

Spring Gathering 2021 Report



St. James Town Spring Gathering
Community Conversations

life during the pandemic

Join us this Spring
and Summer for
some important
conversations online,
social connections,
games and prizes!



SWIPE FOR ALL DATES AND TOPICS
SJTSPRING@STJAMESTOWN.ORG
#SJTSPRINGGATHERING



Hosted by Health Access St. James Town in
partnership with the STJSPN



Authorship

This report was prepared by Health Access St. James Town (HASJT) for the St. James Town community, and the St. James Town Service Providers' Network (SJTSPN) in November 2021.

A number of writers, editors and notetakers contributed to this report. Acknowledgement to: Subrana Rahman (resident and volunteer) and Sehr Athar, Health Promotion and Systems Specialist (Sherbourne Health) for the compilation of this report, and Nicolle White (Community Ambassador) for write up of the executive summary. For a detailed list of planning committee members, including those who participated in the writing of the report, facilitation and note-taking during the conversations, please see Appendix A.

The Co-Chairs of Health Access St. James Town:

Nalini Pandalangat, Sherbourne Health

Ravi Subramaniam, The Neighbourhood Organization/ The Corner

For more information on Health Access St. James Town and the St. James Town Service Providers' Network please see Appendix B or visit: [St. James Town – A World Within A Block \(stjamestown.org\)](https://stjamestown.org).

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Executive Summary Spring Gathering Report 2021

Summary: Residents attended Four Community Conversations across 2 Months in 2021 to discuss *Social and Emotional Wellbeing during COVID-19* (Hosted May 6, and May 28), *Towards an Economically Thriving Community during COVID-19* (Hosted June 24), and *Towards a Greener and More Eco-friendly Neighbourhood* (Hosted July 8). These online Community Conversations took the place of the annual in-person Spring Gathering neighbourhood consultation. These conversations were hosted by Health Access St. James Town in partnership with the St. James Town Service Provider's Network.

Objective: Create a Healthy, Safe & Responsive, Economically Thriving, and Greener Community during COVID-19

Key Demographics: Seniors, Newcomers, New Mothers/Families, 2SLGBTQ+ Communities



**200+ Residents in Attendance
Across 4 Conversations**

Key Insights:

- Hardships including the Opioid Crisis and Food Insecurity increased in 2021.
- Social isolation and access to technology in order to overcome isolation are continued challenges.
- Cases of discrimination (felt particularly by the Asian community) have increased.
- Outreach and public awareness of existing programs is limited.
- Those that are aware of existing programs and services are eager for those programs to expand.

Solution Timeline: 3 Years (2022 - 2025)

Approach: Programs have begun this year already to address several of these insights. Approaches vary from providing education, open dialogue, services, supplies, and ongoing programming or training (i.e. workshops, financial support for professional certifications)



6 new programs started since July 2021

Spring Gathering Community Conversation Summary

**Community Conversation 1, May 6th, 2021:
Social and Emotional Wellbeing during COVID-19; Families, parents, caregivers and
seniors**

The Positives:

- Lockdown provided the opportunity to upskill where residents felt otherwise they wouldn't have been able to.
- They also felt they were more aware of nature within the city, and there is a distinct desire for more green space.
- They also felt stronger connections to family members

The Challenges:

- Isolation from neighbours.
- Anxiety around the safety of loved ones.
- Children missing out on social events (birthdays, holidays).
- Newcomers have difficulty asking for help.

Planning implications: (pg 7)

- Addressing Social Isolation
- Specific Supports for Seniors
- Supports for New Parents/New Mothers

Accomplished Since Conversation 1:

In 2021, The Corner began pursuing a youth - senior intergenerational program that is funded by the University Health Network. Residents have expressed an interest in expanding this program, and returning to in-person. (pg. 7)

**Community Conversation 2, May 27th, 2021:
Social and Emotional Wellbeing during COVID-19; food security and mental health, the
opioid crisis and the wellbeing of 2SLGBTQ+ adults**

The Positives:

- Residents were surprised by the information around the opioid crisis, and were thankful for the education provided.
- Residents described how they adapted to the food insecurity caused by inflation this year.
- Residents outside of the 2SLGBTQ+ community were eager to learn more about allyship, and its importance.

The Challenges:

- Residents sometimes feel unsafe in the community and in their buildings.
- Social isolation and trauma are root causes for addictions
- Food banks had long line-ups, and provided food that didn't align with cultural needs (halal, and spices)
- Residents who are part of the 2SLGBTQ+ community felt that the presentation aligned more strongly with the needs of allies than the actual community. They are seeking representation of their community in ambassador roles and targeted responsive programming for their needs.

Planning implications: (pg 11, 14 & 15)

- Increased dialogue around harm reduction and understanding of addictions
- Increased Access to Harm Reduction Kits
- Increased Access to Overdose Prevention
- Food Insecurity
- Inclusive & Safe Spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ communities in St. James Town
- Hiring of more 2SLGBTQ+ Ambassadors

Accomplished Since Conversation 2:

ASAAP, Supporting Our Youth program at Sherbourne Health, the 519, The Corner, and TNO hosted 3 online drop-in sessions for 2SLGBTQ+ Community Members, two members ended up joining the vaccine engagement efforts. (pg. 15)

**Community Conversation 3, June 24th, 2021:
Towards an Economically Thriving Community during COVID-19**

The Challenges:

- Small business owners experienced difficulty in transitioning to e-commerce where they had to compete with larger retailers
- Financial aid was difficult to navigate during the pandemic
- Residents struggled to sustain themselves and support family overseas
- Seniors worried they wouldn't be able to afford health expenses

Planning implications: (pg 18)

- Opportunities for small business owners, entrepreneurs and sole proprietors to connect and support one another
- Financial Education/Literacy for seniors

Accomplished Since Conversation 3:

The Catering Collective helped newcomers receive food handling certifications and supported the successful scale of business into local Farmer Markets, establishing a framework for local economic success. (pg. 19)

**Community Conversation 4, July 8th, 2021:
Towards a Greener and More Eco-friendly Neighbourhood**

The Challenges:

- Residents have noticed this year that numerous public spaces are under utilised, and could benefit from more greenery and benches. Many referenced Cabbagetown as a model.
- Sidewalks are cracked, causing residents to feel unsafe.
- During the summer, residents are hit hard by lack of AC, or malfunctioning AC in their buildings.
- Waste management is often not up to standards in buildings, increased convenience is desired.
- Residents want increased accessibility for alternative transport (bikes especially)

Planning implications: (pg 21-22)

- Increased Greenery and Added Common Areas

- Beat the Heat strategies
- Waste Diversion strategies
- Increasing access to biking

Accomplished Since Conversation 4:

Residents participated in repair workshops for electronics and bicycles hosted by The Corner @240 and Repair Café Toronto. Resulting in gainful employment and successful recycling of broken appliances / bikes. (pg. 22-23)

Conclusion

From the Spring Gathering insights, St. James Town and its Service Provider Network will strive to plan, implement and improve the community for residents over a 3-year period by expanding existing programs and creating new ones. The positive experiences, existing challenges, and suggestions from residents have been gathered across several topics including Health and Wellbeing, Local Economy, Greener Spaces, and Safety.

