

Streets to Homes



May 2008

Complex Relationships

“The trick in any great social project – from the global fight against AIDS to working to eradicate poverty in a single Canadian city – is to stop looking at the discrete elements and start trying to understand the complex relationships between them.”

- Getting to Maybe

Toronto Context

- Toronto is the fifth largest City in North America with 2.5 million residents, within a regional context of 7 million and is the 6th largest government in Canada
- Rental market characterized by high rents and low vacancy rates and significant income gap between monthly income and average rents (Income \$550; Avg Rent for Bachelor \$750)
- Dense urban core, large public spaces, considerable green space for a City of its size
- While some services have been devolved to the City, others remain with the Provincial or Federal orders of government

Overview: Current Streets to Homes Program

Project start

- February 2005

Context

- Focuses on people living outdoors.
- Other City Programs target prevention and emergency shelter.

Goals

- End street homelessness
- Community integration and independence

People housed

- Homeless people living outdoors
- Almost 90% remain housed
- More than 1,750 to date

Housing tenure

- Permanent housing

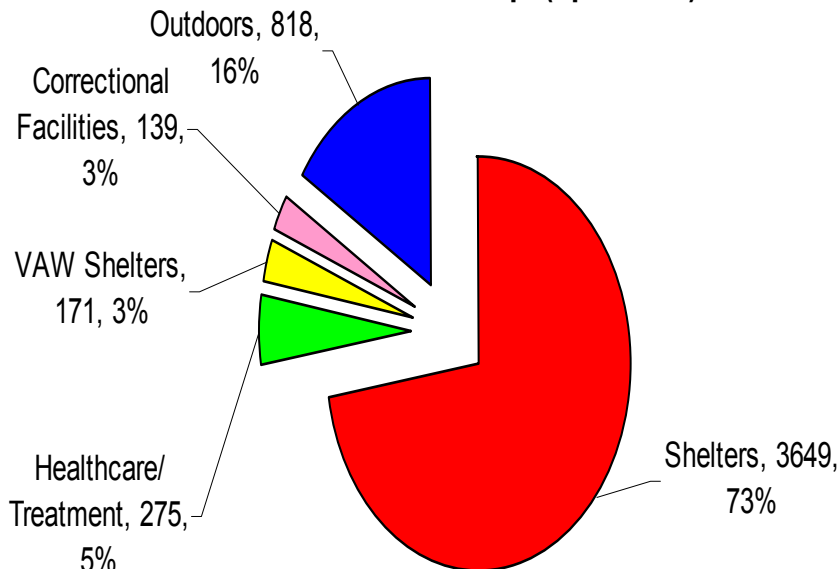
Partnerships

- More than 30 non-profit agencies across the entire City working on a common vision across all Streets to Homes program areas
- Other City Divisions working in tandem

Awards and Recognition

- Finalist 2007 World Habitat Awards
- Honourable Mention, Arthur Kroeger Award for Public Policy
- 4 PSQF Awards for Adherence to Standards of the National Quality Institute
- HRSDC and CMHC
- National Alliance to End Homelessness
- International Colloquy on Homelessness
- Assistance to more than 100 other jurisdictions

Toronto Homeless Pop. (April 2006)



Range of Services Available to Low-income and Homeless People

In addition to Streets to Homes there are:

65 Shelters

- 4,000 beds
- Range of programs

50 Drop ins (27 funded)

- Basic needs (food, etc.)
- Social networks, access to services
- Special programs

67 Housing Help & Eviction prevention projects

- Rent banks, mediation, etc.
- The best way to end homelessness is to stop people from becoming homeless in the first place

Community Economic Development & Employment

- Partner with United Way – Toronto Enterprise Fund – to create businesses that employ homeless people
- Job readiness, Job training

Affordable Housing

- Administer 91,000 social housing units
- Social Housing Connections (coordinated access system)
- New Affordable Housing Office targets 1,000 new affordable units per year
- Housing Allowance Program
- Hostels to Homes Program

For more info, see our Service Guide

<http://www.toronto.ca/housing/>

The Streets to Homes budget is \$8.7 M annually to fund all program areas. This is 1% of the Divisional budget.



Why Housing First?

Why “Continuums” are neither
continuous nor linear.

What we can learn from penguins.

Why Housing First?

- Homeless people want housing
- The best place to learn the skills necessary for housing stability is while in housing
- More cost effective to focus on permanent solutions than emergency measures
- Quality of life improves for people housed
- Separates housing (homelessness) issues from other life issues
- “Treatment first” is not needed to achieve stable, independent living
- Decreases demand and costs of other health, emergency and criminal justice services



Streets to Homes

What we do and how we do it

Streets to Homes: Mission

- We are committed to ending homelessness for people living outside. Streets to Homes provides leadership, focused initiatives, innovation and system coordination to help people find and keep housing.

