For over a decade there have been various tables convened in Hamilton to address the reality of street level sex work and its impact on neighbourhoods from various angles. The Sherman Neighbourhood is one of the more recent local hubs to indicate the need for conversations on this topic.

The Sherman Neighbourhood in Ward 3 is one of three city-defined neighbourhoods located near the Tim Hortons Field (formerly Ivor Wynne Stadium) that make up what has become known as the Stadium Precinct. Since the site was chosen to host events for the 2015 Pan Am Games, the City of Hamilton's Neighbourhood Action Strategy staff has been hosting regular meetings with residents of the Stadium Precinct.

Those consultations resulted in a regular expression of concern by residents about the impacts of street level sex work on their lives. This led to the creation of the Sex Work Engagement Project Team led by the City of Hamilton which began a consultation process to assist neighbourhoods, including the people involved in sex work and service providers who work there, to create safer and healthier communities for everyone.

**RESIDENT ENGAGEMENT SESSIONS**

Two resident engagement sessions were held in the Sherman Hub with a total of 60 participants. Background was provided on the process currently underway and some similar work that had been done on Barton Street a decade ago and in Vancouver’s Collingwood neighbourhood in the 90s. The Vancouver conversations were based on the Four Pillars approach to drug addiction which was first implemented in Europe in the 1990s, and is based on four principals:

- Prevention
- Harm reduction
- Treatment
- Enforcement

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Prepared by Deirdre Pike, Senior Social Planner
Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton
www.sprc.hamilton.on.ca
905-522-1148, ext. 302

This report is a summary with only top responses and recommendations identified.
The full report is available at www.sprc.hamilton.on.ca.
Commmunity Engagement Process and Results

Out of the Four-Pillar Approach used in Vancouver, “Safe in Collingwood—Sex Work Awareness for Everyone”, was founded with its first goal to address the health and safety concerns related to sex work experienced by residents, visitors, and businesses.

At both Sherman Hub sessions, residents were asked to identify the safety issues they experience on the street in their neighbourhood and what can be done about them. The answers were arranged under the four pillars.

Safety issues ranged from the impact on people who regularly see the activity associated with sex work in their neighbourhood to residents’ fear of young women being approached for grooming and possible attack by the men involved.

Some men identified that they feel “uncomfortable and embarrassed but not necessarily unsafe” when they see women engaged in sex work on the street.

Many people expressed fear for women, particularly young women who some think are being groomed to become active in sex work. They also worry about the stigmatization of women living in the area who are often approached and propositioned by potential johns. It was also noted that johns have been seen taking pictures of women in the area.

Some residents feared street level sex work was associated with gangs and organized crime though research shows that is generally not the case. The litter related to drug use is often found by residents and there is great concern about children being exposed to it.

Fear was expressed about the possibility of being mugged or having more assaults in the neighbourhood and “vulnerable people being preyed upon.” A few residents reported seeing sex acts take place openly on street.

Focus Group with Women at Stars

(Sex Trade Alternatives, Resources, and Services)

A focus group was held at the STARS Drop-in coordinated by The Elizabeth Fry Society. Ten women who have been, are at risk of, or are currently involved in street level sex work participated in the facilitated conversation. After some input from the facilitator about the Four Pillar Strategy, the women were asked to consider: What do you think has been done, is being done and needs to be done to address women’s engagement in street level sex work pertaining to Prevention, Treatment, Harm Reduction and Enforcement? (top needs below)

Prevention: Increase in social assistance rates and easier access upon release from detention; community centres with stronger supports for women and children’s programming; hydro assistance; affordable housing; increased supports for criminalized women and women facing addictions; women’s shelter with a higher threshold of substance use before decline

Treatment: More access to 24-hour support/crisis phone lines; responses for families with children; increase in medically managed women’s treatment; more spaces for women to access support

Harm Reduction: More accessible counselling support for women and youth; increased hours at the STARS Drop-In; supports for women with mental health issues; programming for children with incarcerated moms; transportation support; lack of payphones on Barton St.; 24-hour fix site when the Van is closed

Enforcement: More access to Social Navigator (Hamilton Police Service); education for police about responding to people with mental health issues, addiction and trauma; important for police to know how to de-escalate encounters with survivors; officers on bicycles were identified as positive resources
The 1st Resident Engagement Session brought 20 residents together at St. Giles Church to discuss the street level safety issues they experience and what they think can be done about them. Pam Hubbard graphically recorded the conversation.

The 2nd Resident Engagement session brought close to 40 residents together at Mission Services. Most participants were not at the first session so the same process was used to gather information on what residents are seeing on the street, again graphically recorded.
WHAT DOES OUR COMMUNITY NEED? WHAT CAN THE NEIGHBOURHOOD DO TO ADDRESS THE SAFETY ISSUES ON THE STREET?  WHAT CAN I DO? WHAT CAN THE CITY DO?

SAMPLE RECOMMENDATIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PREVENTION</th>
<th>TREATMENT</th>
<th>HARM REDUCTION</th>
<th>ENFORCEMENT</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Create more safe and walkable streets</td>
<td>Feasibility study on the expansion of the 24 hour support/crisis lines and strengthening the connections across this area</td>
<td>Develop educational tools for sex workers and residents re: community programs and community safety issues including litter</td>
<td>Identification of police officers who need training to respond to people with trauma and mental health issues</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

MEDIUM

| Connect to existing youth serving agencies to build early intervention and diversion education programs | Funding for addiction services, housing, vocational training | Satellite locations for STARS Drop-In and other programs and services | HPS explore other alternative models of enforcement like social navigators |

LONG

| Additional affordable housing stock for women; Increase in Social Assistance | More beds for appropriate withdrawal and treatment models and alternatives | Indoor space for women to live and work with safety | Feasibility study of adding a liaison officer with a community policing station |