



Spring Gathering 2023

An annual community consultation for the St. James Town neighbourhood



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Authorship

This report was prepared for Health Access St. James Town (HAJST) and the St. James Town Service Providers Network (SJTSPN) by the Supervisor, Health Promotion & Community Capacity Building Initiatives at Sherbourne Health (SH). For more details please visit: www.stjamestown.org

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Planning Committee: Spring Gathering would not be possible without the efforts of the planning committee, table facilitators, and organizers made up of service providers and residents. The following agencies participated in the planning and implementation of Spring Gathering this year: Sherbourne Health, The Neighbourhood Organization (TNO), Progress Place, The Neighbourhood Group (TNG), Unity Health, SickKids community mental health, and more.

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Introduction

The St. James Town neighbourhood is known for its rich diversity and vibrant community. The Annual Spring Gathering serves as a platform for residents to voice their perspectives, experiences, and collectively envision the future of health and social services within the neighbourhood.

This year's Spring Gathering consultation witnessed an incredible show of community participation, with over 285 residents actively contributing their insights and ideas. This engagement was nurtured in two formats: smaller community conversations that encouraged intimate discussions among residents with shared experiences, and the main Spring Gathering Event, a focal point that brought together residents for a dynamic conversation on the needs, strengths, and priorities of the neighbourhood.

The main event was held on **June 2nd, 2023, from 5:30-8:00pm at the Wellesley Community Centre**. This event served as the highlight of the Spring Gathering community consultation. Drawing more than 130 St. James Town residents, the evening offered a platform for not only substantive discussions, but a celebration of our successes and talent within the neighbourhood.

Representatives from the St. James Town Service Provider Network (SJTSPN) introduced some highlights since last year's event. The new model for the Corner 240 was unveiled, detailing The Corner's innovative approaches to well-being and sustainability, and updates were provided on the Wellness Clinic, showcasing highlights and achievements throughout the past year. Additionally, an overview of the SJTSPN provided attendees with a comprehensive understanding of the collaborative efforts shaping neighbourhood services, and the successes of the community ambassador program were shared.

The event was further elevated through captivating performances that showcased the talent within St. James Town. The Chinese Seniors group presented a dance, completed by a youth classical dance that added to the event's overall vibrancy. These dynamic performances helped to make the event a memorable and impactful evening.



The Spring Gathering discussions centered around three focus areas:

1. **Youth Engagement:** in consultation with 68 youth aged 15-25, these conversations sought to understand the interests and barriers to participating in neighbourhood programming for youth. Additionally, youth shared insights into their perceptions of community safety and provided recommendations for responsive programming and measures.
2. **Income generation:** this focus area delved into the economic well-being of residents, investigating barriers to income generation, profiling neighbourhood skills that could generate income, and consulting with residents to gain recommendations for enhancing income security.
3. **Mental Health and Social Connectedness:** recognizing the significance of mental health and social connection, these discussions centered on strategies to reduce social isolation, improve community safety, and advocate for harm reduction within the neighbourhood.



Community Engaged Planning: Methods

The planning of Spring Gathering and the community conversations was led by the Spring Gathering Planning Committee (SGPC), which consisted of service providers from agencies including Sherbourne Health, The Neighbourhood Organization (TNO), Progress Place, The Neighbourhood Group (TNG), Unity Health, SickKids community mental health, and other organizations from the St. James Town Service Provider Network. Alongside the service providers, the SGPC also included two community residents who played vital roles as community co-chairs, ensuring a resident-driven and inclusive approach.

The strategic direction of this year's Spring Gathering community consultation was determined in a collaboration between the SJTSPN, Health Access St. James Town, and community residents. Program staff were interviewed, and a **progress report** was compiled to assess the alignment of the past year's implemented programs with the recommendations from the Spring Gathering 2022 report.

The progress report was presented to the SGPC, where members engaged in a feedback session to shape this year's Spring Gathering **"Focus Areas"**. The committee members shared their ideas and experiences to identify what information was essential to collect for planning high-impact programs in the neighborhood. Following this session, the focus areas were created using feedback from the SGPC members, and the SJT Social Charter (appendix-3) as a guiding framework. The final focus areas included: **Youth Engagement, Income Generation, and Mental Health & Social Connectedness**. Collaboratively, the SGPC, with input from the SJTSPN and guidance from the SGPC evaluation sub-committee, developed the "sub-questions" for each focus area, culminating in the creation of the Spring Gathering Focus Area Framework (appendix-1).

Prior to the community conversations, 10 of our community ambassadors participated in a comprehensive 3-hour training on conducting semi-structured interviews and facilitating community conversations. This training, led by the Health Promotion & Systems Specialist at Sherbourne Health, equipped community ambassadors with the necessary skills to participate in developing the "Focus Group questions", to be asked during community conversations. The SGPC decided to maintain an iterative process as community conversations were held, enabling continuous feedback and adaptation to the focus group questions throughout this phase of the project. This approach ensured that community voices remained at the heart of the planning process and promoted a more meaningful dialogue with residents of St. James Town.