Leadership...

Changing Perceptions

- Solution-focused in all that we do...identifying problems is one thing, solving them is another
- We cannot be satisfied with managing street homelessness – we are charged with the task of ending it
- Demonstrate that solutions are possible
- Be accountable
- Contribute to knowledge, understanding and implementation

Leadership...the Role of a Steering Committee

- Street Outreach Steering Committee comprised of over 30 community agencies, health care providers, business community, housing providers, and various City Divisions provides advice to the General Manager

Focused Initiatives...

- Invest available resources strategically
- Take on special projects after careful examination
- No investment or resource allocation based upon hunches or anecdotes

Streets to Homes Innovations: Current Program Areas

- Street outreach focused on housing
- Private sector landlord partners...most without subsidy
- Mobile Multi-Disciplinary Team
- Fred Victor Rapid Access Housing
- Post-incarceration
- Centralized follow-up supports
- Specialized housing supports
- Professionalizing outreach services
- Aboriginal specific street outreach city-wide
- New data system
- Employment supports
- Moving service
- Income supports
- Volunteers
- Partnership with Assessment and Referral Centre

Housing Focus of Street Outreach

- Shift the paradigm from “Can I help you?” to “Can I help you get housing?”
- Mandatory monthly meetings of frontline workers
- Common data elements reported
- “**Some** is not a number, **soon** is not a time.”

Three Requirements for Service

1. Must agree to pay direct to the landlord
2. Must agree to have follow-up supports
3. Must agree to complete an application to be on the centralized waiting list for subsidized housing

Housing Assessments

- **Income supports**
- **Who else is the client connected to / working with?**
- **Identification?**
- **Housing history?**
- **Shared accommodation?**
- **Housing Connections application?**
- **Substance use / Mental health supports?**
- **How to connect or reach client?**
- **Match to housing unit**
- **Furniture and household goods needed**

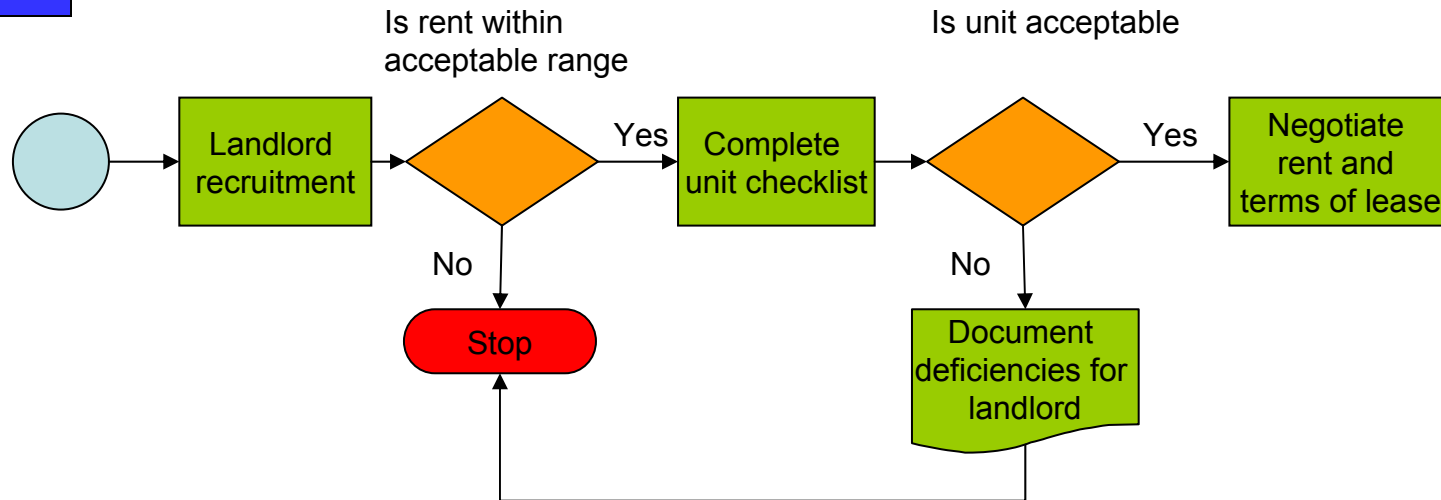
Income Supports

- Strong partnership with Social Assistance offices (OW and ODSP)
- Fast-tracked access
- Flexibility and discretion
- Access to Social Assistance database
- Housing workers in key OW and ODSP offices
- OW and ODSP worker half-day at S2H office

Private Sector Landlords

- Built landlord relationships using a business - not social or philanthropic – approach
- Housing homeless people makes good financial sense
- Focus on large property management firms initially
- Landlords get tenants with supports and direct payment of rents
- Landlords receive follow-up support as well
- Conduct due diligence to determine a good fit
- Private sector landlord partners report less damage, less issues, less demands on building superintendent, more reliable payment and greater duration of tenancy from our clients

Assessing landlord



Comprehensive assessment of units prior to placements. Lets landlord assess how serious we are and builds relationship.

