Summary: The TNR project engaged residents of 2 high-rise buildings in over 140 events and meetings to increase their capacity, create a sense of community and test a model for on-site delivery of community services.

Tower Neighbourhood Renewal (TNR) – Bathurst & Finch

The TNR Project was a United Way-funded initiative aimed at improving the lives of residents in high-rise buildings. The Bathurst-Finch demonstration project, led by Family Service Toronto, focused on two privately-owned tower buildings in the Bathurst-Finch neighbourhood.
The project ran from November 2014 to May 2017.

This summary report focuses on the two major goals of the Bathurst Finch TNR project:

1. Revitalize the community and the cultural life of towers through the development of local partnerships between residents, landlords, social service agencies and other stakeholders (*see p. 3-4*).

2. Provide the opportunities & space for social, cultural and recreational programming within apartment communities that respond to the needs of children, youth, families and the elderly, and promote and test a model of on-site delivery of services (*see p. 5-7*).

Phase 1	Phase 2
627 non-unique participants engaged in **38 Events***	1267 non-unique participants engaged in **66 Events***
Events included: • Outreach Events • Residents' Meetings • Meet and Greets • Income Tax Clinic • Children's Activities • Healthcare Clinics (Flu Shots)	Events included: • Multicultural Holiday Celebrations • Children's Activities • Therapeutic Art Activities • Healthcare Clinics (Flu Shots) • Workshops on employment, settlement, healthy living, & more
Resident Social Activity Group (RSAG) and Building Improvement Group (BIG) created to address community issues	RSAG and BIG consolidated into one Resident Group (RG) to focus on community development
6 RSAG meetings, 2 BIG meetings and 2 goal setting meetings were held	35 RG meetings and trainings were held

*Residents could be counted at multiple events, so this number exceeds the number of unique residents engaged in these events.

Evaluation Process

The evaluation for TNR posed four key questions:
1. Has TNR led to an increase resident's capacity as relevant to their specific goals?
2. Has TNR led to an increase in resident and community connections?
3. Are TNR activities matched with community priorities?
4. Has the TNR project led to enhanced access to programs and services for residents?

Pre-Implementation

Before the start of the project, FST's Knowledge Building team conducted a **neighbourhood profile** to understand the demographics of the local population, and compiled a **social service agency directory** of available resources in the community.

FST also engaged residents though **surveys**, **focus groups**, and **general meetings** to understand their needs, their current patterns of service use, and goals for the project.

Intervention Evaluation

Throughout the TNR initiative, quantitative and qualitative data was collected via multiple evaluation activities:

- 400 Participant Satisfaction Surveys
- Interviews with Key Informants
- Focus Groups with Residents
- Review of Project Documents
- Recorded Observations from Program Staff, Residents Group, Student Volunteers, and Project Participants
- Interactive Scales and "Rose, Bud, Thorn" Evaluation (*see sidebar*)

Engaging Children in Evaluation

As children and families are an essential part of the tower community, TNR used evaluation techniques appropriate to children.

Two methods were used to evaluate children's experiences:

- **Interactive Scale**
Children indicated agreement with a series of statements by standing on a line between a happy and sad face.

- **Rose/Bud/Thorn**
On a poster , children identify their highlight (*rose*), major challenge (*thorn*), and idea for the next session/workshop (*bud*).

