, family doctors and community-based health care service providers, we provided COVID-19 vaccination clinics for people experiencing homelessness staying in the shelter system, accessing drop-ins and living in encampments, as well as for shelter staff. We continue to work with our partners to efficiently administer first, second and third doses.

We supported vaccine uptake in the shelter system by:

- providing supports to homelessness service providers for vaccine outreach and clinic coordination
- providing incentives and funding for incentives for people experiencing homelessness to attend a vaccine clinic
- providing funding to the Toronto Shelter Network for the Campaign Vaccination Promotion in Toronto Shelters Project, which provides resources to help shelters encourage vaccination
- funding a mobile peer vaccine ambassador program for people with lived experience of homelessness
- working with the Toronto Shelter Network to:
 - launch an on-site Peer Champion program, made up of current and past clients who work to enhance vaccine confidence at shelters with low vaccination rates
 - host targeted information sessions for youth and families
- working with the Toronto Shelter Network and the Black Physicians of Ontario to host Black client-centred vaccine clinics and webinars

We worked as quickly as possible with health care partners and the Province to prioritize access to vaccinations for people experiencing homelessness. Between May 7 and December 31, 2021, the City and Inner City Health Associates hosted more than 1,300 clinics at shelters, drop-ins and encampments, resulting in 75% of those aged 12 and above in the shelter system receiving their first dose, 64% receiving a second dose and 9% receiving a third dose.

By the end of 2021, 23% of kids aged 5-11 had also received a first dose.

On August 23, our own Donna Ashman from Robertson House threw the first pitch to kick off the baseball game, as part of the Toronto Blue Jays month-long celebration of frontline workers. Donna was chosen for this honor in recognition of her instrumental work in coordinating testing and vaccine clinics at Robertson House.

Isolation and Recovery

Throughout 2021, we worked closely with Toronto Public Health and other health partners, including the Inner City Health Associates, to manage COVID-19 cases in the shelter system, including outbreaks. We continued to operate an Isolation and Recovery Site to support people who tested positive and required additional support during their isolation period. The program is run in partnership with ICHA, University Health Network, Parkdale Queen West and The Neighbourhood Group, and offers an integrated model of care that includes intensive clinical, harm reduction and peer and personal support. The program is pet- and family-friendly, and children/infants can remain with their parents on-site.

Celebrating Toronto's Peer Champions

Peer Champions are individuals with lived experience of homelessness, who work to connect with individuals in the shelter system to better understand their concerns, increase their vaccine confidence and ultimately support them to get vaccinated.

Funded by the City and run by the Toronto Shelter Network, there are more than 30 Peer Champions doing this important work across the shelter system – individuals like Edward P., who ended up in the shelter system after he lost his job, followed by his apartment, due to COVID-19.

Recruited by staff, Edward didn't hesitate to help out and valued listening to the different stories. According to Edward:

At the beginning of the vaccine roll-out, there was a lot of misinformation coming from social media. I try to target my speech to whoever I'm talking to, based on their individual fears. No two situations are really ever alike. I try to take it from my own personal point of view, explaining how I try to keep people safe by immunizing myself.

Watch Edward's story at toronto.ca/shelterresponse.



Maintaining and Expanding the Shelter System

Toronto – like all cities – continued to experience significant demand for emergency shelter in 2021 and we expanded capacity to respond to this increased demand, with nightly occupancy growing from more than 6,000 people in January to more than 7,200 by December.