Community Conversations

To build on the successes of previous Spring Gathering community consultations, the SGPC decided to conduct smaller community-based conversations, a method that had been introduced in previous years. The primary aims were to (1) foster opportunities for residents to share perspectives and amplify the voices and experiences of marginalized and racialized communities, (2) ensure better data quality and disaggregated information for targeted programming, (3) reduce barriers for residents to participate in the consultation. The community conversations were thoughtfully designed to encompass various groups, including youth in SJT, the Black community, 2SLGBTQ+ communities, parents & caregivers, recent newcomers to Canada, and seniors.

Our youth community conversations specifically engaged individuals between the ages of 15-25, with a total of 68 youth engaged in conversation. Throughout all community conversations, a total of 155 residents were consulted *prior* to the main Spring Gathering event.



1.0 Youth Engagement

Many organizations with the SJTSPN expressed challenges with engaging youth in their programs. Our focus during the Spring Gathering was to gain a deeper insight into how youth in the neighbourhood perceive the services offered within the community, and the barriers they encounter while accessing them. It is crucial to align youth programming with their specific interests and needs, considering how they engage with social justice and advocacy topics, their priorities with mental health services, and the types of skills-building and learning opportunities they seek within the neighbourhood. As we grow our understanding of these perspectives, our agencies can develop effective strategies that cater to the needs of youth in St. James Town.

1.1 Perception of Services

- Among the youth brought into conversation, a significant portion (56%) indicated that they do not often access programs in St. James Town, including social, health, or after-school activities. Those who did participate primarily attended sports-focused programs.
- To effectively engage youth, it was found that leveraging social media such as Tik Tok and Instagram were the most successful methods. Additionally, offering incentives like free food, activities, and highlighting the opportunity for participants to earn volunteer hours for school motivates their involvement.

1.2 Barriers to Participate

- Youth highlighted several barriers that deter them from joining health and social programs, clubs, and events in St. James Town, including:
 - Lack of awareness about these programs due to insufficient marketing and promotions. Some youth emphasized the need for improved outreach and communication strategies.
 - Overwhelming academic and personal obligations – many youths found it challenging to manage their time and participate in additional programming outside of school.
 - Perceived lack of relevance or interest in the programs that are available within the neighbourhood. Many of our findings suggest that there is a need for dedicated efforts in adapting our current and new programs to align with the specific interests and needs of youth in the St James Town.

1.3 Interests & Needs

- Youth in SJT have identified specific priorities related to social justice, which included ensuring access to affordable housing, addressing mental health concerns, combating homelessness, focusing on substance-use and harm reduction initiatives, enhancing community safety, and exploring how these issues intersect with 2SLGBTQ+ communities.
- Regarding mental health, youth primarily focus on anxiety, depression, stress & stress management (mentioned by n=8 participants), social isolation, and loneliness.
- Youth proposed effective strategies to address mental health topics, such as: promoting equality by addressing the social determinants of mental health issues (many focused on combatting racism, homophobia, and transphobia). Youth also emphasized the importance of mental wellness workshops, spaces for discussing topics on mental health, social programming, and skills-building initiatives.



- When asked more generally about skills that they would like to develop, the responses varied widely, reflecting the diverse interests, experiences, and goals of the youth. Some of the skills mentioned include:
 - Communication and networking abilities, culinary and other food-related skills, essential life skills (e.g., taxes, self-sufficiency, personal finances, budgeting), employment-related skills (e.g., job-related counselling, networking, resume-writing), academic skills (e.g., writing, presentations, effective study techniques), Sports and exercise proficiency (e.g., dance, basketball, javelin), and language proficiency (e.g., English, and other common languages in the neighbourhood).
 - 2SLGBTQ identifying youth shared a similar desire in many of the listed skills, with attention to self-defence training (mentioned by n= 3 participants), and mentorship programs involving 2SLGBTQ adults.

1.4 Community Safety

A significant majority of the youth (65%) reported feeling safe in St. James Town, while 35% expressed concerns about safety, citing factors such as gun violence and substance use. Notably, many participants recommended implementing harm reduction strategies as a vital approach to addressing community safety. This approach was consistently advocated for among youth, compared to other non-youth residents engaged in discussions on community safety. For the youth that felt safe in the neighbourhood, many identified their strong community relations, and the busyness of the neighbourhood as contributing factors to their sense of safety.

When asked what could be done to make St. James Town a safer place for everyone, the most prevalent recommendation was to increase the investment in shelter homes for people experiencing homelessness (mentioned by n=6 participants). Additionally, many youths stressed the need for expanded mental health resources, therapy services, and harm reduction programs in the neighbourhood to address safety issues upstream. Some youth also suggested an increase in security measures, but they were critical of the current practices, urging for improved training of security personnel in the neighbourhood to effectively de-escalate situations and promote community safety.

For 2SLGBTQ+ Identifying youth, a common emphasis was placed on promoting the safety of trans and queer individuals in the community. Many underscored the importance of education and addressing anti-trans violence in schools from an early stage to foster a more inclusive and safer environment within the neighbourhood.

