

**St. Stephen's
Community House**

St. Stephen's
Community House
2017-2021

STRATEGIC DIRECTIONS

2017 - 2021

Our Culture

OUR MISSION

St. Stephen's works with individuals and communities in the City of Toronto to identify, prevent and eliminate social and economic inequality by creating and providing a range of effective and innovative programs and services.



OUR VISION

St. Stephen's envisions an inclusive city in which harmony, empowerment and opportunity create social and economic justice and a better quality of life for all.

OUR MOTTO

Creating Opportunities.
Strengthening Communities



OUR VALUES

Quality
Equity
Inclusion
Social Justice
Innovation
Teamwork
Participant Engagement
Harm Reduction

Crafting our Strategic Plan

In the fall of 2016, we began to lay out the road map to our Strategic Plan 2017-2021. Starting in October 2016, we gathered information about the economic and political landscape in SWOT and PEST analyses and staff and board met to discuss their vision for the future. We gathered together all the information that our participants and key informants told us from our six Population Reviews and youth survey. Overall this process engaged 560 program participants, 130 staff and 60 key external informants.



What we learned:

- St. Stephen's Community House is well regarded by participants, partners in the sector and funders, for its high impact programming.
- People who use our services value us for the excellence of our staff, the quality of our services and our philosophy of engaging and empowering participants.
- Our city is changing and our world is expanding. We are increasingly serving individuals and responding to community needs outside of our historic Kensington / Downtown West neighbourhood.
- While our programs fit well with government funding priorities, those funds are not always available and stable, despite the growing need for our services.
- Participants across our varied populations told us that their biggest struggles are with decent housing, good jobs and support for their families.
- Our staff identified common themes of mental health, trauma and isolation among our participants in all programs.
- We operate in the wired world and we have work to do to catch up and bridge the digital divide, both in our operations and our services to the community.



In March 2017, the Board of Directors and Senior Management Team met in a day long retreat that resulted in our Strategic Plan.

Theory of Change

St. Stephen's Community House Strategic Plan 2017 - 2021

St. Stephen's Mission

St. Stephen's works with individuals and communities in the City of Toronto to identify, prevent and eliminate social and economic inequality by creating and providing a range of effective and innovative programs.

Populations and Issues

- Women in our programs may have different needs than men; our services may not address gender-specific needs.
- Newcomer populations are more diverse economically and culturally; often overqualified and underemployed.
- Geopolitical factors are increasing the number of refugees and non-status migrants.
- Precarious work is increasing (low wages, part-time, short-term, no benefits).
- Good quality, affordable housing is a problem for participants in all our programs.
- There is a lack of supportive housing for seniors and adults.
- Barriers to services and discrimination affect many of our participants, such as people who are LGBT, racialized, indigenous or disabled.
- Mental health needs are experienced by participants in all our programs, and trauma is a growing concern.
- Digital literacy and the digital divide need to be addressed.
- Our name and downtown focus no longer reflect current needs and the diversity of the city.

New Directions

Social and economic justice and equality:

- Advocate for systemic change to move people out of poverty
- Offer employment support to participants in all St. Stephen's programs, with a commitment to decent work
- Improve outcomes for women and their families
- Offer housing help to participants in all St. Stephen's programs
- Create relevant, impactful on-line and digital services for participants
- Develop a mental health strategy that recognizes the impact of trauma
- Enhance current anti-oppression policies and practices

A leading and learning anchor organization that values community development:

- Seek out and respond to new and expanded partnerships outside of our traditional Downtown West neighbourhoods
- Explore the potential for a new location, as a standalone service or as part of a hub in North York or North Etobicoke
- Focus on Continuous Quality Improvement
- Develop innovative approaches to solving community issues
- Invest in training and capacity-building for staff
- Build on our work as advocates for social justice and equality

An evolving organization:

- Provide decent work for all staff, including peer workers
- Keep communication and information-sharing technology up-to-date
- Develop comprehensive and efficient data systems
- Tell our story through a stronger social media presence
- Reach new supporters and explore innovative partnerships
- Conduct name change feasibility to better reflect our community

Community Outcomes

- We serve and help build communities where needs are greatest; we bring diverse people together to solve problems.
- We are anchors and leaders in our communities.
- We actively participate in shaping solutions to social and economic inequality.
- We are committed to diversity and inclusion.

