

REPORT FOR ACTION**Proposal for Youth Transitional Housing at 747 Warden Avenue**

Date: May 24, 2017

To: Community Development and Recreation Committee

From: General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration

Wards: Ward 35

SUMMARY

The purpose of this report is to seek City Council approval for a new 51 bed program for youth in Scarborough (Ward 35) to be operated by YouthLink. This proposed program contributes to the goal of increasing shelter system capacity identified in report CD2.2, "Infrastructure and Service Improvement Plan for the Emergency Shelter System," adopted by City Council March 31, April 1 and 2, 2015. The proposed program meets all the criteria of the Municipal Shelter By-law 138 2003. The community engagement process underway is consistent with the new approach adopted by City Council in April 2017. This program will also comply with the recent Council endorsed recommendations related to a new service model.

RECOMMENDATIONS

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

1. City Council approve the location of a new 51-bed youth transitional program to be operated by YouthLink at 747 Warden Ave. in Ward 35 in accordance with the requirement of the Municipal Shelter By-law 138-2003;
2. City Council authorize the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to grant YouthLink up to \$1 million to fund renovations and equipment purchases at 747 Warden Ave. to prepare the property for use as a transitional youth program;
3. City Council direct the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to bring forward a new and enhanced request to establish a new

permanent 51-bed transitional program for youth in Ward 35 during the 2018 budget process; and

4. City Council increase the 2017 Approved Operating Budget for Shelter, Support and Housing Administration by \$1 million gross, zero net, with the funds to be withdrawn from the Social Housing Stabilization Reserve XQ1106.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

On December 13, 2016, City Council adopted EX20.18, "Administrative Amendments to Reserve Fund Accounts – 2016." The report revised the criteria of the Social Housing Stabilization Reserve account (XQ1106). The criteria was broadened to allow shelters access to uncommitted funds. The purpose of the reserve is the following:

The Social Housing Stabilization Reserve provides funding to mitigate the financial exposure associated with Social Housing Devolution as well as the needs of the City Shelters, including the following purposes:

- (a) For stabilization of in-year variances as well as unanticipated year-to-year expenditure fluctuations, to help minimize or phase in their impacts on the property tax rate
- (b) To supplement funds for capital repairs, in regard to urgent needs or phase-in toward higher funding levels
- (c) To fund other potential liabilities as they arise.

As of May 18, 2017, the uncommitted balance of XQ1106 was \$1.6 M. Recommendation three would commit up to \$1 M from this reserve leaving \$0.6 M uncommitted.

Additionally, the estimated annual operating costs for this new program are \$1.5 M. The program is expected to open in the early part of 2018. SSHA will put forward a new and enhanced business case for this increase in service level while respecting Council's budget targets for 2018.

EQUITY IMPACT STATEMENT

The shelter system in Toronto serves equity seeking groups such as seniors, youth, people with disabilities, individuals with mental health issues, the working poor, Indigenous people, people who identify as LGBTQ2S and other vulnerable groups. The proposed transitional shelter program will serve youth experiencing homelessness who are particularly vulnerable.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of April 26, 27 and 28, 2017, City Council adopted CD19.6 "Proposed New Engagement and Planning Process for Emergency Shelters" that sets out a new process on how the public will be engaged around new or relocated municipal shelter locations and proposes a new model of providing support to people who use these services.

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2017.CD19.6>

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 the efforts to reduce shelters occupancy. When considering this item at its meeting of April 13, 2016 CDRC requested staff to report back on the current divisional strategy to identify new and replacement sites for shelter services.

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

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 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 residents in Toronto.