2.0 Income Generation

One of the primary means of supporting and nurturing the health and well-being of the neighbourhood is through substantial investment in skills-building programs that empower residents to develop a diverse range of skills and leverage them to generate income. During this year's Spring Gathering, one of our main focuses was to gain a comprehensive understanding of the existing skills within our community and identify some of the main barriers that residents face in utilizing these skills to create income opportunities. Additionally, we aimed to gauge the community's interest in learning specific skills through our service agencies, and explore the ways in which these agencies, along with local politicians and community leaders, can collaboratively support residents in developing robust income streams.

Our efforts toward skills development and income generation aligns with our commitment to fostering a thriving and resilient community. As we better understand and harness the talents and capabilities present within St. James Town, we can continue to work towards a more vibrant and self-sustaining neighbourhood, where residents can pursue their passions, and improve their quality of life. The insightful findings from this community consultation will act as a foundation for designing future skills-building programs, tailored to our community's interests and needs.





2.1 Barriers

Throughout the community conversations and main Spring Gathering Event, participants shared their diverse skill sets, revealing a rich diversity of talents present within our community. Notable highlights included entrepreneurship, marketing, project management, event organizing, painting, graphic design, sewing, makeup artistry, cooking, dancing, computer and IT skills, as well as valuable knowledge in nutrition.

Among our **senior residents** in SJT, we discovered an array of skills in sewing, knitting, and clothing alterations. Our **2SLGBTQ+ communities** also brought a wide range of skills, including crafting, arts, karate, cooking, food preparation, and computer proficiency. **Recent newcomers** to Canada shared their expertise in areas such as engineering, product management, and marketing highlighting their potential to positively impact our neighbourhood and community.

The insights gathered during our consultation sessions have also illuminated the various challenges and barriers that residents face in practicing their skills to generate income. Common barriers include work permits, limited access to professional networks, and insufficient capacity-building resources. For many seniors, obstacles lie in transportation, stress, and health related concerns like arthritis. Our **2SLGBTQ+ communities** encounter challenges in obtaining interviews, securing references, navigating vocational gaps, facing cultural bias, and the cost of associated fees. **Newcomers** face obstacles in obtaining professional licenses, adapting resumes for the Canadian job market, and establishing a professional network. **Black residents** who participated in our conversations expressed challenges related to workplace diversity, awareness of government grants to start their own businesses, systemic barrier such as low credit scores, and work permits.

While many of the findings here reflect the experiences and perspectives of participating residents, it is important to acknowledge that individual experiences may vary, and the challenges and skills described may not be representative of everyone within the diverse community of St. James Town.

2.2 Skills and Capacity Building

When participants were asked about the skills and/or qualifications that they would like to develop, several common responses emerged, including:

- **Professional skills** such as resume building, professional networking, business management.
- **Technical skills** like communication, technical writing, computer skills (e.g., basic computer use, office programs including Word, Excel and PowerPoint).
- Furthermore, there was notable interest in acquiring **essential training**, such as Naloxone & harm reduction, CPR, mental health crisis training, and group facilitation skills.

The findings from this consultation revealed a strong emphasis on computer and software-related learning; there was high interest in learning Office 365 software products, including Word, Excel, and PowerPoint. Seniors demonstrated an interest in fundamental computer navigation skills, with specific applications such as online banking, doctor's appointment scheduling, medical report access, grocery ordering, and passport renewal.

Regarding the challenges experienced in transitioning back to work following the pandemic, many residents voiced their frustrations in the barriers that hindered their prospects of gaining re-employment or transitioning back to in-person workspaces. These challenges included the mental health impacts of social isolation, and the need for support in adapting to the increased demand for virtual and online work. For many **2SLGBTQ residents**, there were prevalent experiences of discrimination and racism within the workplace, and this was a significant barrier to returning to in-person work. These experiences underscore the importance of tailored approaches and support to facilitate a smoother transition back to the workplace for all residents in St. James Town.



2.3 Action from St James Town

Participants were asked how organizations in St. James Town can support residents in income generation and practicing income-generating skills. Some of the primary responses included:

- Main Spring Gathering event highlighted the need for employment programs, career counselling, and capacity-building programs geared toward enhancing workforce skills. Moreover, participants expressed interest in job fairs tailored to the specific skills prevalent within the neighbourhood.
- For seniors, the focus was on providing skills-building workshops and systems navigation support to directly connect them with income resources. Some seniors also emphasized the need for health programming to reduce barriers limiting seniors' participation in income-generating activities.
- Our 2SLGBTQ+ communities expressed priorities for income generation, with attention given to resources on 2SLGBTQ+ friendly employers, specific job fairs, support for safely practicing sex work, and acquiring hard skills like electrician, plumbing and social work. Participants also recommended workshop topics such as legal rights within the workplace, self-advocacy for 2SLGBTQ+ communities, understanding taxes, Employment Insurance (EI), and benefits, as well as starting a business.
- The Black community conversation generated recommendations for support in resume building, interview preparation, workshops on starting and investing in businesses, financial education, and systems navigation to pursue job opportunities within government and large organizations.

