

## Community Safety Meeting: Report and Recommendations

### Somerset West Community Health Centre

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#### February 2020

On November 13th, 2019, Somerset West Community Health Centre (SWCHC) co-hosted a community safety meeting in partnership with City Councilors Catherine McKenney and Jeff Leiper and local Business Improvement Associations (BIAs) including Chinatown and Preston Street. The meeting was part of the ongoing work of the SWCHC Community Liaison Committee, which has been meeting for more than a year with a focus on building positive relationships with residential and business neighbours. It was also a response to feedback from the Chinatown and Preston Street BIAs who had written SWCHC about their concerns regarding the impact of the Consumption and Treatment Service (CTS)/ Supervised Consumption Site (SCS) on community safety.

To set the context for the discussion, there were presentations from the BIAs, Member of Provincial Parliament Joel Harden, the Ottawa Police Service, Ottawa Public Health and Crime Prevention Ottawa. The community safety meeting was open to the public. More than 80 residents, businesses, landlords and partners attended. The following is a summary of feedback along with recommendations for moving forward.

It's important to note that many of the short-term recommendations are already being actioned and that we are actively seeking resources and partnerships to advance the longer-term recommendations, which include increased community engagement and capacity building at the local level and significant advocacy on issues such as safe supply at the system level. We have submitted one funding application to the Ontario Trillium Foundation to advance this work and are strongly committed to finding additional resources to action the long-term recommendations identified.



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<p><b>WHAT WE HEARD FROM NEIGHBOURS</b></p>	<p>There were mixed reports about whether the level of neighbourhood safety has changed over time, with some people reporting minor changes and some people reporting significant changes. Some of the concerns raised included an increase in break-ins, vandalism, discarded needles, trespassing, drug dealing, indecent exposure, and increased levels of fear when walking at night. A number of participants expressed a sense of helplessness when faced with these issues and expressed not knowing what to do or who to call. There was also recognition that a small handful of people are causing problems, and that intensive support should be provided to those individuals.</p> <p>There was recognition that broader societal issues, including poverty, homelessness, inadequate mental health supports and the toxic drug supply, were the root cause of many of the safety issues coming up.</p> <p>There was a sense of neighbourhood pride and a recognition that there are many assets to build on including high levels of empathy and desire to participate in collaborative solutions. Participants expressed a desire to maintain the economic and cultural diversity of the neighbourhood and acknowledged the vital role of businesses related to neighbourhood health. There was recognition that everyone has a role to play with regards to solutions.</p>		
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p>	<p><b>STATUS UPDATE</b></p>	<p><b>NEXT STEPS</b></p>	<p><b>WHO IS RESPONSIBLE</b></p>
<p>Compile and circulate information about who to call for support locally</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Who to call list completed</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Keep list updated</li> <li>Circulate list to relevant parties</li> </ul>	<p>SWCHC</p>
<p>Foster and nurture relationships between neighbours and people who use drugs by holding meetings, events, community groups and/or round tables. Recognize that some people face more barriers than others and that we all have a role to play in building a healthy community.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Small grant secured from City of Ottawa to organize community clean-up and events this spring</li> <li>Funding application submitted to Ontario Trillium Foundation (OTF)- focuses on outreach and engagement, education, trust building and collaboration with stakeholders (businesses, residents, and people who use drugs)</li> </ul>	<p>Short-term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Engage stakeholders and organize spring events</li> <li>Evaluate initiatives</li> <li>If received, implement OTF project plan</li> </ul> <p>Long term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Seek resources for additional activities of this kind</li> </ul>	<p>SWCHC, BIAs, Community Associations</p>



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RECOMMENDATIONS	STATUS UPDATE	NEXT STEPS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE
<p>Build capacity of people who use drugs, recognizing that they have both a desire and a responsibility to be part of the community solutions</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing work on Somerset West’s peer program which provides people who use drugs with training in areas such as communication, conflict resolution and advocacy and which engages people who use drugs in activities like community clean-ups, snow shoveling for neighbours, community events and system level advocacy</li> <li>• Ongoing involvement of people who use drugs in community meetings to discuss and resolve neighbourhood concerns, such as discarded needles</li> <li>• DOPE project engages peer volunteers and provides extensive training</li> <li>• SWCHC harm reduction program employs significant number of people who use drugs</li> </ul>	<p>Short term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to engage, train and support people who use drugs and peer volunteers through various SWCHC harm reduction services</li> <li>• Continue to engage, train and support people who use drugs as members of the SWCHC staff team</li> <li>• If funded, OTF grant includes additional resources for capacity building with people who use drugs</li> </ul> <p>Long term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Further research to develop and expand peer programming</li> </ul>	