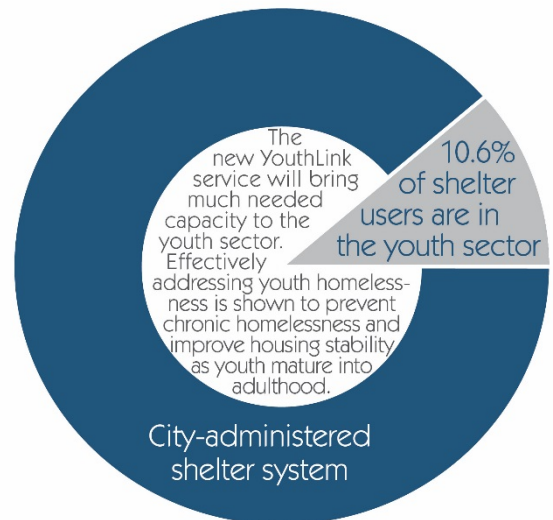
<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2013.CD25.10>

COMMENTS

Youth Homelessness in Toronto

Based on the 2013 Street Needs Assessment, an estimated 850 young people aged 16 to 24 are sleeping in Toronto's emergency shelters or on City streets each night. In 2015, over 3,000 unique youth (not accompanied by parents or guardians) accessed the Toronto shelter system, accounting for 24% of all heads of households in shelters. Youth experiences of homelessness are characterized by declining mental health, nutritional vulnerability, criminal victimization, low school participation and high levels of continuing homelessness and housing instability.

Youth homelessness is distinct from adult homelessness in both its causes and consequences. Effectively addressing youth homelessness through tailored responses and specialized services not only improves outcomes for young people, but also contributes to preventing longer term homelessness and housing instability as youth become adults. The proposed YouthLink program will provide a range of services to holistically support young people in their transitions to housing stability, adulthood and independence.



Need for More Shelter Beds

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, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) to identify up to 15 new and replacement shelter sites over the next five years. In part, these additional shelters will support the George Street Revitalization (GSR) project and will advance the goal of achieving a 90% shelter occupancy rate, as directed by Council.

Although several temporary and permanent projects have opened and several others are in the planning and construction stage, shelter occupancy rates continue to be very high. The occupancy rate for youth in the shelter system on May 23, 2017 was 98%, with only 12 beds available. If demand were to remain the same, the addition of 51 beds to the youth sector would bring the occupancy rate in the youth sector down to 88%.

In April 2016, the Scarborough Housing Stabilization Planning Network, a multi-agency planning table that seeks to build and support a coordinated and integrated system of services for people experiencing homelessness, at risk of homelessness, and under-housed populations in Scarborough, released "Laying the Foundation: Housing and Homelessness Research Report for Scarborough." The report provides an analysis of the current housing and homelessness support system in Scarborough, identifies gaps and barriers to service and makes multiple recommendations for action by government, funders and non-profit organizations working in the community.

One of five priority actions in the report recommends working towards increasing and improving services in a number of areas including shelter services for specific populations groups including youth. The report further recommends that funders and community resources should, "Work to ensure that these services are well coordinated with other services to meet each client's unique needs." YouthLink is a member of the Scarborough Housing Stabilization Planning Network and will coordinate their new service with others offering supports to homeless or at risk youth.

YouthLink Proposal and Proposed Program

YouthLink responded to a Request for Expression of Interest from SSHA in November 2015 for a new youth program in Scarborough. Additional services for youth are required in Scarborough to address gaps left when Second Base Youth Shelter closed in October 2015. After a review process, YouthLink was chosen as the successful applicant and received notice from SSHA on May 17, 2016.

The program will provide 41 transitional beds and 10 emergency beds. The goal of YouthLink's proposed model is to provide an intensive support and referral system for youth as they prepare for the next phase of their lives. Youth may spend more than one year in the transitional beds depending on their progress. The program will provide more than a place to sleep and will include the following programs and services:

- Individual counselling, goal setting, job readiness support and job search support
- Support to access education and training opportunities
- Motivational programming, guest speakers and introduction to role models
- Basic life skills classes in cooking and budgeting
- Programming on stress management, conflict resolution and communication
- Assistance to find permanent housing and ongoing support to keep that housing
- Links with the continuum of YouthLink's services including support with mental health issues, substance use issues and intellectual disabilities

YouthLink owns the building at 747 Warden Ave. which currently serves as its administrative and program offices. These offices will be moved to a nearby leased location to make space available for the new transitional program. Some renovations will be required to make the building suitable for its proposed use and to comply with requirements under the Toronto Shelter Standards. The renovations will focus on expanding the kitchen, bathrooms and adding showers. The total renovation and start-up cost is estimated at \$641,000 including furniture and fixtures.

