



# SAFE & INCLUSIVE STREETS STRATEGY



## KEY POINTS

The Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area (DYBIA) has seen the issues of homelessness, panhandling and street-involvement become of growing concern to our stakeholders in recent years. And we have been increasingly asked by those stakeholders to find solutions.

We prioritize safety and inclusiveness as pivotal to economic development. We believe that by taking the initiative to facilitate, collaborate and build partnerships to tackle visible, street-based concerns, we are investing in the economic competitiveness of our neighbourhood and commercial district.

This *Safe & Inclusive Streets Strategy* identifies steps that the Downtown Yonge community can take to build a safer, more inclusive community for all who live, work, play, study or invest here.

### **THE STRATEGY CULMINATES WITH AN ACTION PLAN FOR 2017 THAT INCLUDES THREE GOALS:**

#### **1. Collaborate**

- Working with all Downtown Yonge stakeholders—including property owners, businesses, residents—to address issues of safety and inclusiveness on a case-by-case basis, bringing in police, social agencies and bylaw enforcement, as needed.

#### **2. Communicate**

- Support a safer neighbourhood by working with property owners, developers and businesses to make their locations as secure as possible.

#### **3. Engage**

- Perhaps most importantly, DYBIA will continue to build relationships with partners who share the goal of collaborative and innovative problem-solving for complex social challenges.

## SAFE, INCLUSIVE & SUCCESSFUL

### WHY A BUSINESS IMPROVEMENT AREA NEEDS A SAFE & INCLUSIVE STREETS STRATEGY.

Safety is the cornerstone of any thriving neighbourhood, community or city. It's the foundation of successful commercial districts, shopping destinations and residential communities. The old real estate adage that it's all about location, is based on an assumption of being safe.

Toronto, often listed as one of the most livable cities in the world, is also an overwhelmingly safe city with crime statistics that are enviable for many other world cities.

As important as safety itself, however, is the *perception* of safety. Toronto, and especially the downtown, is seeing a sharp increase in residential development. Along with the reality of street-based poverty and homelessness, and in an era of squeezed police and shelter budgets, the perception of safety is being challenged in a way it has not been before.

DYBIA has seen the issues of homelessness, panhandling and street-involvement become a growing concern to our stakeholders in recent years. Perceptions are profoundly impacted by street-based challenges like these. And we have been increasingly asked by those stakeholders to find solutions.

For this reason, DYBIA prioritizes safety and inclusiveness as pivotal to economic development, not simply as an operational issue. We believe that by taking the initiative to facilitate, collaborate and build partnerships to tackle visible, street-based concerns, we are investing in the economic competitiveness of our neighbourhood and commercial district.

To be clear, in this *Safe & Inclusive Streets Strategy*, when we talk about social issues we are referring to a variety of individual issues at street level that might influence the perception of safety or quality of life. These include street homelessness, mental health, addictions and other street involvement. We want to emphasize: *This does not imply a correlation between street involved issues and crime, or a judgement of those individuals who are street involved—only that these issues impact on perceptions of the neighbourhood.*

We also recognize that businesses and property owners are not outreach workers, nor are they police or bylaw enforcement officers.

The purpose of this *Safe & Inclusive Streets Strategy* is also not to explain why street involvement exists, or why it negatively impacts perceptions of safety, nor is it to judge the different players involved. Our goal is to identify steps that the Downtown Yonge community can take to build a safer, more inclusive community for all who live, work, play, study or invest here.

## BUSINESSES ON THE FRONT LINES

### AS A BUSINESS COMMUNITY, WE CAN HELP ADDRESS STREET-BASED ISSUES.

It took the death of a jacketless, homeless man, one cold night in January 2015 to focus the attention of the City on the plight of street-involved individuals. The fact that he died in a bus shelter at Yonge and Dundas—Toronto’s most high-volume intersection—compounded the sense that “somebody must have seen him” and yet no one phoned for help.

For DYBIA, this tragedy focused our attention on understanding homelessness and poverty, and how these issues impact a \$5 billion commercial real estate district. The question for us is what role business should play to support access to services and programs for those most in need.

Research in recent years has looked at how Toronto is segregating along income lines<sup>1</sup>, and how poverty is increasingly dividing the city. Indeed, today the spotlight is on issues like poverty, homelessness and street involvement in a way that it perhaps has not been before.

At the same time, there is a growing move to de-criminalize poverty and respond to social needs using a root-cause approach that supports street-involved individuals accessing appropriate programs for their needs, helping people off the street in a constructive and respectful way.

Traditionally, BIAs have approached street-based issues with a focus on enforcement and limited interaction with social agencies. There are exceptions, however, like the work done at the Downtown Winnipeg Business Improvement Zone (BIZ) to tackle homelessness head-on. In the United States, Downtown DC in Washington, D.C. provides a full spectrum of outreach and homelessness services.

In Downtown Yonge, at the heart of downtown Toronto, we are seeing an increasing disconnect between a traditional enforcement approach and the challenges that businesses are seeing on the street. Mental health and drug use are both health concerns that require clinical and social intervention. But businesses are reporting increasing incidents of violent and aggressive behaviours that appear to be linked to mental health or drug use—and require police assistance. Enforcement often only results in a ‘revolving door’ approach, with individuals back on the street without receiving sustained medical or social services help.

As our work with police and outreach partners shows, a collaborative approach to social issues is often a more effective route, as outlined later in this *Strategy*.

Again, this is not just a social issue. We believe social stability is central to economic growth, and reduces both the direct and indirect costs of street involvement to the district economy.

## BACKGROUND: UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

### HOMELESSNESS, STREET INVOLVEMENT, SUBSTANCE USE AND PANHANDLING ARE COMPLEX CHALLENGES. DIFFERENT CAUSES REQUIRE DIFFERENT INTERVENTIONS.

In *TO Prosperity*<sup>2</sup>, the City of Toronto sets out its short-, medium- and long-term goals for fighting poverty in our city, with a focus on housing stability, service access, transit equity, food access, quality jobs and livable incomes.

What the report makes clear is that poverty in Toronto is a growing challenge. It also asks whether we want to fund the high cost of homelessness in emergency shelters, hospitals and jails, or the lower cost of stable housing.

Research published by both DYBIA and other sources in recent years is enlightening.