Opens door for negotiations on rent and terms of lease that increase accessibility to units for clients

Fred Victor Rapid Access Project

- Intent is to provide immediate housing access for homeless individuals living outdoors with really complex needs
- 10 units
- Access to the program is controlled by street outreach provider
- Intensive case management for three months
- Stability before transition to permanent housing



Specialized Housing

- Negotiated a set number of vacancies per month from a number of alternative and supportive housing providers.
- Additional funding provided to the housing provider to allow for in-house follow-up supports for S2H clients.
- Access to social housing through three Community Housing Units so that S2H clients can have improved access to RGI housing.

Post-Incarceration Housing Program

- Two participating agencies:
Elizabeth Fry and John Howard
- Focus on housing at the
point of discharge or release

Mobile Multi-Disciplinary Team

- Collaboration between an outreach team, a hospital, an addiction and psychiatric institution and a multi-service community agency
- Team of specialists (nurse, concurrent disorders therapist, case manager, housing worker, two psychiatrists) who are a resource to outreach teams to better meet the needs of homeless individuals living outdoors with complex mental health and/or addiction issues
- Emphasis on stability then housing

Professionalizing Street Outreach Services

- Intensive investment in training for outreach workers
- Focus on core components for service excellence
- Most experienced on the street, not behind a desk
- In-house resources to assist with problem solving

Aboriginal Specific Outreach Services City Wide

- Aboriginal people are disproportionately represented in the homeless population
- Anishnawbe became a City-wide Aboriginal specific program in partnership with other outreach provider to improve the health and well being of Aboriginal people in spirit, mind, emotion and body by providing Traditional Healing within an intradisciplinary health care model



Keeping People Housed



Recovering from Street Homelessness

- Street homelessness is most often a traumatic experience
- Recovery is a personal process
- Need a holistic and supportive approach on a personal and systems level
- Relapse is part of recovery
- Housing is good medicine
- Home is where it starts

Focus on Keeping People Housed

- Invest in keeping people housed so they do not return to the street
- Three requirements for service:
 1. Must agree to pay direct to the landlord
 2. Must agree to have follow-up supports
 3. Must agree to complete an application to be on the centralized waiting list for subsidized housing
- Three pillars of service:
 1. Service user
 2. Landlord
 3. Community
- Assignment and monitoring of cases is centrally administered
- Follow-up model is consistent across all agencies
- Follow-up services are geographically based
- Monthly case conferences

Centralized Follow-up Supports

- 15 organizations providing housing follow-up to S2H clients
- Centralized through S2H
- Graduated step-down follow up model
- All organizations use the same model for consistency

Follow Up Supports

Range of Activities

- **Joint meetings must be arranged to transfer care from housing access workers to housing follow up workers**
- **Centralized management**
- **Individualized service planning and goal setting - contracting**
- **Supports are time limited – one year**
- **Landlord support and Mediation**
- **Monthly rent checks**
- **Linking clients with new communities**
- **Harm reduction strategies**
- **Eviction prevention and crisis intervention**
- **Exit Strategy, and re-housing if applicable**

Moving Service

- Purchased service from furniture bank
- Dedicated day for S2H client moves
- Addresses a practical problem for people moving into housing
- Ensures outreach vans are doing outreach and not drafted to help move belongings

Employment Follow-up Initiative

- **EFI a joint project of *S2H, Transition to Work Pilot Project (TWPP), Toronto Social Services***
- **EFI Objectives:**
 - ✓ Conduct psycho-vocational assessments for recently-housed S2H/OW clients
 - ✓ Develop employability plan for clients
 - ✓ Stream clients to employment supports
 - ✓ Enhance employment focus of S2H workers
- **EFI Status and Accomplishments:**
 - ✓ Excellent client/worker feedback; high attendance stats
 - ✓ Interdivisional service integration; worker orientation

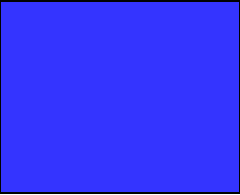
Volunteers

- Assist with community development and resident stability activities
- **NOT** involved with outreach or other aspects of the program requiring professional skills
- Have assisted in family reunification
- Were a key part of the Street Needs Assessment



