Homeless Housing in Coronavirus Surrey

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POST 2150 Citylab 6 Cultivating Community

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Situation

- We recognize that homeless and transition shelter providers serve the most vulnerable people in our community.
- These communities have greater health concerns and may be at greater risk to the virus.
- People sharing living spaces and meals
  - Shelters
  - Transition houses
  - Safe houses
  - Single Room Occupancies
  - Supportive house providers

Strengths

- Shelter community inclusiveness
- Self awareness of others and the implications of contamination
- 3 meals and a cot
  - Healthy and nutritious meals
- Immediate access to medical supplies/services and safe drug supplies
- Social Workers and trained shelter workers
  - Trained/Educated
  - Day to day scenarios in a shelter
- Community activists: without them will the government take action to enable shelter for the homeless community

Weaknesses

- Tight corridors, shared rooms, and a different cot each night (shelters)
    - Not accomplishing social distancing
- Unwillingness to communicate when you are not well
- Mingling without meeting social distancing guidelines
- Cleaners may not employ full standards of cleaning
    - May use dirty supplies or not cover all areas
- Not enough cleaning personnel on a regular basis
- Cleaning protocols: lack of clear protocols from one center to another.

Opportunities

- Closed Surrey recreational centers can temporarily house the homeless and reduce numbers in the current shelter system
  - Transform the use of these centres: Transformational Placemaking
  - Ensure their right to safe shelter and food while ensuring social distancing and providing additional shelter space
- Make use of closed or under-utilized hotels
  - For example, Toronto has designated hotels to be used as homeless shelters
- Potential to use religious spaces that are temporarily closed down
- Usage of Parks
  - Meeting social distancing guidelines
  - Having washing and sanitation facilities

Threats

- Cleaning and housing staff moving from one shelter to another
  - Could be moving infections from one shelter to another shelter
- Hard time understanding risk of COVID-19 and new guidelines
  - Staff and management as well as people using the shelters need to change routines and habits
  - Some homeless people may not have access to the latest information, especially if it is digitally communicated

Recommendations to BC Housing

- Dedicate housing and cleaning staff to one shelter
  - Ensuring staff do not spread virus from building to building
- Ensure that the cleaning staff are trained and follow clear cleaning protocols
  - Always using clean sanitation materials and do not spread virus to other shelters
  - Change shelter chores to not involve clients in cleaning common areas
- Supply sanitizer stations and other personal cleaning items
  - Toilet paper and hand wipes provided so people do not have to leave shelter
  - Provide single-use "hotel" soaps and shampoos
- **Separate / dedicated cots** will ensure social distancing

Recommendations to BC Government

- Assessing hotels that can be used for homeless shelter and can accommodate social distancing and proper cleaning
  - Cooperating with hotel chains to ensure that they have the spaces and willingness to shelter homeless
- Ensuring BC Housing meets government protocols on COVID-19 prevention guidelines

Recommendations to City to Surrey

- Open up Recreation Centres to provide safe, temporary housing during the covid emergency
  - Organize permanent housing solutions to meet housing needs after the covid emergency
- Open up City Parks as a secondary option
  - If Recreation Centres are not opened
  - Ensure set-up meets social distancing guidelines
  - Ensure washing and sanitation stations are put in place
- Work with community activists to support homeless people
- Communicate with religious groups to determine if additional space is available to help temporarily house homeless people
  - Ensure that spaces can be converted back to worship spaces after the emergency