Spring Gathering Overview

Due to the pandemic, life moved online this year. As such, Spring Gathering 2021 was held online over four Zoom sessions throughout May, June, and July of 2021. We called these community conversations, “Life During COVID-19”, and focused on topics related to how COVID-19 has impacted the lives of community members in St. James Town. The topics for these conversations were chosen in light of the St. James Town Social Charter (See Appendix C). This is the 7th in a series of annual community consultations carried out to understand the service and program needs of the St. James Town community.

Three topics were discussed this year during the four community conversations: *Social and Emotional Wellbeing During the Pandemic*, *An Economically Skilled and Thriving Community during COVID-19*, and *Towards a Greener and more Eco-Friendly Neighbourhood*. The community conversations were planned and implemented by a very large team of dedicated residents and community organizations. For detailed breakdown of the planning committee, please see Appendix B.

Consultation Methodology

Each online community conversation held small group discussions via breakout rooms, where participants were asked questions about their experiences related to the main topic of the event (eg. *Social and Emotional Wellbeing*). Sometimes the breakout rooms were facilitated in different languages. There were facilitators and notetakers assigned to each breakout room to capture the feedback. The feedback was analysed and the main themes that emerged were shared to different stakeholders through September and October of 2021. These stakeholders identified opportunities, came up with planning implications and committed to some areas of action. Many of the [Spring Gathering feedback](#) from Spring Gathering 2019 have also been integrated into this report. The Spring Gathering findings also helped to inform the new Strategic Plan 2022-2025 for the St. James Town Service Providers’ Network.

For a detailed Discussion Guide for each community conversation, please see Appendix D.

Key Findings

Community Conversation 1, May 6th, 2021:

Social and Emotional Wellbeing during COVID-19; Families, parents, caregivers and seniors

The first Community Conversation was held on May 6th 2021 from 1:30 to 3:30 pm. More than 60 participants joined, which included families, parents, caregivers, children and seniors. To encourage participation, games and prizes were offered. The theme that was discussed was social and emotional wellbeing during COVID-19.



A promotional poster for a community conversation. At the top, a blue banner reads 'MAY 6 • 1:30 PM - 3:30 PM'. Below it, the title 'COMMUNITY CONVERSATION 1' is in blue, followed by the subtitle 'Social and Emotional Wellbeing during COVID-19: Families, parents, caregivers, children and seniors'. The central graphic features a woman in a grey shirt and pink pants holding a young girl in a pink dress. To their left, a speech bubble contains the text 'We're all in this together; what have we learned about supporting our mental health and wellbeing'. Below the illustration, the hashtag '#SJTSRINGGATHERING' is displayed. At the bottom, contact information is provided: 'ZOOM LINK FOR ALL SESSIONS: https://ca01web.zoom.us/j/69892710937', 'TO JOIN BY PHONE DIAL: 647-374-4685', and '& ENTER ID: 698 9271 0937 #'. Logos for 'St. James Town Community Corner' and 'SPN' are also present.

Life During the Pandemic - the positives

When discussing life during the pandemic, participants shared several positive aspects. Many spoke about how nature can be very therapeutic and or comforting and shared that they enjoyed going for walks and gardening. Some noted that while staying at home was difficult, they were able to spend more time with family members, thus reconnecting households that typically spend more time at work or school. Some felt comforted by technology because it allowed them the opportunity to work from home and connect with family members overseas. Others, particularly seniors, shared that

they surprised themselves by learning new skills, or taking up new hobbies during the pandemic. In fact, when we started the session, our MCs asked participants on zoom to identify themselves if they learned a new skill or hobby during the pandemic, and a majority of participants indicated that they did, demonstrating resilience.

“She never thought that she could write, but she actually wrote a whole book about her day-to-day life during the pandemic.”

“She was anxious when [the] pandemic started because her husband was working in the COVID ICU, so she started helping out in the community. She started a cooking for seniors’ initiative and found satisfaction in it. She also tried painting after 30 years and decorated her walls.”

“They exercised and found ways to use their body and move around. It helped them have a sense of control by using [their] body in [a] way that they wanted to.”

“She said she restarted her career after 8 years, but [sic.] doing a software testing program. She said the pandemic gave her enough time to practice and explore.”



Life During the Pandemic - the hardships

On the other hand, anxiety and fear was expressed by residents of the community because of the ripple effects post-pandemic and having loved ones in the hospital. Both seniors, parents with young children and new parents experienced isolation. Isolation can especially take a toll on seniors who live alone as it can manifest physically and worsen depression. Newcomers also shared that it was difficult to “ask for help” during the pandemic since some cultures look down on seeking aid from others.

Parents felt that their children were missing a great deal of social interaction as well. Parents with newborns were often confined to their homes, making it difficult to go outside. Milestones such as birthdays and important ritualized events that are typically done in large gatherings were difficult to celebrate.

As a way to cope with isolation, friends of new mothers shared that:

“She focused on her baby’s milestones such as introducing solids.”

“She had a baby in Jan of 2020 and soon after lockdown was announced., She hasn’t been out or seen friends the entire time and it’s making her feel sick. She said her child is 1 year old and hasn’t been out freely or even seen the world.”

“They were pregnant and had recently delivered [a] baby, so they were not interacting with people very much and did not have much to do. When they moved house[s] they were able to donate some things to the homeless.”

Following up from 2019

At the 2019 Spring Gathering, stakeholders brainstormed ideas for the development of an intergenerational program for seniors and youth in St. James Town, to address some of the social isolation that seniors are faced with, and to enhance skill-building for youth. In 2021, The Corner began pursuing a youth - senior intergenerational program that is funded by the University Health Network, to take on some of this work.

Planning Implications from Community Conversation 1:

1) Addressing Social Isolation

- Increased in-person programming ie. walking, biking, gardening, cooking
- Having a space to connect and discuss topics that may not even related to the purpose of the group ie. gardening group discussing vaccines

2) Specific Supports for Seniors

- Pop-up clinics in the community catered towards seniors (regular checkups, dental, optometry)
- Re-initiating programs that were successful in the past such as the Seniors’ Day Program.
- Developing new programs to address Anti-Asian racism and harassment: Never Walk Alone program so that members of the Asian Community can feel safe when leaving their homes
- Integrate the recommendations from the 2019 Spring Gathering for the Intergenerational Programming of seniors and youth

3) Supports for new parents/new mothers

- New mothers virtual circle to share tips, experiences, and have open discussions on mental health and postpartum depression
- Stroller walks: In person socially distanced with babies/stroller walks outdoors



Community Conversation 2, May 27th, 2021: Social and Emotional Wellbeing During COVID-19: food security and mental health, the opioid crisis and the wellbeing of 2SLGBTQ+ adults

The second Community Conversation was held online on May 27th 2021 from 5:30 to 7:30 pm. More than 40 participants joined this community conversations to share in discussions about *Social and Emotional Wellbeing*, with respect to overdose prevention, allyship with the 2SLGBTQ+ community, and food security efforts in St. James Town.

The topics for this community conversation were chosen as they have been identified as emerging community concerns from previous community needs assessments (eg. Spring Gathering consultations, annual Festival surveys, The Corner client feedback surveys).

For example, the Harm Reduction Working Group was established in 2019 under the umbrella of the SJTSPN to increase access to harm reduction supports in St. James Town. At the 2019 Spring Gathering, they engaged the community in a conversation on harm reduction and learned that at the time, while many residents were aware of the volume of needles in the neighbourhood, the concept of harm reduction was new for over half of the audience.