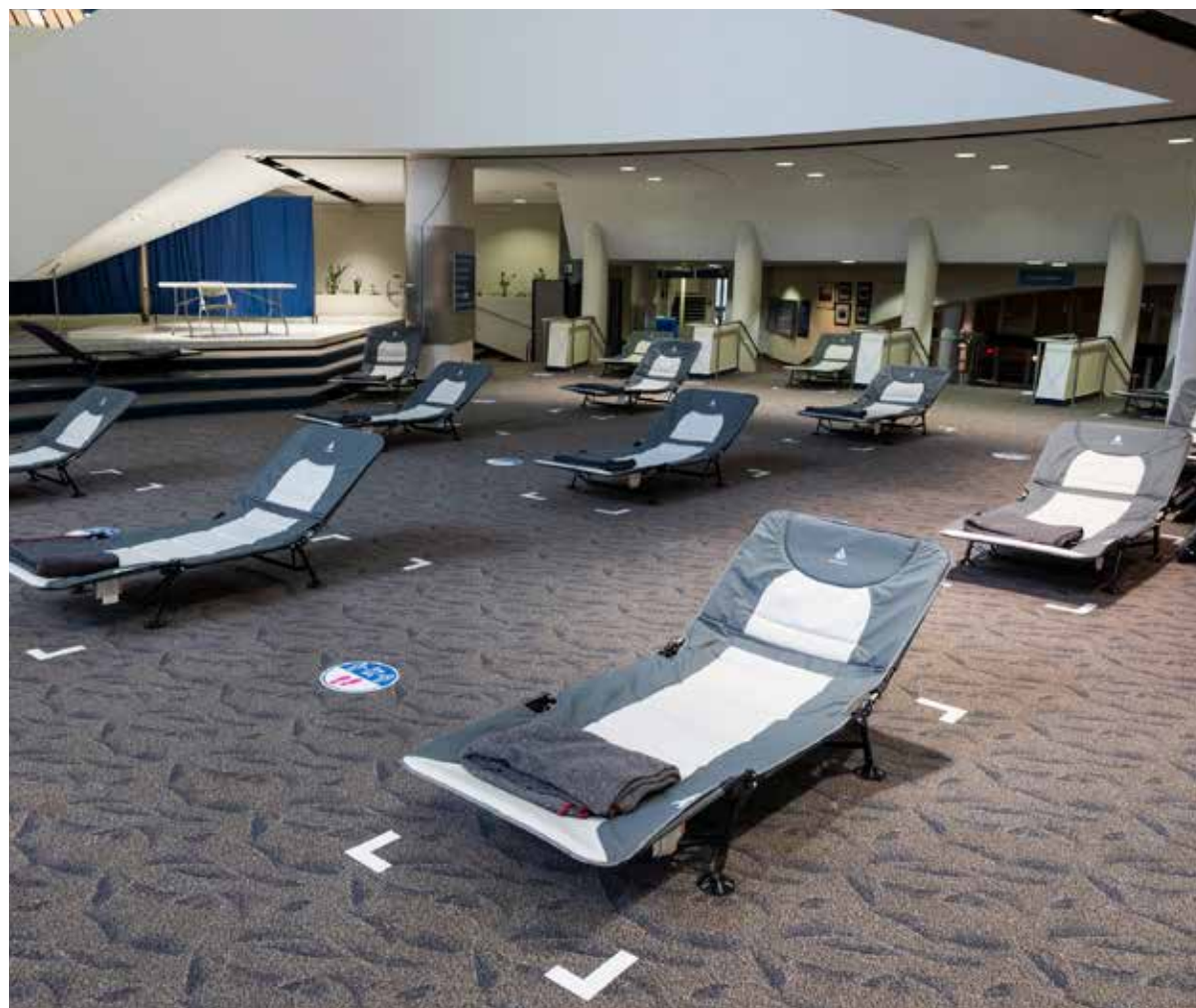
To help ensure there were safe and welcoming spaces available for those who need it, while also continuing ongoing response to the COVID-19 pandemic, we continued to work with partners to operate a number of temporary shelter sites to create physical distancing in the shelter system and provide space for people to move indoors from encampments. By the end of 2021, there were 27 temporary shelter sites in the shelter system, providing more than 3,200 temporary spaces. These sites were operated in addition to the 75 permanent shelters and 24-hour respite sites.

To maintain space, we kept open 450 spaces from the 2020-2021 winter season that were originally planned to close in April 2021. Over the past five years, we have continuously added and maintained new capacity. As a result, the number of beds currently available for individuals or couples experiencing homelessness is at a five-year high.

As part of City Council direction to expand the number of permanent new shelter beds, we also opened two new fully accessible, co-ed shelters in 2021. Operated by Homes First Society, the shelters located at 101 Placer Court and 4117 Lawrence Ave. E. provide more than 100 new physically-distanced spaces (with regular capacity for up to 176), along with dedicated space for health care, recreational activities and community programming.

Some other noteworthy achievements in 2021 include:

- re-opening of the YMCA Davenport shelter at 348 Davenport Rd. The renovations increase the space available to residents and include new amenities such as commercial and learning kitchens, a dining area, program room, offices and storage
- re-opening of the Red Door Family Shelter for families, the first condo development in Toronto to incorporate a shelter into a private residential development
- move of Fatima House for women to 1059 College Street. Announced on International Women's Day, the new shelter is newly-renovated, accessible and pet-friendly
- opening of new temporary shelters at 45 The Esplanade, 556 Sherbourne St., 76 Church St. and 20 Milner Business Court



In October, we also launched the 2021-2022 winter services plan to provide additional spaces and support during the cold winter months. The winter plan helped to enhance services by:

- adding new capacity in shelters and 24-hour respite sites – approximately 265 new spaces were added by the end of December 2021, with more opened in 2022
- activating 165 additional spaces at Warming Centres and additional street outreach during Extreme Cold Weather Alerts
- creating more than 300 additional supportive homes for phased occupancy throughout the winter

The new Red Door Family Shelter features family suites and a playroom for children.