Participants were asked about how they would like community leaders and elected officials to support them within income generation. Some of the main aspects that residents would like community leaders to prioritize included:

- Addressing **food insecurity** by providing and supporting meal programs and food security initiatives to support residents.
- Enhancing access to **affordable or free childcare services**. Many residents highlighted the need for affordable childcare and childminding services to enable families to engage in income-generating activities.
- Increasing access to **training programs**, vocational workshops, and job-related skills training to overcome barriers to gaining essential skills.
- Emphasizing **effective community engagement** from elected officials. Residents valued access and communication with elected officials and community leaders through their participation in community events and programs, and a hands-on approach to engagement.

3.0 Mental Health & Social Connectedness

In previous years, our Spring Gathering community consultations have been important for identifying key barriers and challenges to accessing primary health care services. This year, our focus shifted to exploring additional methods beyond medical interventions to improve the overall health and well-being of our communities. Particular attention was given to the role of social programming in reducing social isolation and improving population health outcomes. Through these consultation sessions, we wanted to understand the main obstacles residents face when engaging in these programs, and how we can adapt our initiatives to minimize these barriers.

It was important for us to involve residents in both the planning and evaluation process, and we gathered valuable insights during these sessions on the best methods of assessing program success and identifying metrics of measuring program impact. This participatory approach ensures that our programs and services are shaped by the true needs and goals of the community.

Furthermore, as the demand for harm reduction programming grows, we wanted to understand the community's knowledge on these practices, while soliciting ideas on how best to support both community mental health and neighbourhood safety. The perspectives of our neighbourhood residents will allow us to tailor comprehensive harm reduction programs and address the unique challenges faced in our neighbourhood.





3.1 Health Priorities

In exploring health priorities beyond medical intervention, participants offered a diverse array of ideas aimed at enhancing overall health and well-being:

- Socializing and community connection emerged as a top priority, with 29% (n=43/148) of participants emphasizing the significance of staying connected with their social network, engaging in community celebrations, festivals, social programs. Many participants stressed that social groups are an economically feasible way to combat social isolation and foster resource sharing. Additionally, connecting with their community and cultural practices was highlighted as a supportive factor for their health, as evident through examples such as language retention and sharing, cultural foods, and multi-cultural events within the neighbourhood.
- Exercise and sports were also identified as integral components of health, with 20% (n=30/148) of participants expressing the importance of activities like swimming, walking, yoga, and dancing.
- Healthy food and nutrition received attention, with 4% (n=6) of participants emphasizing the significance of diverse and culturally relevant dietary choices.
- Other activities were mentioned, including gardening, meditation, and skills for managing mental health.
- Participants also acknowledged that employment status significantly impacts health. They expressed that implementing programs that support residents in identifying and maintaining employment would meaningfully impact and improve health outcomes.

3.2 Barriers

In understanding the main barriers that residents faced in accessing social programs and building community connection, participants provided valuable insights which were consistent across various community groups:

- Managing other commitments and priorities, such as work and family responsibilities, emerged as a prevalent barrier.
- Some participants expressed experiencing shame or stigma in attending these programs.
- Language barriers were highlighted as a significant obstacle, with participants from various community conversations emphasizing that the availability of programs in their primary language influenced their likelihood of attending.

For **seniors** in St James Town, accessibility was a key concern that acted as a barrier to participating in these programs. This included both health-related issues and pain management concerns, as well as physical barriers that hindered their ability to navigate and participate in the spaces where programs were held. Within our **2SLGBTQ+ communities**, hesitancy to join social programs came from concerns regarding visibility, privacy, and anonymity. Participants cited a lack of trust in security measures and personnel, fearing potential risks to their safety and well-being in these spaces. Our **Black community conversations** highlighted that some of the main barriers to participating in social programs were a lack of diversity in the spaces and the stigma associated with attending.

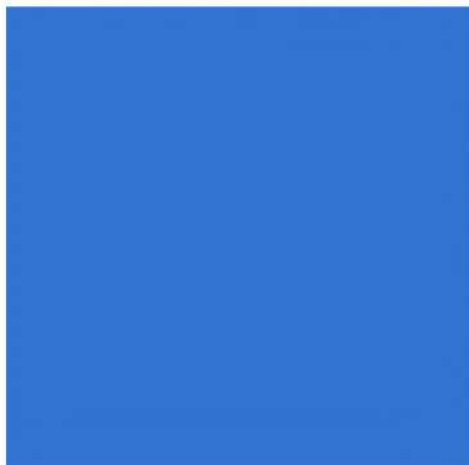
To ensure better resident inclusion in the planning of our health programs and services, we sought input from a diverse range of individuals with varying backgrounds and experiences in program evaluation. The key findings provided insight into the program goals of the community, and effective ways to determine the success of non-medical interventions in improving health:

- Participants advocated for soliciting feedback from participants through various means, such as surveys, interviews, satisfaction scales, and program suggestions.
- Some seniors emphasized the importance of facilitating conversations to obtain feedback. This could be in the form of structured or semi-structured interviews or verbalizing surveys and providing support to seniors throughout the survey process.
- Other indicators that participants recommended to measure impact of the programs included attendance rates, changes in clinical health indicators, improvements in social connections and socializing, improved community connections, positive referrals to others, increased confidence, and comfort, as well as achievement of outcome measures (e.g., skill-based, or qualification-based accomplishments).