In 2013, the City of Toronto conducted a *Street Needs Assessment (SNA)*<sup>3</sup>, a point-in-time count of all homeless individuals on the street, in shelters, and in healthcare and correctional facilities. A number of the findings are relevant to the street experience in Downtown Yonge:

- The study counted 5,253 homeless people on the night of April 17, 2013.
- The report notes an increase in people sleeping outdoors compared to 2009.
- Emergency health services were used by almost 50% of homeless individuals in the six months preceding the count.
- Some 31% people sleeping outdoors are on a housing waitlist.
- Mental health supports were needed by 32% compared with alcohol/drug supports (21%), or harm reduction supports (18%), or detox programs (16%).

The SNA found the most important needs of homeless individuals to be: more income from Ontario Works or the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP); access to subsidized housing or an increase in the housing allowance; help finding affordable housing; and help finding employment or job training.

In 2015, DYBIA released *Yonge Love: Campaign Findings Report*<sup>4</sup> which detailed the results of a seven-month, multi-platform community consultation on the future of Yonge Street and Downtown Yonge. Key themes emerging from the consultation focused on walkable, flexible and complete streets that are vibrant and active. There was also a core of responses that highlighted concerns about homelessness.

In one question, respondents were asked to “spend” \$10,000 on a variety of options that would enhance the neighbourhood. The third highest amount was on funding for homelessness, at 13% of the total spent, while a need for that funding was indicated by 63% of respondents.

## BACKGROUND: UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

Also in 2015, DYBIA conducted an observational study<sup>5</sup> of street-involved individuals in Downtown Yonge to better understand patterns, trends and behaviours around street involvement, as a first step toward identifying constructive solutions.

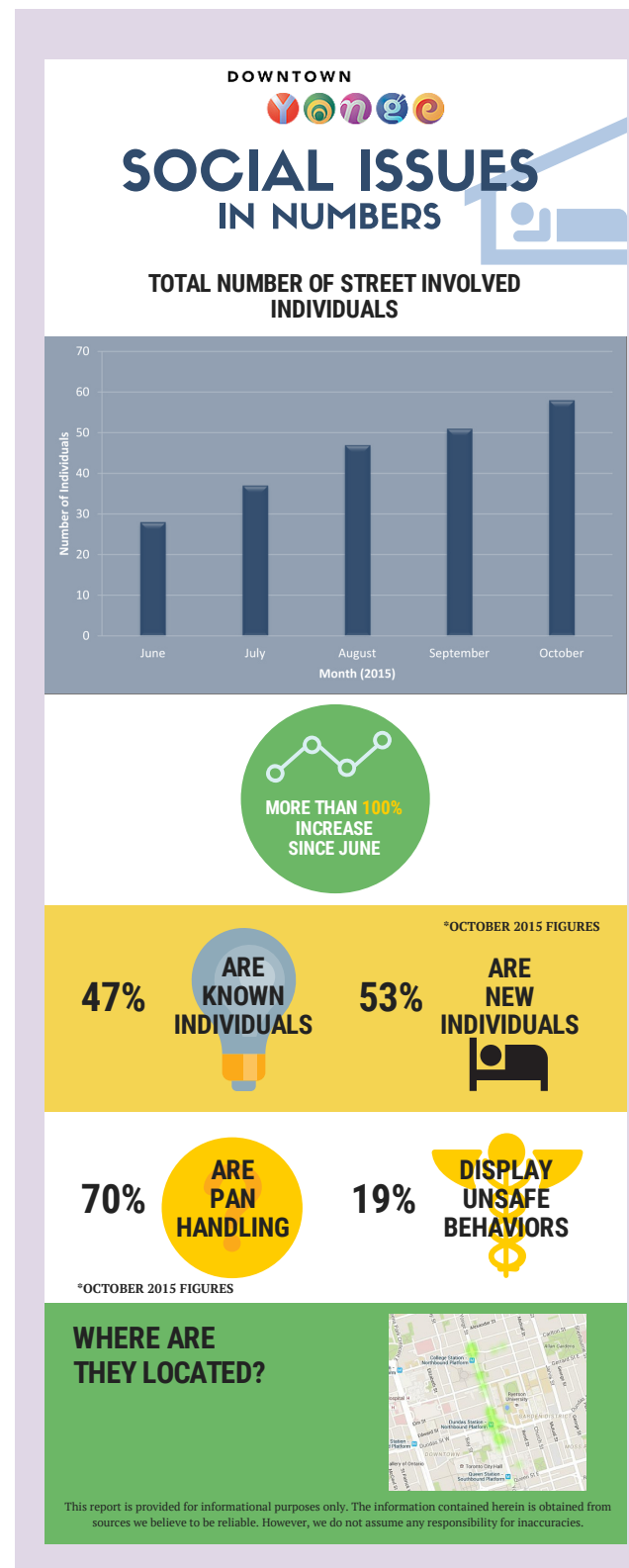
The study ran from June through October 2015. A number of key observations emerged:

- Just under 30 street-involved individuals were observed in June, a number that increased to almost 60 in October. That amounts to a more-than-100% increase over five months.
- About half of the individuals were regulars in the neighbourhood and known to DYBIA. The other half were new arrivals in the neighbourhood during the study period.
- About 70% were observed panhandling.
- About 20% displayed unsafe behaviours of some kind.
- The majority of individuals observed were located along Yonge Street, close to Dundas.

DYBIA members also highlighted that street-based poverty and homelessness was an escalating issue for our neighbourhood in 2014 and 2016 member surveys:

- In 2014, homelessness and panhandling were identified as Downtown Yonge's greatest challenge by 7% of employees, 9% of residents and 13% of businesses respectively. However, overall, it emerged as the fourth-ranked challenge for the neighbourhood.
- In 2016, homelessness and panhandling was identified as Downtown Yonge's greatest challenge by almost 27% of respondents—the highest-ranked challenge. A further 63% responded that “More” or “Much more” Safety & Security is needed in the neighbourhood.

As part of our Summer 2016 focus on understanding social issues in Downtown Yonge, we conducted a month-long street assessment to identify chronic locations of street-involved activity in our area. During August, there were approximately 15 street-involved individuals at any one time along Yonge Street in Downtown Yonge and in its parks and public areas. Approximately seven locations were deemed “chronic”.