101 Placer Crt. opened in December 2021 to provide new shelter capacity. Three murals were painted inside by well-known mural artist and community advocate Amir Akbari.

Strengthening Ties with the Community

We continue to work closely with neighbours in communities surrounding new shelter sites to provide information and address questions and concerns. Several locations also have Community Liaison Committees that meet regularly to work together to discuss and collectively problem solve community concerns.

In 2021, we completed a third party review of our community engagement process to identify current strengths and opportunities for future enhancements. The review highlighted that the existing community engagement process has achieved significant gains and identified 11 actions to strengthen community engagement. The 11 actions include developing a three-year capital infrastructure strategy, updating how community engagement processes support Indigenous services and creating communications materials to educate residents on the human rights-based approach to addressing homelessness. More information on these actions can be found on toronto.ca/welcomingshelters.

New Shelter Design Guidelines

In January 2021, we released new [Shelter Design and Technical Guidelines](#) that lay out best practices in the design of new permanent shelter sites. Developed through extensive consultation with a diverse group of stakeholders, including equity-deserving groups who are over-represented in the shelter system, the guidelines include a broad range of areas from design approaches and principles, through to functional components of the building, environmental design, and materials and finishes. The Guidelines are intended to assist those designing and building shelters to incorporate best practices and lessons learned through use of existing shelter facilities, so that new and renovated sites respond to evolving needs of those experiencing homelessness.



In alignment with the Shelter Design and Technical Guidelines, the new shelter at 4117 Lawrence Ave. E. is pet-friendly, accessible and features a commercial kitchen, dining area and laundry facilities.

Harm Reduction

Toronto has continued to see a rise in opioid overdoses across the city, which has also impacted those experiencing homelessness. This is largely due to the increasing toxicity of the unregulated drug supply, as well as other factors associated with the COVID-19 pandemic.

In 2021, we continued to expand our response within the shelter system to the drug toxicity crisis, working in partnership with Toronto Public Health (TPH), community health and harm reduction partners and people with lived experience of homelessness and substance use. Highlights include:

- releasing an updated [shelter harm reduction directive](#), along with the [Guidance Document for Harm Reduction in Shelter Programs: A 10-point Plan](#) and a [Harm Reduction Implementation Toolkit](#) developed with Toronto Public Health, to expand harm reduction standards across the shelter system
- working with TPH to open three additional Urgent Public Health Needs Sites (UPHNS) in shelter hotels, and receiving exemptions from Health Canada to open two more in 2022
- working with community partners to embed harm reduction staff in 23 priority locations, including six shelters, four 24-hour respites and 13 shelter hotels
- funding the Shelter Hotel Overdose Prevention Project (SHOPP), a peer-based witnessing and harm reduction support program, at 3 shelter hotels
- providing enhanced mental health case management supports at 12 shelter hotels through the M-DOT Hotel program
- establishing a mobile program to provide harm reduction support to clients required to self-isolate in shelters experiencing a COVID-19 outbreak
- creating a new position for a Harm Reduction Program Coordinator and establishing a Shelter Harm Reduction Implementation Work Group
- launching the Overdoses in Homelessness Services Settings [webpage](#) and making this data available for download on the City's [Open Data Portal](#)
- participating in the City of Toronto's Decriminalization Submission to Health Canada Work Group

Streets to Homes Outreach

Streets to Homes (S2H) and partner agencies operate 24/7 and 365 days per year. The team engages with people living outside, builds positive relationships, and creates individual plans for housing. As a result of this work, 263 individuals were successfully housed in 2021. The S2H team performed 26,950 site visits, engaged with individuals living outside 21,072 times, and provided assistance to individuals 7,406 times by offering:

- immediate access to safe, indoor spaces along with options towards permanent housing
- COVID-19 education, screening and referrals to provincial COVID-19 assessment centres
- assistance with accessing ID and a housing worker
- health care including mental health and harm reduction supports
- water and help accessing nearby meal programs or food banks

Securing Permanent Housing for Individuals Living in Encampments

The City has experienced an increase in visible encampments and has adapted its response throughout the pandemic. In 2021, a large encampment at Dufferin Grove Park became an effective model on how an enhanced housing first approach for encampments could greatly increase the uptake of permanent housing outcomes, through the development of meaningful relationships, along with increased and expedited access to permanent housing unit options. Through this initiative at Dufferin Grove Park, between August 11 and December 23, 2021, multi-disciplinary teams successfully supported 25 individuals to transition to permanent housing and successfully referred 88 people to shelter hotel spaces. Outcomes from this enhanced approach will continue to better inform the City of Toronto's ongoing response to support unhoused people in encampments.