Evidenced Based Planning

Finding your inner nerd and
embracing it

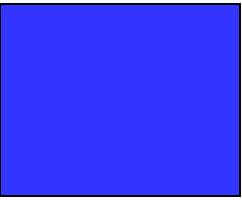


Evidenced-based Planning, Investment, Monitoring and Program Refinement

- Street Needs Assessment
- Post Occupancy Survey
- Gap Analysis
- Core Competency Training Survey
- Common case management software (Pirouette developed by Roxy Software)
- Monthly case conferences
- Anchors Project
- GIS Mapping
- GPS Interface with Outreach Services

Thoughts on Some Key Tools and Data Collection

- Just getting numbers is useless – neither people nor systems are “widgets”
- Street Needs Assessments/Counts:
 - Learn the extent of the issue
 - Use the results to inform policy and decision-making
 - Embrace the findings
- Post-occupancy survey:
 1. Use methods that are statistically valid
 2. Explore a range of issues
 3. Consider longitudinal changes
- Anchors – how does your homeless population change?



Results

Help People Access Housing

- 1,750+ people housed in just over 3 years
- Type of housing:
 - Private market: 63%
 - Social housing: 16%
 - Supportive housing: 15%
 - Transitional housing: 6%

“However beautiful the strategy, you should occasionally look at the results.” – Winston Churchill

Help People Sustain Housing...

- Some fluidity because of re-housing, but between 85-90% still housed on a consistent basis
- Currently 88.8% still housed
- Focus on recovery and integration

Happy with housing

Very Happy	Mostly Satisfied	Somewhat Unsatisfied	Very Unhappy
50%	37%	8%	5%

- What they liked the most
 - Size
 - Specific amenity such as a balcony or air conditioning
 - Privacy
 - The fact that they were off the street and had a roof over their head
 - Location

Housing changes lives

Improved a lot	Somewhat improved	Stayed the same	Gotten worse
61%	30%	7%	2%

- Most spoke about improved security and privacy, and overall improved mental outlook

Quality of life improves

	Improved	Stayed the Same	Gotten Worse
Health	70%	17%	13%
Mental Health	57%	31%	12%
Food Quality	63%	22%	15%
Sleeping	69%	18%	13%
Personal Safety	72%	22%	6%
Social Interaction	40%	35%	26%
	Increased	Stayed the Same	Decreased
Stress Level	16%	24%	60%
Food Eaten	65%	18%	17%

Less alcohol and drug use

	Increased	Stayed the Same	Decreased or Quit
Alcohol	10%	41%	49%
Drugs	8%	18%	73%

- 17% reported no drinking since being in housing
- 31% reported they had quit using drugs completely since being in housing

Housing Security

- 85% say they felt their housing is secure
- 39% say they thought about leaving their housing at least once since being housed
 - Most often immediately after moving in
 - Most often they stayed because their follow-up (after care) worker resolved the issue
- Those homeless 2+ years more likely to report thinking about leaving housing (51% vs. 28%)
 - Same for those with mental health issues (48% vs. 33%)
- 32% moved at least once since being housed
 - Most often moving from shared to independent units

“In the beginning I was thinking about leaving. It's hard to think about having a roof over your head. But not anymore.”

Housing satisfaction linked to choice in type of housing

- *Those who felt they had the greatest choice in type of housing were likely to report highest housing satisfaction*

	Housing Choice		
	Yes	Somewhat	No
Very happy	63%	42%	32%
Mostly satisfied	34%	26%	52%
Somewhat unsatisfied	2%	26%	4%
Very unhappy	0%	5%	12%

Living alone better than sharing

- Shared:
 - Those in shared accommodation were most likely to say they had no choice in the type of housing (45% vs. 19%)
 - Of the 32% who had moved at least once since being housed, almost one-third blamed roommate problems in shared accommodation
- Independent:
 - Those living alone more likely to be very happy or mostly satisfied than those sharing
 - Even when respondents said they had no choice in type of housing, 100% of those in independent units were very happy or mostly satisfied

Better use of health services

Up	
Family Doctors	32%
Psychiatrists	71%
Dentist	5%
Optometrist	143%
Specialists	233%
Down	
Clinics	- 28%
ER	- 40%
Hospital	- 25%

- Of those who used hospitals when homeless
 - 21% said they had been admitted at least once just to get off the streets
- Of those who used the ER when homeless
 - 40% had gone once in the past year, 35% went between 2 and 5 times, 25% (12% of all surveyed) went from at least once every two months to several times per week
- Of these frequent users
 - 20% had not been to the ER once since being housed; 80% reported a decrease in the frequency of visits