# BACKGROUND: UNDERSTANDING THE ISSUES

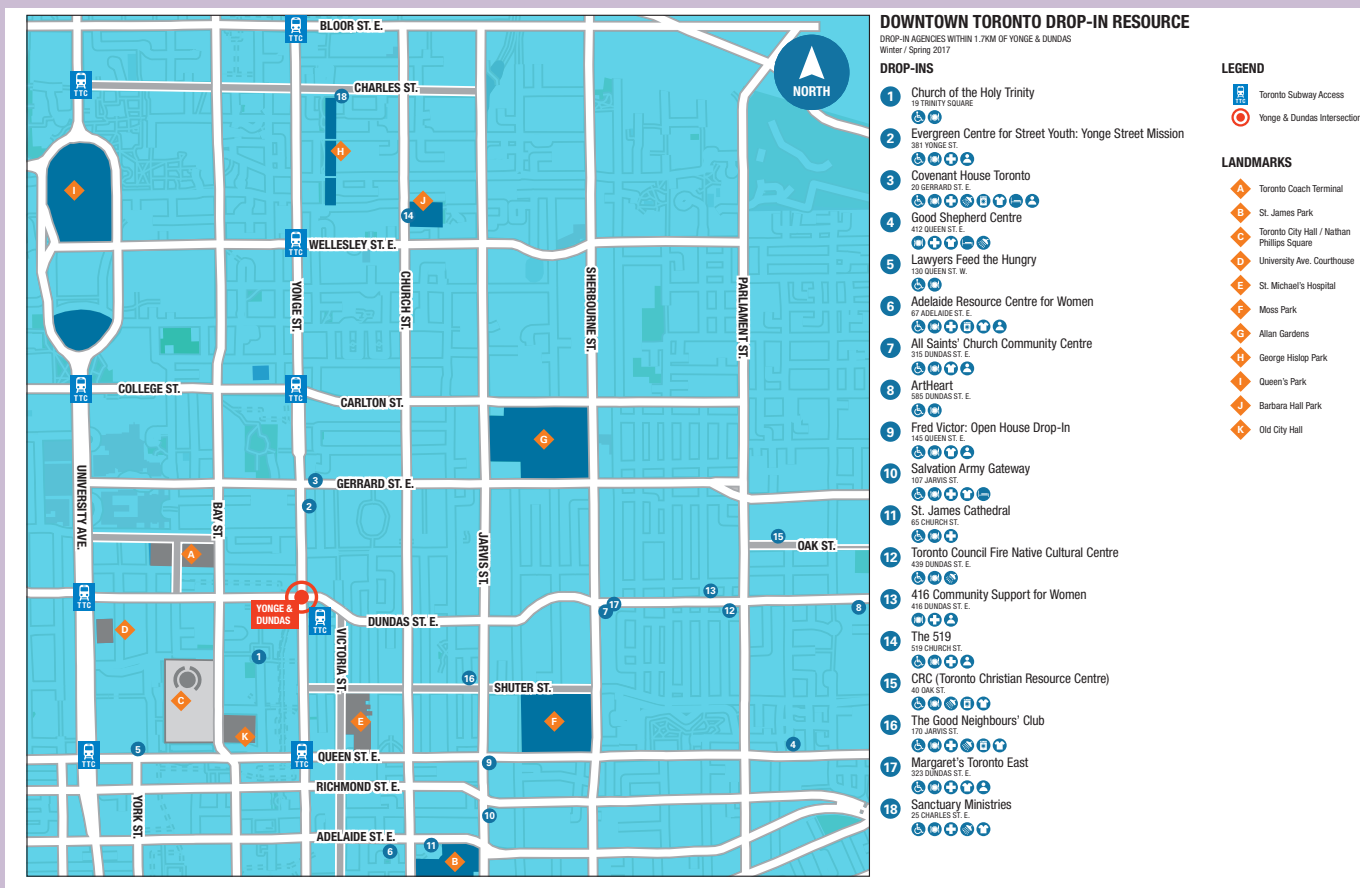
As a side note, during our interactions with street-involved individuals, we were often told that the income to be made from panhandling is a strong disincentive to accessing services. Anecdotally, the average daily income from panhandling in Downtown Yonge is reported to be around \$150/day—with some panhandlers reporting income of up to \$600/day if accompanied by a pet dog.

## DOWNTOWN TORONTO DROP-IN RESOURCE, 2016

In Summer 2016, DYBIA published the *Downtown Toronto Drop-In Resource*, a map showing some 20 drop-in programs within a 10-minute walk of the Yonge and Dundas intersection. (See below.) The purpose of the tool was simply to provide residents, businesses and street-involved individuals with information on easily accessible social services.

Due to demand, we distributed more than 1,500 hard copies of the booklet, with nearly half requested by businesses and the balance by police, social agencies, educational institutions and the City.

We then published an updated version for Winter-Spring 2017. This time, the first print run was for 2,500 in anticipation of demand for copies.



## A CHANGING NEIGHBOURHOOD WITH CHANGING NEEDS

**WE BELIEVE THAT OUR FAST-GROWING DOWNTOWN COMMUNITY NEEDS MORE INVESTMENT IN SOCIAL PROGRAMS, POLICE AND OTHER SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE. WE ALSO BELIEVE THESE SERVICES MUST BE BETTER COORDINATED.**

DYBIA is one of the largest BIAs in the city with 2,000 members. Of that, property owners number around 200 and businesses account for about 1,800.

But business is only one part of the community we represent.

Like many downtown neighbourhoods in Canadian cities, Downtown Yonge is seeing extensive residential growth, along with the intensification that comes with it<sup>6</sup>. There are currently 175,000 people living within a 10-minute walk of Yonge and College Streets. According to forecasts, that population is expected to increase by 43% between 2009 and 2024<sup>7</sup>. The total number of new condominium units being developed in the existing Downtown Yonge BIA boundary is 8,607, with a further 14,119 units being developed in the proposed expanded boundary.

That's a total 22,726 new units in the wider Downtown Yonge neighbourhood<sup>8</sup>.

In addition to residents, the daytime population swells to 580,000 as people come into the neighbourhood to work. Ryerson University alone accounts for 110,000 students and faculty coming into Downtown Yonge every year.

Add to the mix the more than 40 million pedestrians travelling northbound and southbound on Yonge Street at Dundas every year, and 51 million commuters who use Downtown Yonge's three subway stations (College, Dundas, Queen) annually<sup>9</sup>.

In the face of such significant growth, there remain equally significant challenges to neighbourhood and city building<sup>10</sup>. Some 25% of children and 20% of adults in the city live below the poverty line; 90,000 households are on the waiting list for social housing; and more than 16,000 children are waiting for subsidized childcare.

Despite Toronto being named one of the most liveable, prosperous and competitive cities in the world, many find housing unaffordable—and jobs are increasingly divided between high-skilled/well-paid, and part-time/low-paid/precarious.

These are just some of the factors affecting poverty and homelessness. At the same time, the Toronto Police Service (TPS) is looking to implement sweeping organizational change while also decreasing its annual budget.