SECTION 2

STRENGTHENING THE ORGANIZATION

Confronting Anti-Black Racism

Our Confronting Anti-Black Racism (CABR) team continues to build on its goal to support Black staff and clients by promoting equity within the division. Through continued work on the eight identified action items, we have made progress implementing work plans that engage and include staff from all sections toward applying an anti-Black racism (ABR) lens across the division. As we grow in applying a CABR lens across the division, other initiatives outside of the eight action items are emerging, including applying an ABR approach to the 2022 budget process, including CABR scoring indicators for agencies receiving grants, as well as internal support and accountability across the shelter portfolio. As a result of our continued work on confronting anti-Black initiatives we have:

- filled two dedicated positions (CABR lead and Business Analyst) to move forward the division's efforts to confront anti-Black racism
- implemented Intentional Reflections to promote a change in organizational culture by increasing safe spaces for conversations about race and encourage reflection/ authenticity
- piloted Anti-Oppressive Psychotherapy training that utilizes a trauma-informed model to focus on active allies and Black staff's mental well-being
- created consultation process so staff can apply a CABR lens to current and upcoming initiatives/projects/ policy/programs
- implemented a Pilot Mentorship Program for Black Staff (the first of its kind in the corporation) developed by the General Manager's Office and staff at Seaton House



Meeting in the Middle

On January 12, leadership from SSHA and members of the Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board (TICAB) met virtually for the third Meeting in the Middle Annual Gathering. Leaders committed to gather annually to reconnect, recommit to our partnership, and assess progress made in 2021 on implementing [Meeting in the Middle](#), an engagement strategy and action plan co-created to more meaningfully address Indigenous homelessness.

The gathering was opened and closed by Elder Larry Frost who offered a blessing honouring our unity, followed by a drum song by Steve Teekens, Chair of TICAB. Gord Tanner offered a land acknowledgment and opening remarks with Steve Teekens, and reflected on their meeting over the holidays where they exchanged the bundle of commitments as is customary every year.

The past year included collaboration on key strategic initiatives such as the Homelessness Solutions Service Plan, Street Needs Assessment, Coordinated Access, Indigenous allocation of the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (21% of benefits were received by Indigenous households over the course of the first two years, 2020-2022), implementation of the Indigenous funding stream, and recruitment of eight dedicated positions for Indigenous people.

Overall both groups felt that the relationship was strong and that Meeting in the Middle has been a leading example for other City Divisions and community partners. Key areas identified for improvement included: increasing employment opportunities for Indigenous people at SSHA; equitable funding for Indigenous organizations, and more co-creation of policy and programs.

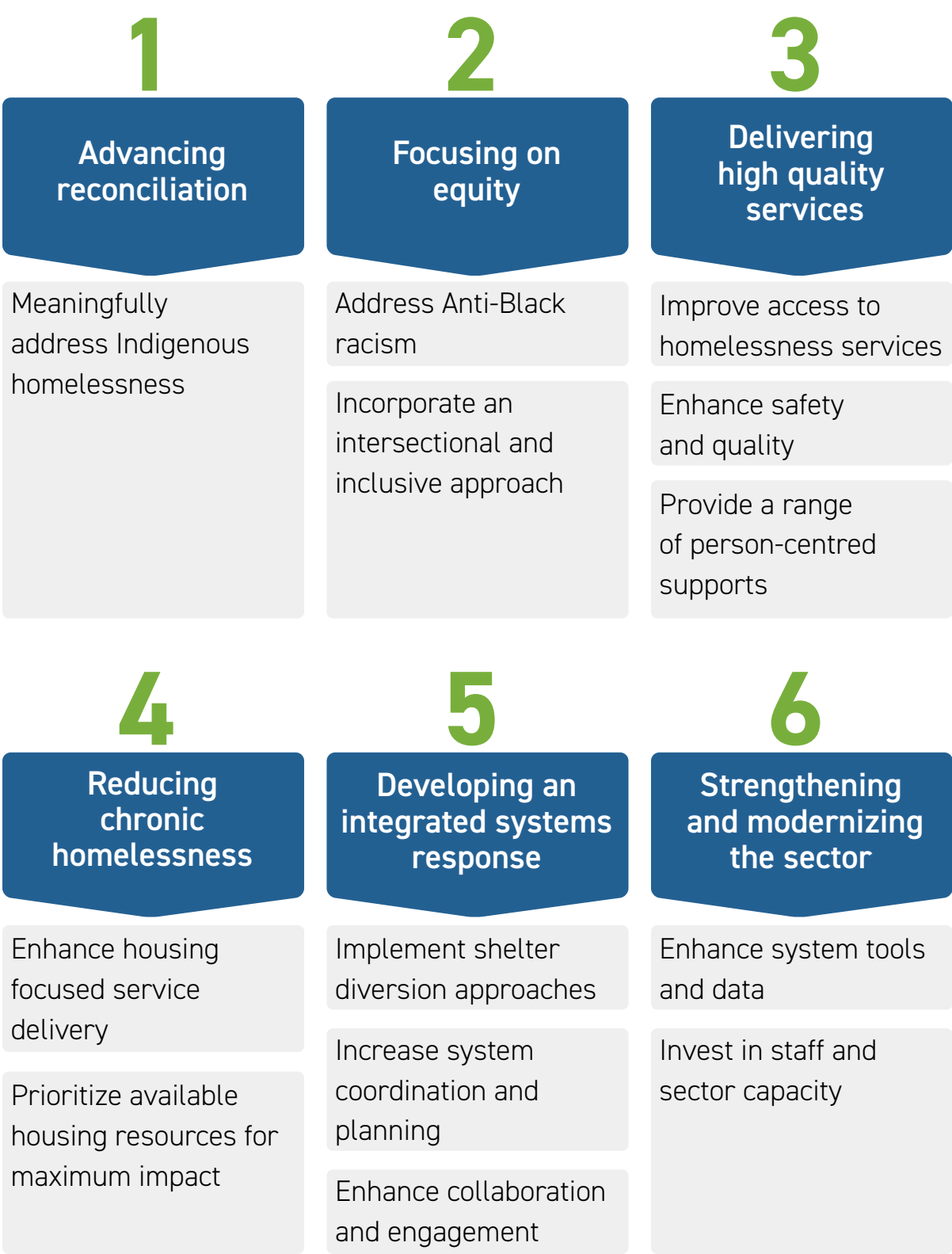
Street Needs Assessment and Homelessness Solutions Service Plan

