

## Appendix 1 – Methods and data sources – detailed information

February 19, 2021

*Learn more about this project and download maps and fact sheets:  
[Changes in informal access to selected indoor public spaces in Toronto](#)*

The focus of this project is informal access to public, indoor space in Toronto during the COVID-19 pandemic. There are different ways to decide what constitutes a space that is “informal” and “public,” and multiple ways to present the data associated with these spaces.

Our goal was to capture spaces available on a walk-in basis, without booking or pre-registration. In practice, however, access to indoor space is in flux across sectors. It was not always possible to determine how some spaces were operating. Informal access to public, indoor space in Toronto will continue to be in flux, and the information included in our maps and final report may stale date quickly.

We detail our decisions and definitions below. We also provide hyperlinks to our sources, so that others can explore the data. Much of this information is also available on the fact sheets associated with each [map](#).

For more information about our data sources or methods, please contact us at: [info@maphealth.ca](mailto:info@maphealth.ca)

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## Methods and data sources

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### (1) Space definitions and descriptions

#### *Informal public indoor space*

For the purposes of this project, we defined an *informal* indoor space as one that people can access on a walk-in basis, without booking or pre-registration. We also focused on spaces that allow people to come and go, without committing to a specific length of stay. As a result, we did not examine services such as registered programming at community agencies, shelter beds, housing programs, or health care.

In 2020/2021, access processes to indoor spaces are in flux due to shifting pandemic restrictions and COVID-19 outbreaks. Many spaces that would have been categorized as informal in 2019 now have specific access requirements such as pre-registration, or are no longer available for indoor access.

We defined *public* spaces broadly as spaces that are open and accessible to the public, rather than as publicly-funded spaces (i.e. we mapped chain restaurants as well as libraries). Some spaces we included, however, focus on specific groups of people, such as the 24-hour women's drop-ins.

The categories of informal indoor public spaces we mapped were chosen based on the following:

- a) Public accessibility of their information, and;
- b) Capacity as a project team to compile accurate and comprehensive information about a particular type of space within the study time period to ensure the results would be useful and relevant during winter 2020/2021.

This project is not a comprehensive depiction of informal public space in Toronto. We note that there are many spaces that would match our definitions and goals but that have not been included. These include malls, places of worship, internet cafes, independent restaurants and coffee shops, and chain restaurants and coffee shops that are not 24-hour.

Lastly, we did not look at how welcoming specific public spaces are or were to people looking to come in out of the cold. There will be significant variation between sites.

#### *24-hour chain restaurants and coffee shops*

We focused on 24-hour chain restaurants and coffee shops with indoor dining along the TTC [Blue Night Network](#), as these locations represented indoor space that was open and accessible by public transit overnight.

We started by identifying popular chain restaurants that were known to have some 24-hour sites (McDonalds, Tim Hortons, A&W, Fran's, Denny's, Burger King, and T-Bones). We then identified sites that were a short way from the Blue Night Network bus route. This resulted in a list of 536 locations. We then called individual locations and checked websites to determine if these locations had 24-hour indoor seating prior to the pandemic.

Through this process, we determined that, prior to the pandemic, approximately 105 sites offered 24-hour indoor dining overnight along the Blue Night Network. Twenty-four hour locations that were drive-through only or located in hospitals were not included. Finally, there are other chain and independent

restaurants across Toronto that had 24-hour indoor space prior to the pandemic. These locations are not captured in this project.

### *Out of the Cold dinners and drop-in programming*

Prior to the pandemic, Out of the Cold (OOTC) programs ran at synagogues and churches from November to March. They offered overnight bed spaces, as well as dinner and evening drop-in hours to many additional people who did not stay overnight. We explored the dinner and drop-in capacity that OOTCs offered over and above their bedded program, as this represents a change to informal access to indoor space. We did not explore the OOTC bed spaces. The combined overnight beds of the 16 OOTC locations in 2019/2020 [have been replaced by the City](#) in a central location for winter 2020/2021.

### *Allied services*

According to the City's 2019 "Housing and Homeless Service Glossary," allied shelter services constitute "[Emergency overnight spaces that offer a safe, warm indoor space and connections to other supports to meet the immediate needs of people experiencing homelessness. Provided to respond to increased demand for homeless shelters and/or operate from a low-barrier approach to serve people who may otherwise not access homeless shelters.](#)"

As a result of this definition, we decided to map all services listed under the "allied services" category in the daily shelter census. However, we recognize that, right now, these services may not all be operating as originally intended. We did not map shelters, COVID-19 Hotels, or COVID-19 interim housing, as we did not consider these spaces to be informal indoor space.

