



STAFF REPORT ACTION REQUIRED

SSHA's Strategy to Identify New and Replacement Shelter Services in All Parts of Toronto

Date:	June 14, 2016
To:	Community Development and Recreation Committee
From:	General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

Community Development and Recreation Committee (CDRC) requested at their meeting of April 13, 2016, that Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) report to the June 23, 2016 meeting on its current divisional strategy to identify new and replacement services to ensure that housing and shelter services are available and accessible to all residents in all parts of Toronto. This report responds to that request.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA), recommends that:

1. Community Development and Recreation Committee direct the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, in consultation with the Executive Director, Social Development, Finance and Administration, to report back to the Community Development and Recreation Committee in late 2016 with recommendations on raising awareness on homelessness issues and ways to improve communication with local communities when seeking to establish new shelters.

Financial Impact

There is no financial impact associated with the recommendation in this report.

Equity Impact

The emergency shelter system in Toronto serves equity-seeking groups such as seniors, people with disabilities, individuals with mental health issues, the working poor, Aboriginal peoples, people who identify as LGBTQ2S and other vulnerable groups. Effective operation of the shelter system is important in ensuring that temporary accommodation is available to a variety of equity seeking groups and contributes to the City's Poverty Reduction Strategy.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of May 3, 4 and 5, 2016, City Council adopted CD11.7 "*Update on the Shelter System and Hostels to Homes Pilot*" which provided an update on efforts to reduce shelter occupancy and information on the implementation of the Hostels to Homes Housing First Pilot Program. At its meeting of April 13, 2016 while considering the item, Community Development and Recreation Committee requested that Shelter, Support and Housing Administration report back on the current divisional strategy to identify new and replacement sites for shelter services to ensure they are available to residents across Toronto.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CD11.7>

At its meeting of April 20, 2015, the Community Development and Recreation Committee received for information, CD3.10, "*Strategies to Improve Location and Relocating Emergency Shelters*" which set out the challenges of locating properties for use as emergency shelter and community engagement best practices when opening emergency shelters.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.CD3.10>

At its meeting on March 31, April 1 and 2, 2015, City Council adopted CD2.2 "*Infrastructure and Service Improvement Plan for the Emergency Shelter System*" which sets out an infrastructure and service improvement plan to guide the transformation of the emergency shelter system and requested staff to identify sites for up to 15 emergency shelters over the next five years.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2015.CD2.2>

At its meeting of December 16, 17, and 18, 2013 City Council unanimously adopted CD25.10, *2014-2019 Housing Stability Service Planning Framework* (HSSPF). The HSSPF includes strategic directions to maintain a strong emergency shelter system as well as to create housing opportunities for vulnerable households in Toronto.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.CD25.10>

At a Special Meeting on February 7, 10, and 11, 2003, City Council adopted the Municipal Shelter By-law (By-law No. 138-2003) recognizing the continued need for emergency shelter accommodation across the City. The By-law allows municipal shelters as a permitted use in all zones and districts of the City provided among other things that

the lot for the proposed shelter is located on a major or minor arterial road and that the shelter location is approved by City Council.

<http://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/bylaws/2003/law0138.pdf>

ISSUE BACKGROUND

On any given night in Toronto, over 5,000 men, women, couples, and children experience homelessness. Emergency shelters are part of the range of service responses to homelessness available in the city that also include street outreach, street respite, housing help services and drop-ins. Shelters not only provide emergency accommodation and a safe place to stay but also access to other supports including counselling, case planning, income supports, housing search assistance, and assistance with other life skills to needed to maintain housing.

There is a need for shelters across the city as homelessness is not limited to any one community or neighbourhood. In 2003, City Council adopted the Municipal Shelter By-law (By-law No. 138-2003) recognizing the continued need for emergency shelter accommodation across the city. The By-law allows municipal shelters as a permitted use in all zones and districts of the city provided that the site meets certain criteria and that the location approved by City Council.

Addressing homelessness in Toronto is an ongoing challenge given the lack of affordable housing and a tight rental market characterised by high rents and low vacancies. The shelter system has also been characterized by persistently high shelter occupancy rates over the past several years making it difficult for people in need to access a bed.