The [Street Needs Assessment](#) (SNA) was conducted in April 2021 for the fifth time in Toronto, and despite the challenges of being implemented during the pandemic, was successfully completed thanks to the hard work of our partners and frontline staff in planning and delivering the initiative. The SNA is a needs assessment survey and point-in-time count of people experiencing homelessness in Toronto led by SSHA, in collaboration with community partners in the homelessness sector. The 2021 results provide critical data needed to understand the impact of the pandemic on homelessness, and to understand broader service needs of people experiencing homelessness in Toronto. The SNA also gives people experiencing homelessness a voice in what services would help them get housing and the supports they need to end their homelessness.

Based on the results of the SNA, as well as extensive engagement and feedback with frontline staff, service providers, sector partners and people with lived experience of homelessness, the [Homelessness Solutions Service Plan](#) identifies the implementation priorities to guide us and our partners in the homelessness service system in Toronto over the next three years. The plan supports our ongoing efforts to build and strengthen a responsive homelessness service delivery system which uses an integrated and person-centred approach to address homelessness. These priorities will advance the outcomes of ensuring people experiencing homelessness in Toronto have access to safe, high quality emergency shelter, and are provided housing-focused supports that ensure homelessness is rare, brief and nonrecurring.



Service Plan Implementation Priorities



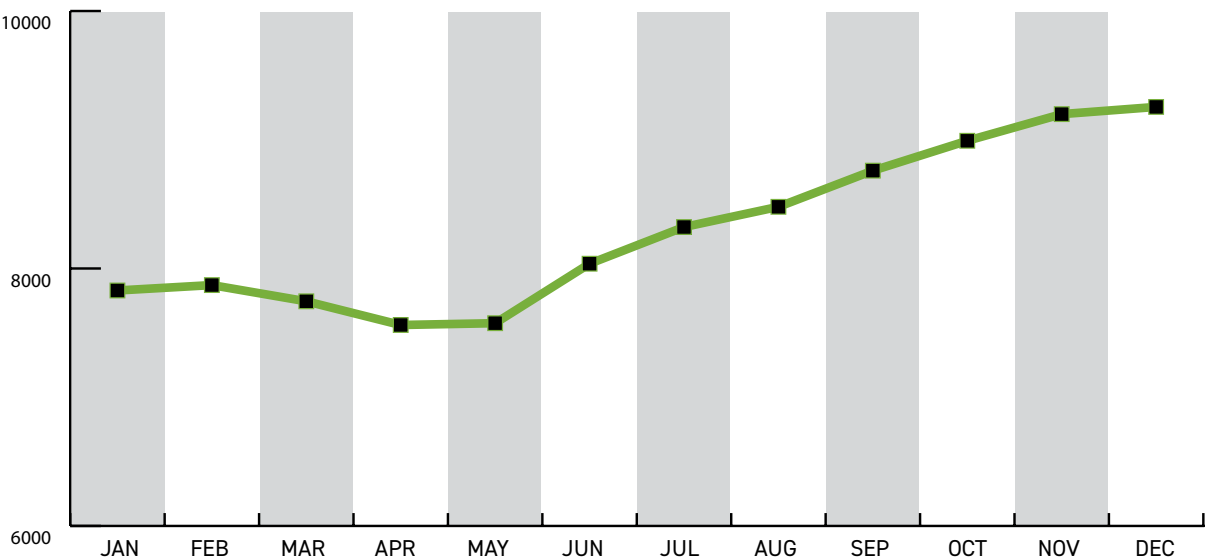
Information Technology

Shelter System Flow

In March 2021, we took a significant step in our commitment to open data and started sharing monthly data on the City's website about how people flow through Toronto's emergency shelter system. The [Shelter System Flow](#) dashboard includes detailed demographic data, as well as the number of people newly experiencing homelessness, those who have moved to permanent housing, and those experiencing chronic homelessness. It has been used throughout the year to support data-informed decision making around program design and implementation, and is a valuable tool available to all staff, community partners, and the public to inform our ongoing efforts to end chronic homelessness and work to ensure homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring.

Number of unique individuals actively experiencing homelessness in 2021

Defined by: Individuals who used the shelter system in the past three months and were not moved to permanent housing

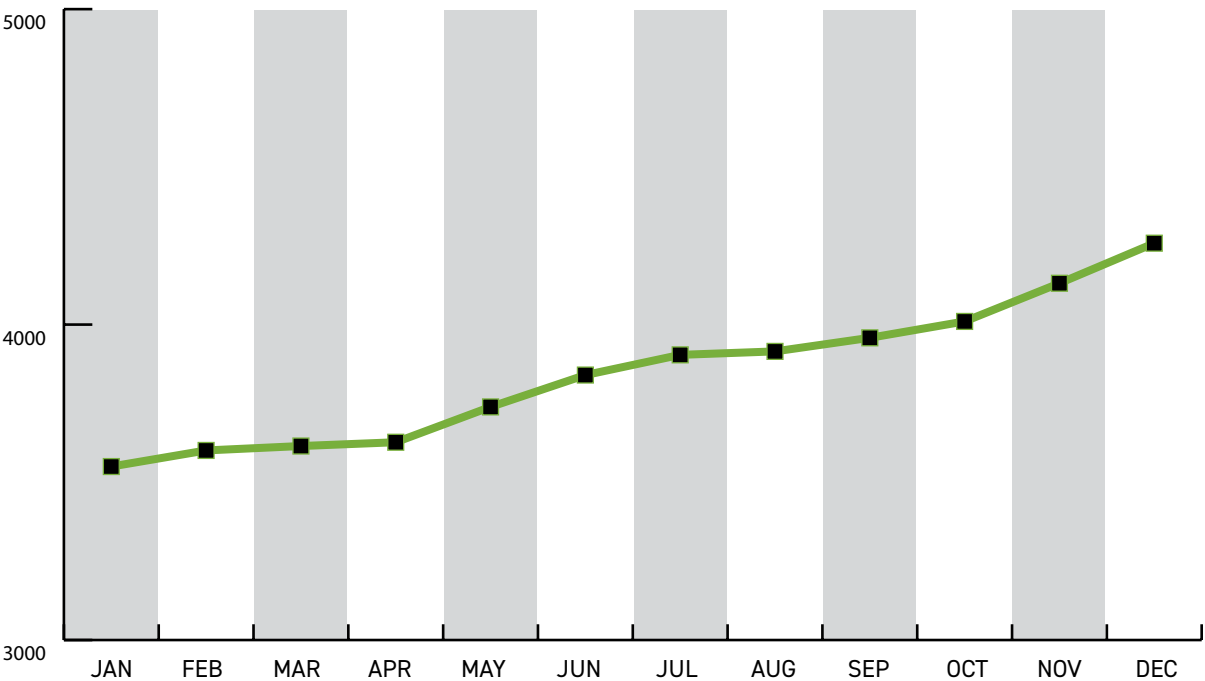


In 2021

, demand for shelter services remained high, with the number of people using the shelter system in the last three months growing to more than 9,400. The number of people chronically homeless also grew from more than 3,500 to more than 4,200.