Less use of emergency services

911	- 35%
Ambulance	- 38%
Fire	- 71%
Police detox (“Drunk Tank”)	- 75%
Getting arrested	- 56%
Jail	- 68%
Court	- 58%
Probation	- 38%

- For those who still had interaction, frequency decreased
 - E.g. for those who had been arrested when homeless, 52% reported being arrested multiple times per year. Only 25% of people who had been arrested since being housed reported this had happened more than once.
- While 63% of those who used police detox when homeless reported using it more than twice a year (some several times per month), the maximum any individual reported being in police detox since being housed was twice.

Use of services

UP

Food bank	+55%
Education	+57%
Drug/ alcohol treatment	+50%
Mental health programs	+20%
Job training	+175%

Down

Drop-ins	-38%
Identification clinics	-44%
Out Of The Cold meals	-67%
Harm reduction services	-32%
Legal services	-32%
Health bus	-77%
Detox	-62%

Follow-up supports deemed most valuable

- Service users identified the following as the most valuable components of follow-up supports:
 1. Discussion/ Decision-making
 2. General support/ “Makes me feel better”
 3. Information/ Referrals
 4. Advocacy on their Behalf
 5. Help with Appointments

After housing, less panhandling

- 54% panhandled when homeless
 - 23% reported panhandling once housed
- Panhandling and drugs and alcohol
 - 66% of those who panhandled used drugs, compared to 32% of non-panhandlers
 - Once in housing, of those who stopped panhandling, 70% had also quit or decreased their alcohol use
 - Those who decreased drug use were still likely to panhandle
 - Those who **quit** drug use were less likely to panhandle

Housing makes the future look better

More positive	Not really changed	Gotten worse
82%	18%	<1%

- Higher self-esteem
- Starting to set goals
- Looking for volunteer positions
- Beginning to plan to go back to school or work



End-user perspectives on “housing first”

- Friendliness and persistence of outreach workers was key to accepting service
- Being housed – especially the first few months – is a difficult adjustment and many people think about leaving
- Despite all the difficulties and adjustments, people served are inclined to want to stay housed



What housing first means

- Better quality of life
- Substantially less alcohol and drug use
- Less use of emergency services
- More use of appropriate health services
- Less panhandling
- The need to rebuild social networks

Keys to Success

- Shift the paradigm from “Can I help you?” to “Can I help you get housing?”
- Work with a small group of people intensely rather than a large group peripherally, focusing on one person at a time
- “No blind referrals” – the best way to get the outcome wanted from other systems and service providers is to accompany the person you are serving
- Keep services focused on ending, not managing homelessness
- Evidenced-based planning
- Professionalize services
- Central administration

Solution-focused and Co-operative Culture

- Changed outreach services to focus on solutions.
- Street Outreach Steering Committee comprised of senior managers/executives of over 30 community agencies, health care providers, business community, housing providers, and various City Divisions to provide advice to the General Manager.
- Work to stop using terms like “hard to house” and “service resistant”. It is our job to find the right type of housing, the right type of service or the right way of presenting the options that will lead to the solution.
- Regular meetings with frontline and management staff of agencies to share ideas and get the best results for clients.



Create a Culture of Innovation

- Be reflective practitioners
- Reinvent a certain portion of your work on a regular basis
- Cycle people through different management portfolios and push people outside their comfort zones
- Read and discuss relevant books
- Bring in outside facilitators as necessary
- Find the edge of the arrow



Transference of the Streets to Homes Approach

- Scalable
- Replicable
- Cost-effective
- Not resource intensive in start-up
- Opportunities for partnerships
- Born in a Canadian Context
- Non-partisan – not a right wing, left wing or centrist approach, just good public policy
- Resonates with the public
- Pragmatic
- Award winning

How Can We Help?

- All of our materials, forms, surveys, etc are available to anyone for free
- Workshops and training – half-day to multi-day sessions can be provided on any and all of the Streets to Homes components
- Peer review
- Document co-development
- Shadow the team in action



What's Next for Streets to Homes

Expansion

- \$5 Million proposed expansion before Toronto City Council later this month to now serve all street involved people:
 - People who are homeless and living outdoors
 - People who are homeless and spending the night in shelters but choosing to hang out on the street during the day
 - People who are housed and panhandling
- Develop more partnerships with housing first programs in Canada



Contact us

www.toronto.ca/housing

- Iain De Jong, Manager, Streets to Homes, City of Toronto, 416-397-5142
idejong@toronto.ca