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STAFF REPORT
ACTION REQUIRED

Supplementary Report: Review of Community Information Process to Assess New and Replacement Shelter Sites

Date:	September 6, 2016
To:	Community Development and Recreation Committee
From:	Deputy City Manager, Cluster A
Wards:	All
Reference Number:	

SUMMARY

This report provides an update on the City's review of the Community Information Process (CIP), a component of the site review process for new shelters and shelters relocating to a new neighbourhood, required under the City's Municipal Shelter By-law (By-law No. 138-2003) and related Council approved policies. The engagement activities associated with the CIP review equally respond to Community Development and Recreation Committee's (CDRC) request for staff to report back to Committee on the use of a professional facilitator to assist with identifying best practices on raising awareness about homelessness issues and improving the City's community engagement when seeking to establish new and replacement shelter locations.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Deputy City Manager, Cluster A, recommends that:

1.   Community Development and Recreation Committee receive this report for information.

Financial Impact

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

The Deputy City Manager & Chief Financial Officer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

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. The effective integration of emergency shelters into neighbourhoods across the city is essential to maintaining temporary accommodation for a variety of equity seeking groups and is an important component of the City's efforts to address poverty.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of July 12-15, 2016, City Council referred CD13.16 "Shelter, Support and Housing Administration's Strategy to Identify New and Replacement Shelter Services in All Parts of Toronto" back to CDRC for further consideration. In addition, when considering this matter at its meeting of June 23, 2016, CDRC requested that the Deputy City Manager, Cluster A, report to Committee on September 20, 2016 on the hiring and / or contracting of a professional facilitator, within existing resources to assist with community consultation and engagement.
http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2016.CD13.16

At its meeting of May 3-5, 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 authorized the Acting General Manager, Shelter Support and Housing Administration (SSHA), to enter into agreements and fund five agencies for up to $800,000 gross and $0 net. Additionally, CDRC when considering this matter at its meeting of April 13, 2016 requested the Acting General Manager, SSHA to report to Committee 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 of 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 a 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

ISSUE BACKGROUND

In March 2015, as part of a four-point plan to address shelter occupancy and initiatives to transform the shelter system, City Council directed the General Manager of SSHA to identify up to 15 new and replacement shelter sites over the next five years. These additional shelters will support the George Street Revitalization (GSR) and will advance the goal of achieving a 90% shelter occupancy rate, as directed by Council.

As homelessness is not limited to any one community or neighbourhood, SSHA has been considering shelter locations across the city. The Municipal Shelter By-law and its implementation report (Planning and Transportation Committee Report No. 3, February 2003) set out criteria that guide the identification and approval of shelter sites, and related policies set out process requirements associated with each site assessment. These requirements include a Community Information Process (CIP) that outlines how staff are to facilitate and report on community engagement activities to support new or relocated emergency shelter sites. SSHA is currently reviewing the CIP and its implementation policies and practices, in partnership with Social Development, Finance and Administration (SDFA), to ensure that community engagement activities are effective and inclusive. This report presents an overview of the status and plans related to that review and the process of identifying and incorporating best practice improvement for community engagement.

The services overseen by SSHA have historically evolved as an ad hoc response to decades of intermittent and mostly decreasing funding. The introduction of the 2014-2019 Housing Stability Service Plan created the environment to leverage existing resources, foster innovation and transform the way we approach about the causes, impacts, and solutions to homelessness. Within the context of the Poverty Reduction Framework, SSHA in partnerships with other city divisions and community partners, is contributing to a broader integrated strategy that will ensure "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 Housing Charter – Opportunity for All).

COMMENTS

Community Information Process Review

SSHA has established a staff team, including representatives from the Affordable Housing Office (AHO) and SDFA, to review the CIP for assessing new and replacement shelter locations, which includes expectations for public meetings, written communications and the establishment of community liaison committees. The current CIP approved by Council in February 2003 is detailed in attached Appendix A of this report.