Number of unique individuals experiencing chronic homelessness in 2021

Defined by: Individuals who recorded a minimum of 180 overnight stays over 365 days, or had recurrent overnight stays over three years with a cumulative duration of at least 546 nights



Shelter Management Information System

The Information Technology team made a wide range of enhancements to the Shelter Management Information System (SMIS) in 2021, including:

- enhancing various modules (e.g., Intake, Incident, end-of-service) to allow users to better support clients to find housing and collect client data in more accurate and efficient ways
- enhancing SMIS reports and reporting mechanisms to allow for more effective use of SMIS data by community partners, SSHA, the City's Open Data Portal, and Homeless Help
- adding a Streets Needs Assessment function to help facilitate the administration of the assessment
- completing numerous database and infrastructural upgrades to modernize the system

SECTION 3

PIVOT TO HOUSING

With demand for emergency shelter high in 2021, we continued our work to reduce chronic homelessness through a Housing First approach that focuses on helping people to find permanent housing as quickly as possible, with the support they need to live as independently as possible.

Counsellors and Case Managers at shelters and on the Streets to Homes community outreach team continued to work with those experiencing homelessness to develop permanent housing plans.



Staff who work on the Rapid Re-Housing Initiative and at Toronto Community Housing Corporation work together to help furnish apartments offered through our Rapid Re-Housing Initiative with donated furniture from the Furniture Bank. (photo taken prior to COVID-19).

Coordinated Access to Housing and Supports

We made additional steps towards the implementation of a Coordinated Access System, a best-practice, community-wide approach to connect people experiencing homelessness with housing and wrap-around supports through the use of data and a consistent approach to assessments, prioritization, matching and referrals.

Some of the highlights of this work in 2021 include:

- 522 individuals were matched with 491 supportive housing units, including 261 new homes that opened last year. This work was done using our **Priority Access to Housing and Supports (PATHS)** process, which helps identify and match individuals on the By-Name List of people experiencing homelessness, with the right type and intensity of housing with supports.
- In partnership with Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), the Furniture Bank and over 18 community agencies, we were able to quickly move 533 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness into 422 fully furnished TCHC units. This work was done through the **Rapid Re-Housing Initiative (RRHI)**, which also helps individuals with the move-in process and provides wrap-around supports.
- 612 newly-housed individuals were connected to **Follow-Up Supports and Voluntary Trusteeship** services that assist people exiting homelessness to maintain housing. Follow-up supports can include landlord relations, community orientation and referrals to other services that may help with daily living (e.g. cooking) or other services (e.g. mental health and addictions, medical, legal services). Voluntary Trusteeship assist individuals in acquiring money management skills.
- As of December 2021, more than 5,800 households were supported by our **Toronto Transitional Housing Allowance Program (TTHAP)**, which provides a fixed rate benefit to help eligible households pay rent. Of these households, more than 650 were new households added in 2021.

In 2021, more than **3,400 people** experiencing homelessness moved from the shelter system into permanent housing.

Modernizing the Centralized Waiting List

The lack of affordable housing and economic uncertainty continued to drive applications for [Rent-Geared-to-Income](#) (RGI) housing in Toronto, also known as subsidized housing. RGI helps to make rent more affordable by capping rent at 30% of a household's net family income.

Access to RGI units are available through the Centralized Waiting List, which is managed by the Access to Housing team. By the end of 2021, there were close to 79,000 households on the waiting list, representing more than 149,000 people.

To help more efficiently support administration of the program, and also provide a more convenient and secure way for applicants to apply for and manage their application, we launched an online application portal called [MyAccesstoHousingTO](#) in July 2021. Through the portal, applicants can submit documentation, update and view the status of their application, and receive notifications. Previously, the application process was paper based. Housing providers and community partners can also use MyAccesstoHousingTO to manage the offer process and assist applicants to apply for or make changes to their application.

By the end of December 2021, more than 46,000 applicants had signed up to use MyAccesstoHousingTO.

In 2021, we helped provide Rent-Geared-to-Income units to more than 2,800 households in Toronto, representing close to **4,800 people**.

In November 2021, we also began to test a new [choice-based housing offer process](#) with a small group of applicants near the top of the Centralized Waiting List. The choice-based process enables applicants to sign onto MyAccesstoHousingTO to view more detailed information about available buildings and units, and choose units of interest. Applicants can also sign up to receive email notifications when new information is posted.

This change helps improve the waiting list experience by helping applicants better understand their position on the Centralized Waiting List and make an informed decision about the types of housing units available. It is also expected to increase efficiency in the offer process and therefore reduce the length of time units are vacant.

Learning from the pilot would help to inform the full roll-out of the choice-based housing offer process to all applicants on the Centralized Waiting List in 2022.



Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing Now Online!

MyAccesstoHousingTO is your way to manage your RGI application.

toronto.ca/accesstohousing

Need help?
Watch the registration video on our website.

Posters, postcards and bookmarks were developed to help support the launch of MyAccesstoHousingTO and promote the tool.



