

Update on Housing Access Initiatives



Background – Wait List Review and Housing Stability Service Planning Framework

- Multi year review resulted in “**Review of the Centralized Waiting List for Social Housing: Framework and Proposed Directions**” report approved by Toronto City Council April 2013
- Summer of 2013, City of Toronto Shelter Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) Division did a **broad consultation** and heard more than 2,000 voices

This consultation informed the 2014-2019 ***Housing Stability Service Planning Framework***

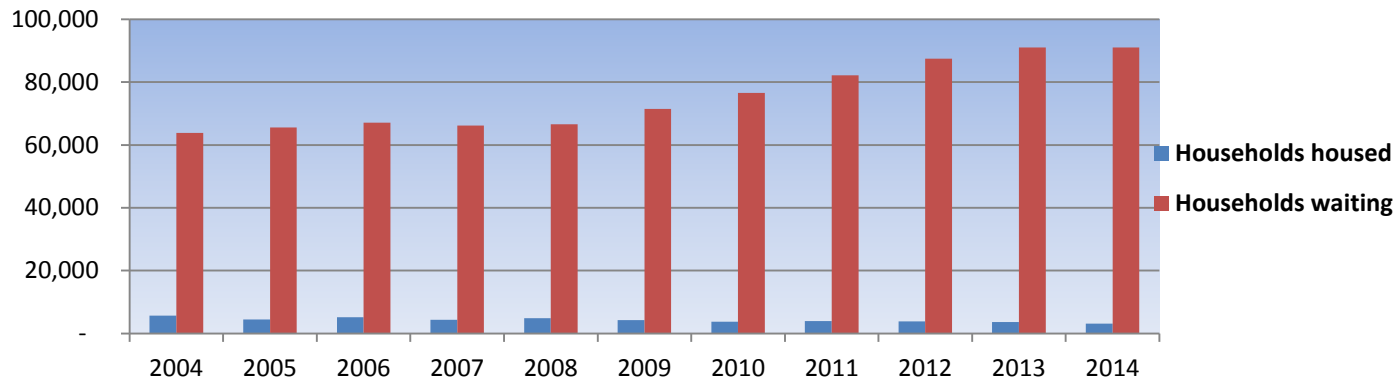
- One of the key actions in the framework: “**create a proactive, coordinated access system for social and affordable housing**...by implementing changes to City policies, modernizing system administration and **empowering applicants with better information and more choices**”.

Council Directions

- July 2014
 - Implement a **choice based system** for the selection of households for vacant rent geared to income (RGI) units
 - **Policy changes**; mandate policy, occupancy standards, single date rule
 - Steps to **integrate** the administration of **access to rent-geared-to-income** with administration of **other housing benefits and supports**
- March, April, 2015
 - develop an **online housing help portal** as a coordinated access point
 - **Expand choice based system** for the allocation of RGI units to also include other housing benefit options.
- May, 2015
 - Bring **Housing Connections** and all delegated functions into the City's reporting and governance structure through an **asset transfer**.

Wait List Review and Choice Based Systems

- For the past 10 years, the number of households on the waiting list has continued to grow while the number housed each year continues to decline



Under the current system:

- Wait times for households are unacceptably long
- Significant resources are dedicated to administrative tasks of managing the growing list of people waiting to have their housing needs met.

Benefits of Choice Based System

Using an advertisement model that allows interested applicants to actively express interest on units as they become vacant, choice based systems have the following benefits:

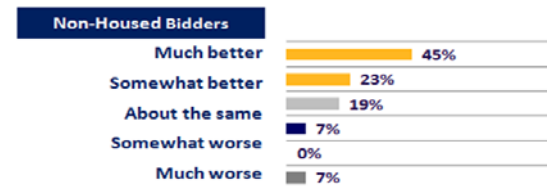
- **Improved efficiency** in matching applicants to units
 - Quicker turnover and reduced vacancy loss in all units
 - Fewer offer refusals even in low demand units and buildings
- **Greater engagement** and initiative on the part of the applicant
 - Providing more information and more choice empowers the applicant to be more involved in their housing decisions and outcomes.
- **Support for vulnerable and disadvantaged** households
 - Attentive system design ensures opportunity and access for all groups



My Choice Rental Pilot

Evaluation of the ***My Choice Rental*** pilot in 2015 confirmed all of the benefits of a choice based system in the City's context:

- **Greater efficiency** in matching applicants to vacant units
 - Acceptance rate improved from 24% to 76%
 - Length of time to fill a vacant unit reduced by 46%
 - Number of phone calls required reduced from an average of 9 to under 2
- **High approval rating** from all pilot participants on
 - Information provided on units, buildings and neighbourhoods
 - Perceptions of fairness of the system; operated under same rules
 - Overall preference over current system



Choice Based System

Other key learnings from the *My Choice Rental* Pilot evaluation

- Implementation of a choice based system on a larger scale will require **greater automation** than the current IT system can support
- A comprehensive and multi-channel **communication strategy** is required to ensure optimal access and participation for all stakeholders
- An **extensive database** of information on units, buildings and surrounding neighbourhoods and amenities is required.
- Strategies are required to **support vulnerable and disadvantaged applicants** to ensure uncompromised access

Choice Based System – next steps

System Replacement

- Request for Information (RFI) closed **October 1, 2015**
- Review of submissions and options analysis - **November 2015**
- Development of RFP/RFQ - **Q1 2016**
- RFP/RFQ release – **Q2 2016**

Database development

- Collection and validation of information is underway to support both choice based system and Housing Portal:
 - all RGI units and buildings
 - Alternative Housing units and buildings
 - Affordable Housing (below market rent) units and buildings

Transfer of Housing Connections

- Following extensive due diligence undertaken by joint teams of subject matter experts, the transfer of Housing Connections has been completed.

Transfer milestones

- Asset Transfer completed - October 28
 - 44 Housing Connections staff became City of Toronto employees
 - 176 Elm Housing Connections Resource Centre became a City of Toronto facility
- Transition Period – October 28 to December 31, 2015
 - Migration of IT and phone systems to City network to be completed
 - Housing Connections to be working under City policies and procedures
 - Staff oriented to the City environment and engaged in ongoing training

Service Integration

Housing Portal



Online coordinated access point to a range of housing benefits and support services

- June 2015 – Cross Divisional housing access website design visioning exercise
- Q3 2015 – development of Housing Portal initial design
- Q4 2015 - consultations and testing with stakeholders and users
 - Integration plan for SSHA and Housing Connections websites
 - Accompanying printed guide also in development
- Q1 2016 – web changes and housing portal launch

Service Integration

Planning for Housing Allowance Pilot Program

- Allocation for households on the Centralized Waiting List by target groups
 - **Underserved** by both the wait list system and existing housing allowance programs
 - **Coordinating** housing allowances **with other benefits** to meet more complex needs
 - Selection and distribution of housing allowances will operate under **choice based principles**
 - Incorporate **“while you wait” services** to integrate access to other City administered supports and benefits
- Implementation to begin **Q1 2016**

Questions?

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