SSHA has identified the opening of this new service as one of its priority shelter infrastructure projects of 2017. The location meets the criteria of the Municipal Shelter By-law as it is located on a major arterial road and is more than 250 meters away from another municipally funded shelter or crisis care facility.

YouthLink has also reached out to local politicians to make them aware of this service enhancement in Scarborough. If approved by City Council, the renovations are expected to take four months to complete. One month is required for orientation and training of new staff, so it is anticipated that the program will open in early 2018.

New Community Engagement Process and Program Model

In April 2017, City Council adopted item CD19.6 "Proposed New Engagement and Planning Process for Emergency Shelters." This includes recommendations to improve the community engagement process for opening new programs, as well as a new service model to achieve program and operational excellence. Though the YouthLink

proposal was well underway at the time Council adopted these recommendations, some of the new approaches are being applied, most notably changes to the service model and community engagement process.

Location and Design

Search for an appropriate location for the program was not required as YouthLink owns 747 Warden Ave. and has operated programs and services from the site for vulnerable youth in Scarborough since 2004. The architectural and design plans developed for the new service will provide ample space and programming areas for service users, including a private outdoor courtyard and garden.

Modern design that promotes rapid return to independent living will be incorporated into the renovation. The building will be fully AODA compliant and will accommodate singles, young couples and youth with pets. The program will also meet the Toronto Public Health Ventilation Guidelines and be designed to consider infection control measures and strategies. See Appendix 1 for the proposed floor plan of the new program.

Upon awarding a contract to YouthLink to enhance their services in Scarborough, staff from Social Development and Finance Administration (SDFA) and SSHA undertook a broad environmental scan of existing resources in the communities near 747 Warden Ave. The immediate area around the site is made up of a variety of commercial businesses. To the north, a new residential community is under development featuring town homes. To the south is the Institute for Technical Trades. There are no Business Improvement or Resident Associations in the area.

The proposed project is located in Ward 35 in Scarborough. The site is well served by transit on the 68 Warden bus and is approximately a 10 minute walk to the subway at Warden Station. As part of a search for shelters sites across Toronto, City staff have reviewed all City Wards for their ability to support a shelter program with relevant local services. Each Ward was identified as having a high, medium or low established service infrastructure. Analysis on Ward 35 indicates it is high in services with three multi-service community agencies, a community health centre, an Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) Office, settlement services, and youth employment programming. These services, in addition to those offered by YouthLink itself, provide an environment well suited to support a youth residential program. See Appendix 2 for a map of Ward 35 showing local community health and social services.

City Actions for Successful Community Integration

SDFA reached out to other City divisions for information on services available to support the new program and its successful integration within the local community. The following resources are in proximity to 747 Warden Ave. and will be available for YouthLink and their clients to access:

Parks, Forestry and Recreation

- Youth programming and recreation activities at the Warden Hilltop Community Centre and connections to youth outreach workers and community development workers to provide an overview of local recreational activities

- Access to the Homeless Softball League
- Introduction to the Welcome Policy
- Community garden programs
- Tree pruning in and around 747 Warden Ave. and in local parks to address any site line and safety issues

Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS)

- Committed to ensuring that Ontario Works clients residing in the shelter have access to appropriate financial, employment and social supports
- Provide information about employment-focused services and supports available to low-income City residents at TESS office Employment Centres and link to programs and services available at Employment Ontario as appropriate