In addition, through previous needs assessments with the community, programming and services for LGBTQ+ community members was highlighted as a gap/need. This was echoed anecdotally from service providers, who have been interested in how to promote safe and inclusive spaces within The Corner and existing service providers' network in St. James Town. With respect to food insecurity, St. James Town needs assessments in the past have identified St. James Town as an urban food desert, without a lot of access to affordable healthy food options. With the onset of the pandemic, food insecurity came up as an urgent need.



A promotional poster for a community conversation. At the top, a dark blue banner contains the text 'MAY 27 • 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM' in white. Below this, the title 'COMMUNITY CONVERSATION 2' is in blue, followed by the subtitle 'Social and Emotional Wellbeing During COVID-19: food security and mental health, the opioid crisis, and the wellbeing of 2SLGBTQ adults' in a smaller blue font. The central graphic features a stylized illustration of a person with dark skin and curly hair, wearing a light-colored shirt, holding a potted plant. To the left of the person, the text 'Continue the conversation on emotional wellbeing with us!' is written in a pink, cursive-like font. Below the illustration, the hashtag '#SJTSRINGGATHERING' is displayed in orange. At the bottom, the Zoom link 'https://ca01web.zoom.us/j/69892710937' is provided, along with the phone dial-in number '647-374-4685' and the meeting ID '698 9271 0937'. The poster also includes the 'St. James Town Community Corner' logo on the bottom left and the 'SJTSPN' logo on the bottom right. Decorative elements include a small orange flower on the left and a blue and white striped circle on the right.

MAY 27 • 5:30 PM - 7:30 PM

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION 2

Social and Emotional Wellbeing During COVID-19:
food security and mental health, the opioid crisis, and
the wellbeing of 2SLGBTQ adults

Continue the
conversation on
emotional wellbeing
with us!

#SJTSRINGGATHERING

ZOOM LINK FOR ALL SESSIONS:
<https://ca01web.zoom.us/j/69892710937>

TO JOIN BY PHONE DIAL: 647-374-4685
& ENTER ID: 698 9271 0937 #

St. James Town
Community Corner

SJTSPN

Opioid Crisis and Overdose Prevention

The May 27th Community Conversation started off with a presentation on the severity of the opioid crisis from a local (city-based) perspective to a national one. The presentation showcased some of the root causes of the opioid, including the history of the medical community prescribing opiates for chronic pain, which have led to drug dependence over time. One participant shared:

“ It is surprising that a lot of it stems from chronic pain issues”

Participants also learned about how some drugs affect the brain, including the role of dopamine and how and why it makes people feel better. Another participant shared:

“Good to talk about dopamine and why people might use”

Social isolation and trauma were also presented as root causes of addictions, and this was discussed further in breakout groups. Participants shared thoughts and examples of how social isolation and lack of connections, along with depression, has worsened the opioid crisis, especially during the pandemic. They spoke about how the pandemic contributed to a lack of solutions and alternatives to tackle the issue:

“Connection is what helps, it’s the remedy – we should be looking out for each other. The social isolation is amplifying it more. “

“Volunteered at drug rehab center as a pastoral care person. Talked to someone who had to go through rehab and asked him why he kept coming back? He said what I really need is someone I can fall back on in case I’m living through a low point. He looks for connection. Community brings strength and resilience”

“Both times I encountered someone overdosing both times were someone who was very isolated.”

Some participants also raised concerns around the increase in people from outside the community selling drugs in their building stairwells, and lobbies, creating an overall sense of not feeling safe.

Following up from 2019

This is the second time that harm reduction has been a topic of discussion with the St. James Town community; the first being at the 2019 Spring Gathering. Learnings from both the 2019 and the 2021 events indicate that many felt that this topic could have

used more time in smaller groups and in the community. Recommendations around next steps and planning implications have been noted below.

Planning Implications from Community Conversation 2:

1) Addictions, Harm Reduction Dialogue

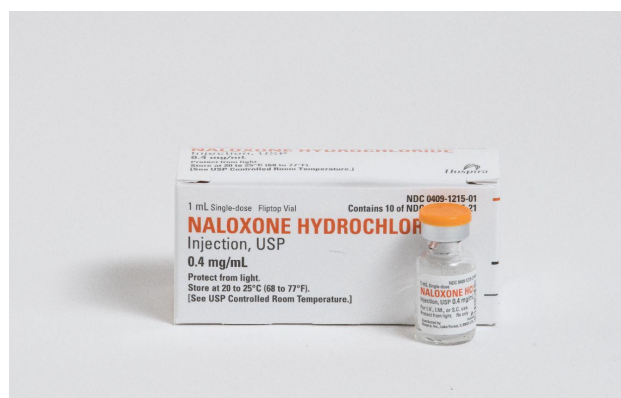
- *More stigma-reducing awareness about harm reduction* is needed as it relates to people who use drugs. This could be implemented through creative activities and spaces to reduce bias, judgement and stigma around substance use and drug dependence:
 - A social media campaign (have an agency with expertise in this topic take over The Corner instagram for example). Use social media to let people know about language around stem kits (vs. crack pipes) and other language considerations
 - Develop workshop series to educate and raise awareness on harm reduction principles, practices and approaches with the wider community
 - Host a Town Hall that provides deeper education about the root causes of addictions, drug dependence (eg. social isolation, trauma), and what we can do as a community to support people who use drugs

2) Increased Access to Harm Reduction kits

- When implementing the needle disposal bins in St. James Town, include follow up contact information for people in case they have further questions (eg. possibly The Corner). The Harm Reduction Working Group can look into disposal of all equipment (eg. Stem pipes as well)

3) Increased Access to Overdose Prevention

- Implement overdose prevention training with youth, adults and seniors by integrating it into programs and services throughout the SJTSPN, and The Corner



Food Insecurity

2020 presented a unique set of challenges in delivering services to communities. SJTSPN came together (virtually) to discuss what adaptations needed to be made to prevent disruptions in service as well share resources on best practice, referrals, and peer support. Community Engagement & Outreach and Health Access are two subcommittees of the SJTSPN that were able to identify specific needs and challenges brought on by the pandemic – one of them being food insecurity. Food insecurity has been a deeply-rooted issue in St James Town long before the onset of the pandemic. Like many systemic inequities, it has been exacerbated by the pandemic.

At the May 27th Community Conversation, residents from the St. James Town community shared that they have faced further food insecurity during the pandemic. For one, increase in food prices and food staples caused community members to switch from branded food items to non-branded or no name food products. Others mentioned that they have switched from shopping at traditional grocery stores to shopping at farmers markets and local stores that are walking distance.

However, upon accessing food banks, residents encountered long lines and congestion and did not feel like there were accommodations to address these barriers. They also shared that food banks don't have culturally sensitive food options (eg. Halal, or cultural-specific foods).

"I found it very difficult meeting basic needs from India. For example the rice or the spices – and the quality is not good – spices are old and stale."

Overall, in response to the pandemic, community members have changed their purchasing habits and have acknowledged the work done for food insecurity in their community.



"Volunteers work tirelessly for the food security in St. James Town. They are the backbone of [the] food/meal support program."

"This [food program] is a great neighborhood effort."

“Last year at the beginning of the pandemic, our whole family would do groceries together – almost 4 months now, I am alone doing the groceries; sanitizing them and then it changed after we got used to it. I feel that now it is going back to normal.”

