

## **Toronto Housing and Homelessness Service Planning Forum Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** October 7, 2020

**Time:** 10am-12pm

**Zoom:** <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/83253802815?pwd=Yjc1OExmQ0N3WUE0UVhHSEdNTzA5Zz09>

**Max # Attendees:** 73

### **Co-chairs**

- Mark Aston, TAEH Chair and ED, Covenant House
- Ashleigh Dalton, Manager, Strategic Policy and Service Planning, SSHA

### **Land Recognition**

- Kira shared a video titled "Land acknowledgements: uncovering an oral history of Tkaronto" created by Local Love Magazine. The video can be viewed here:  
<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=voXySM-knRc>

### **Interim Shelter Recovery and Infrastructure Implementation Plan – Laural Raine, SSHA**

- Laural shared highlights from the report titled "Interim Shelter Recovery and Infrastructure Implementation Plan". The full report can be found here:  
<https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/mmis/2020/ec/bgrd/backgroundfile-157088.pdf>
- This report was recently released in response to recommendations from the Interim Shelter Recovery Taskforce, which involved a range of community partners and consultations with a broad range of stakeholders
- The report describes an implementation action plan for the City's Covid-19 response for homelessness services for the next 12 months
- The five key themes in this report are:
  - Ensuring preparedness for resurgence
  - Adapting service models to the Covid-19 context (this includes a 2020-2021 Winter Service Plan, a response strategy for encampments, and strengthening service models at temporary response shelters)
  - Leveraging opportunities for housing and the Shelter Infrastructure Plan (this includes continuing to increase rapid housing efforts, and redevelopment of shelter sites for housing)
  - Minimizing the flow of people into homelessness
  - Ensuring recovery addresses inequitable outcomes (this includes efforts to confront anti-Black racism, and addressing the distinct needs of Indigenous Communities)

### **Coordinated Access and the City's Rapid Housing Initiative - Stephanie Malcher and Melissa Doyle, SSHA**

- Stephanie shared a summary of enhancements to the SMIS system, which were made to support a transition toward a more user-friendly, client-centered, and housing-

focused information management system, to advance the development of a Coordinated Access approach, and to enable more accurate and fulsome data collection.

- The changes were informed by research and consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, and include:
  - Global release of a mandatory, updated Indigenous identity field, updated gender dropdown, enhanced client summary screen, displayed total number of bed nights, a "Chronically Homeless" flag, discharge field editable for two weeks, improved case notes usability, improved display of OW/ODSP data from SAMS for DOS intake, and a new referral message with information about program.
  - Pilot release of a SMIS intake form that integrates an initial assessment and additional demographic questions including pronouns, contact information for the client, client details (including Indigenous identity, racial identity, veteran status, and refugee status), support details with triage, and housing essentials.
- Melissa shared an update about the City's Rapid Housing initiative.
  - The rapid housing initiative was a pilot project conducted in partnership with the Toronto Community Housing Corporation (TCHC), with the goal of ensuring that eligible low-support clients could be moved into vacant TCHC units. This program helped with alleviating stress on the shelter system during Covid-19.
  - The program is being run in partnership with various groups, including but not limited to Furniture Bank, follow-up supports agencies, Toronto Employment and Social Services, Housing First, etc.
  - To date, 361 individuals have been housed.
  - A total of 404 units are available from TCHC. A total of 214 households have been filled as of September 14, 2020.
  - For additional information about the client profiles of those housed, please refer to the slide deck.

### **Housing Allowances – Ashleigh Dalton, SSHA**

- Ashleigh shared an overview of Toronto's Housing Allowance Program, including the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) and Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI)
- A housing allowance is a fixed-amount housing benefit provided directly to eligible households, usually in the private rental market. It is paid directly to the household, and is often provided with a bridging grant to assist with first and last month's rent to secure the unit.
- Approximately 6,200 households in Toronto are currently receiving a Housing Allowance.
- There are plans to assist an additional 1,900 households through OPHI until March 2022.
- Implementation of COHB provides funding for new housing benefits between 2020 and 2029. It is projected that COHB will assist an additional 900 households in 202/2021.
- COHB program guidelines are set and administered by the province of Ontario. City of Toronto service managers identify and select eligible households and assist with the application submission to the provincial Ministry of Finance.