The services listed under the "allied services" section of the daily shelter census are: six 24-hour respites, four warming centres and two 24-hour women's drop-ins. We mapped the City's two 24-hour women's drop-ins as part of the [drop-in centre map](#), as they are both members of the Toronto Drop-In Network. We mapped the [respite and warming centres](#) together on a separate map.

### **24-hour respites**

When we use the term respite, we are referring to sites labelled as 24-hour respites on the daily shelter census. They are listed under the category of "allied services." According to the standards set for respites, they "[prioritize ease of access to safe indoor space](#)" and are "generally more accessible, especially to those who are vulnerable and who may not otherwise access shelters."

Based on the description of respites included in City documents, we considered them to be informal indoor space and chose to include them in this project. At present, however, the City website states that, "[Temporary shelter and respite sites may not have space to accommodate walk-in referrals. Calling Central Intake in advance is recommended to minimize unnecessary travel...](#)"

As per the daily shelter census, the City has also opened five 24-hour temporary response sites during COVID-19, with a total capacity of more than 300 spaces. These spaces are listed separately from respites and other allied shelter services on the daily shelter census. We could not find a public definition of response sites that shares how they might be different from or similar to either a shelter or a respite. The City has produced [a map of respites](#)— it includes two out of the five response sites.

### 24-hour women's drop-ins

We included the city's two 24-hour women's drop-ins on the Toronto Drop-In Network Map, as they are members of the Toronto Drop-In Network. They are also listed under the category of "allied shelter services" on the daily shelter census, [and are held to the same standards as 24-hour respite sites](#). Like the respites, the 24-hour women's drop-ins now have more restricted access. According to [information](#) made publicly available through the Toronto-Drop-In Network (accessed on February 19, 2021), one of these drop-ins is "not accepting new referrals at this time" and is "open to current participants only." The other is "not accepting new referrals at this time except through Central Intake."

### Warming centres

Warming Centres are also categorized as "allied shelter services." Unlike respite centres, warming centres are only opened during cold weather alerts, or when the City otherwise decides it's appropriate to do so. They are described by the 2019 "Housing and Homelessness Service Glossary, 2019" as providing "[immediate safe indoor space for people during extreme cold weather alerts](#)."

We chose to map warming centres alongside the 24-hour respite sites as low-barrier options available this winter. However, we are in the process of producing a separate map of the four warming centres only, which will be ready by the end of February, 2021. This is to address our understanding that warming centres are currently more able to receive walk-ins than 24-hour respites.

### *Libraries and community centres*

We used the [Toronto Public Library website](#) to identify library branches. We did not include other libraries in Toronto such as those associated with universities.

We used the [City of Toronto website](#) to identify city-run community recreation centres and arenas. We did not include civic centres, or community centres run by non-profits or faith groups.

### *Toronto Drop-In Network drop-ins*

We included the Toronto Drop-in Network (TDIN) members as part of this project, as they specifically "[work with people who are homeless, marginally housed, or socially isolated](#)." TDIN membership includes non-profit agencies and faith-based organizations. Drop-in spaces often include access to washrooms, showers and meals, in addition to community programs. The city's two 24-hour women's drop-ins are TDIN members, and we have mapped them in this category.

There are other drop-in services and youth spaces available across the city run by the city, non-profits, community health centres, and other agencies who are not members of TDIN. These services are not included on this map and we did not examine whether they currently had easily accessible space. Additionally, we did not include TDIN members on the 2021 map who were providing outdoor services or take-away meals, as our focus was on access to indoor space.

## (2) Decisions and calculations re: capacity and locations

### *24-hour chain restaurants and coffee shops*

We focused on access to the 24-hour indoor dining spaces at chain restaurants and coffee shops. Since all indoor dining space in Toronto is currently closed, there are no 24-hour chain restaurants and coffee shops on the 2020/2021 map.

We did not examine the capacity of each restaurant or coffee shop included in this project. We also did not map bathroom access at these locations. Based on our inquiries, bathroom access at restaurants and coffee shops seemed to be variable.