The following is an overview of 6 collaborative food security initiatives undertaken by the SJTSPN over the course of 2020, some of which continue into 2021. These initiatives were shared at this Community Conversation.

Program	Partners
Food Bank Program	The New Common, Daily Bread, Our Lady of Lourdes, Health Access/The Corner, Dixon Hall, Central Neighbourhood House, Sherbourne Health
Prepared Meal Program	Sherbourne Health, Hospice Toronto, Progress Place, St. James Town Catering Collective, Health Access/The Corner, The New Common
Monthly Grocery Baskets	Health Access/The Corner, Community Response to Extreme Weather, The Neighbourhood Organization, Medallion Corporation
Fresh Food Items:	Evergreen, Health Access/The Corner
Balcony Gardening Training Session	The Neighbourhood Organization, City of Toronto, Health Access/The Corner
Grocery Gift Cards	Health Access/The Corner, WoodGreen

Comment from the Community Dietitian, at Sherbourne Health:

“Even in the face of a global pandemic, food still is able to bring people together. I am in awe of the hard work of the The Corner staff, the Catering Collective, and the volunteers for all their hard work during the onset of the pandemic. Everyone did whatever possible to mitigate hunger in the St. James Town community. While we have a long way to go, it’s amazing to see the dedication and creative ideas that came out of the pandemic.”

Planning Implications from Community Conversation 2 (continued):

4) Food Insecurity

- Continue food hamper and hot meal programs as they have been a huge help in the community so far so continuing this
- Promote farmer's markets for fresh food and produce
- Support the informal market vendors in the grassy space beside Rose Avenue Public School
- Introducing culturally diverse and sensitive options within food banks programming (ie. halal foods/meats)
- Work with residents to implement an indoor gardening group to address food insecurity in some households



On Developing Allyship with 2SLGBTQ+ Communities

At this Community Conversation, partners from the 519 presented a video on allyship and privilege, as well as talked about some ways people could be allies to and with Trans and Queer community members. People broke up into breakout groups to discuss their ideas about the videos, and brainstormed how to build allyship. From the discussions it was found that community members learned new information and were introduced to new terms such as privilege and allyship, showing the importance of these topics. At the same time, for community members from 2SLGBTQ+ communities, they shared that these terms were not new for them, and suggested that for future conversations to be mindful of target audience.

Following up from Spring Gathering 2019

Since 2019, a group of service providers working with 2SLGBTQ+ communities in the Downtown East have come together to network and plan for programming in St. James Town. The service providers include Alliance for South Asian Aids Prevention, Supporting Our Youth program at Sherbourne Health, the 519, The Corner, and The Neighbourhood Organization. They worked together to implement an online drop in group for 2SLGBTQ+ community members. This ran for 3 sessions in 2020. This group helped developed some volunteer capacity in St. James Town. Further, SOY/Sherbourne recruited two St. James Town community members with lived experience to be part of the Vaccine engagement efforts.

Planning Implications from Community Conversation 2 (continued):

5) Inclusive & Safe Spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ communities in St. James Town

- Implementing art-based programs for youth and 2SLGBTQ+ to increase engagement
- 2SLGBTQ+ led advisory/working to speak on issues such as community safety and identify gaps in services and programs faced by the community, and be part of solutions and actions to address these gaps
- Developing a program for newcomers of the same background

6) Hiring of more 2SLGBTQ+ Ambassadors

- Through the Downtown East Vaccine Engagement group, Sherbourne Health was able to hire 2 Vaccine Ambassadors from the LGBTQ+ community in St. James Town to develop programming and activities that promote vaccine uptake in the community.

Community Conversation 3, June 24th, 2021: Towards an Economically Thriving Community during COVID-19

The third Community Conversation was held online on June 24th 2021 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm and was focused on economic security during the pandemic. There was a panel presentation held by four community members regarding their career changes and changes they have had to make to their small businesses due to the pandemic. This conversation was also an opportunity to introduce the employment agencies, and employment-related programs and services that are available to residents in St. James Town.

JUNE 24 • 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION 3:
Towards an Economically Thriving Community during COVID-19

Come talk about self employment, career changes and advocating on behalf of your hood!

#SJTSRINGGATHERING

TO JOIN BY PHONE DIAL: 647-374-4685
& ENTER ID: 698 9271 0937 #

ZOOM LINK FOR ALL SESSIONS:
<https://ca01web.zoom.us/j/69892710937>

Working for Oneself During the Pandemic

It was learned through the panel presentations and small group discussions, that people with small businesses were heavily impacted by the pandemic where many struggled to transition to online marketing, lost clients or were unable to continue with their business. Home-based (product and service) businesses and sole proprietors were especially hard hit. They were also unable to participate in outdoor events, showcases and market booths.

All four panelists spoke about how the pandemic impacted their mental health negatively, whether that was their ability to focus, ability to stay positive and not get depressed, or their ability to reduce social isolation.

Although financial assistance was available, business owners found that it was very limiting and not enough to carry them through the pandemic. Others stated that they did not receive any government assistance and found the application process difficult. When discussing entrepreneurship goals and aspirations with community members during the small group discussions, many shared that they had aspirations of creating or furthering their own small business however several factors held them back such as loss of clients, not knowing enough about social media marketing, and competing with large e-commerce platforms.

Financial Life During the Pandemic

Various participants shared that they faced financial hardship. Some families were placed in difficult positions to provide for their own families and their families back home in other countries. Recent graduates were unable to find employment and either went back to school or chose to work instead.

“Being in school was a financial strain to begin with...”

Once again community members struggled with asking for help, especially those from the South Asian community, where accessing food from food banks and vouchers are not considered to be culturally appropriate. Additionally, it was found that the food offered at the food banks were not culturally inclusive as members found that there were no halal options available. Others shared that they were not aware of the financial support available to them such as the Canadian Emergency Response Benefit (CERB).

“people in the community struggled a lot; food vouchers were helpful to them; some people are shy and don’t want to ask help.”

Along with a lack of job opportunities, those with international credentials faced increased barriers to employment. Despite this, community members looked to volunteer instead and were eager to know about the new programs being held in the St. James Town community.

“For many years I was only a homemaker so I would like to get a non-technical job training. I am requesting the St. Jamestown Community Corner team to organize such sessions. It would be helpful for me to start my career. “

When it comes to financial security for the future, some older participants (seniors) worry that they will not be able to pay for health expenses that are not covered by insurance. Furthermore, seniors faced barriers in accessing technology and could have benefitted from access to computers, iPads and tablets. This would allow them to participate in online programming safely and reduce feelings of isolation.

They also worry for their children’s financial security. One participant shared the following:

“I also worry if my children can not find a job or can't afford buying their house. Or they can't manage their daily lives when they have not enough money.”

Planning Implications from Community Conversation 3:

1) Opportunities for small business owners, entrepreneurs and sole proprietors to connect and support one another

- Implementing Coffee and Connect/ Monthly Meet N’ Greet events for small business owners to connect with each other, network with business professionals, access coaches and mentors and receive workshops on a monthly basis
- Develop a St. James Town Community Database of residents’ skills, trades and services to increase visibility and skills and service-exchanges. Currently an

Ambassador in St. James Town is working on this; the goal is to have residents be able to connect to one another through the Trusted Space app.