By incorporating these insights into our program evaluation strategies, we can create a more robust and participatory approach to assessing the effectiveness of non-medical interventions. Improving avenues for resident feedback and tracking various impact indicators will not only enhance the quality of our programs, but also foster a stronger sense of ownership and collaboration within our improvements to the health and well-being of St. James Town.

3.3 Community Safety & Mental Health

When asked whether residents felt that their community was inclusive and welcoming to people with mental health concerns, or those who may feel socially isolated, **74% of respondents indicated “no”**, with some of the main reasons including stigma toward mental health issues, the impact of mental health on community safety, and a lack of awareness and understanding of mental health issues. When prompted with a question on the relationship between mental health and community safety, many participants spoke on how not knowing others in their buildings and neighbourhood increases their sense of social isolation and makes them feel less safe in public spaces. Many recommended neighbourhood-level action to address their concerns of community safety, including additional support for encampments and food banks, increasing street/public lighting, and improved mental health resources.



3.4 Harm Reduction

In past iterations of the Spring Gathering community consultations, our exploration of the attitudes and knowledge regarding harm reduction services in St. James Town had been primarily in smaller, organic conversations. However, these discussions sometimes fell short of capturing a comprehensive view of harm reduction knowledge and practices in the neighbourhood. This year, we started by directly asking participants about their understanding of harm reduction and its role in promoting community health.

A noticeable disparity in knowledge about harm reduction practices emerged between the broader Spring Gathering conversations and the more focused community discussions. Across all conversations, slightly over half (54%) of respondents indicated that they lacked awareness of harm reduction practices. Notably, a significantly higher level of knowledge about harm reduction was evident within the context of the 2SLGBTQ+ community conversations. For participants who were familiar with harm reduction, many emphasized its potential to reduce crime, enhance safety for people who use drugs, and prevent death. Importantly, participants mainly identified harm reduction as a practice associated exclusively with drug use, for some who did not have direct experience of drug use, they shared that harm reduction strategies did not feel relevant to their own understanding.

After assessing knowledge on harm reduction, participants were asked about the main barriers that prevent people from attending harm reduction trainings or resources in the community. A recurring sentiment expressed by participants was the social stigma surrounding harm reduction and substance use within the neighbourhood. As a possible solution, a few individuals suggested rebranding harm reduction education, proposing ideas such as framing it within the context of community safety.

Some of the main recommendations to support harm reduction efforts in the neighbourhood included increasing awareness through trainings and workshops, providing a centrally located supply of naloxone, promoting programs that reduce social isolation, and online/one-on-one counseling support for people who use drugs.

Recommendations

Embedded within this report are a multitude of specific recommendations tailored to the priorities, challenges, and insights identified within the St. James Town community. The subsequent recommendations distill some key highlights that were most often suggested by residents and capture the community's most pressing needs.

Increasing Youth-Centric programming

Youth ages 15-25 called on the development and implementation of youth-focused programming that aligns with their specific need and interests in St. James Town. Service providers and organizations should leverage social media platforms, offer incentives, and promote engagement in activities that address social justice, mental health, and skills-building (specifically on practical life skills such as financial literacy, and time management). Specific recommendations included:

- Programs that promote equality by addressing the social determinants of mental health issues (combatting racism, homophobia, and transphobia).
- Mental wellness workshops, with topics focused on anxiety, depression, and stress & stress management.
- Skills/capacity building programs that teach communication & networking, food-related skills, essential life skills, employment-related skills, academic skills, sports and exercise, and language proficiency.
- Promote the safety of trans and queer individuals in the community through education early in school.

Comprehensive skills-building Initiatives

Residents emphasized the need for a range of skills-building programs and workshops. Recommendations include workshops on essential skills (resume building and networking), technical skills (computer proficiency, software training), and workplace-specific training to help overcome barriers to income generation. When facilitators introduced topics of harm reduction, many residents identified the need for education and skills building on harm reduction strategies, and naloxone training.

Social Programming and Community Well-being

There was a pressing need for social programs that focus on community connection and promoting overall well-being. Some specific recommendations included Inter-generational events, cultural celebrations, and fitness and wellness classes (e.g., yoga, dance, walking clubs) in community spaces to encourage physical activity and socializing.

Mental Health Workshops and Resources

Residents called on agencies to establish a range of mental health workshops and resources that address their specific needs. Residents identified the need for culturally competency training for service providers, ensuring that mental health initiatives are inclusive and relevant to diverse backgrounds. Many residents suggested a focus on specific mental health concerns including anxiety, depression, through workshops, peer-support networks, and shared resources. Both youth and adults sought out programming that teaches skills in stress management. Importantly, there was an emphasis on implementing programs that reduce social isolation as a method of supporting mental health.