Rationale for Review

Based on SSHA's considerable experience locating and opening shelters, including the proposed 731 Runnymede Road site, opportunities for improving community engagement have been identified. Improvements to the CIP would help ensure the successful identification, assessment and integration of approximately five new and replacement shelter sites which are needed in the coming months. The real estate transactions required to secure shelter sites in Toronto's competitive marketplace place added pressure on SSHA to undertake CIPs that are inclusive, efficient and support the City's goals for developing a shelter system that effectively responds to the needs of people experiencing homelessness.

Scope of Review

The overall purpose of the CIP review is to ensure the process of identifying shelter locations and engaging communities is effectively integrated into the City's broader efforts to raise awareness around the causes, impacts, and solutions to homelessness. A public awareness campaign is currently under development in collaboration with other City divisions and the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness, to dispel myths associated with people experiencing homelessness and build greater public acceptance and understanding of the services required to help people rebuild their lives and achieve housing stability.

The City will use its experiences to date in applying the CIP in a range of neighbourhoods and contexts, and will leverage the expertise of SSHA, SDFA, the AHO, Public Health, the City Manager's Office and other city divisions. It will consult with residents (including those who are experiencing homelessness), community agencies, councillors, engagement experts and other jurisdictions.

Additionally, a professional facilitator will be engaged to assist in the identification of best practices on raising awareness about homelessness issues and improving the City's community engagement activities.

The scope of the review will included the following elements:

- Obligations and requirements under the Municipal Shelter By-law (By-laws No. 138-2003 and No. 569-2013, Chapter 150 Specific Use Regulations);
- Human Rights considerations and other legal requirements;
- Use of Community Liaison Committee and other engagement mechanisms;
- Effective communication strategies and tools;
- Identification of neighbourhood resources and services during the planning process;
- Development of partnerships with local community members and leaders;
- Alignment of City services and other resources required to support the successful integration of a new shelter into a new community.

The review process will also include a review, in conjunction with the City's Solicitor's Office, of an Ontario Municipal Board (OMB) decision dated April 29, 2004 which was recently brought to the attention of SSHA staff. The 2004 OMB decision struck Section 2(iv) from the Municipal Shelter By-law. Section 2(iv) was a provision requiring that new shelter locations be approved by Council. In the context of the CIP review, the implications of this information will be further explored and reported to Council in the Fall of 2016.

Community Information Process Review Components

Literature and Jurisdictional Review

Best practices in community engagement to support the siting and development of supportive housing and homeless shelters in major Canadian and American cities will be researched, reviewed and analyzed, including practices in Vancouver, Montreal, Edmonton, New York and Seattle. Engagement leads in these jurisdictions whose practices are of particular interest may be interviewed.

Examples of best practices and other relevant information gathered from the consultation and literature / jurisdictional review will be summarized and used as a background document throughout the review, and will set the context for discussions with various community partners.

Professional Facilitator

The City will engage the services of an external consultant with highly developed expertise in facilitation and public engagement design, to assist with the planning and delivery of community consultation and engagement events targeted at identifying best practices:

    a) on raising awareness on homelessness and the need for shelters throughout Toronto; and,

b) for improving the City's community outreach and engagement activities when locating new or replacement shelters.

The Consultant will provide a report summarizing the key findings and best practices, ensuring that broader City strategies for raising awareness and understanding of the causes, impacts, and solutions to homelessness are effectively integrated with an improved process for how the City engages communities and neighbourhoods during a shelter location or re-location process.

Charrette

On August 24, 2016 Councillors Fletcher and Bailão offered to co-host a charrette focused on reviewing best practices for successful community engagement when siting new shelters and moving existing shelters. The charrette has been scheduled for October 3rd and the agenda and structure for the event will be developed in consultation with the councillors and a professional facilitator.

The charrette will bring residents, including those experiencing homelessness, community agencies, councillors, city staff, engagement experts and others together to identify strategies and tactics that will increase the effectiveness of the current CIP and build community support for the introduction of supportive housing and shelters.