- Implement regular meet n' greets and networking opportunities for career and employment development for newcomers
- Create opportunities for seniors to turn skills (eg. sewing, knitting) into income
- Increase resources for the Income Generation Subcommittee at the SJTSPN to incorporate some of these actions into the portfolio

2) Financial Education/Literacy for seniors

- Informing members of the community about financial resources that are available to them (ie. CERB, TFSA)
- Assistance with financial support and applications



Following up from 2019

At the 2019 Spring Gathering, residents provided feedback and input on the development of social enterprises in St. James Town, with a special focus on *Flavours from Our Neighbours- the St. James Town Catering Collective*. While the pandemic brought on a lot of hardship and difficult experiences, it also became almost like a launching pad for the Catering Collective. They were instrumental in offering 11,198 meals to those experiencing food insecurity between March 2020 to March 2021, and have incorporated new newcomer members to their group.



With the help of the Manager, Partnership, Community and Stakeholder Engagement, at The Corner, the Catering Collective was able to implement a variety of income generation pilots as COVID-19 restrictions began to lift. For example, they were able to test out diverse lunch food menu items and options, as recommended by the community in 2019, and are now offering a daily lunch meal program (Monday-Friday) at The Corner for \$8 per serving. The Collective was also able to participate in the Cabbagetown Market selling not only ready to eat items, but also take-home entrées and take-out style dinners for two.

Finally, as recommended in the 2019 Spring Gathering, the Catering Collective has since worked with The Corner's Communications team to have a more consistent social media presence, launch its Instagram account, and develop a new brochure with new pricing which is being used in outreach to promote the Catering Collective. This social enterprise and its successes serve as a template for future social enterprise development in St. James Town.



Community Conversation 4, July 8th, 2021: Towards a Greener and More Eco-friendly Neighbourhood

The fourth and final online conversation was held on July 8th 2021 from 1:00 to 3:00 pm, *Towards a Greener and more Eco-Friendly Neighbourhood*. Topics such as waste diversion, green spaces and developing eco-friendly strategies were discussed.

JULY 8 • 1:00 PM - 3:00 PM

COMMUNITY CONVERSATION 4 Towards a Greener and Eco-friendly St. James Town Neighbourhood

Let's strategize on
waste diversion,
greener spaces, and
how we can re-use,
reduce and repair
better!



#SJTSRINGGATHERING

ZOOM LINK FOR ALL SESSIONS:
<https://ca01web.zoom.us/j/69892710937>

TO JOIN BY PHONE DIAL: 647-374-4685
& ENTER ID: 698 9271 0937 #



Safety and Greener Spaces

Residents identified several streets and pathways that have cracked sidewalks thus causing residents to feel unsafe when walking on them. Residents also noticed that there are unused spaces within the community that could be replaced with more greenery, such as trees and flowers, or public seating. Many residents referenced the Cabbagetown Neighbourhood as a model to follow with respect to flowers, trees and green spaces throughout Parliament Street. There were suggestions for benches to be established along with covered areas that should be strategically placed such that residents, particularly seniors, can

seek shade during warmer weather.

Residents also discussed impacts from climate change. During the hot summer months, there is great concern for buildings with malfunctioning or no air conditioning system installed, impacting the most vulnerable populations. Waste management is also a concern for residents since only two chutes are available in several high-rise buildings and often build up in parking lot areas over time. One resident stated the following:

"The individual high rise buildings create barriers to waste management, because even if individuals want to separate waste properly, their building will not do it."

Residents are also unaware of waste management strategies and feel that there is a lack of knowledge in this area

Developing more eco-friendly strategies

To develop a more eco-friendly neighbourhood, residents talked a lot about biking, and how they would like to see more bike paths within the neighbourhood and encourage their children to use bikes as well. However, bike theft, lack of bike parking, and fear of traffic prevents members of the community from biking more often.

“One of the challenges are not having a common place for everyone to join in group gardening. And not knowing about the resources that are provided for the community. Having [a] common place to work on [in the] garden would encourage youth and children to spend time with friends and families.”

Planning Implications from Community Conversation 4:

1) Increased Greenery and Added Common Areas

- Engage more with schools for gardening and gardening projects
- Plant more greenery (ie. trees, flowers) similar to what has been done on “Howard Street” with green canopies
- Implementing more benches and seats in the neighbourhood (especially in shaded areas)

2) Beat the Heat

- Promote splash pads in the neighbourhood (Wellesley Park, Winchester Park/Ontario Street, Riverdale Park West)
- Set up cooling centers/rooms in some of the buildings that do not have AC
 - i) Build on the SJTSPN advocacy to have a cooling centre designated at Wellesley Community Center (WCC)



3) Waste Diversion

- Strategize, educate and implement campaigns to inform residents on how to dispose of their items (ie. residents do not know “what goes where”)
- Developing posters on bin separation in multiple languages
- Offer black and green bags to tenants to encourage separation at home
- Reuse or recycle laundry detergent containers
- Develop a compost pit with different buildings and encourage freezing compost
- Work with landlords and property managers to support these initiatives

4) Biking

- Introducing a bike rental for kids to bike to school
- Offering bicycle lessons and training on road safety and rules
- Women’s bicycle repair training taught by female instructors
- Hold bike events with giveaways/prizes to encourage biking



Following up from 2019

In the 2019 Spring Gathering, residents were able to provide detailed feedback about the Repair and Reuse Hub that was launching in the heart of St. James Town. In 2019, we learned that most of the residents wanted to be able to repair “electronics” and “appliances” as well as have additional skills-based workshops and classes.

Since then, The Corner @240 has contributed greatly to both skills-building/income as well as waste diversion in St. James Town. They have partnered with the Repair Cafe Toronto to host many Repair Cafes for residents across the City, and employed over 5 local community members as “fixers” who have fixed over 2500 items for community members. They have also

hosted “Earn a Laptop” and “Earn a Bike” programs where residents learn how to fix laptops and tune up bicycles. A Bike club has started, and fixers tune up people’s bikes for free.



With respect to skill-based classes, sewing, knitting and crocheting have been added to the program schedule, as well as workshops such as Clothing Transformation- transforming clothes to reduce waste, and Design and Make your Own Recycled Material as well.

Lessons Learned for future online conversations

Planning committee member debriefs and feedback surveys from these community conversations gave us a lot of insight into planning online forums for the future.

- **Collaboration with residents:** Residents on the planning committee, as MC's, breakout room facilitators continues to be an effective bottom up strategy for community engagement
- **Zoom Tech:** Having organizers with established zoom tech point people is important in order to trouble shoot and have breakout rooms
- **Zoom education and training:** Consider longer time for tutorials at the onset of each session so that participants are more comfortable using zoom
- **Interpretation:** It's important to have an interpretation plan for online forums, and breakout groups specifically. Having language specific breakout groups and facilitation provided by community members is important.
- **Accessibility:** In order to ensure accessibility, there should be multiple ways for participants to join online forums, which includes phone-based options, or a hybrid model where they can join a community program space in person with other community members and watch zoom on a projector screen
- **Safe spaces:** It is important for the organizers to establish where the community conversation is meant to raise awareness and provide education, or provide a space for people with lived experience to share their experiences and concerns. If it is the latter, then it is very important to establish those objectives from the beginning so that safe spaces are created for those with lived experience. For example, with the discussion on overdose prevention, there was some stigmatizing language in breakout rooms being used and not enough time for facilitators to address this. It became very clear that promoting a deeper understanding of the root causes of addictions, and promoting harm reduction as an approach to living/working with people who use drugs is a priority for St. James Town.