Conclusion

The St. James Town Annual Spring Gathering demonstrates the neighbourhood's commitment to community-driven progress. The event successfully engaged a diverse array of residents, fostering discussion on three focus areas: **Youth Engagement, Income Generation, and Mental Health & Social Isolation**. These conversations offered valuable insight into the needs, priorities, strengths, and aspirations within the community.

The recommendations that emerged stem from the rich and diverse array of perspectives and experiences shared by St. James Town residents. These recommendations offer actionable strategies that hold the potential to elevate health and social programming in our neighbourhood. They encompass a broad spectrum of interventions – ranging from youth-centric programming and skills building, to strengthening community connection through our programs, increasing specific mental health resources and supports, and establishing resilient harm reduction practices in our neighbourhood.

These findings lay the groundwork upon which we can construct sustainable health and social programs that are tailored to the diverse needs of our community. This report will be shared with the SJTSPN, Health Access SJT, community residents, and other pertinent stakeholders involved in the planning and implementation of health and social programming. Furthermore, the insights from this report will be conveyed to elected community leaders and the City of Toronto, ensuring the broader integration of these perspectives into the policy-making process.

**Appendix-1:
Spring Gathering
Focus Area Framework**

Spring Gathering Focus Areas – Framework

Focus Area	Social Charter	Sub-questions (objectives)	Focus Group Questions (asked to community)
Youth Engagement	<p>Healthy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support youth in reaching their potential. • Connect communities to healthcare and preventative services. <p>Safe and Responsive:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Raise awareness about safety measures and practices. • Connect neighbours and local groups to support one another. 	<p>Current perceptions of services offered to youth: What are the current perceptions of The Corner among youth, and what improvements do they think should be made?</p> <p>What are the perceptions of services for youth offered in St. James Town, and at The Corner. Here, we will work from a macro level to a micro level.</p> <p>Partnerships: What partnerships could be developed to increase youth engagement? What are the current programs/organizations that they are accessing now?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Have you been to any programs in St. James Town? Were they what you needed? Prompt: These can be social, health programs, after school, etc. • What is the best way to reach out to youth, and get them involved in St. James Town? Prompt: This can be volunteering, going to different programs • Have you visited the Corner before? If yes, what did you like about it? If no, why not?
		<p>Barriers to Participation: What barriers do youth face in participating in activities, programs, and volunteering within St. James Town, and more specifically within The Corner?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In the neighbourhood, there are many health and social programs, clubs, and events. What are some reasons that make it difficult for young people to join these? • Have you attended any programs at The Corner before? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If not, why? ○ If you have, what made you want to be involved?

Spring Gathering Focus Areas – Framework

		<p>Interests/needs: What are youth looking for in social, health, and other programming?</p> <p>Key Areas included:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Youth involvement in advocacy • Youth mental health resources • Capacity-building/ skills-building 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Are there any topics or issues related to social justice or community advocacy that interest you or that you would like to learn more about? • What mental health topics do you think are the most important for young people in our community to focus on? <p>Prompt: (e.g., stress management, anxiety, depression)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is there any knowledge or skills that you think would be helpful to learn so you can be more successful in school or the future?
		<p>Community Safety: What are the perceptions of safety from youth in SJT, safety concerns, trust in authority, and what actions could be taken to improve community safety?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How safe do you feel in your neighbourhood, and why do you feel that way? • What do you think can be done to make St. James Town a safer place for everyone? <p>Prompt: How do you think these actions would help?</p>

Spring Gathering Focus Areas – Framework

<p>Income Generation / “Investing in St James Town”</p>	<p>Skilled & Thriving:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create skill building opportunities that support employment. • Develop opportunities that promote social entrepreneurship. 	<p>Barriers to Participation: What barriers do resident’s face in participating in income generating activities and programs? Barriers to practicing/utilizing skills in a way that generates income (e.g. Appropriate information, Canadian experience, degree, language etc.)</p> <p>Within our programs that generate money (Greens Café, Catering Collective, etc.), assessing the priorities/goals of the community within these programs (e.g. could be transparency with where money is invested, different capacity building goals)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some skills that you have that you believe could be used to earn money? • What are the main challenges that you face in practicing these skills in a way that earns money? • (If applicable) What are some challenges that you have faced returning to work after the pandemic? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ What kind of support would be most helpful in overcoming these challenges?
		<p>Skills and Capacity Building: This can include a more exploratory assessment of different skills that could guide the corner services, but should also allow residents to select from possible opportunities for capacity development within income generation, and rank the options (e.g. Job market readiness, financial literacy, language training, soft skills – team work/leadership/etc.)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What skills would you like to develop, and why are these important to you?
		<p>Models of Income Generation: Residents share the ways that they would like to interact with The Corner, and with their neighbours.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can organizations within St James Town help residents earn money? • What role could community leaders play in supporting residents to generate income?