Methodological Challenges

- Due to limitations in on-site evaluative capacity, survey data could only be consistently collected for smaller groups (e.g., Resident Group). For larger events, a portion of total attendees were surveyed.
- Some residents completed surveys at multiple events, so overall counts reflect some duplication.
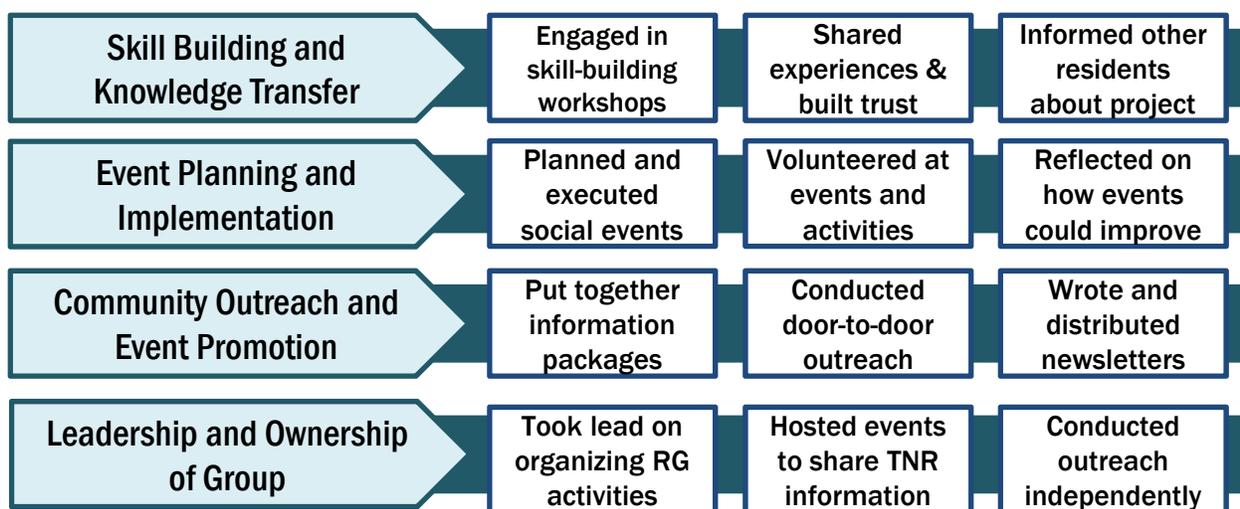
Goal 1	Revitalize the community and cultural life of towers through the development of local partnerships between residents, landlords, social service agencies and other stakeholders.

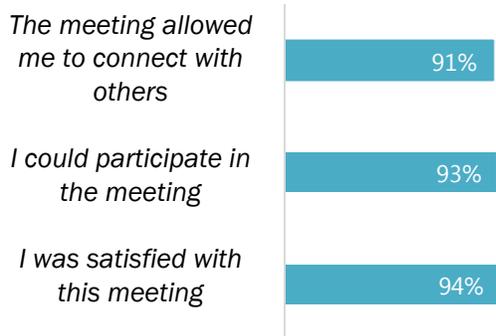| Key Outcome 1a	Strengthened Resident Group Capacity

The focus of the Resident Group (RG) was on building community development skills among members and planning social events to bring residents together. RG membership grew throughout the project, with 11 members by March 2017.

Observations of Resident Capacity Being Developed and Exercised

Skill Building and Knowledge Transfer	Engaged in skill-building workshops	Shared experiences & built trust	Informed other residents about project
Event Planning and Implementation	Planned and executed social events	Volunteered at events and activities	Reflected on how events could improve
Community Outreach and Event Promotion	Put together information packages	Conducted door-to-door outreach	Wrote and distributed newsletters
Leadership and Ownership of Group	Took lead on organizing RG activities	Hosted events to share TNR information	Conducted outreach independently

RG Feedback on Meetings

The meeting allowed me to connect with others — 91%

I could participate in the meeting — 93%

I was satisfied with this meeting — 94%

Average participant agreement with each statement on end-of-meeting surveys (across all RG meetings)

Workshops for RG Members

- TNR organized capacity building workshops, including education on:
  - leadership development
  - consensus building
  - assertive communication
  - problem solving

- TNR brought in United Way to conduct a training on Community Outreach and Engagement for RG members.

Through the workshops, members learned how to communicate/interact with community members, how to do door-to-door outreach, values and principles for community building and more.

Goal 1	Revitalize the community and cultural life of towers through the development of local partnerships between residents, landlords, social service agencies and other stakeholders.

Key Outcome 1b | **Positive Impacts on Resident Group Members' Lives**

Members of the RG described many positive benefits of their participation, including:

Taking on new roles as community volunteers

Feeling less isolated and forming friendships with neighbours

Having an outlet to discuss experiences and challenges with peers

Providing and accessing space for children's activities

"I was not working. This group gave me the opportunity to meet neighbours, talk about problems, feeling not alone here."

"I met friends and talked to them about the building, problems, what we need... what we are feeling."

