

PEARS' AVENUE HOUSING PROJECT OUTCOMES EVALUATION, MARCH 2006.

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The Pears Avenue Supportive Housing project is the product of multiple partnerships between 15 local social service providers with municipal and federal government funding. St. Clare's Multifaith Housing Society initiated the project and purchased the building in 2004. Agencies throughout Toronto contribute by referring tenants and providing an array of support services to their "own" tenants as well as the other tenants in the building. Family Service Association of Toronto (FSA) provides a Tenant Support Coordinator who is responsible for Community development both within and outside the building, organizing and coordinating tenant support services, setting up programming for common areas, and ensuring the model is implemented with all stakeholders being involved in the decision making process including tenants, partner agencies, and property management.

Evaluation of this project was always an ongoing goal of the Pears Ave. model. The Model would be evaluated for "movement" experienced by tenants, community development and its impact, and the effect that having affordable housing had on tenant's sense of wellbeing and mood. The project evaluation would also capture innovation and learning as Pears Ave. is FSA's first supportive housing initiative that arose from the values and inclusive approach developed from its Options program.

The Tenant Support Coordinator from Family Service Association of Toronto provided administrative support, coaching and facilitation, if needed, for the Community Development programming implemented by the tenants. This included initiatives such as:

- The Community Meal Program - designed, implemented, and run by volunteer tenants - dinner is cooked and served 7 nights per week, each person who eats pays \$1.00 per meal or \$20.00 for the month. 52 tenants are involved in this program.
- Renovation Working Group – Tenants work with St. Clare's Multifaith Housing Society and the Architect to plan all the renovations in the building to ensure a strong sense of community. 13 tenants are involved.
- Landscaping Working Group – Tenants work with Home Depot, St. Clare's Multifaith Housing Society and the architect to plan all landscaping and community gardens outside the building to ensure it builds a sense of community. Tenants also volunteer to provide continuing maintenance and care for the gardens. 17 tenants are involved.
- Safety and Security Working Group- Tenants work with St. Clare's Multifaith Housing Society and Community First Property Management and the Security Program to identify and solve safety and security issues in the building including

developing links to community policing and fire plans, fire drills etc. All tenants are involved.

- Personal Skill Building workshops - Assertiveness Training, Conflict Resolution Skills, Community Crisis Intervention - tenants learn skills to solve problems with individuals.
- Community Conflict Resolution Meetings – tenants have a community mediation process of resolve issues that cannot be resolved between tenants that effect the larger community.
- Movie Nights - tenant designed and driven and implemented from an anti-oppression framework.
- Holiday Celebrations - tenant designed and driven and implemented on a multicultural framework.
- Education/Discussion Sessions – provided by Partner Agencies and Community Groups as identified by the needs of the tenants and the community.

Outcome Evaluation

Upon entry into the building, ninety tenants completed a brief Time 1 survey examining various outcomes and providing base line information. For this evaluation and to build on this Time 1 (T1 Sample) evaluation, a second survey was done in Feb. 2006 (T2 Sample). In total, sixty-seven tenants completed the Time 2 survey.

The following outcomes were chosen to assess:

- Has Tenants' well-being is improved?
- Have Tenants' available social support increased?
- Have Tenants' life skills are increased?

Summary of Results

○ Demographics

At the time of this evaluation, the average length of residency at Pears Avenue was just under two-years (M = 19.3 months, SD = 41.17). On average, tenants were 45-years-old (SD = 14.45), with ages ranging from 18- to 84-years-old. A majority of tenants (92.5%, n = 62) identified English as the language they speak. Approximately half of the tenants surveyed reported that they were not born in Canada (52.2%, n = 35), with an average length of Canadian residency of 18 years (M = 17.7, SD = 14.93). With respect to education, approximately equal numbers of tenants indicated that they had attained a college or university degree (26.9%, n = 18), some college or university schooling (20.9%, n = 14), and a high school diploma or some high school education (19.4%, n = 13, respectively). A majority of tenants were unemployed (59.7%, n = 40), with some tenants reporting full-time or part-time employment (10.5% and 14.9%, respectively). The average income for tenants was \$13,270.32 (SD = \$15,919.60). And, sources of income for tenants varied widely between those who received

funding from various government assistance programs, such as Ontario Works, and ODSP to those whose income source was their job.