To provide some context for the demands made on TPS, consider that police dealt with almost 150,000 non-emergency calls in 2015—that's more than 410 calls a day<sup>11</sup>. This was done with fewer uniformed officers than the City had in 1980 (5,235 compared with 5,412). For the



## A CHANGING NEIGHBOURHOOD WITH CHANGING NEEDS

downtown divisions that DYBIA works with most closely, anecdotal evidence suggests that 45% of all calls to police involve mental health.

It is against this dichotomy of high residential growth and increasing income division, exacerbated by growing poverty and a cut to police and shelter budgets, that we feel the need to advocate for a more collaborative, coordinated approach to safety and inclusiveness in our Downtown Yonge neighbourhood.

**After all, community safety is a collective responsibility and we can all act as ‘eyes and ears’ to keep our neighbourhood safe.**

## CRIME ISN'T JUST A STATISTIC

### **ALTHOUGH CRIME STATISTICS SHOW A DOWNWARD TREND DOWNTOWN, WE BELIEVE THAT MANY INCIDENTS ARE NOT BEING REPORTED.**

Downtown Yonge is split between two police divisions—51 Division to the east of Yonge Street, and 52 Division to the west.

In 2016, in partnership with both divisions, we embarked on an incident logging pilot study with a group of 13 streetfront businesses in the Downtown Yonge neighbourhood. The project asked businesses to provide weekly logs of incidents “that made their staff or customers feel unsafe or threatened in some way” in their stores. These logs were collected and tallied to see how many of the incidents were reported to police.

The goal was two-fold:

- To assess what types of incidents Downtown Yonge businesses are facing; and
- To assess whether or not businesses are reporting incidents to police.

The results showed that businesses reported just 30% of incidents to police. This finding was backed up by anecdotal evidence gathered during discussions with businesses in the neighbourhood as well as our local patrol officers.

In addition, we found that:

- Many businesses feel that it's not worth reporting incidents in their stores, either because they believe the incidents are not important enough to warrant police attention or they believe that police will not be able to respond in a timely manner.
- Those same businesses are often not aware of various incident reporting channels—such as the non-emergency number or online reporting—and tools like the Crime Prevention through Environmental Design (CPTED) safety audit, which the police provide as a free service.
- Businesses encounter a high number of incidents that appear to involve substance use or mental health issues—a trend that is underscored by the high demand for harm reduction supplies and the growing number of discarded used needles being reported by DYBIA. More on that later in this *Strategy*.

# CRIME ISN'T JUST A STATISTIC

## RAISING AWARENESS OF HOW TO REPORT A CRIME

Given that the police budget is allocated based on Calls for Service from the public, we recognize that under-reporting leads to fewer police resources in our community.

To that end, we worked with 51 and 52 Divisions to design a handy and simple-to-use *How to Report a Crime* infographic showing the five different channels available for reporting crime.

To date, more than 5,000 infographics have been distributed in hard copy alone, to businesses, police, property owners, social agencies and other DYBIA stakeholders. In 2017, DYBIA will be working with police to produce and distribute this infographic for all 17 police divisions in the TPS.



**How to Report a Crime**

**Is it an emergency?**  
 Situations where the safety of people or property are at risk  
 • Fire  
 • Crime in progress  
 • Medical Emergency  
**Call 9-1-1**

**If it's not an emergency**  
**Call (416)-808-2222**

**If you want to report online**  
 • Theft  
 • Fraud  
 • Driving complaint  
 • Property damage  
 • Damage to vehicle  
 • Theft from a vehicle  
 • Graffiti (not hate-crime related)  
 • Theft of gas (from a gas station)  
**Visit [www.torontopolice.on.ca/core/](http://www.torontopolice.on.ca/core/)**

**Have an ongoing issue?**  
 • Trespassing  
 • Nuisance issues  
 • Noise complaints  
 • etc...  
**Telephone: 51 Division (416) 808-5100 & request a Community Complaint Form**

**Want to remain anonymous?**  
 If you have ANY information on a crime you want to report  
**Crime Stoppers**  
**[www.222tips.com](http://www.222tips.com)**  
**OR**  
**1-800-222-TIPS (8477)**  
**OR**  
**Text TOR+message to CRIMES (274637)**

## ALTERNATIVES TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

### IF WE AGREE THAT POVERTY IS NOT A CRIME, AND IS THUS NOT A POLICE MATTER, WHAT ALTERNATIVES ARE WE PROVIDING?

In 2016, DYBIA wanted to ascertain the opportunities and challenges faced by the social agencies located in and around our neighbourhood. Through discussions with more than twenty social agencies in the area, a few common themes emerged:

- The system relies too much on temporary “band-aids” (e.g. emergency shelters instead of housing), and does not address root-cause issues of poverty, homelessness, mental health and substance use.
- There are profound institutional frameworks that make the ‘revolving door’ impossible to escape while at the same time making little economic sense and tying up resources.
- Funding for social agencies is fragmented, unreliable and often highly competitive, which creates instability for programs.
- Although there is great work being done and great programs on offer, there is often limited awareness of the full spectrum of services available, even within the social services sector itself.
- There is potential to foster wider interaction between police, social agencies, BIAs, City outreach workers and other community members. This would improve awareness of poverty, the interventions available and how to access them.
- There is likewise a great need to educate residents and businesses on what street-based activities are legal (e.g. poverty is not a crime; non-aggressive panhandling is legal as long as the right of way is not impeded) versus those that are illegal (e.g. panhandling at an ATM; panhandling on private property without permission).
- Overall, social agencies identified a pressing need for supportive housing, mental health services and substance use services.

If, as a business community, we can start to tackle root causes of social issues, it would also arguably reduce calls to police and more resources would be available for active community safety initiatives.