Spring Gathering Focus Areas – Framework

		<p>Goals and Priorities: What do you expect to get out of income generating programs at the Corner. What are your longer-term goals?</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you expect to get out of income generating programs at the Corner? What are your longer-term goals?
<p>Mental Health & Social Connectedness</p>	<p>Healthy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reduce social isolation to improve our mental and physical well being • Raise awareness on health and wellbeing • Connect communities to healthcare and preventative services. <p>Eco-Friendly:</p>	<p>Assessing the potential benefits of social programs to support mental health, and how they compare to traditional healthcare approaches.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How can social programs help with mental health, and what makes them different from traditional healthcare? • What are some things that can be done, other than medical treatments, to help improve health?

Spring Gathering Focus Areas – Framework

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Champion access to green, accessible, and liveable spaces 	<p>Social Prescription: How do social programs and activities support your health and wellbeing? We will not be directly asking questions on social prescription, rather we will be asking questions that centre the health benefits of social programming.</p> <p>Barriers to Participation: What are the main barriers to accessing social programs and activities? (e.g. economic, geographical, interpersonal, or psychological)</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • We know that social programs can improve health. What are some reasons that make it hard for people to join a social program? • How can we determine if a social program is improving health? <p>Prompt: What steps could we take to measure this?</p>
		<p>Community Safety: How are community safety and mental health connected within the neighbourhood? With this question, we are looking at how we can <i>promote safety through supporting community mental health</i>.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Do you feel that your community is inclusive/welcoming to people with mental health concerns? If not, why do you think this is the case? • How do you think community safety affects mental health and social connection?
		<p>Harm Reduction: Residents express their level of knowledge and comfort with harm reduction topics/strategies.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What do you know about harm reduction? <p>Prompt: What role does it play in promoting community health?</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What are some reasons that prevent people from attending harm reduction trainings or resources in the community?

Spring Gathering Focus Areas – Framework

			<ul style="list-style-type: none">○ How do you think we can get more people involved?● What kind of harm reduction resources do you think would be the most valuable in St. James Town? Why?
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Appendix-2:

Community Conversation Guide

Spring Gathering 2023 – Community Conversation Questions

Introduction:

- Spring Gathering is an annual community consultation, led in collaboration with the St James Town Service Provider Network, and community residents.
- Each year, we determine several areas to focus on, and create a space for community residents to help us set our priorities and change services to better align with what the community would like to see.
- This year, our areas are (1) **Youth Engagement**, (2) **Income Generation**, and (3) **Mental Health & Social Connectedness**

Data & Privacy:

- All information collected during these sessions will be used to inform programs and services offered through the Service Provider Network. All information will remain anonymous. The intention of the consultation is not to collect personal information, rather, general feedback and opinions on how we can better provide service. Therefore, please refrain from sharing personal or medical information.



Youth Engagement

Youth Engagement	
Perception of Services	Barriers to Participating
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Have you been to any programs in St. James Town? Were they what you needed? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prompt: These can be social, health programs, after school, etc. ● What is the best way to reach out to youth, and get them involved in St. James Town? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Prompt: This can be volunteering, going to different programs ● Have you visited the Corner before? If yes, what did you like about it? If no, why not? 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● In the neighbourhood, there are many health and social programs, clubs, and events. What are some reasons that make it difficult for young people to join these? ● Have you attended any programs at The Corner before? <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ If not, why? ○ If you have, what made you want to be involved?

Youth Engagement

Interests & Needs

- Are there any topics or issues related to social justice or community advocacy that interest you or that you would like to learn more about?
- What mental health topics do you think are the most important for young people in our community to focus on?
 - **Prompt:** (e.g., stress management, anxiety, depression)
- Is there any knowledge or skills that you think would be helpful to learn so you can be more successful in school or the future?

Income Generation

Barriers

- What are some skills that you have that you believe could be used to earn money?

- What are the main challenges that you face in practicing these skills in a way that earns money?

- **(If applicable)** What are some challenges that you have faced returning to work after the pandemic?
 - **Follow up:** What kind of support would be most helpful in overcoming these challenges?

Skills and Capacity Building

- What skills would you like to develop, and why are these important to you?

Income Generation

Goals and Priorities

- What do you expect to get out of income generating programs at the Corner? What are your longer-term goals?

Models of Income Generation

- How can organizations within St James Town help residents earn money?

- What role could community leaders play in supporting residents to generate income?

Mental Health & Social Connectedness

Impact of Social Programs

- How can social programs help with mental health, and what makes them different from traditional healthcare?
- What are some things that can be done, **other than medical treatments**, to help improve health?

Barriers

- We know that social programs can improve health. What are some reasons that make it hard for people to join a social program?
- How can we determine if a social program is improving health?
 - **Prompt:** What steps could we take to measure this?

Mental Health & Social Connectedness

Harm Reduction

- What do you know about harm reduction?
 - **Prompt:** What role does it play in promoting community health?

- What are some reasons that prevent people from attending harm reduction trainings or resources in the community?
 - **Follow up:** How do you think we can get more people involved?

- What kind of harm reduction resources do you think would be the most valuable in St. James Town? Why?