○ Tenants' Well-Being

Overall, the results showed a significant decrease in depressive symptoms between the tenants who completed the initial survey (Time 1 sample) and tenants who completed the survey at the end of the first year (Time 2 sample). A one-sample t-test comparing the two samples demonstrated a statistically significant reduction in depressive symptoms of approximately two points, from 13 to 11 ($t(63) = -2.06, p < .05$). Specifically, at Time 1, ninety tenants reported an average score of moderate depression ($M = 13.7, SD = 5.9$) whereas at Time 2, sixty-four tenants completed the same measure of well-being, with a significantly lower score in the range of mild depression ($M = 11.5, SD = 8.6$). Categorical analyses also revealed a significant reduction in the proportion of tenants who were experiencing depression in the two samples ($X^2(1) = 4.88, p < .05$). Specifically, in the Time 1 sample, 73% of tenants reported experiencing depression (either mild, moderate, or severe) whereas only 56% of tenants in the Time 2 sample reported experiencing depression (mild, moderate, or severe). This reduction is significant. The Center for Epidemiological Studies depression Scale was used for both Time 1 and Time 2.

CESD	Time 1 (n =90)	Time 2 (n = 64)
No Depression	26.7% (24)	41.8% (28)
Depression (mild, moderate, or severe)	73.3% (66)	56.2% (36)**
Average Score (Standard Deviation)	13.7 (5.9)	11.5 (8.6)*
*p <.05. **p < .01		

○ Tenants' Life Skills

Overall, a great majority of tenants, 65.5% (38) were actively searching for jobs or volunteer opportunities between T1 and T2. Thirty (30) of these tenants were successful in obtaining a job or a volunteer position.

Only a 43% of all the tenants (25) have written a resume or cover letter, or received training toward writing these necessities. An even smaller minority has received training toward their desired jobs. This number includes tenants who are students, people who are identified as disabled, unemployed or unable to work due to refugee status.

It may be necessary to implement an intensive employment/volunteer training skills program on a one-on-one basis to help the tenants who have identified themselves searching for work or volunteer placement, but have not been able to complete the steps necessary to be successful. This will be looked at closely to develop a plan of action.

Life Skills Needed	Time 1	Time 2	Life Skills Obtained
Write a resume	21.3% (20)	43.1% (25)	Written a resume
Apply for a job	17.4% (16)	48.3% (28)**	Sent an application package
Interview for a job	22.6% (21)	51.7% (30)	Been offered an interview
*p <.05. **p < .01			

- Tenants' Social Support

Two measurement tools were used:

The Social Provisions Scale (Russell & Cutrona, 1984) assessed the social support of tenant's relationships. Tenant's social support scores were correlated with their depression/well-being scores. Specifically, higher scores on the social support measure were negatively correlated with depression scores. This suggests that tenants in the Time 2 Sample with more available social support had lower levels of depressive symptoms ($r(64) = -.46, p < .01$). This correlation held true for all subscales of the Social Provisions Scale with the exception of nurturance.

Sense of Community Index (SCI, MacMillan & Chavis, 1986)

No significant correlations were found with the second measure of social support, namely, the sense of community index. This result could reflect the early stage of developing a sense of community within the building. There also seemed to be a language/ interpretation issue with the 'community' scale, which was used for the first time. When completing the questionnaire, several tenants did not seem to understand a lot of the questions, leaving them blank.

- Gains from moving into Pears

In an open-ended question, tenants were asked to list their top two gains. The gains listed by tenants were then categorized into broader themes. The most frequently cited gain made by tenants was socialization – friends/social environment/belonging. A total of 31 tenants (46.27%) indicated this was one of their top two gains. In addition to gaining friends and a sense of belonging, the second most frequently cited gain was privacy/own place: Twenty-five tenants (37.31%) cited this as one of their gains.

Other gains included security, movement skills (for example school, employment, volunteering), affordable housing, life skills, and personal skills like confidence and feelings of self-worth, specific individual gains, cared for by agency, and clean/comfortable living space.

- Partner Agency Evaluations

The study included efforts to engage Pears' multiple partners in the evaluation by asking them to review their case files to rate tenant change from their perspective. Partners' were enthusiastic about completing an on-line survey; However, this did not translate to successful completion of the evaluation forms. The complexity of cases, the multiple staff involved, their implementation in using an on-line survey resulted in response rate of 65% and confused information on the evaluation. Future partner evaluation requires their being oriented and trained in advance.