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<p><b>WHAT WE HEARD FROM BUSINESSES</b></p>	<p>A number of businesses expressed concerns including harassment, fear of safety of customers and staff, thefts, property damage, car break-ins, and finding needles. Despite the concerns identified, many businesses expressed support for the CTS and for people accessing its services. It was noted that there have been some recent changes to physical infrastructure at SWCHC that have led to improvements with loitering. It was recognized that there was an opportunity for businesses to show leadership, paired with the recognition that many local businesses and BIAs have limited resources to respond. It was also suggested that there are models in Ottawa and other municipalities where BIAs are playing a significant role and taking leadership. There were examples of the some of the ways that local businesses are already trying to respond. One business owner reported offering people a cup of coffee and making them feel welcome. This owner reported not having had any break-ins. Some businesses reported implementing buddy systems for opening and closing in order to maximize safety for staff. 'When I opened my shop, I signed up to be a part of the community'.</p>		
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p>	<p><b>STATUS UPDATE</b></p>	<p><b>NEXT STEPS</b></p>	<p><b>WHO IS RESPONSIBLE</b></p>
<p>Facilitate information sessions and develop resources to ensure that local businesses have up-to-date information about the systemic challenges being faced and resources to respond (i.e. opioids, housing, and social services).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Meetings with Chinatown and Preston BIAs have taken place to share this information</li> <li>• Outreach has been undertaken in Chinatown to initiate conversations with local businesses</li> <li>• OTF grant submitted- would increase SWCHC capacity to engage in this work</li> </ul>	<p>Short-term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Initiate regular meetings with BIAs</li> <li>• Circulate updates to businesses through BIA distribution list (see communication strategy)</li> <li>• Continue outreach to local businesses, within existing capacity</li> <li>• If funded, implement OTF program plan</li> </ul> <p>Long-term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Research on models and funding to expand this work</li> <li>• Explore possibility of collaboration with BIAs in other areas</li> </ul>	<p>SWCHC, BIAs</p>

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RECOMMENDATIONS	STATUS UPDATE	NEXT STEPS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE
Develop a 'five-year plan' responding to business concerns	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Recommendations from Safety meeting are aimed at addressing business and community concerns</li> </ul>	Short-Term <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Implement meeting recommendations and evaluate results</li> </ul> Long-term <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore possibility of developing a longer-term strategy</li> </ul>	SWCHC, BIAs
Compile information about what is working to share among businesses (for example, buddy system, offering coffee). Explore potential of BIA campaign such as "I Love my Neighbour".	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not started</li> </ul>	Short-term <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Organize meeting with local businesses to discuss what's working</li> <li>Research business responses in other communities to identify best practices and lessons learned</li> </ul>	BIAs (with support from provincial association of BIAs)
Ensure that communication with businesses is incorporated into the communication strategy (see communication)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>See outreach and meetings above</li> </ul>	Short-term <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Incorporate businesses into SWCHC communication plan</li> </ul>	SWCHC
Consider the role of local businesses related to advocating for systems level change	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Not started</li> </ul>	Short-term <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore whether businesses and BIAs wish to be engaged in existing SWCHC advocacy efforts</li> </ul>	SWCHC, BIAs