# ALTERNATIVES TO LAW ENFORCEMENT

## Some Solutions Cause Other Problems

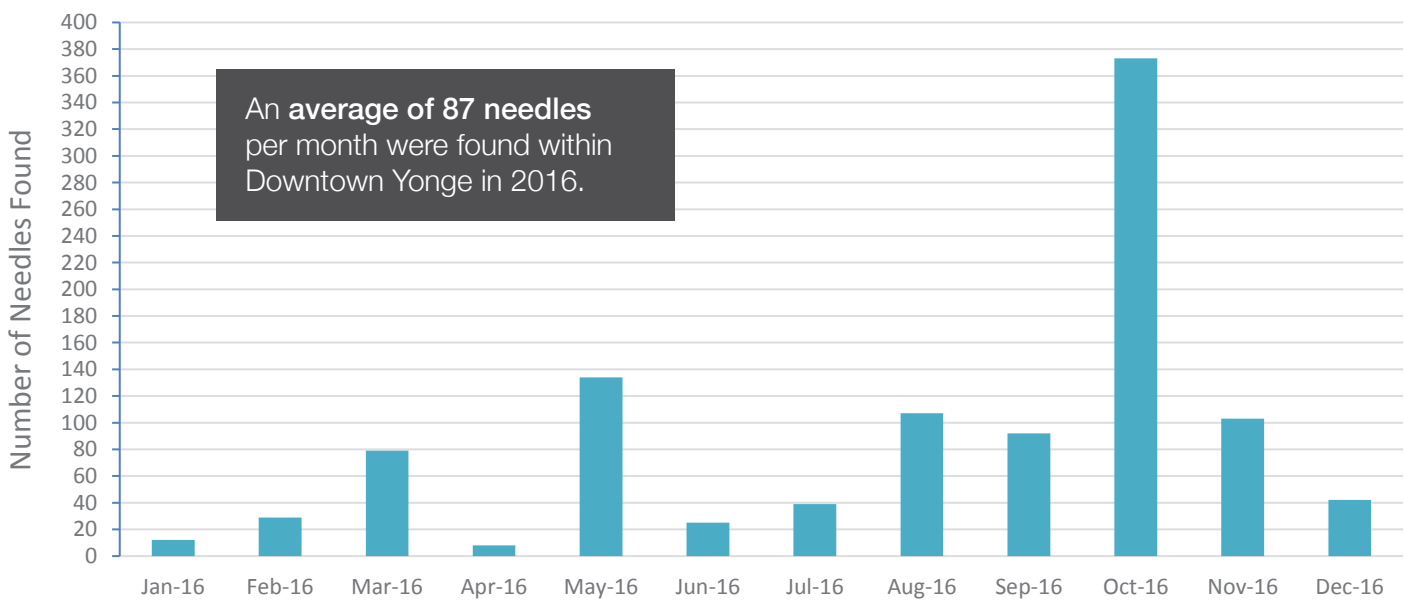
Consider a harm reduction program like the The Works at Toronto Public Health, which make available harm reduction kits (needles, pipes and other paraphernalia) to substance users. Programs like this play a critical role in preventing the spread of diseases like hepatitis and HIV through shared needle use. However, there is an unintended consequence of providing free harm reduction supplies: the improper disposal of used needles.

The Works typically hands out 800,000 clean needles annually and achieves a return rate of 75%. While this is relatively high, it nonetheless means that 200,000 needles are not returned. In 2016, The Works distributed almost one million needles through their mobile outreach, street outreach and Victoria Street location.

In 2016, DYBIA cleaned up 1,043 improperly disposed-of needles in our neighbourhood – an average of 87 per month. In early 2017, our team cleaned up 63 used needles in January and 70 in February—year-over-year increases of 425% and 141% respectively.

Obviously, the improper disposal of used needles has a negative impact on perceptions of safety and inclusiveness in our neighbourhood. We are advocating for more collaboration to ensure all considerations and possible consequences are taken into account.

## Number of Needles Found by Month, 2016



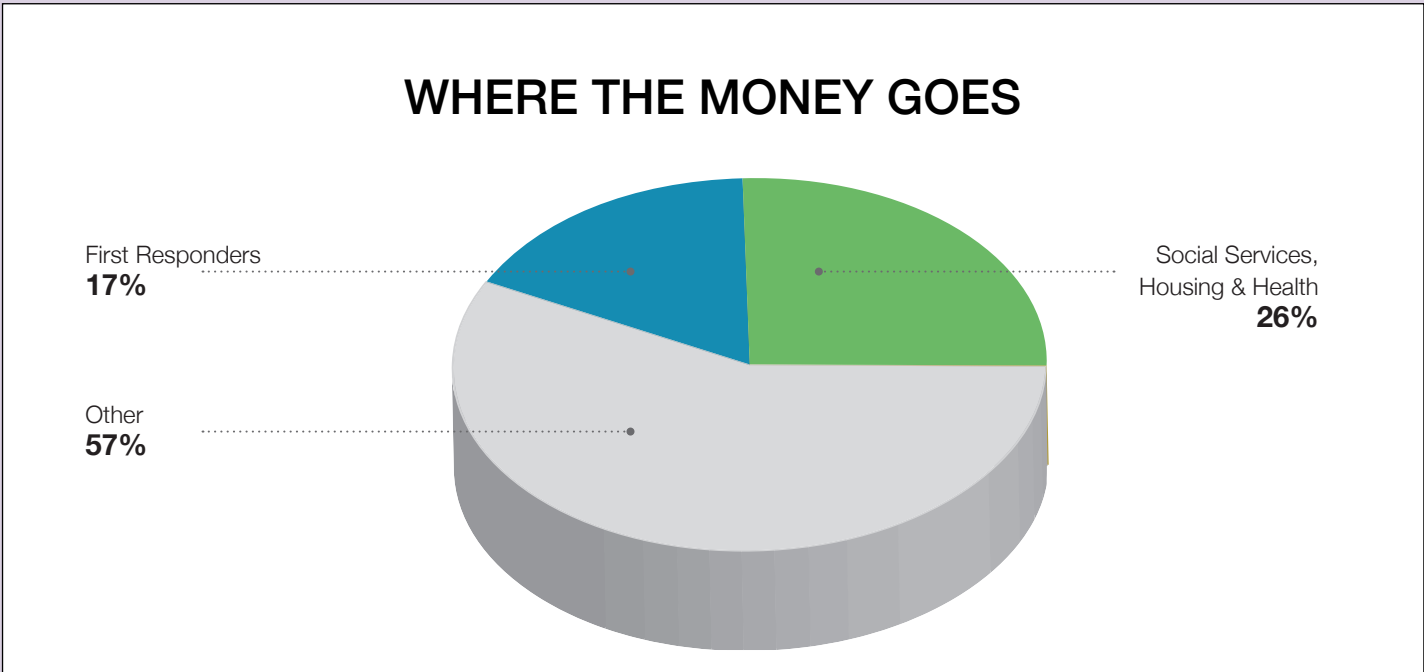
Source: DYBIA

## MONEY COULD BE BETTER SPENT

### AS A BUSINESS COMMUNITY, WE FEEL THAT STREET-INVOLVEMENT IS NOT BEING MANAGED IN A COST-EFFECTIVE WAY.

When examining how homelessness and street involvement are being managed, a good place to start is the City of Toronto tax-supported operating budget. Viewed through a safe and inclusive lens, the 2017 budget raises some questions.