Of those partners who completed the evaluation, a majority indicated that the tenants they placed at Pear were homeless before coming to Pears Avenue (55.7%, n = 29.) With respect to gains made by tenants since becoming residents, partners' answers were categorized into distinct themes. The most frequently cited gain was stable housing. In total, gaining stable housing was attributed to 30 tenants (57.7%). Affordable housing was the second most commonly cited theme with partners endorsing this gain to 20 tenants (38.5%). Additional gains made by tenants included community/friendships (26.9%, n = 14), privacy/own place and clean/comfortable living space (17.3%, n = 9), security (15.4%, n=8), and support from agencies (including Pears staff) (11.5%, n = 6).

Partners also completed questions regarding the challenges still facing tenants. The most frequently cited challenge still facing tenants were specific to the individual tenant. Partners cited that 32 tenants (61.5%) still faced challenges that were specific to their individual situations. Problems with the building itself were the most cited challenge still facing tenants, the main example being the lack of a full kitchen in the units. Other challenges included life skills such as money management/finding a job (19.2%, n = 10), connecting with others (15.4%, n =8), substance abuse issues (5.8%, n = 3), income, and rent payment (1.9%, n = 1).

APPENDIX

Measures

Tenants' Well-being

The Center for Epidemiological Studies Depression Scale, shortened version (CES-D; Radloff, 1997) was used to evaluate tenants' depressive symptoms. The scale consists of 12 items designed to evaluate depressive symptoms in the community. Items included in the scale emphasize symptoms of depression including appetite loss, sleep disturbance, lack of focused attention, loneliness, and depressive mood. Tenants were asked to rate how often they experienced these feelings in the past week on a 4-point scale from (0) 'rarely or none of the time' to (3) 'most or all of the time'. Higher scores reflect greater depressive symptoms. The Time1 evaluation employed previously established cut-off scores for categorizing varying degrees of depressive symptoms: no depression (0-9), mild depression (10-12), moderate depression (13-18), and severe depression (19-36) (Radloff, 1977).

Tenants' Life Skills

An integral goal of Pears Avenue is for tenants to gain employment, volunteering position or education. Therefore, it was necessary to examine whether tenants went about obtaining those skills necessary to gain employment. Unfortunately, an adequate standardized instrument to examine such skills was not found thus one had to be independently constructed. To do that, the steps to gaining a job and being successful at a job were identified and became the nine items of this assessment. For example, the first item asked whether tenants had written a resume since becoming a Pears resident. Tenants indicated 'yes' if they had taken a particular step, 'no' if they had not, or 'no, but I will within the next month' if they had a plan to pursue that step within the next month. It was hypothesized that those tenants who were retired and/or those tenants who had a full-time job before moving into Pears Avenue and still held that same job with that same job status at the present time would not pursue the steps outlined. Thus those particular tenants would artificially inflate the 'no' responses thus provide inaccurate results. Therefore, a fourth option of 'not applicable' was given to those particular tenants only.

Availability of Social Support

To assess the level of social support experienced by tenants, two measures were utilized. The first, Social Provisions Scale (Russell & Cutrona, 1984) assessed social support of tenant's relationships. The scale consists of 24 items including the statement "there are people I can depend on to help me if I really need it". Tenants were asked to indicate their level of agreement with each statement using a four-point Likert scale from 'strongly disagree' (1) to strongly disagree (4). Total scores ranged from 24 to 96 with higher scores indicating greater degree of support thus 12 items worded negatively must be reverse scored. Total scores on the Social Provisions Scale are reported according to six sub-scores: (a) guidance, (b) reassurance of worth, (c) social integration, (d) attachment, (e) nurturance, and (f) reliable alliance. Scores in each sub-scale range from four to 16.

The second scale used to assess social support was the Sense of Community Index (SCI; MacMillan & Chavis, 1986). This scale consists of 12 true/false items. The more items endorsed by respondents, the greater degree of community each feels therefore it is necessary to reverse score four items. SCI scores are reported according to four subscales: (a) membership, (b) influence, (c) fulfillment of needs, and (d) emotional connection.