- Current challenges with COHB and intergovernmental requests are:
  - Insufficient funding, as current funds can only assist 1% of the waiting list
  - Administrative difficulty
  - Lack of clarity around allocations beyond 2022
- The City is currently advocating to Provincial and Federal governments for
  - increased investment to scale up COHB to assist more households,
  - increased flexibility in the program
  - information and certainty on future allocations
- The proposed expansion of Toronto's Housing Allowance program includes:
  - Continuation of the chronic homelessness stream, adopting a new federal definition of chronic homelessness
  - Expanding the homelessness stream to Indigenous people experiencing homelessness, youth experiencing homelessness, and clients in Covid-19 temporary response sites that have leases expiring

#### **Modular Housing Initiative – Abi Bond, Housing Secretariat**

- Abi provided an update on the Modular Housing Initiative.
- In April 2020, Council approved the purchase and installation of 250 units of modular housing, including an initial 100 homes ready for occupancy in the fall of 2020, and the remaining 150 homes ready for occupancy by April 2021
- These homes will be used to provide permanent affordable housing with supports for individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness
- Through a Request for Proposals process, the City of Toronto selected the Neighbourhood Group and COTA Health as housing service providers for the two modular housing sites
- In addition, in September 2020, the federal government announced a new Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) investing \$1 billion Canada wide in the construction of modular housing, as well as the acquisition of land, and conversion of existing buildings to affordable housing
- Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy will also provide additional funding to help extend and expand the response to the Covid-19 pandemic.
- There are currently no further details about the rollout of the RHI. However, in anticipation of receiving additional funding, an inter-divisional City team is assessing an initial list of properties and land suitable for modular supportive housing, acquisition opportunities, and shelters to be converted to permanent supportive housing. Next steps are underway on site-specific diligence, including zoning reviews, site inspections, fair market value determined through appraisals, and construction assessment.

#### **Toronto Housing Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH) Updates – Kira Heineck, TAEH**

- Kira provided an update on behalf of TAEH
- TAEH will be facilitating monthly forums and creating other virtual opportunities to get together, learn from each other, etc.
- They will be restarting regular engagement with TAEH partners and broader networks via Zoom and webinars. These will include learning and sharing around best practices in ending homelessness in Toronto, as well as addressing racism and colonialism in homelessness.

- TAEH will also be engaging in inter-governmental advocacy, with a focus on *Provincial Engagement on Improving Supportive Housing* in October.
  - The consultation process includes an online survey and regional engagement sessions
  - TAEH will be working with partners in the Toronto Supportive Housing Growth Plan project to develop key messages and a submission for this consultation
  - TAEH will also be engaging in advocacy and briefing meetings with provincial officials and ministries

### **Q&As:**

Questions and answers on each of the above presentations. Additional questions identified as possible topics for future forums (see below).

Winter Plan: <https://www.toronto.ca/news/city-of-toronto-2020-2021-winter-plan-for-people-experiencing-homelessness/>

### **Suggested topics for future forums:**

- Does any of the planning have a specific focus on the childbearing population (pregnant or newly parenting and homeless?). Appropriate beds for Covid-positive pregnant and postpartum people and newborns was a gap back at the height of lockdown
- Do we have any information on the number of TCHC units awaiting renovation to facilitate occupancy? Can the issue of TCHC disrepair units be included on this table's agenda, possibly with an invitation from them to speak to this issue?
  - What partnerships / capacity-building exists with other non-TCHC housing providers that have robust unit turnover processes?
- Do we have any data for Black clients in the context of the anti-Black and anti-Indigenous racism strategy?
- Planning Dept. has asked to come and get feedback on Inclusionary Zoning and the proposed Affordable Rental Housing definition
- Accessibility and relationship to housing and homelessness
- The Tower and Neighbourhood Revitalization Unit presentation
- How is the new Reaching Home funding going to be used or allocated to the sector?
- When will you be able to provide the locations for Phase 2 modular housing?
- What / who created the province's interest in supportive housing?