Cross-Cutting and Emerging Themes

Impacts of the Pandemic upon our Mental Health and Wellbeing



Poorer mental health was experienced by all age groups. In particular, new mothers and seniors were susceptible to depression due to extreme isolation and lack of interaction with others. Mothers also experienced anxiety as they were worried about their children's development during the pandemic and what the future would hold post-pandemic. Furthermore, financial strain and food insecurity caused stress and burnout from encountering long lines and providing for families back home in addition to their own.

Despite this, members of the community have taken steps to improve their mental health in a positive manner. Many shared that they were able to discover and learn new hobbies and skill sets and also spend quality time with family members.

Opportunities to address social isolation:

- Increased in-person programming ie. walking, biking, gardening, cooking
- Having a space to connect and discuss topics that may not even related to the purpose of the group ie. gardening group discussing vaccines

Seniors' Needs and Strengths

In many of the discussions and community conversations, seniors' needs emerged as a priority concern for St. James Town. Out of all the age groups in the St. James Town community, seniors were heavily impacted by the pandemic and faced numerous barriers. From initially living alone, feelings of isolation for seniors worsened. The lack of technology and access to devices prevented them from participating in online programming and connecting with others. On the contrary, seniors have gained strength and resilience from learning new hobbies and skills. These have included, but are not limited to gardening, sewing and new skills in technology in order to participate in online and phone-based programs.



Opportunities to tackle issues faced by seniors include the following:

- Pop-up clinics in the community catered towards seniors (regular checkups, dental, optometry)
- Expanding Programs that have been successful like the Seniors' Day Program.
- Developing new programs to address Anti-Asian racism and harassment: Never Walk Alone program so that seniors of the Asian Community can feel safe when leaving their homes
- Integrate the recommendations from the 2019 Spring Gathering for the Intergenerational Programming of seniors and youth

Stigma Surrounding Seeking Help

Newcomers especially from the South Asian community in St. James Town have avoided asking others for help and chose not to seek assistance. This theme emerged when members noticed that their neighbours or friends avoided seeking aid throughout the pandemic such as utilizing food banks or financial aid like CERB. Due to cultural influence, South Asians have faced their own unique struggles throughout the pandemic.

A strategy to mitigate this issue has been addressed through the following:

- Developing a program for newcomers of the same background to discuss available resources and address stigma surrounding help

Stigma Surrounding Substance Use

Upon discussing substance use and harm reduction, stigma surrounding these topics were a prevalent theme. Members of the community were not familiar with the appropriate language used and some of the root causes behind drug dependence. This ongoing issue must be tackled with education so that future spaces and discussion can be free from bias, judgement and stigma.

Strategies to address stigma surrounding substance abuse include the following:


- Through a social media campaign (have the Urban Health Team take over The Corner instagram for example)
- Develop workshop series to educate and raise awareness on harm reduction principles, practices and approaches with the wider community
- Host a Town Hall that provides deeper education about the root causes of addictions, drug dependence (eg. social isolation, trauma), and what we can do as a community to be more supportive to people who use drugs


Integrating a Cultural and Equity-focused Lens with respect to Food Insecurity

The cross cutting themes of diversity and inclusion were found in two community conversations with regards to food insecurity and financial hardship. Members of the community noticed that there was a lack of food diversity and culturally sensitive food within food banks, where only foods such as canned beans and pasta were available. Those who come from different cultural backgrounds can find certain foods difficult to enjoy and adjust to their own taste. Additionally, members of different religious backgrounds found that food banks also did not offer halal options and thus did not consider the difference in diet for the Muslim community. This also applies for those who identify with other religious backgrounds, causing them to have limited food options.

Strategies to address this:

- Continue the culturally diverse and responsive food hamper and hot meal programs offered
- Work with Food Banks to promote inclusive and culturally diverse options (ie. halal foods/meats)



 **First 10 people to register
sjtspring@stjamestown.org
get a free balcony
gardening book!**

 **Seed packets for each
participant!**

 **Raffle grand prize for
residents who attend 3 or
more conversations!**



ZOOM LINK FOR ALL SESSIONS:
<https://ca01web.zoom.us/j/69892710937>



#SJTSRINGGATHERING
Hosted by Health Access St. James Town in
partnership with the SJTSPN



Appendix A - Planning Committee Members

The following staff, community agencies and residents/volunteers contributed to the planning of the 2021 online Community Conversations and played different roles throughout each online Conversation (MC's, presenters, facilitators, activity leads, zoom technical support, note-taking, report- writing).

Nassim Vahidi, St. Mikes Family Health Team // Norma Khandekar, Progress Place // Robb Johannes, Fred Victor // Armela Marano, The Neighbourhood Organization // Yamo Said Ogho, The Neighbourhood Organization, // Afsana Chowdhury, Dixon Hall Rooming House Project // Christina Tran, Sherbourne Health // Sehr Athar, Sherbourne Health // Shova Adkhar, The Corner // Aravind Joseph, The Corner // Tamara Este, SickKids Centre for Community Mental Health // Trina Rozenzweig, SickKids Centre for Community Mental Health // Suja Selvaraj, The Corner // Danielle (Dana) Astrug, Fred Victor // Touhida Choudhury, The Neighbourhood Group // Emel Tabaku, Unisphere // Alaa Mohamed, The Corner // Diana Mavunduse, Dixon Hall // Linda Fuerth, Dixon Hall // Safia Hirsi, The Neighbourhood Group // Julyatta Mekonnen, The Neighbourhood Group // Lidia Ferreira, CREW // Cindy Tse, The Corner // Sathyan Arulvarathan, The New Common // Oday Abdaljawwad, The Neighbourhood Organization

Residents, Volunteers and Ambassadors

Sebastián Mendoza-Price, Deepika Anandkumar, Anuradha Yadav, Ashley Carpenter, Nicolle White, Mike DeSilva, Selvajayan Vijaya, Maya Kollegal, Sarah Rocha, Isiah Tan, Irfan Khan, Chris (Archie) Kenyon, Dave Ngyuen, Faiza Ami, Samreen Ishaq, Julia Baronovsky, Sanchi Parulkar, Tarin Moni, Rufaida Rahman

Appendix B - Health Access St. James Town and St. James Town Service Providers' Network

Health Access St. James Town

Health Access St. James Town (HASJT) is a partnership of 15+ organizations who provide health and social services to residents of St. James Town.

Health Access St. James Town has an intake team who work with residents to understand their needs and connect them to appropriate services. Residents can get in touch with HASJT at The Corner, both at 200 and 240 Wellesley St. E locations and across six access points in the neighbourhood.

HASJT Services

Services:

- Primary Care
- Diabetes Support (Nurse and Dietician)
- Counselling
- Employment Services
- Housing Support
- Newcomer Services
- Community Dietician and more!