In March 2015, City Council adopted Shelter Support and Housing Administration's (SSHA) four-point plan to address shelter occupancy and initiatives to transform the shelter system. Part of the plan was to identify up to 15 new and replacement shelter sites over the next five years as part of the George Street Revitalization (GSR) and to address shelter relocations and the ongoing occupancy pressures. Six of the 15 shelters originally identified were to support the GSR transition plan and closure of Seaton House. City Council endorsed a transition plan which alters this approach and instead will require four shelters and an investment in creating 150 units of supportive housing and 200 housing allowances. This brings the total number of new shelters required to 13. An update on the 13 sites can be found in Appendix A.

Since the plan was adopted, City Council has approved 4 new shelter sites. But it continues to be challenging for SSHA and Real Estate Services to find suitable sites that meet both operational requirements and those of the By-law and that are accepted by the local community.

The Municipal Shelter By-law directs City staff to hold a community information meeting to share details about the proposed shelter and services. Due to the fast pace of real estate transactions, the limited availability of suitable properties for shelter combined with the immediate need for shelter space and the timelines for Council approval, the

public living around proposed shelters have identified that they often feel shut out of the decision making process. Further, the requirement of City Council to approve all proposed locations gives the impression to the public that some recommended shelters are defeated. This has not been the case to date.

COMMENTS

In April 2015, Community Development and Recreation Committee received for information a staff report that outlined strategies to improve the ability of the City to locate and relocate shelters in an efficient and community sensitive way. This report reflects on those strategies and comments on how they have been used to date to locate and relocate shelters.

Working with Real Estate Services to Locate Sites

SSHA has been working closely with the Real Estate Services Division since early 2015 to search all areas of the City for feasible locations for new shelters that will be City-operated. The search is based on criteria provided by SSHA and includes the following:

- Approximately 25,000 square feet
- Must adhere to the Municipal Shelter By-law
 - on a major or minor arterial road
 - at least 250 meters away from another municipally funded shelter
 - any new buildings need to conform with other secondary zoning requirements
- Built form must be suitable for transformation into shelter space for up to 125 people as per guidelines in Toronto Shelter Standards
- Must meet accessibility requirements upon purchase or lease or be suitable to meet accessibility requirements within renovation budget available
- Must provide space for the installation of a commercial kitchen, dining area and programming areas for clients and staff
- Must be accessible to transit services
- Ideally located near or accessible via transit to services to support people experiencing homelessness including income support programs, drop-in programs, housing help programs and community health services including mental health, harm reduction and / or substance use supports.

Community agencies that operate purchase of service shelters have their own real estate services that assist with their property searches. The City does not provide this service for community agencies except when required (e.g. Dixon Hall's School House Shelter due to the George Street Revitalization). In these cases, SSHA will approve the location based on the same criteria listed above.

The property search has focussed on motels, hotels and open retail or commercial spaces which provide a built form which is easily converted to shelter accommodation.

Many properties were eliminated from further consideration due to their proximity to existing shelters, not being located on a minor/major road, and situations where a property purchase or lease would displace current residential tenants.

A concentrated focus on property in the downtown core, specifically Wards 20, 27 and 28, has been necessary to accommodate at least two shelters related to the GSR. These shelters will need to maintain close links with specialized health services available in these communities. Other than these particular programs, staff are looking for potential sites in all wards across the City.

Since the summer of 2015, over 80 properties have been considered for purchase or lease. The ward location of each of those properties is portrayed in the table below:

Ward 1	0	Ward 12	1	Ward 23	0	Ward 34	1
Ward 2	2	Ward 13	0	Ward 24	0	Ward 35	1
Ward 3	0	Ward 14	2	Ward 25	0	Ward 36	7
Ward 4	0	Ward 15	1	Ward 26	1	Ward 37	2
Ward 5	4	Ward 16	0	Ward 27	14	Ward 38	0
Ward 6	2	Ward 17	1	Ward 28	11	Ward 39	0
Ward 7	0	Ward 18	1	Ward 29	0	Ward 40	2
Ward 8	3	Ward 19	3	Ward 30	5	Ward 41	0
Ward 9	0	Ward 20	9	Ward 31	0	Ward 42	0
Ward 10	0	Ward 21	1	Ward 32	2	Ward 43	1
Ward 11	1	Ward 22	2	Ward 33	1	Ward 44	4

The current real estate market in Toronto makes it difficult for the City to compete for available property which meets the criteria for shelters. Either the price or the fast pace of transactions puts the City at a disadvantage.