The charrette provides an opportunity to deeply engage key stakeholders in the process of informing Council recommendations on how the CIP might be updated and/or more effectively applied to ensure that as the housing stability service system manager we are equipped to meet changing shelter requirements.

Consultation

Focus groups and/or interviews will be held with councillors, city staff, residents (including those experiencing homelessness), community agencies and other community stakeholders with experience in establishing new shelters or moving existing shelters.

Based on the information gathered through each component of the review, staff will report back to CDRC in the Fall, identifying best practices on raising awareness about homelessness issues and making recommendations to improve the City's engagement activities when seeking to establish new and replacement shelter locations.

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SIGNATURE

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Giuliana Carbone
Deputy City Manager

ATTACHMENT

Appendix A – Community Information Process

Appendix A
Community Information Process
(as approved by City Council in February, 2003)

Once staff have identified a potential site and completed due diligence on the site by completing the site assessment and property assessment processes:

(1)   In the case of a City owned site:

(a)   Staff will contact and meet with the Councillor in whose Ward the site is located, will advise the Councillor(s) as to their recommendations regarding the use of the site and will inform the Councillor that the Community Information Process will commence within 15 working days. Where a site is within 120 metres of another Ward(s), staff will also meet with the other affected Councillors.

(b)   Following the meeting with the Councillor, staff must schedule an evening public meeting to inform the Community regarding the proposed use of the site as an emergency shelter. This meeting will take place no sooner than 15 days after the meeting with the Councillor(s). At this meeting attendees will be canvassed regarding interest in participating in a future Community Liaison Committee as noted in 1(e)(vi).

(c)   Staff will prepare a written communication that will be circulated to local residents and businesses within 120 metres of the approved site informing them of the proposed use of the site and identifying the date, time and location of the public information meeting.

(d)   The written communication will include the following information:

(i)   address of the site
(ii)   agency to be operating the site
(iii)   clients to be served on the site
(iv)   capacity of the site
(v)   hours of operation
(vi)   staffing of the site
(vii)   services to be provided on site
(viii)   contact name and number from the City for information; and
(ix)   contact name and number from the agency for information.

Where required information will be translated to accommodate local constituents.

(e)   At the public information meeting City staff and a representative from the agency will provide:

(i)   further details on the project described in the written communication;

(ii)   the date of any further community information meetings that will be held;

(iii)   the date of the Community Services Committee at which the proposed use of the site will likely be considered;

(iv)   information on how deputations can be made before the Community Services Committee;

(v)   the date of the Council meeting at which the proposed use of the site will likely be considered; and

(vi)   solicit the names of residents who may be interested in participating in a Community Liaison Committee.

(f)   Staff will call a meeting of the Community Liaison Committee prior to the Community Services Committee meeting to answer any further questions that might have arisen and to provide them with information on the report that will be going forward to Community Services Committee.

(g)   Should the development of the site be approved, staff will call together the Community Liaison Committee.

(h)   During the development of the new municipal shelter, the Community Liaison Committee will meet once a month, or at scheduled times as agreed to by the committee.

(2)   In the case of a privately owned site, the following additional steps will be followed:

(a)   The city will secure a commitment from the owner with the cost and the main terms of a lease or purchase agreed upon. All offers of purchase or lease by the City will be conditional upon the final approval of the site for municipal shelter use by Toronto City Council.

(b)   Staff will contact and meet with the Councillor in whose Ward the site is located, will advise the Councillor(s) as to their recommendations regarding the use of the site and will inform the Councillor that a recommendation will be made to the Administration Committee regarding the purchase of the site. Where a site is within 120 metres of another Ward(s), staff will also meet with the other affected Councillor(s).

(c)   Staff will provide a report to the Administration Committee who will make recommendations regarding the proposed financial terms of the conditional offer to purchase or lease. If the Administration Committee approves the financial terms, staff will inform the local Councillor(s) that the Community Information Process will commence within 15 working days.

Process will then mirror that described for City owned sites from 1(c) onward.