### *Out of the Cold dinners and drop-in programming*

Capacity data for the 2019/2020 OOTC program was collected directly from OOTC programs by Rafi Aaron, spokesperson for the Interfaith Coalition to Fight Homelessness, and co-chair of the Beth Shalom/Beth Tzedec Out of the Cold program. Our interest was in the capacity of OOTCs to offer drop-in space to people who were not participating in their bedded program.

To calculate the capacity of each OOTC to serve people over and above those participating in their bedded program, we subtracted the capacity for the bedded program from the capacity for the drop-in hours. For example, if an OOTC had the capacity to serve 100 people for dinner, and the capacity to accommodate 50 people overnight, we calculated their additional drop-in capacity over and above their bedded program as 50 people.

We did not include capacity numbers for the one indoor dinner program that is currently available through the OOTC program, which runs at one downtown location, twice a week, as the program was newly-established and evolving when we were finalizing this project. The current OOTC dinner program is supported and administered by a collaborative of volunteers, harm reduction workers, community agencies and faith groups.

### *Allied services and City data*

#### **24-hour respites**

In the [City's Winter Services Plan](#) for 2020/2021, the six respites centres are listed as having a combined capacity of 221. In the context of the shelter census, respite capacity fluctuates somewhat, presumably due to COVID-19 outbreaks. For our combined respite and warming centre map, we chose to use the total respite capacity listed in the shelter census for January 31 2021, the last night available before we began finalizing the project. This number was 174. On February 18 2021, the last night available before we began finalizing this document, this number was 188.

To calculate 2019/20 capacity for both respites and warming centres, we used the [2019/20 Winter Plan](#).

#### **24-hour women's drop-ins**

We did not look at capacity for the 24-hour women's drop-ins, or for any of the drop-ins included in the Toronto Drop-In Network map.

## Warming centres

In the City's Winter Services Plan, warming centres are listed as having a combined capacity of 145. For our combined respite and warming centre map, we chose to use the total warming centre capacity listed in the shelter census for January 31 2021, the last night available before we began finalizing the project. This number was 145. On February 18 2021, the last night available before we began finalizing this document, this number was also 145. All maps included in this project are dated-stamped and are meant as a point-in-time snapshot of available space.

To calculate 2019/20 capacity for both respites and warming centres, we used the [2019/20 Winter Plan](#).

## City Winter Services Plan

In the project summary, we state that the City added between 560 and 680 spaces for winter 2020/21. This was based on available public documents including an [October 6 press release](#), and a subsequent [Winter Services Plan](#).

We estimated that a "space" in the Winter Services Plan was approximately equivalent to an "individual" served. This was a rough estimate based on the types of spaces added through the Winter Services Plan. For example, hotel spaces were referred to as "beds," rather than "rooms," though it is possible that some beds may be shared. Likewise, it is possible that some of the studios or apartments may also be shared.

We considered that this potential increased occupancy would be offset by periodic reductions in capacity due to COVID-19 outbreaks, such as those affecting respite capacity, and the fact that some housing units [will not be at full occupancy until May 2021](#).

Since our report was published, the City has announced additional spaces, such as hotel rooms at 45 Esplanade with an opening date of February 22, 2021. City documents state that at 45 Esplanade, ["205 rooms are available currently with the ability to rent up to the 254-room maximum."](#)

## *Libraries and community centres*

We did not look at capacity for libraries or community centres. Instead, we tried to gauge the degree to which they were available for indoor access during different stages of pandemic restrictions through direct contact with locations, and the use of web resources. As a result, we looked at:

- Whether or not facilities were open or closed.
- What types of access (if any) were offered by facilities that were still open.

We began gathering information in early December 2020, and produced a map on this basis. Given the substantial changes put in place to indoor access in Toronto at the end of the year, we produced another map that reflected the situation in late January 2021.

## *Toronto Drop-In Network drop-ins*

We compared the number of locations that were open in 2019 and 2021 based on two publicly available documents, both produced by the Toronto Drop-in Network. The first is a [schedule from 2019/2020](#). The

second is [2021 google document](#). We note that the google document is a live link, and currently available locations may have changed since our maps were created.

We did not examine changes to capacity within the drop-in centres, but we note that capacity and hours have dramatically reduced in some instances and are often changing.