Health and Wellness Programs:

- Children's Programs
- Parenting Programs
- Language Classes (English, French, Spanish etc.)
- Tax Clinics
- Arts and Crafts
- Seniors Support
- Annual Health Promotion Initiatives: Flu Clinics, Pap Clinics, Cancer Awareness

HASJT Partner Organizations

- TNG – The Neighbourhood Group
- Dixon Hall
- Women's Health in Women's Hands
- Toronto Public Health
- Unity Health
- Neighbourhood Legal Services
- Hospice Toronto
- Progress Place
- TCH – Toronto Community Housing
- SickKids Centre for Community Mental Health
- Youthdale
- Fred Victor
- Renascent
- Home and Community Care
- The Corner (Primary Service Hub)
- Sherbourne Health (Co-lead)
- TNO – The Neighbourhood Organization (Co-lead)

Health Access St. James Town works with residents to connect them to timely, localized and responsive services through effective partnerships.



ACCESSIBLE

COLLABORATIVE

COMMUNITY DRIVEN

DIVERSE

EQUITABLE

INNOVATIVE



Contact:

For more information about what is happening at The Corner, or to access programs, services, and use of our spaces.

St. James Town Community Corner (The Corner)

The Corner@200: 200 Wellesley St. East

(t) 416-964-6657

(f) 416-964-6658

(e) info@stjamestown.org

Please check the website for changes to opening hours.

The Corner@240:

240 Wellesley St. East

(t) 416-964-6657 Ext. 240

(f) 416-964-6658

(e) thecorner240@stjamestown.org

www.stjamestown.org

#THECORNER@STJ



**Health Access
St. James Town**



"The SJTSPN engages like minded organizations to address the needs of the SJT community, the collaboration amongst agencies is truly inspirational! Progress Place is proud to be a member of the SJTSPN."

— Criss Habal-Broszek, Progress Place

"Being connected to the SJTSPN has proven invaluable in being able to connect with residents and other partner agencies in determining what the community needs and how we as an organization (TNG) can help fill those service gaps. I am inspired by the true collaboration that takes place within the network!"

— Veronica McDonald, The Neighbourhood Group



Contact:

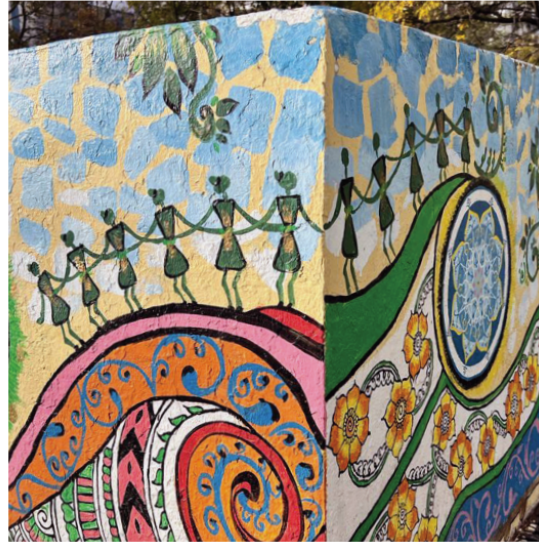
For more information about what is happening at The Corner, or to access programs, services, and use of our spaces.

St. James Town Service Providers' Network (SJTSPN)

The Corner@200:

200 Wellesley St. East
(T) 416-964-6657 Ext. 5013
(F) 416-964-6658
(W) sjtspn@stjamestown.org

[Facebook](#) [Twitter](#) [Instagram](#) [LinkedIn](#) @THECORNERSTJ



St. James Town Service Providers' Network

MAKING ST. JAMES TOWN
A NEIGHBOURHOOD OF
CHOICE TO CALL HOME



About SJTSPN

The St. James Town Service Providers' Network (SJTSPN) consists of service providers, grassroots community groups and community members who work collaboratively to develop and implement a coordinated plan for a vibrant, safe and healthy community.

The St. James Town Service Providers' Network was formed in response to requests from community groups to address coordination and service planning in St. James Town. It began in 1998 as a coalition under the name St. James Town Working Group. By mid-2006, the coalition was represented by over 20 social, health and educational organizations. In the fall of 2008, the group was renamed the St. James Town Service Providers' Network, developing Terms of Reference that reflected their mission, goals and objectives.

FOUR PILLARS OF SJTSPN:

Community Engagement and Advocacy
Neighbourhood Based Activities
Population Specific Activities
Service Coordination

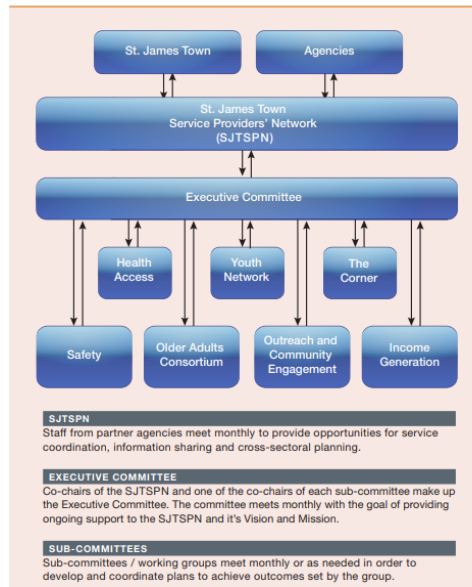
Key milestones in SJTSPN history:

1998	SJTSPN Working Group formed
2006	20 agencies became part of coalition
2007	Youth Network and Mental Health Access group included in SJTSPN
2008	Working Group became the St. James Town Providers' Network
2011	Senior's Subcommittee formed
2012	Festival and Health Access Subcommittees formed
2013	SJT Festival organized by SJTSPN; Revised Terms Of Reference of SJTSPN
2014	Safety Committee is formed. SJT Spring Gathering and other community engagement events held
2015	Revised work plan for 2015-18
2016	Endorsement of the Collective Impact Project. Executive Leadership Committee formed to champion SJT investments.
2017	1st SJTSPN Leadership Forum held
2018	SJTSPN and partner organizations respond to 650 Parliament and other building crisis. Monthly newsletter initiated
2018	Strategic Plan and work plan for 2018-20. Income Generation Subcommittee Formed; Outreach and Community Engagement Subcommittee is reorganized
2019	Joint petition to designate St. James Town as a Neighbourhood Improvement Area submitted to The City Council and unanimously passed
2020	2nd Leadership Forum held
2021	Strategic plan for 2022-25; 3rd Leadership Forum held

Objectives:

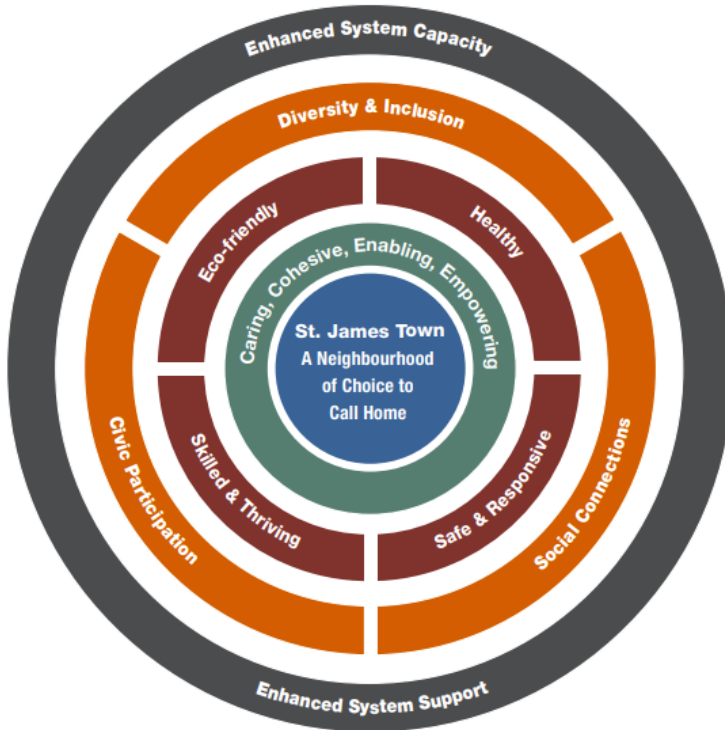
- Identify the needs, assets, resources and shortfalls in the St. James Town Community.
- Collaborate and coordinate with organizations to address the identified needs.
- Advocate for policy and systemic changes to address priority issues.
- Interact with organizations, community groups and decision makers working in St. James Town.
- Evaluate the impact and effectiveness of the activities of the SJTSPN.