Eviction Prevention Support

With the COVID-19 pandemic and related closures continuing to affect employment stability, many residents in Toronto faced financial hardships in 2021, including the inability to pay rent.

We made significant changes to the [Toronto Rent Bank](#) program to help low-income households who are behind on their rent or require a rental deposit to prevent homelessness during the pandemic. While the Rent Bank has historically provided loans, to mitigate the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, in April 2021, City Council approved piloting the program to provide grants that do not require re-payment, starting May 1, 2021. As part of the pilot, Council also approved pausing repayment on the balance of any loans given out as of April 1, 2020. To help support anticipated demand for the program, in 2021, we invested an additional \$3 million to base funding for the program.

In 2021, the Rent Bank program supported a total of 1,717 households, representing more than \$5 million in funding. From January 1 to April 30, 2021, 527 households received loans, and from May 1 to December 31, 2021, 1,190 households received grants.

We also continued to offer [EPIC \(Eviction Prevention in the Community\)](#), a program that assists vulnerable households facing imminent risk of eviction by offering intensive case management services to prevent the loss of housing and avert homelessness. People are referred to the program through support services and organizations that work with low-income and marginalized tenant households.

Even with the Provincial moratorium on evictions continuing through to June 2021, demand for eviction prevention services remained high in 2021 due to economic uncertainty caused by the pandemic and the subsequent higher than average rental arrears by many vulnerable tenants in Toronto. In 2021, EPIC assisted more than 800 individuals to remain housed.

In January 2021, the City opened 321 Dovercourt Rd., new modular housing units with supports for individuals experiencing homelessness.

Looking Forward

With the anticipation of COVID-19 restrictions lifting, 2022 promises to be a year of great transition as we continue to respond to the evolving situation while also looking to brighter days ahead. SSHA will also undergo organizational changes as sections within the division transition to the Housing Secretariat to centralize and better align housing-related services. We will also continue to work to strengthen our housing-focused approach and wrap-around health-related supports, in alignment with the [Homelessness Solutions Service Plan](#). A summary of this work can be found below.

COVID-19 Shelter Transition and Relocation Plan

To respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, we opened 27 temporary shelter sites to provide additional space for physical distancing and move people indoors from encampments. As we look to recovery, work will continue on a transition and relocation plan out of sites that considers the needs of service users and ensures adequate shelter capacity is maintained.

The timing of the transition will be based on the availability of the temporary sites, as well as any changes to public health guidance, ongoing assessment of shelter demand and availability of housing with supports. Details of the plan will evolve based on situational updates and data and will be posted on the City's website at toronto.ca/physicaldistancingshelters.

Consolidation of Housing-related Services under the Housing Secretariat

In 2022, the City will undergo a strategic shift in how housing and homelessness services are being delivered. In order to support City Council's priorities and improve upon service delivery, the Housing Secretariat will have consolidated responsibility as the City's housing lead, including accountability for social housing; market and affordable rental housing; supportive housing; and affordable home ownership. These changes are designed to

The shelter at 92 Peter Street opened in 2021 as part of COVID-19 response.



ensure that the City is better positioned to successfully deliver the [HousingTO Action Plan 2020-2030](#) and support SSHA's focus on the delivery of homelessness services. With these changes some of the functions currently within SSHA related to housing will be moving under the leadership of the Housing Secretariat. However, effective delivery of the housing and homelessness system will require continued close collaboration and partnership between SSHA and the Housing Secretariat.

Housing-focused Services

Over the past several years, we have been working closely with the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness and the Toronto Indigenous Community Advisory Board to implement an integrated, systems approach to addressing homelessness that is housing-focused. This includes implementing the core components of a Coordinated Access approach, which are now requirements of both federal and provincial homelessness funding. This work will continue in 2022 with the implementation of consistent prioritization approaches to housing, integration of the STARS Common Assessment Tool in our Shelter Management Information System (SMIS), and alignment of supportive housing opportunities to meet the needs of people experiencing homelessness in Toronto.

Homelessness Health Services Framework

COVID-19 has accelerated collaborative problem solving between the health and shelter systems and shown that partners in both systems have the ability to work together to develop quick, creative responses to meet need. The collaboration that has taken place during the pandemic has also highlighted existing areas for improvement in how people experiencing homelessness receive care within the health and shelter systems. We have been collaborating with health partners on an updated implementation of the Homelessness Health Services Framework, to ensure a coordinated and consistent approach to health services across the homelessness system and incorporate learning and partnerships that have expanded during the pandemic.

The objective of this approach is to ensure all people accessing shelter supports are part of a well-coordinated and integrated system of health and homelessness services – both within the shelter, and as they transition to permanent housing. Development of this coordinated and integrated service model will continue as a priority for 2022.