Key social services account for 26% of the City’s budget and include Employment & Social Services, Long-Term Care, Children’s Services, Toronto Public Health, and Shelter, Support & Housing. A further 17% is spent on emergency first responders like Fire, Police and EMS who are often responsible for street-based social issues after hours.



**First Responders** Include Toronto Police Services, Toronto Fire Services, Toronto Paramedic Services

**Social Services, Housing & Health** includes Toronto Employment & Social Services, Long-Term Care Homes & Services, Children’s Services, Toronto Public Health, Shelter, Support & Housing Administration

**Other** includes Non-Program, Capital and Corporate Financing, Debt Charges, Governance and Internal Services, Other City Services, Fleet and Facilities, City Planning and MLS, Parks, Forestry & Recreation, Toronto Public Library, Transportation Services, Toronto Transit Commission (TTC)]

*Based on “Where The Money Goes”, 2017–2026, City of Toronto Tax Supported Operating Budget, www.toronto.ca, December 2016, page1*



**MONEY COULD BE BETTER SPENT**



Given this context, and using data from two reliable sources, we were able to estimate the daily cost of homelessness to the City<sup>12</sup>.

Instead of spending \$421,386/night (\$153 million a year) providing emergency and short-term interventions for homelessness, the City could feasibly spend \$34,512/night (\$13 million a year) housing the same number of people. (See graphic left.)

The differential between the two spending options is significant and certainly worth further discussion.

## THIS MUST BE A JOINT EFFORT

### WE BELIEVE IN THE POWER OF COLLABORATION WHERE POLICE, SOCIAL INFRASTRUCTURE AND THE COMMUNITY WORK TOGETHER.

In Downtown Yonge, there are two key groups that work to foster a safe and inclusive neighbourhood, the TPS and the social agencies and programs that provide support for social issues.

DYBIA believes that better and more effective interaction between the neighbourhood, police and social agencies is needed to address escalating social issues before they become crises<sup>13</sup>.

In discussions with police, we decided to try and define how businesses and other community members can collaborate in a more effective way.

### HOW SAFE AND INCLUSIVE INTERACTS WITH COMMUNITY

In the Venn diagrams on the next page, the blue circle represents the police and community perceptions of safety. The turquoise circle represents public or non-profit infrastructure including social agencies, hospitals and outreach programs, which all play a role in perceptions of inclusivity. The pale blue circle represents the larger neighbourhood of residents, businesses, students and other stakeholders who can play a role in the area's well-being.

The interplay between these three different sectors is key to understanding the current disconnect.

The amber areas represent escalating challenges; the red area represents crisis.

In the current scenario, shown in **Diagram 1** (see next page), the three sectors operate too much on the margins of crisis. The police are left to deal with social crises involving mental health and substance use; there are insufficient shelters and affordable housing to accommodate those in need; and the neighbourhood is increasingly vocal in its concerns about street-based issues of all kinds. Public health interventions for addictions and mental health are in need of expansion. The white arrows symbolize the revolving door that traps individuals and defies resolution.