Toronto Public Libraries (TPL)

- Will provide specialized registration for youth without identification or permanent address to access TPL's extensive collections and databases for entertainment, language training or research at local branches: Kennedy / Eglinton, Eglinton Square, and Albert Campbell.
- Opportunities to access the Pop-up learning lab classes and the Bookmobile

Toronto Public Health

- Provide access to a Community Health Officer liaison contact for the shelter to link clients to appropriate TPH programs and services as needed, such as Dental, Chronic Disease and Injury Prevention, Sexual Health Promotion, Harm Reduction Services and Vaccination (Flu) Clinic
- Support access to Toronto Health Connections Toronto Public Health's information repository

Social Development and Finance Administration

- Toronto Youth Partnership and Employment (TYPE) program staff can provide drop in employment supports and work with Youth interested in training, education and employment
- Support the development of a Safety Plan including response protocol
- Provide training to YouthLink staff on safety protocols
- Support safety audits
- Consult on emerging safety issues or situations of risk
- Through Community Development Officer, connect clients to City services
- Provide training with a focus on mentorship and conflict resolution

Key staff contacts for these various divisions have been provided to YouthLink so they can reach out and establish contact if the program is approved.

Toronto Fire Services provided a site visit to 747 Warden Ave. and assessed the property's location for its intended use as a residential program. There are no issues with access to the building for fire equipment in the event of an emergency. A final inspection will occur after the building is renovated.

Community Engagement Activities

A community facilitator, Bruce Davis, was hired to develop and implement a community engagement plan as required by the new process endorsed by City Council. To inform the local community of the proposal to enhance YouthLink's services, 9,000 flyers were mailed to local residents and businesses, covering a radius of approximately 550 metres around 747 Warden Ave. The flyers contained information about the proposal and invited recipients to two open houses. Residents were also invited to show their support by attending a community BBQ celebrating this potential expansion of services for Scarborough youth. Lastly, YouthLink started a petition to support their new program on the website change.org. To date it has received 179 signatures of support.

The two open houses were hosted at 747 Warden Ave. on Monday, May 15 and Wednesday, May 17 from 4 until 7 each evening. Staff from YouthLink were on hand to showcase the proposed program and answer any questions or concerns from attendees. Tours of the building were available as well as information on building design. Local community partners from the Scarborough Housing Stabilization Network were also on hand to answer questions about the continuum of local service partners available to support the project.

The community celebration BBQ was held on the afternoon of May 20. The event was an opportunity for residents to demonstrate the overwhelming support for YouthLink's proposal. The BBQ offered another chance for local residents to attend and ask questions about the proposal. It featured food, organized activities for youth and entertainment. In total, 162 people attended the open houses and the BBQ.

In addition to these events, community engagement activities included outreach to other key stakeholders including: the Chief Operating Officer of the Goldman Group, developers of the residential community to the north of 747 Warden Ave.; East Metro Youth Services; educators and social workers in Scarborough schools; the Crown Prosecutors Office; Michael Garron Hospital and Scarborough and Rouge River Hospital; Toronto Police Services at 54 and 41 Division and Toronto Fire staff at Station 222.

Next Steps

In applying the new recommendations of the service model to the YouthLink Proposal, City staff have worked with the Executive Director to enhance the housing supports and the onsite staffing complement to support youth. The program will offer 24/7 support and require that youth be involved in day programming offered either on site or in the local community. With the wide range of services YouthLink offers to vulnerable youth there will be a variety of options for them to find and build confidence and make plans for a sustainable future.

If approved, City staff will continue to work with YouthLink to develop the program to meet the needs of Scarborough youth. Outcomes for the youth using the program will include connections to education, employment, health supports and housing and will be monitored through regular reporting provided by the agency.

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Appendix 1: Proposed Floor Plan for 747 Warden Ave.
Appendix 2: Community Services and Supports in Ward 35 Scarborough Southwest