Key Outcome 1c | **Strengthened Landlord-Resident Partnerships**

During the TNR initiative, residents and landlord/management staff developed a stronger relationship, improving their communications and collaborating on event planning and promotion. Landlord staff showed support for the TNR initiative through numerous in-kind contributions and informal support (*see below*).

During TNR, the landlord provided support through...

Flyer Distribution Throughout Buildings

Use of Party Room for All TNR Activities

Supplying Refreshments at Social Events

Contributing a Model Suite for RG Meetings

Event Planning Support

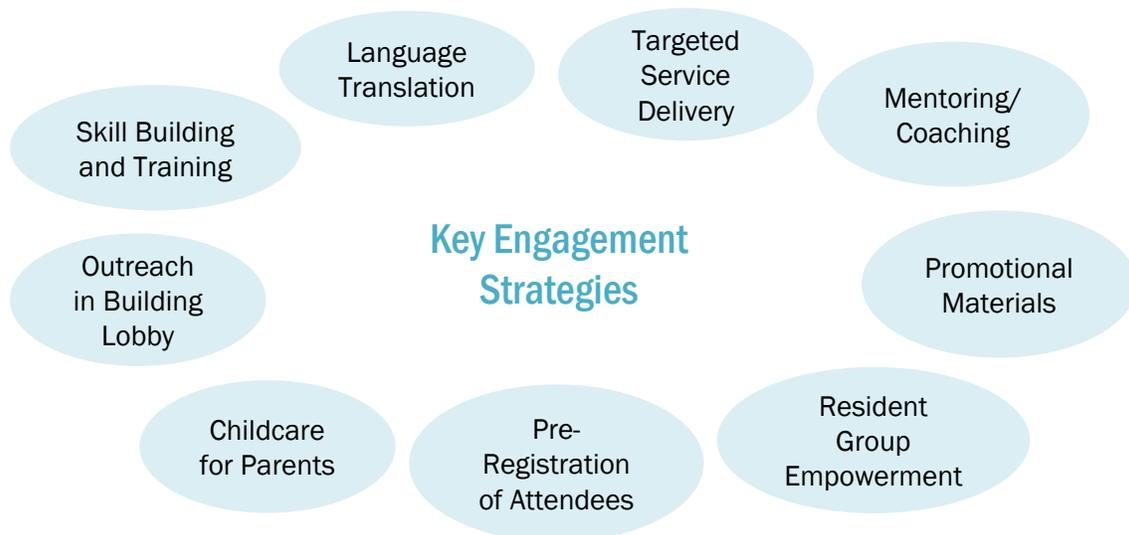| Goal 2	Provide the opportunities and space for social, cultural, and recreational programming within the apartment communities that respond to the needs of children, youth, families and the elderly.

Key Outcome 2a	Stronger Resident Connections and Community

TNR activities provided residents with a space to meet, connect, and share lived experiences, leading to the creation of friendships, cultural learning exchange, and a sense of community. This helped residents to feel safer and widen their support networks within the buildings.

Examples of Stronger Resident Connections

Shared Lived Experience	Increased Feeling of Safety
• Mothers shared parenting experiences and helped others to solve parenting issues • Older adults socialized and discussed stories of their similar experiences	• Mothers felt safer walking in their neighbourhood when in pairs or groups • RG group members felt safer knowing they had someone to call for help when needed
Stronger Support	**Cultural Exchange**
• Residents introduced themselves to others during events • Participant attendance reduced isolation • Residents learned about community services • Residents helped each other (e.g., childcare)	• Residents cooked cultural meals together • Residents learned about each others' heritage, traditions and celebrations • Newcomers learned about Canadian customs and special occasions

HOW DID TNR ENGAGE RESIDENTS IN EVENTS AND ACTIVITIES?

Key Engagement Strategies

- Language Translation
- Targeted Service Delivery
- Mentoring/ Coaching
- Skill Building and Training
- Outreach in Building Lobby
- Promotional Materials
- Childcare for Parents
- Pre-Registration of Attendees
- Resident Group Empowerment

Goal 2	Provide the opportunities and space for social, cultural, and recreational programming within apartment communities that respond to the needs of children, youth, families and the elderly.

Key Outcome 2b	Enhanced On-Site Access to Programs and Services

The TNR program involved 17 partners over its 2 years of operation. Some were short-term partnerships, while some partners continued with TNR for the entire 2 year project *(see below)*.