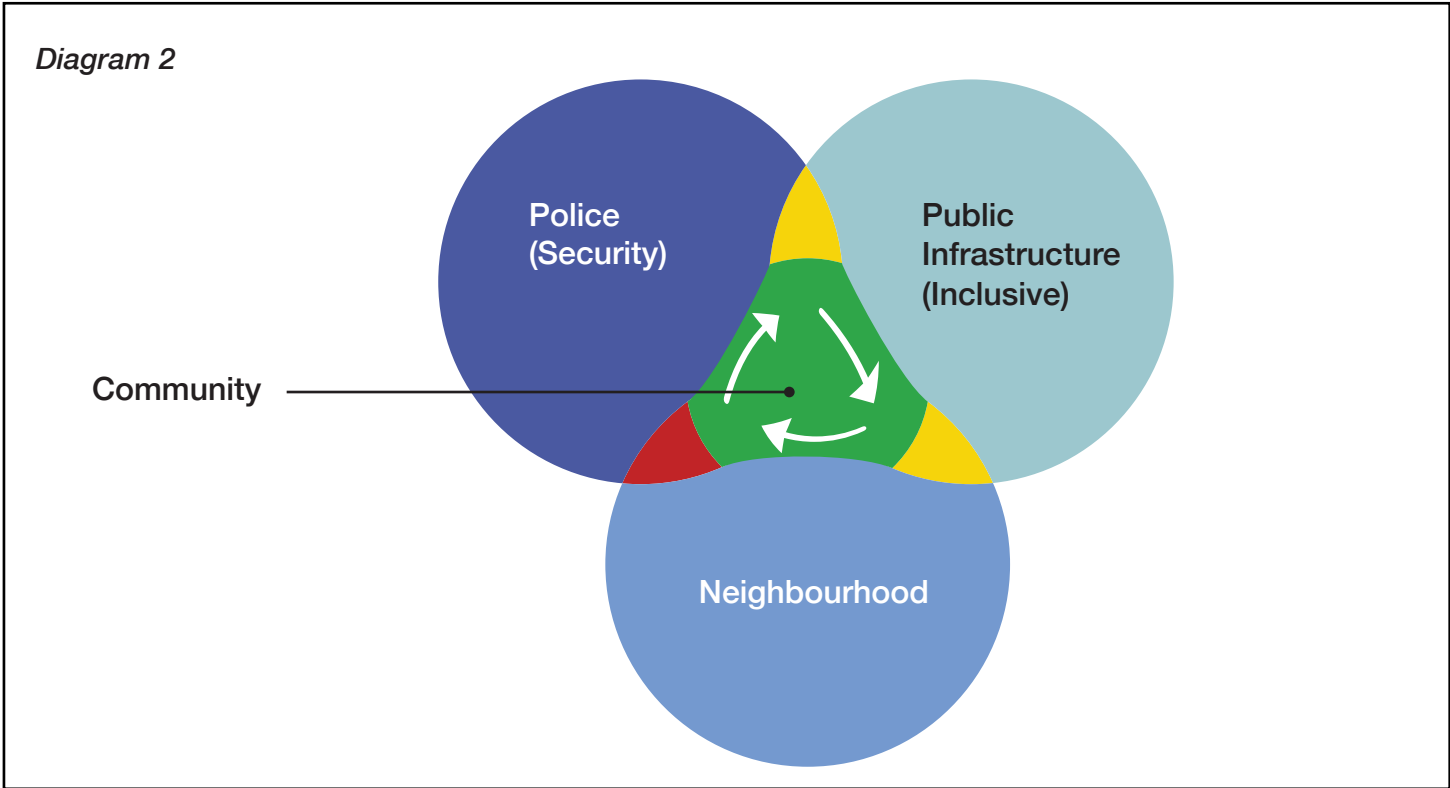
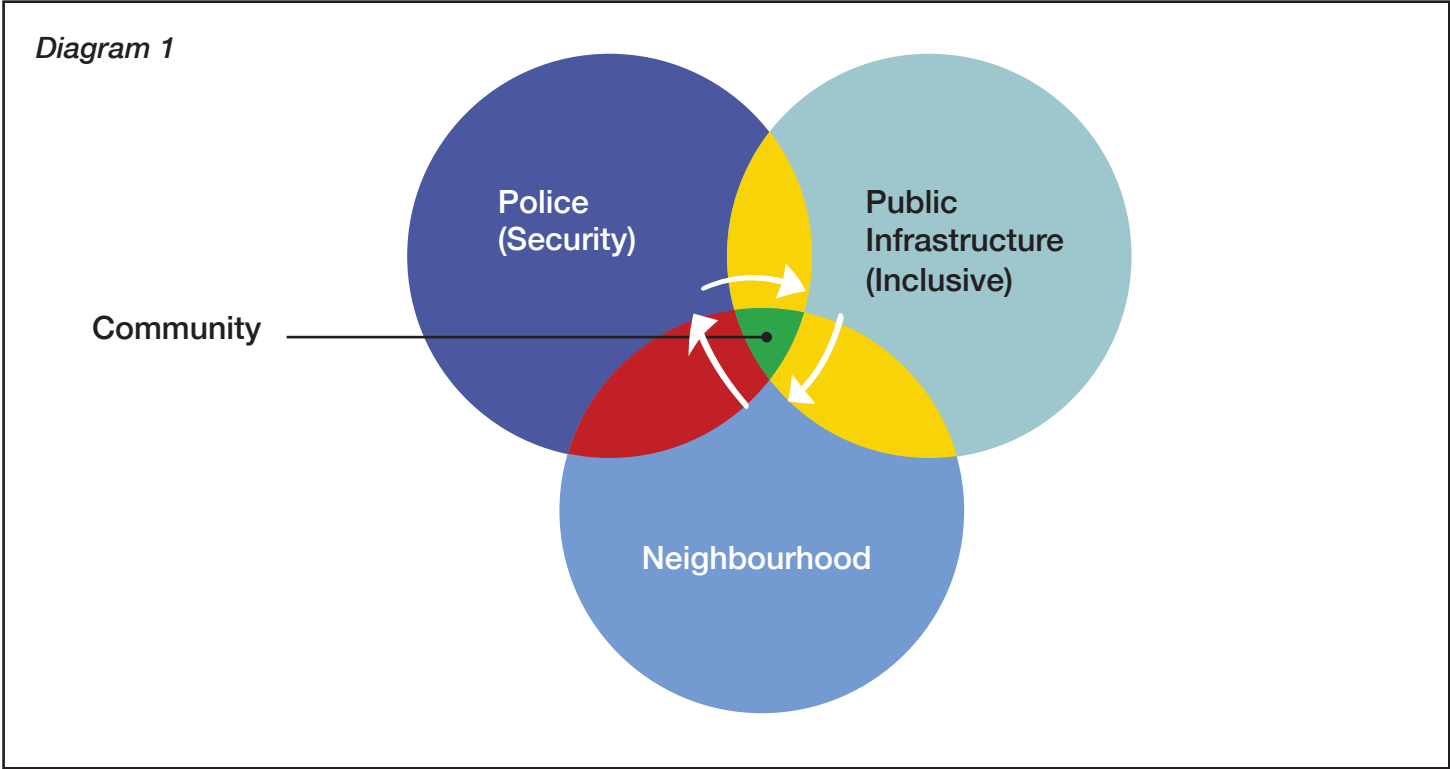
Ideally, as shown in **Diagram 2** (see next page), the three sectors interact seamlessly and supportively, producing a high-functioning and supportive community.

In this scenario, police spend the majority of their time on crime prevention, safety and security; public infrastructure effectively handles social issues and generally prevents them from escalating into a crisis; and the wider neighbourhood plays a strong and constructive role in the area's well-being by reporting crimes, alerting outreach to street-involved individuals, and supporting the agencies that provide pathways out of poverty, rather than giving handouts to panhandlers. Red and amber areas are minimal and represent exceptions rather than the rule.

It all boils down to effective partnerships between the various different stakeholders that make up a community.



**THIS MUST BE A JOINT EFFORT**



## OUTSIDE-THE-BOX PARTNERSHIPS

### WE BELIEVE THAT SOLUTIONS SPRING FROM PARTNERSHIPS THAT GO BEYOND THE TRADITIONAL.

The *Safe & Inclusive Streets Strategy* focuses on the positive actions a BIA can take to be part of the solution, including:

- Building awareness of street-based issues and appropriate responses for both business members and neighbourhood stakeholders.
- Providing details of social programs and supports in the neighbourhood.
- Actively building partnerships between business, by-law enforcement, police and social agencies.

However, we do recognize that the *Strategy* is not an exhaustive analysis of homelessness and poverty—or of the decriminalization of poverty; nor does it suggest poverty and crime are linked.

In 2016, DYBIA facilitated or coordinated a number of key—and in some cases, unorthodox—partnerships.

- Spring 2016 saw the publication and distribution of the *How to Report a Crime* infographic, in consultation with the police and based on input from business members.
- In July 2016, a partnership between DYBIA, Ryerson University and various social agencies resulted in the publication and distribution of the *Downtown Toronto Drop-In Resource* – a booklet designed to provide locations and details of drop-in services available within a 2-km radius of Yonge-Dundas Square.
- In Summer 2016, after being introduced by DYBIA, 51 and 52 Divisions and Streets to Homes decided to try a partnered outreach program where one police officer and one outreach worker would go out on the streets together. The first session was deemed a success by both sides and ways to make it a regular partnership are under discussion.
- Another initiative, dubbed *The Walkabout*, is a partnership between an Aboriginal Elder and police officers from 51 Division, aimed at doing outreach and providing services for Aboriginal adults in the downtown. DYBIA provides the honorarium for the Elder and monthly sessions are currently taking place.
- DYBIA hosts a weekly Yonge Street check-in meeting with Neighbourhood Safety Officers from both 51 and 52 Division, to share information and discuss incidents that have taken place during the week. These meetings sometimes include fire inspectors or bylaw officers depending on the issues being discussed, and solutions being sought.

