

Executive Summary

Our team worked with the Unity Project, a registered charity in London that provides emergency shelter and supportive housing, to address the current needs of the organization based on a research and evidence-based approach. Specifically, we aimed to support their goals relating to the need for improved affordable housing solutions in London and the current divide between the different stakeholders involved. We provided two main deliverables: a) a report and slide deck that outline the positions of key stakeholders involved with affordable housing, and b) a set of three infographics that provide information that connects the homeless community to useful resources. Our report and slide deck contain an investigation of the objectives and incentives of the companies, non-profit organizations, general population, and government with regards to the current policies surrounding affordable housing. It provides the most value to the Unity Project as a handbook that can inform common ground with external stakeholders. We hope the information provided will be useful in pursuing a better transition for the organization's participants into effective affordable housing solutions. Our infographics contain resources that the homeless community can directly access to support their needs, including job-related resources, relevant charities, and government resources. The infographics are easy to distribute online or on-paper and are made accessible through simplicity and the inclusion of relevant contact information. Based on our outcomes, we recommend that future projects facilitate direct communication to relevant stakeholders with practical steps to improve the affordable housing problem.

Course Connection

Course Concept #1: Working in a Team

Teamwork and leadership are essential components to produce an impactful final deliverable, and we have learned to work in a team with our community partner. In the beginning, we often discussed the Ubuntu philosophy while fostering teamwork within the student team and with our community partner. Ubuntu is the state of being that allows us to be humane to others by respecting everyone's viewpoints and ideas. During meetings with our community partner, we ensure that we are having an open and honest conversation by giving everyone a chance to speak, while actively listening to each other. This was important to highlight because it allowed us to grow as individuals. We developed greater patience and empathy for others different from us, especially by listening to our community partner's experiences working with homeless individuals. We learned that we are all connected and we needed to help each other for humanity to progress. This led us to include our infographics as essential components of our final deliverable to provide aid to those in need, as we are all a part of the London community. Moreover, during group meetings, our team has utilized the SBI model to approach each other with any concerns or feedback. This way, we were able to provide constructive feedback for each other to provide a great deliverable to the Unity Project. Consequently, we have been able to foster great teamwork not only within our student team, but with our community partner as well.

Course Concept #2: Perspective-taking

Our deliverables targeted the complex issues surrounding affordable housing. They are complex due to multiple perspectives involved, all with different interests and situations. One such would be the perspective of the homeless population, but there are also non-profit organizations, real estate companies, and the government involved. Through course content on perspective-taking, our group recognized its relevance to the problems at hand. Hence, our main deliverables are sectioned by these stakeholders, with the goal of summarizing matters about affordable housing from each standpoint. For instance, the homeless members of the general population are interested in gaining access to long-term housing as soon as possible, and as easily as possible. However, from the perspective of real estate developers, it's a hindrance to include affordable housing in their projects, due to the losses in revenue from not pricing at the market competitive prices. The government is now tasked with handling both parties and keeping them satisfied. They have a responsibility to care for the welfare of their people, hence the responsibility to help the homeless population in their aims. At the same time, they cannot mandate an excess of affordable housing in every project, or else developers would leave the city and build elsewhere due to the lack of profitability. Such a situation would not be ideal for the government, because it would slow down the city's economic growth. For these reasons, our written report is structured in a way that emphasizes perspectives from various stakeholders.

Course Concept #3: Simulation Week -- Homelessness

The Unity Project focuses on providing services to homeless people in need and, as such, the course concept of homelessness was very relevant to our CEL project. This course concept was about understanding the struggles of those who are affected by homelessness and viewing homelessness through an intersectional lens. We learned many facts about homelessness and some of the struggles that homeless people face on a day-to-day basis. Some of our project deliverables were directly informed by this course concept. Through Dan Turner's talk with our class, we learned that one of the main struggles that homeless people face is with finding employment. Many homeless individuals have been out of the workforce for a significant period of time and are likely not used to the current workforce and hiring practices. While we could not help with the discrimination that homeless people face, we wanted to help homeless people by making the job hunting process easier and help them create professional application materials that would make them more competitive in their job search. Thus, one of our deliverables was an infographic that provided useful job search resources. It included current best practices for resumes, links to automated resume/cover letter generators, and links to common websites that post job opportunities. The homelessness course content allowed our group to better understand the perspectives of those facing homelessness. By empathizing with those facing homeless, we were able to better create resources that hopefully can be of use to individuals struggling with homelessness.

Future Steps

We provided the Unity Project with resources to understand the current stakeholders involved within affordable and assisted housing that helps them better create relationships with the various stakeholders involved. The next logical step would be to more directly interact with the

government officials that are involved with affordable/assisted housing legislation and actively advocate for new legislation to be put into place. One potential idea that we have identified is the new inclusionary zoning policy that was recently put in place in Toronto. The Unity Project could assess the effectiveness of that solution in places where it has been implemented and assess whether London could be a viable location where it could be enacted. Should the policy be viable in London, the Unity Project could then promote advocacy by creating campaigns raising awareness about the policy and how effective it could be in London.