Facilitating the Community Information Process

As soon as a potential location is determined feasible for a shelter program, the local Ward Councillor is notified. A meeting to review the proposal with the Councillor is convened and staff seek input on the surrounding neighbourhood and community needs. Local stakeholders including resident associations, business improvement associations and an inventory of community recourses is developed. Some Councillors are supportive of the need for shelter programs across the City while others actively campaign against the creation of a proposed shelter in their ward.

With the input from the local Councillor, a community information event is organized. The format of the community information meeting is determined in consultation with the Councillor and has followed either one of two formats – a town hall meeting or a drop-in/open house to share information.

The town hall meeting allows local residents to hear a staff presentation on the proposal followed by questions and concerns or feedback from residents. This format allows for

all in attendance to hear consistent information and for all to benefit from the question and answer period.

The drop-in format provides an opportunity for local residents and stakeholders to meet one on one with a variety of experts including staff of the proposed shelter, staff of local community resources that work with the target population to be served by the shelter and relevant City staff. In advance of the recent meeting on the proposed shelter at 29 Leslie St., the Salvation Army hired a community facilitator to assist with outreach to community members before and after the proposal was considered by City Council.

Regardless of the format of the community information meeting, staff make available relevant FAQ documents and solicit feedback in the form of verbal comments, written feedback and deputations through the committee process.

Feedback Commonly Received During the Community Information Process

Both the town hall and drop-in/open house formats for information meetings generate similar feedback from communities regarding the potential opening of a homelessness shelter. Some common concerns that emerge are:

1. Location:

- Proposed location is not good for an emergency shelter because:
 - Already too many vulnerable individuals in the neighbourhood
 - Neighbourhood is revitalizing and the creation of a shelter here will compromise future development
 - There are no services in the community for people who are homeless
 - There are too many services for people who are homeless
 - This is a residential community
 - This is an industrial community
 - There is a school located nearby
 - There is a park located nearby
 - There are several bars in the area
 - There is a beer store / liquor store located nearby

2. Process:

- Mistaking a community information meeting with a community consultation
- Complaints that not enough notice given about the proposal or community information meeting
- Complaints about not receiving information delivered about the proposal and community information meeting
- Information is not available in languages other than English
- General feeling that the proposal is a done deal
- Misinformation about the Council approval process

3. Crime and Safety:
 - Fear that vulnerable seniors, women and children will be at greater risk for violence and crime
 - Fear of people who have mental health issues and use substances
4. Proposed Service:
 - The size of the proposed shelter is too large and there are not enough services to support an influx of vulnerable people
5. Impact on Property Values:
 - The shelter will have a negative impact on the value of homes and land in the local area

Public Awareness Campaign

Recent experiences with shelter approvals indicate there is a need to raise awareness about homelessness, housing, and poverty issues throughout all communities in Toronto. The stigma and fear many residents express during the community information meetings indicate that the general public does not understand the contributing factors which cause homelessness or the human reality, stigma and discrimination people who experience homelessness and poverty face on a daily basis. SSHA is in the initial stages of a joint initiative with the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness to raise awareness and support for the benefit of mixed neighbourhoods, in addition to addresses some of the fear and stigma described above.

Part of any awareness campaign should also educate Torontonians about the rights of groups identified in the Ontario Human Rights Code and Toronto's Housing Charter, the first of its kind in Canada and a key component of the *Housing Opportunities Toronto: An Affordable Housing Action Plan, 2010-2020*. The Housing Charter states that:

"All residents have the right to equal treatment in housing without discrimination as provided by the Ontario Human Rights Code, and to be protected from discriminatory practices which limit their housing opportunities; All residents should be able to live in their neighbourhood of choice without discrimination and; All residents, regardless of whether they rent or own a home, or are homeless, have an equal stake and voice in Toronto's future."

Toronto is not alone in this dilemma, other jurisdictions across Canada are also struggling with the approval process of new emergency shelters for people who experience homelessness. Staff have made some initial connections with colleagues in both Ottawa and Vancouver and propose that further investigation be conducted to inform a report to CDRC that may make recommendations to City Council with improvements to the community engagement process.