Organizational Outcomes

- Decent work for all is central to our internal practice as well as our advocacy.
- We have a strong and committed staff team, a dedicated board and responsible governance structure.
- We have well-diversified and stable funding; our reputation with donors is excellent.
- We have strong partnerships that provide quality services.
- We have up-to-date technology and good data systems.

Participant Outcomes

- All have decent incomes and decent work.
- All enjoy good mental and physical health.
- All have equal access to services without discrimination.
- All have decent housing.
- Newcomers are well-settled and well-integrated.

Tackle social and economic injustice and poverty

We will focus our mission on tackling social and economic injustice and poverty, with an emphasis on key social determinants of health such as employment, housing, education, and health care. Our services will focus on access and equity for the most disadvantaged. We will achieve measureable outcomes for participants through developing new approaches and enhancing existing ones.

We will do this by:

- Advocating for changes to systems, such as social assistance, that create barriers to moving out of poverty
- Offering employment support to participants in all St. Stephen's programs, with a focus on good jobs with fair wages, benefits and working conditions
- Assessing how our services are impacting women using a gender equity lens to ensure that current and future programs and services address outcomes for women and their families
- Offering housing help to participants in all St. Stephen's programs, and strengthening advocacy on decent housing as a human right
- Improving access to our services by creating relevant, impactful on-line and digital services for participants, as well as training in digital media
- Developing a mental health strategy that recognizes the impact of trauma and mental health issues on participants in all programs, and enhances access to mental health support
- Enhancing current anti-oppression policies and practices, to ensure that issues of discrimination, inequality and power imbalance are addressed in our work



Our Seniors' Community Kitchen helped provide food security to isolated seniors



The Corner Drop-in's Member Advisory Committee speaks out about issues that affect them

Lead through learning and community development

We will be a leading and learning anchor organization that values community development. We will go where the need is greatest and where we can best contribute to building healthy communities through our expertise in delivering high quality and innovative programming. We are open to new organizational models, approaches and partnerships.

We will do this by:

- Seeking out and responding to opportunities for new and expanded partnerships outside of our traditional Downtown West neighbourhoods
- Exploring the potential for a new location, as a standalone service or as part of a hub in North York or North Etobicoke
- Ensure that our programs are always of high quality through measures that track participant outcomes and the long-term community impacts of the services we provide
- Developing innovative and responsive approaches to solving community issues, through engagement and empowerment of program participants, peer workers and neighbours
- Investing in training and capacity-building for staff to meet current and emerging needs
- Building on our work as advocates for systemic change that leads to social justice and equality

Evolve as an organization that believes in decent work

We will continue to evolve as an organization and ensure that our practices and infrastructure are up-to-date, relevant, efficient and reflect our commitment to Decent Work.

Stability and growth will be supported by raising our public profile, telling our story and sharing our impact.



Employment programs like the Youth Job Connection help people find steady income

We will do this by:

- Providing good jobs and opportunities for advancement, growth and learning to all staff, including peer workers
- Keeping our communication and information-sharing technology (internet, telephones, etc.) up-to-date and functioning well, so that we are open and accessible to our participants, funders, partners and the general public
- Developing comprehensive and efficient data systems that will support our service provision, internal functions and our ability to demonstrate our impact to funders and the wider public
- Enhancing our ability to use our data to tell our story through a stronger social media presence
- Maximizing and diversifying our revenue sources, reaching new supporters and exploring new and innovative partnerships
- Conducting a feasibility study to determine whether we should change our name, to better reflect the cultural diversity of our communities and our broader geographical reach