Community Safety

- Do you feel that your community is inclusive/welcoming to people with mental health concerns? If not, why do you think this is the case?

- How do you think community safety affects mental health and social connection?

Appendix-3:
St. James Town Social Charter

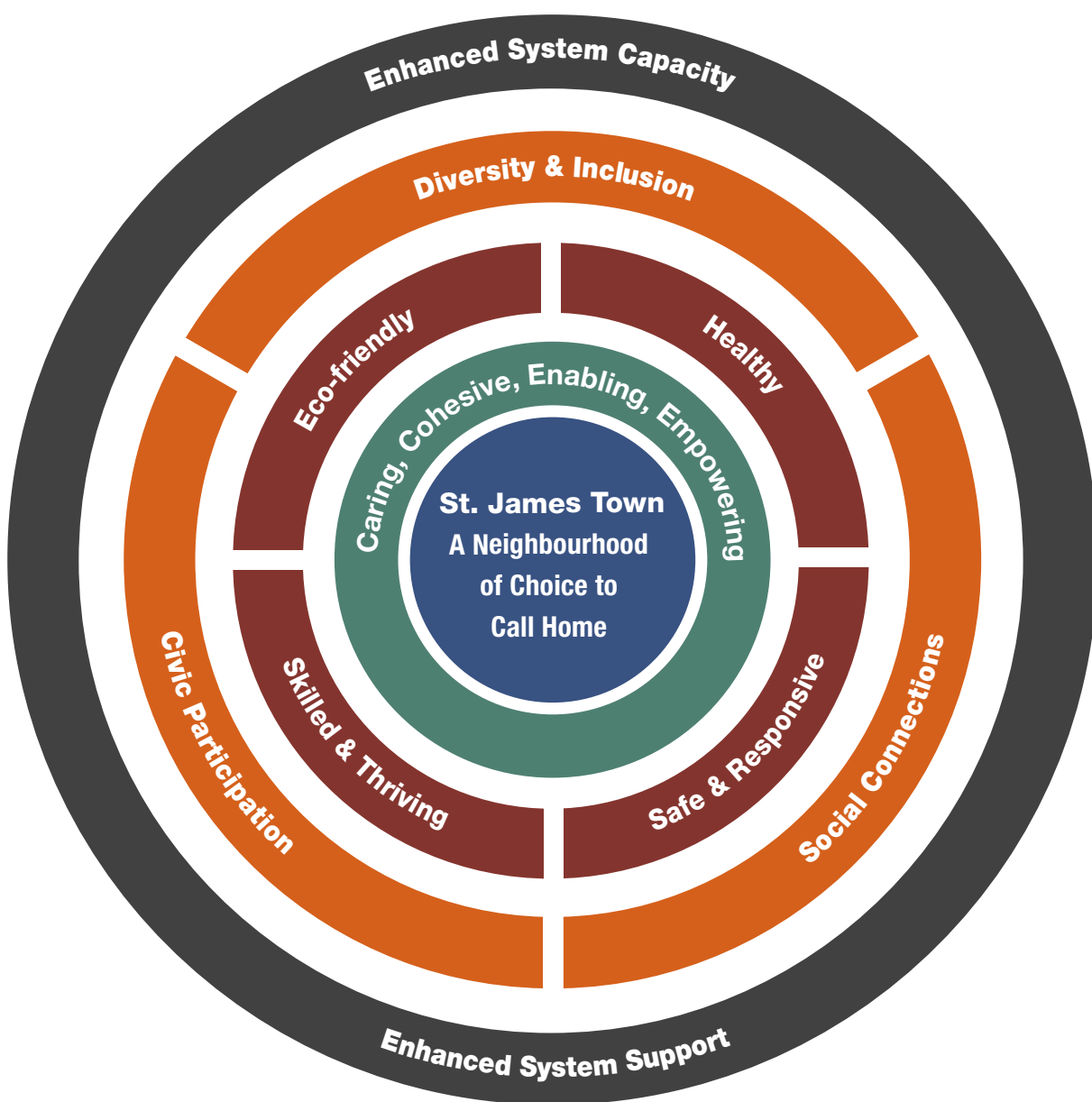
Social Charter

St. James Town has a strong history of collaboration between residents, service providers, and stakeholders, working towards community development, advancing neighbourhood priorities, navigating challenges and addressing systemic barriers through collective action.

NEIGHBOURHOOD CONSULTATIONS

The Social Charter outlines a vision for St. James Town and helps to guide our collective work in 4 action areas in order to achieve the vision. It will be implemented by the the community, St. James Town Service Providers' Network and Health Access /The Corner.

It was developed by stakeholders with diverse backgrounds through a series of community consultations between 2013 – 2019 which included: residents, service providers, The City, Toronto Police Services, Toronto Community Housing, landlords, Toronto Central Local Health Integration Network, artists, Cabbagetown Business Improvement Area as well as academic and research institutions. This visual representation is the result of 18 months of consultations.



PRINCIPLES

DIVERSITY & INCLUSION

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

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.

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)

DOMAINS / ACTION AREAS

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

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

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

Skilled & Thriving

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