Stabilizing Shelter Infrastructure

The most expedient way to address the approval issue of new shelters is to limit the number of new shelters required. SSHA's shelter infrastructure and service system improvement plan aims to achieve this with two concurrent strategies. The first will stabilize the existing shelter system and make it a priority to maintain all shelters services where they currently are located. The most stable beds in the shelter system are those beds operating in buildings owned by the City or owned by non-profit organizations funded to provide shelter services. Beds that are located in leased properties are subject to periodic successful lease negotiations and are at greater risk for loss.

SSHA is working to increase the share of owned versus leased beds in the system and had made some initial progress shown in the table below:

	Owned #	Leased #	Owned %	Leased %	Total Beds
Actual 2012	3,352	889	79%	21%	4,241
Actual 2014	3,441	857	80%	20%	4,298
Actual 2016	3,452	639	84%	16%	4,091
Projected 2018	3,838	579	87%	13%	4,417

The second strategy which will limit the need for additional shelter beds is adoption of a Housing First approach in all funded services and supports. SSHA is transforming the way it delivers shelter services to people who experience homelessness, using a Housing First approach. The central assumption of the Housing First model is that having a home provides a solid emotional and social foundation which makes it possible to work on other life goals. In the simplest terms Housing First case management means that finding, securing and maintaining housing with clients is the primary focus of work being conducted by shelter staff.

The foundation of this transformation is to move away from the sole provision of emergency services and to create an integrated housing and support service system which increases the housing stability for all Torontonians. SSHA has a dual mission: to house more people in permanent housing with supports, and to stabilize and improve the existing shelter infrastructure.

Next Steps

SSHA staff will continue work with the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness on a broad scale awareness initiative to address the stigma of homelessness. Outreach to other municipalities in Canada on the shelter approval process will be done over the summer and staff will report back to CDRC in the fall on this information as well as any recommendations to improve engagement with local communities related to shelter approvals in Toronto.

SSHA will work closely with staff from Social Development and Finance Administration to identify ways to improve the community information meeting process when new shelters are proposed in neighbourhoods. Both divisions fund community agencies across the City which could provide a range of services for vulnerable populations. In addition SSHA staff could improve links to strategic City initiatives led by SDFA including the Toronto Youth Equity Strategy, the Toronto Seniors Strategy and the Poverty Reduction Strategy.

SSHA will begin meeting with downtown Councillors and others whom are interested in identifying sites in the core as replacement sites as part of the GSR project. Future shelter approvals are expected in the fall of 2016.

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ATTACHMENT

Appendix A: Shelter Infrastructure Update on 13 Shelter Sites

Appendix A

Shelter Infrastructure Update on 13 Shelter Sites

To date, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration has received City Council approval for four new shelters and the approval to add beds at existing purchase of service locations to satisfy the need for a fifth. Of these five shelter equivalents, two have opened and three are in various stages of planning, development and construction. A sixth shelter approval will be considered concurrently with this report by CDRC and by City Council in July 2016.

The table below summarizes this work:

Shelter Location	Status
Added beds at various shelters	80% open
389 Church St. (transitional program for women)	Open
850-54 Bloor St. West	Forecasted to open fall 2016
3306 Kingston Rd	Forecasted to open spring 2017
29 Leslie St.	Forecasted to open spring 2017
731 Runnymede Rd – Proposal only	Forecasted to open summer 2017

Of the seven shelters still required, one has been purchased by a community agency, will operate as transitional housing and is expected to open in 2018. The lease for another is being finalized and staff recommendations forthcoming to City Council in the fall.

Staff continue the search for five remaining shelter sites, three related to the GSR which will be directly operated by City staff and two are non-profit purchase of service programs. The table below summarizes this work:

Shelters Needed	Area of City	Number of Beds
GSR Shelter – Temporary	Outside of core	100 – 125 men
GSR Shelter – Permanent	Downtown core	100 – 125 men
GSR Shelter – Permanent	Downtown core	100 – 125 men
Dixon Hall School House	Downtown core	40 – 60 men / coed
Homes First Society	Scarborough	100 coed