## OUTSIDE-THE-BOX PARTNERSHIPS

- During 2016, DYBIA facilitated meetings and created connections between the police, Streets to Homes and our members for more than 40 businesses and property owner members. The goal with these connections was to educate and encourage members to use available tools for both crime prevention and helping move street-involved individuals into appropriate programs.
- The Faculty of Community Services at Ryerson University invited DYBIA and 51 Division to speak to Social Innovation students on the topic of “wicked social problems”. This involved two afternoon lectures that included a walk of the laneways and parks within a 5-minute radius of the campus. This lecture will be featured again in the 2017-18 course.

These are just some examples of how creating non-traditional partnerships between business, outreach workers, social agencies, police and the wider community can generate new solutions to long-established challenges.

Downtown Yonge believes it is our role to identify what the business community, and wider neighbourhood, can do to contribute positively to addressing street-based concerns.

**We recognize we don't have all the answers, or even understand all the challenges.  
But we are taking steps to change the conversation.**



# ACTION PLAN 2017

## ACTION PLAN 2017

## COLLABORATE

Work with all DYBIA stakeholders—property owners, businesses, residents—to address issues of safety and inclusiveness on a case-by-case basis, bringing in police, social agencies and bylaw enforcement partners as needed:

- Establish a multi-disciplinary task force to tackle complex and chronic issues of safety and inclusiveness in a collaborative way.
- Participate in 51 Division's quarterly BIA meetings to work more closely on shared interests with Cabbagetown BIA; Church-Wellesley Village BIA; and the St Lawrence Neighbourhood BIA.
- Build on, and expand, partnership initiatives that enhance safety and inclusiveness in Downtown Yonge:
  - Continue to support outreach with Aboriginal Elders and police to street-involved adults.
  - Identify opportunities to work with street artists and artisans in partnership with the Native Canadian Centre of Toronto.
  - Continue to identify opportunities for partnered outreach with Streets to Homes and police, or other outreach agencies.
  - Identify and work with partners who specialize in mental health and addictions outreach.
- Partner with The Works to provide a secure needle dropbox at their Victoria Street location as well as working with them to develop appropriate metrics around proper needle disposal.
- Collaborate with The Works on building metrics around the proposed Supervised Injection Site expected to open at their location in Fall 2017.

## ACTION PLAN 2017

## COMMUNICATE

Support a safer neighbourhood by working with property owners, developers and businesses to make their locations as secure as possible.

- Create monthly social media content that educates members about panhandling, the Safe Streets Act, the Charter of Rights, supervised injection sites and other related topics.
- Support a more inclusive neighbourhood by providing accessible information on nearby social programs and drop-ins, to encourage access to services. In 2017, DYBIA will publish the *Downtown Toronto Drop-in Resource* booklet for Winter-Spring 2017 and Summer-Fall 2017. We plan to work with 51 and 52 Division's Youth in Policing Initiative during Summer 2017 to distribute the booklet.
- Actively communicate with property owners and businesses on ways to make their buildings and spaces more secure. For instance:
  - Hold Crime Prevention Workshops in partnership with police.
  - Distribute Safety & Security Checklists in Winter-Spring 2017 and Summer-Fall 2017.
  - Conduct Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) safety audits in partnership with 51 and 52 Divisions.
  - Ensure trespass letters are signed for building owners and businesses, at their request.
  - Distribute *How to Report a Crime* infographic for 51 and 52 Division stakeholders.

**ACTION PLAN 2017**

## ENGAGE

Perhaps most importantly, DYBIA will continue to build relationships with partners who share the goal of collaborative and innovative problem-solving for complex social challenges.

- In 2017, DYBIA will be focusing on the Supporting People Off the Streets (SPOTS) project in partnership with the Toronto Drop-In Network (TDIN) and the City of Toronto.
- DYBIA will conduct a semi-annual street assessment walk in February and August in partnership with Ryerson University where possible. The purpose of the walk is to identify chronic locations of street involvement in the neighbourhood, to help us work more closely with property owners and City partners.
- Actively use DYBIA social media channels to support police and social agencies in their work, as well as charitable events and initiatives in Downtown Yonge.
- Provide quarterly volunteer listings via website and social media channels to support Downtown Yonge social agencies looking for donations or volunteers for specific or long-term purposes. Although we focus on Downtown Yonge-based agencies, we do accept postings from agencies further afield in the downtown.

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## SAFE & INCLUSIVE STRATEGY ENDNOTES

1. Hulchanski, David: *The Three Cities within Toronto*, 2010, University of Toronto
2. City of Toronto, *TO Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy*, 2015
3. City of Toronto, *Street Needs Assessment*, 2013
4. Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area, *Yonge Love Campaign Findings Report*, 2015
5. Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area, *Street Needs Observational Study*, 2015
6. Environics Analytics, 2014
7. Environics Analytics, *Population Projections*, 2014
8. Downtown Yonge Business Improvement Area, *Condo Developments*, 2016
9. Springboard traffic counts, 2009-date; and TTC data, 2012-13
10. City of Toronto, *TO Prosperity: Toronto Poverty Reduction Strategy*, 2015
11. Toronto Police Service, *The Way Forward: Modernizing Community Safety in Toronto*, 2017
12. The Homeless Hub, *The Real Cost of Homelessness*, York University, 2012; SNA, 2013
13. The Furthering Our Communities Uniting Services (FOCUS) tables currently being held in various police divisions throughout the city are a good example. A partnership between social agencies and police, there is a Downtown East FOCUS table that runs out of 51 Division, aimed at intervening where individuals, families or locations are facing situations of acute elevated risk.



# THANK YOU

A big thank you to everyone who made it possible for Downtown Yonge BIA to start understanding and discussing the question of Safety and Inclusiveness in our neighbourhood and in our city. Special shout outs to:

- Our City Councillor Kristyn Wong-Tam for her ongoing support and insight.
- Our partners in the Toronto Police Service—especially 51 and 52 Divisions—who took the time to teach us about relevant legislation, crime prevention strategies and community policing.

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- Our partners in neighbourhood social agencies—and especially the Street Outreach Team at Streets to Homes, who allowed us to shadow them on outreach walks, talked to us about homelessness and helped us understand the various complex issues at play on Downtown Yonge's streets. A special mention to: Hellen Haziprodomu, Acting Street Outreach Programs Officer at Streets to Homes in 2016, who supported our efforts to learn more; and Shaun Hopkins, Manager of The Works at Toronto Public Health, for her willingness to work with us.
- We also owe a huge debt of thanks to Rona Abramovich, Cathy Crowe and Melanie Panitch at Ryerson University who collaborated with us, helped us find student interns and believed in the value of our semi-annual *Downtown Toronto Drop-In Resource*.

We couldn't have done it without all of you!

