



Friday January 29, 2021

## **Barrie City Council SCS Site Engagement Sessions: Summary of Findings**

### **Background:**

Supervised Consumption Site (SCS) discussion sessions with small groups of Barrie City Council members took place on December 16 and 18, 2020 and January 14, 2021. In total, the Mayor and six of ten Councillors participated in the discussion sessions. The purpose of the sessions was to gain insight into the following:

- What Council members perceive to be the benefits and concerns associated with the two proposed site options for a SCS in Ward 2 Barrie – 31 Toronto St. (building at the back of the property) and 110 Dunlop St W. unit 4;
- Mitigating strategies to address any perceived concerns; and
- Thoughts on the need for adding a third site option, including suggestions for this third site.

The discussions were held virtually using Zoom videoconferencing and were each 1.5 hours in length. The sessions included a short power point presentation followed by a facilitated discussion. A note taker was present to capture key themes from the discussion in order to inform this summary.

### **Findings:**

The benefits of the two proposed sites, identified through the discussion, included:

- The proximity of the sites to where people are currently using drugs;
- The positive impact that this could have on the immediate community, both from a client perspective and a neighbourhood perspective;
- Neither site fronts directly onto Dunlop St.; and
- A site in the proposed area would meet the immediate need to help address the concerning level of overdoses and deaths.

The concerns with the two proposed sites, identified through the discussion, included:

- The locations selected may not be perceived as adding value or improvement to the area they are located in, by local residents and businesses;
- The locations are both within the historic downtown / boundaries of the Downtown Barrie BIA
- The need for renovation and retrofitting of the spaces (31 Toronto St. in particular); and
- The potential for stakeholder concerns regarding impact that these locations may have on future plans for the downtown, including development, the Market Precinct area and plans for a performing arts centre.

Although the question was not asked directly, site preference was indicated by some Council members as 110 Dunlop St. W, with the rationale being:

- Mitigation of concerns may be easier, for example addressing security concerns, and anonymity of clients;
- Retrofitting may be easier as less extensive renovations required;
- More opportunity for co-location of services, including parking access; and
- Volume of foot traffic in the area would provide more of a sense of anonymity for clients of the site.

Mitigation strategies suggested included:

- Community engagement, building relationships with the surrounding businesses and neighbours, including providing education to ensure that there is a common understanding of the vision and goals of the site; this would include ongoing education through presentations to the community and printed materials related to the vision and goals of the site, and the impact that it is having on the clients and broader community
- Link to other services/strategies already in operation or planned to address the opioid crisis, for example the peer support program and transportation options offered through CMHA Simcoe County Branch (SCB) and the newly funded Home Care Withdrawal Management Services (delivered by mobile team) and Day/Evening Care for Substance Use Program collaboratively delivered by CMHA-SCB, the Barrie Area Native Advisory Circle and Mamaway Wiidokdaadwin and CMHA Muskoka Parry Sound.
- Ongoing engagement of City Council members
- Ensure that a plan is in place to hear and address concerns raised by the community and consumers through the use of a community liaison and a community advisory committee;
- Be open and transparent in sharing evaluation of the site operations, strategies to address concerns and relevant outcome measures with the public
- Implement environmental controls to enhance public and client safety (lighting/mirrors)
- Implement organizational/operational controls to enhance public and client safety; for example harm reduction/outreach workers; security guards; working relationship with Barrie Police Service
- Be able to articulate the plan of care for clients, as they arrive through to when they leave the facility; this includes considering how client social interactions can be supported without being disruptive to the community (e.g. loitering)
- Integrate strategies from within the Community and Safety Wellbeing Plan for Barrie into SCS mitigation plan
- Create an inviting space both inside and out
- Demonstrate a collaborative approach with other community agencies (e.g. letter of support from RVH)
- Publically share information on next steps and timelines, so that community stakeholders are aware and can engage in the process

Feedback related to the need for a third site option and/or temporary location

- Several Council members thought a third site option would be beneficial, but only if the timeline associated with identifying it would not significantly impede/delay the process
- A very short (e.g. 3 week) process to complete a search for a third site option, and then to move forward was proposed
- The third site option should meet the same criteria developed by the SCS Site Selection Advisory Committee and be outside of the Downtown BIA boundary
- A suggestion to consider 110 Dunlop St. W. as a temporary location (3-5 years) while the potential for a health and social services campus concept is under development was supported by some in theory.
- Others preferred to proceed with one of the available site options as a long-term vision and evaluate the site over time, as a basis for any consideration of moving the site.

A common sentiment was that we need an SCS site in Barrie, and that we need it very promptly.

Feedback was also received informally during one on one conversations from three Council members who were unable to participate in a scheduled consultation session. The findings are similar to those voiced by Council members during the formal process.

- Co-location with other services is the preferred model;
- A site option outside of the historic downtown/boundaries of the Downtown Barrie BIA is preferred, and
- Results of the community consultations will inform decision making on a proposed site

**Next Steps:**

This feedback will be incorporated into the overall SCS site selection consultation process. It is being used by the Advisory committee to inform next steps in a third site option search and community consultations.