Collaboration led to the delivery of such programs as employment and settlement support, flu shot clinics, income tax clinics, storytelling for children, and healthy living classes *(see next page, Onsite Programs and Services)*. Partners also conducted on-site outreach about services.

Partners and Participating Organizations

Phase 1	Phase 2
City of Toronto	
Campaign 2000	
Bernard Betel Center	
Toronto Public Library	
Kababayan Multicultural Center	

North York Community Housing
Jewish Immigrant Aid Services
JVS
Unison Health and Community Services
Jewish Family and Child Services
Canadian Ukranian Immigrant Aid Society (CUIAS)
KWCA Family and Social Services
North York Women's Centre

	Hincks-Dellcrest
	Service Canada
	Bathurst-Finch Network
	Downsview Community Legal Services

On-Site Programs and Events

TNR **prioritized residents' interests** in planning events and activities. All of the on-site programs were suggested by residents and took their service needs into account, including:

- Employment Workshops
- Settlement Services
- Craft Workshops
- Mother's and Father's Day Celebrations
- Halloween Party and Harvest Dinner
- Multicultural Holiday Celebrations

- Parenting Workshops
- Flu Shot Clinic
- Income Tax Clinic
- Storytelling for Children
- Community Kitchen
- Healthy Living Classes

In addition to those workshops facilitated by partner agencies, **residents used their own talents and skills to lead workshops** in origami making for children, quilt making, and yoga.

Satisfaction surveys were collected at a number of service events held in Phase 2. Participants were asked to indicate agreement with the statement, *"Overall, I was satisfied with the event today."*

91% Positive	Storytelling for Children	91% Positive	MPP Lobby Group
100% Positive	Expressive Arts Workshop	100% Positive	Service Canada Info Session
100% Positive	Positive Aging Workshops	100% Positive	Stress Reduction Workshop
100% Positive	Healthy Living Workshop	90% Positive	Income Tax Clinics
100% Positive	Employment Workshop	96% Positive	Community Kitchens

RESIDENT FEEDBACK

"[The Harvest Dinner] was a wonderful event for me to have an opportunity to learn about community services offered at the Hub, meet and network with various other residents in a perfect fall evening followed by a classy dinner."

"Spending time and celebrating with [other residents] was such a brilliant idea. There were activities for everyone and everyone participated with great joy. It was indeed a wonderful, joyous and beautiful start to the holiday season."

"The Stress Reduction workshop was very useful. The facilitator spoke about how to deal with stress in day to day life. Overall, the topics were very useful and informative and I am happy to attend more workshops in the near future."

"For newcomers like us, who have no family here and yet to make new friendships, it means a lot. We are so busy in our job search, etc., that partying is the last thing on our minds, but if someone does that for [you] and involves our kids, it's a big thing for us."

Challenges to Program Implementation

Short Lead Time for Pre-Implementation Planning

The short lead time for the project was a challenge to establishing relationships with all stakeholders (residents, landlord and management staff, and community organizations). A recommendation for future projects is to establish a presence in the building ahead of the project launch, in order to fully assess need, gain trust, and develop buy-in.

Turnover of Landlord Staff

The partnership with landlord staff was quite positive, but high turnover of landlord employees throughout the course of the project was a challenge in maintaining consistent communication pathways between TNR staff and building management.

Scarce Resources, Funder Requirements and Staff Availability

While TNR was able to cultivate numerous partnership relationships throughout the project, there were some challenges in organizing service delivery at the towers:
- Providing services off-site required greater staff time and resources compared to partners' on-site delivery, a cost that presents a challenge to organizations with tight resources;
- Partners' funder requirements often necessitated larger groups in order to provide on-site delivery (e.g., a service could be provided for a minimum group of 10 residents, but only 9 enrolled);
- Partners' staff availabilities often did not coincide with residents' availability due to and cultural considerations (e.g., weekends, Jewish Sabbath, etc).

Renovations to Tower Buildings

The apartment towers were undergoing a gentrification process, with improvements to building aesthetics and rent increases. This resulted in an apparent shift in economic demographics as older residents left and new residents moved in, which impacted the community building momentum. It also affected on-site services, as new residents were less aware of and less interested in available programs.

For more information on the TNR project, contact:

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