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<b>CONCERNS RE DISCARDED NEEDLES</b>		There was feedback regarding the prevalence of discarded needles in various areas in the community and the safety risks this poses, particularly in areas such as schools and parks. Some people expressed that they didn't know what to do or who to call when they found needles. School representative expressed that they needed information that they could share with parents and children. It was noted that needles were more frequently discarded when the CTS was closed.		
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>Status Update</b>	<b>Next Steps</b>	<b>Who is responsible</b>	
Expand Public Health Needle Hunters program which was reported to be useful and accessible	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Councilor has advocated for needle pick-ups throughout the winter and this has been approved</li> <li>• Regular needle hunting now underway</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Monitor needle collection numbers and advocate for additional pick-ups if needed</li> </ul>	Ottawa Public Health (OPH), Needle Hunters	
Continue the good work of SWCHC peer program related to community cleanup	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ongoing</li> </ul>	SWCHC	
Ensure that community members have the information they need to clean up needles safely (training, educational resources)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWCHC and OPH provide training in this area</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with schools and neighbourhood groups to identify opportunities to provide training</li> </ul>	SWCHC, OPH	
Organize regular community needle cleanups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• SWCHC does regular clean-ups in the vicinity of CTS and targeted clean-up as needed and as capacity allows</li> <li>• Meeting scheduled with local residents, City Councilor and OPH</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to track hot spots and advocate for needle hunting as needed</li> </ul>	OPH All	
Increase the number of community drop boxes in neighbourhood hot spots	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Request has gone to OPH for increased drop boxes, including one at the Somerset bridge</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to track hot spots and advocate for drop boxes in these locations</li> </ul>	OPH All	
Build on best practices from other municipalities (i.e. Winnipeg)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Ottawa Public Health programs are based on best practices</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to advocate for innovative solutions</li> </ul>	OPH	
Research and compile educational resources for schools and parent councils	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City Councilor has approached OPH for resources</li> <li>• SWCHC has offered to make presentations to school councils</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to advocate for resources</li> </ul>	City Councilor OPH	

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<p><b>SECURITY AND POLICING RESPONSES</b></p>	<p>There were mixed opinions related to security and policing responses, with some people calling for an increased police presence and others identifying the limits of the policing role and the potential to do further harm to those who are already deeply vulnerable (acknowledgement about the impact of criminalization). There was a desire for solutions/tools that do not perpetuate this vulnerability (i.e. soft interventions). People provided examples of interventions that do not involve police or have some police involvement (for example, model in the market where people walk the streets wearing vests and provide support or a model in Quebec where the municipality hired PWUD to work with other PWUD). It was noted that when police do respond, they need the right kinds of training (de-escalation, mental health).</p> <p>There were also a number of concerns related to reporting. When do you call the police? When do you call security? While people understood that the need for statistics to justify police response, there was a perception that reports did not always lead to meaningful police response. In addition, there were questions about how to report and the transition to online reporting. It was suggested that more clarity is needed about when reporting leads to an investigation. There was also some frustration related to reporting with the sense that the locations are already known.</p>		
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p>	<p><b>STATUS UPDATE</b></p>	<p><b>NEXT STEPS</b></p>	<p><b>WHO IS RESPONSIBLE?</b></p>
<p>Increase community (neighbourhood) policing</p> <p>Increase police foot patrol</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ottawa Police Services has announced that they will be launching a Neighbourhood Resource Team (NRT) in the Centretown/West Centretown community this fall.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consultation with community stakeholders to identify what is needed from the new model (January-September)</li> <li>Ensure that feedback from this report is shared during consultation process</li> <li>Launch of Neighbourhood Resource Teams in October</li> </ul>	<p>Ottawa Police Services (OPS)</p>
<p>Circulate information to community members and consider providing training about how to report, when to report and what to expect when you report</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Materials circulated with safety report</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore whether businesses and residents would like training or information sessions</li> </ul>	<p>City Counselor's Office</p>

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Promote interventions that are trauma informed and do not further marginalize people (for example, pair police interventions with social workers)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announcement re Launch of NRT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure strong community participation in consultation phase of NRT so that trauma-informed approaches are incorporated in model</li> </ul>	OPS
Ensure more and better training for police related to mental health and addictions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Announcement re Launch of NRT</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Important for the right officers to be selected to work in our neighbourhood as part of NRT model</li> </ul>	OPS
<b>COMMUNICATION</b>	Some participants expressed that they did not know about or participate in the community consultation prior to the establishment of the CTS. Many expressed that they want more regular communication that includes information about what's happening at the site, what the trends are in the neighbourhood, and information on the broader context of the opioid crisis and intersecting issues such as homelessness.		
RECOMMENDATIONS	STATUS UPDATE	NEXT STEPS	WHO IS RESPONSIBLE
Develop a communications strategy to enable people to understand the context and significant changes/updates that are relevant to the neighbourhood and grounded in systems level challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Community Liaison committee is in place and is a good reference group for this</li> <li>Some communication materials have already been developed (CTS brochure, myths and facts sheet, who to call)</li> <li>Email distribution list established from contacts shared at safety meeting</li> </ul>	<p>Short term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ensure that safety report is circulated widely- community associations, church groups, schools, use other SWCHC distribution lists</li> <li>Everyone Matters campaign in local neighbourhood</li> </ul> <p>Long term</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with CLC committee to develop more comprehensive and proactive communication plan</li> </ul>	SWCHC, CLC committee, local neighbours