Structure of SJTSPN



Appendix C - Social Charter

St. James Town **Social Charter**



PRINCIPLES

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

We value our diversity and differences as a strength, and acknowledge the importance of mutual trust and reciprocity within the community.

CIVIC PARTICIPATION

We value the importance of our community getting involved in addressing local issues and advocating for changes through both formal (eg. voting and participation in democratic processes) and informal means (volunteering, faith or cultural groups, grassroots initiatives or organizations)

SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

We value close contact with friends, family and neighbours, strong social networks, social gatherings and activities and that the community feels a sense of belonging.

DOMAINS / ACTION AREAS

Safe & Responsive

Connect neighbours and local groups to support one another
Raise awareness about safety measures and practices
Work with public and private systems in improving and maintaining safe and secure building standards and neighbourhood infrastructure

Healthy

Reduce social isolation to improve our mental and physical well being
Raise awareness on health and wellbeing
Support seniors to age at home in a safe environment
Support youth in reaching their potential
Connect communities to health care and preventative services

Skilled & Thriving

Create skill building opportunities that support employment
Develop opportunities that promote social entrepreneurship
Work with businesses and organisations to promote local hiring

Eco-friendly

Create a culture of Reduce, Repair, Reuse and Recycle
Develop Green initiatives, like gardening
Champion access to green, accessible and livable spaces
Advocate to and hold public and private systems accountable

Appendix D - Discussion Guide

May 6, 2021

1. What are you looking forward to after the pandemic - when all this is over?
 - a. Prompts: What has been particularly hard and stressful that people are looking forward to overcoming?
2. During the lockdown I felt better after I did “_____”, “_____”, “_____”
3. What types of supports could you have used and can continue to help you or your family with your emotional and social wellbeing?
4. What are people seeing in the community that people have been struggling with? What has come up for you, your family, your neighbours?
5. A) What has been working/helping for children that you want to share more about?
B) What has been working/helping for parents and caregivers that you want to share more about?
C) What has been working/helping for older adults/seniors that you want to share more about?

May 27, 2021- Presentation 1 Discussion Questions (Food security in St. James Town)

1. What did you think about the presentation? Is the program expanding?
2. Did anything stand out of the presentation?
3. What do you wish you could have better access to in St. James Town when it comes to food/groceries (e.g. more affordable options, more culturally diverse options, etc.) ?
4. Did you know about the covid response food programs that were discussed in the presentation and did you access them (why/why not)?

May 27, 2021- Presentation 2 Discussion Questions (Overdose Prevention & Opioid Crisis in St. James Town)

1. Does the current scope of the opioid crisis during COVID-19 surprise you? (ie. social isolation, chronic pain management, other systemic inequities being amplified)

May 27, 2021- Presentation 3 Discussion Questions (Being an ally and being an ally to the 2SLGBTQ+ adults)

1. What are some people's initial thoughts about the video? Did you learn anything new?
2. What are some things we can do in St. James Town to create more welcoming spaces? (examples: join Pride events, include positive space posters in our buildings, using our privilege to speak up for others?)
3. What can we do to make sure our Queer and Trans neighbours and friends feel safe living and working in SJT?

June 24, 2021 - Topic #1 Questions

1. Has the pandemic impacted your financial situation? If yes, how?
2. Did you receive any financial support/ aid (eg. CERB, etc.)?

- a. What was the process like accessing financial support? (was it challenging/ smooth/ helpful/not helpful?)
 - b. What other supports or services would be helpful to help with income security?
3. Did this pandemic bring about any opportunities in terms of your job or career?
 - a. Did you learn new skills for work?
 - b. Did you relocate or have to work differently?
 - c. Other?
4. If you could change one thing in terms of your employment/business during this pandemic what would that be?
5. What are your new aspirations with regards to training and higher education
 - a. What are the barriers to accessing them?
 - b. What have people accessed already that have been helpful or not?
 - c. Are there any partnerships we should be making with apprenticeship or co-op programs that might be beneficial to the community?
6. What resources and information would be helpful to you all with regards to employment advancement, income or job security?

June 24, 2021 - Topic #2 Questions

1. How has the pandemic impacted your business/ service/ trade/ employment?
 - a. How did you change your product line or services during the pandemic?
 - b. For those of you who have small businesses, what are some of the challenges that you have faced in keeping your business going during this pandemic?
2. What type of financial supports or aid have you received during the pandemic to keep your business going on? And what additional financial programs or supports do you think you need to help your business survive?
3. For those interested in starting your business, what is holding you back from pursuing your entrepreneurship dream (eg. challenges)?
4. What do you think would be the most helpful in terms of helping you start your own business right now?
5. What are some small businesses or entrepreneurship you have been thinking about pursuing during the pandemic?
6. Resources- what resources and information would be helpful to you all with regards to this topic?

June 24, 2021 - Topic #3 Questions

1. What does financial security mean to you?
2. What have been your main financial worries during the pandemic?
3. What would you like to learn more about regarding financial planning?
4. What is currently your most trusted source for financial advice/ information?
5. What are your financial goals/ plans coming out of the pandemic? Have they changed because of it?

Back up Questions

6. Do you put money aside for an emergency fund (eg. "Rainy day")? For Investing?

7. If you received any government support (eg. CERB), during the pandemic, how has it impacted your life/ lifestyle?
8. Are there any money saving hacks that you found during the pandemic?
9. What does a realistic budget look like for you?

Resources

10. What resources and information would be helpful to you all with regards to this topic?

July 8, 2021 - Topic # 1 Questions

1. What ideas do you have that can make our Neighbourhood more welcoming and green?
 - a. What specific places in St. James Town need to be more welcoming and greener?
 - b. What are some challenges and opportunities to implement more community gardens/ or garden beds?
 - c. What do we need to do to get more green spaces in St. James Town?
(examples: actions like engaging more residents, doing some paintings - benches , murals, gardening, writing small funding applications, Sending letters asking for support to City Councillor , BIA)
2. What new ideas do you as residents have to beat the heat?

July 8, 2021 - Topic # 2 Questions

1. What do you think are the concerns that you face when it comes to proper waste management?
2. How can you, as an individual, contribute to solving this problem?
3. What solutions do you think are required in your building to address the waste management concerns?

July 8, 2021 - Topic # 3 Questions

1. What are the challenges you face pursuing biking as an SJT resident?
2. What other services other than bike clinics can The Corner @240 provide to improve access to biking?
 - a. Will a bike rental/sharing service add access?
3. How can we encourage more residents to take up biking? Example: Social bike club?