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<p><b>CONSUMPTION AND TREATMENT SERVICE (CTS)</b></p>	<p>There was strong overall support for the Consumption and Treatment Service and a recognition of the important, life saving service it offers.</p> <p>Some people felt confused as to why there was a CTS site in our neighbourhood and why there needed to be so many sites in Ottawa.</p> <p>Some participants felt there has been an increase in drug use and drug dealing in the community since the CTS opened. Some expressed concern that the CTS brings business for drug dealers and that there are people coming from other neighbourhoods to use the site.</p> <p>Many people felt that the drug use in the community primarily occurs when the site is either full or not open (evenings and overnight) and therefore advocated for increased hours of service: “A 24 hour problem requires a 24 hour solution”.</p> <p>There was concern expressed that the site does not include safe inhalation, meaning those who smoke their drugs do not have a safe place to go. There was also concern that the model is too clinical (booths, time limits) which impacts accessibility for people who use drugs.</p> <p>There was feedback that the real issue is the toxic drug supply and that more needs to be done at a systems level to address safe supply.</p>		
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p>	<p><b>STATUS UPDATE</b></p>	<p><b>NEXT STEPS</b></p>	<p><b>WHO IS RESPONSIBLE</b></p>
<p>Ensure on-site security at all times and have staff outside of the building to supervise noise levels</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Security and Mobile Greeters are in place during operating hours- both positions have responsibility for inside and outside of the building</li> <li>• Mobile Greeter number has been shared with neighbours so that can reach out if issues arising</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Seek funding to continue and expand these roles</li> </ul>	<p>SWCHC</p>
<p>Increase the hours of the SWCHC CTS to 24 hours/day and 7 days/week</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have reflected community feedback in monthly reports to funder</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formal request to funder for 24/7 service</li> </ul>	<p>SWCHC</p>
<p>Seek funding and advocate for safer supply</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partnered with OPH on application for funding for safe supply project</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with other stakeholders on advocacy campaign</li> </ul>	<p>SWCHC</p>

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<p><b>ADVOCACY</b></p>	<p>There was a strong recognition that systems level problems were at the heart of many of the issues we were discussing and that advocacy and system level solutions were needed to get at the root causes. The following priorities were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Poverty and inadequate systems related to income</li> <li>● Lack of safe and affordable housing</li> <li>● Displacement related to rooming house fires and gentrification</li> <li>● Discrimination - 'landlords will not rent to me'</li> <li>● Toxic drug supply creating adverse reactions</li> <li>● Criminalization exacerbating the problem</li> </ul>		
<p><b>RECOMMENDATIONS</b></p>	<p><b>STATUS UPDATE</b></p>	<p><b>NEXT STEPS</b></p>	<p><b>WHO IS RESPONSIBLE</b></p>
<p>Develop a plan/strategy related to affordable housing, including development options and advocacy.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SWCHC advocacy committee is doing extensive work on affordable housing, including advocating for increased funding from all levels of government and a project focused on maintaining affordability and diversity in West Centretown in the face of unprecedented gentrification</li> <li>● City Councilor is actively pursuing this issue, including declaring a housing emergency</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue and build on affordable housing efforts</li> <li>● Engage broader cross-sector of the community in this work</li> </ul>	<p>SWCHC Advocacy Committee City Councilor All</p>
<p>Develop an advocacy strategy that includes the following advocacy priorities:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Income advocacy (Basic Income, Minimum Wage)</li> <li>● Safer Supply</li> <li>● Legalization of Drugs</li> <li>● Long-term provincial health reform</li> <li>● Social Infrastructure</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SWCHC is working with partners across the City on a social infrastructure campaign to advocate for increased funding for social services.</li> <li>● SWCHC is working with CHCs across the province to advocate for the social determinants of health and to advocate for decriminalization and safe supply</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Continue to work with partners on existing advocacy campaigns</li> <li>● Explore opportunities to broaden advocacy work.</li> </ul>	<p>SWCHC All Ottawa Public Health and Ottawa Police Services (Safe Supply)</p>
<p>Explore viability of a food stakeholders table to ensure coordination of emergency food responses</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● SWCHC received funding to undertake research on food models for West Centretown</li> <li>● City Councilors (McKenney and Leiper) have asked City staff to undertake research on best practices related to food security</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Explore how to integrate the goal of coordinated food response into research project</li> </ul>	<p>SWCHC City Councilors and City staff</p>