



REPORT FOR ACTION

Phase 1: Modular Housing Initiative – Supplementary Report

Date: June 26, 2020

To: City Council

From: Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division
Executive Director, Housing Secretariat

Wards: Ward 9 – Davenport; Ward 20 – Scarborough Southwest

SUMMARY

This report responds to Item No. PH14.8 "Modular Supportive Housing" as adopted at the June 15, 2020, Planning and Housing Committee requesting that staff report back to City Council on the outcomes of feedback received through community consultation. The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division has submitted a report in response to Item No. PH14.8a to this Item.

Recognizing the need to provide permanent housing with supports to effectively reduce homelessness, the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan established an approval target of 18,000 supportive housing opportunities, including a minimum of 1,000 modular rental homes, over the next ten years. At its meeting of April 30, 2020, City Council adopted CC20.6 "Implementing the Toronto Modular Housing Initiative as an Urgent Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic", directing staff to expedite the delivery of the Modular Housing Initiative. As part of the delivery framework, Staff were also asked to undertake appropriate dialogue and engagement with the community in coordination with the local Councillors.

City and CreateTO staff launched a multi-faceted community engagement process on June 2, 2020, to provide residents with an opportunity to learn more about the modular housing proposals for 150 Harrison St. and 11 Macey Ave. and provide feedback. This engagement process included a website, dedicated email address, mailed flyers, on-site signage and virtual engagement sessions.

This report provides an overview of the input received to-date through all of these channels. While there was general support for the City developing new affordable and supportive as a dignified and an efficient approach to addressing homelessness, there were specific concerns about the two modular housing proposals. Questions raised during the community engagement process focussed primarily on the speed of which

these proposals were advancing, building and site design, the planning approval process, and the operation of the modular housing proposals following occupancy.

The community engagement process is ongoing as staff continue to respond to inquiries from the public and organize additional community engagement sessions when a non-profit housing provider is selected for each site in August. A final report on the entire community engagement process will be prepared by the City's consultant following the conclusion of the engagement process in fall 2020.

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning Division and the Executive Director, Housing Secretariat recommend that:

1. City Council receive this report for information.

FINANCIAL IMPACT

There are no financial implications resulting from the recommendations included within this report in the current budget year or future budget years. The Chief Financial Officer and Treasurer has reviewed this report and agrees with the financial impact information.

DECISION HISTORY

At its meeting of June 15, 2020, the Planning and Housing Committee adopted a motion requesting that the Chief Planner and Executive Director, City Planning, in consultation with the Housing Secretariat, report directly to the June City Council meeting on the outcome of feedback from the community consultations on the two modular housing proposals and report directly to City Council on ways to expedite the necessary planning and building approvals. The Decision can be found here:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.PH14.8>

At its meeting of April 30, 2020, City Council adopted CC 20.6 – “Implementing the Toronto Modular Housing Initiative as an Urgent Response to the COVID-19 Pandemic,” which identified Horizon North as the selected builder for the first 110 modular housing units and establishing a process for selecting the builder for an additional 140 modular housing units. This report authorized CreateTO to act as the City's agent and to submit all required planning approval applications and requested that city staff prioritize the modular housing proposals by identifying ways to expedite the necessary building and planning approvals and developing design guidelines for subsequent phases of the modular housing initiative. The City Council Decision can be found here: <http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.CC20.6>

At its meeting of February 26, 2020, City Council adopted PH13.5 – "Plan to Create Supportive Housing Opportunities", outlining plans to develop 600 supportive housing opportunities in 2020 and requested the Federal and Provincial Governments, as part of their 2020 Budgets, to commit capital and operating funding to support the creation of 1,800 new units of supportive housing annually, in order to reduce homelessness in Toronto. The City Council Decision can be found here:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2020.PH13.5>

At its meeting of December 17 and 18, 2019, City Council adopted, with amendments, "HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan" as the framework to address Toronto's housing and homelessness challenges by 2030. This Plan includes a number of actions and targets to address critical needs across the housing spectrum including emergency shelters and transitional housing, social and supportive housing, market and affordable rental housing and homeownership. The City Council Decision can be found here:

<http://app.toronto.ca/tmmis/viewAgendaItemHistory.do?item=2019.PH11.5>

COMMENTS

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS

City and CreateTO staff initiated a multi-faceted community engagement process on June 2, 2020, following the announcement of the proposed sites for the first phase of the Modular Housing Initiative.

The community engagement process took into consideration the expert advice of Toronto's Medical Officer of Health to practice physical distancing to help reduce the spread of COVID-19 and protect the health and safety of Toronto residents and staff.

This process includes a website, email, mailed brochures, on-site signage and virtual engagement sessions to provide residents with a number of options and opportunities to learn more about the modular housing proposals and provide feedback on:

- Some building and site design elements, such as lighting, pathways, and landscaping;
- Ongoing community engagement; and
- Ideas for how to support and integrate the new residents into the neighbourhood

The Housing Secretariat retained Bruce Davis Consulting to assist the City with the community engagement process including developing and implementing a communications and community outreach plan for the first phase of the Modular Housing Initiative. A final report will be prepared by the consultant and posted on the City's website following the conclusion of the community engagement process.

Modular Housing Website and Email Address

The City launched a webpage (www.toronto.ca/modularhousing) on June 2, 2020, to provide information on the modular housing initiative and the proposed plans for each

site. The webpage also includes detailed information on the community engagement sessions scheduled for each site; outlines how community members can participate in the engagement session by either phone or on-line; provides a list of regularly updated frequently asked questions and modular housing case-studies from other jurisdictions and; and identifies a number of relevant research studies on supportive housing.

A dedicated email address was created for community members to provide input on the project and share their questions, concerns, and comments with City staff. Staff have received and responded to approximately 250 emails from residents to-date.

Mailed-out Brochures

Approximately 7,000 brochures were distributed by Canada Post and were received in-home starting June 4, 2020. Acknowledging that the modular housing proposals would require relief from zoning regulations, the notification areas selected for each modular housing site exceed the *Planning Act* notification requirements for a zoning by-law amendment or minor variance application.

As such, the 150 Harrison St. site notification area is delineated by Dufferin St. to the west, Ossington Ave. to the east, Dundas St. W. to the south and Dewson St. /Sylvan Ave. to the north. The 11 Macey Ave. notification area is delineated by Victoria Park Ave. to the west, Warden Ave. to the east, Danforth Ave. to the south and Victoria Park subway tracks to the north.

The brochures also include a brief overview of the proposed projects translated to Portuguese (for 150 Harrison St.) and Urdu and Bengali (for 11 Macey Ave.).

The adjacent streets were also canvassed by the consultant during the first two weeks of June, 2020 to allow for in-person engagement. Comments and questions raised by residents during in-person canvassing were recorded by the consultant. The brochures are included in Attachment 1.

On-site Signage

Customized information signs were installed on each site providing more information about the projects, details of public engagement sessions and project website/email addresses. The on-site signage for both sites is included in Attachment 2.

Outreach to local community agencies, BIAs and residents associations

The City's consultant reached out to 26 local community agencies, BIAs and residents associations (list included in Attachment 3) at the onset of the project to provide them with more information and to seek their input.

Virtual Community Engagement Sessions

On June 17 and 24, 2020, City staff held two community engagement sessions for the 150 Harrison St. proposal. In total, 314 households joined the meeting online or by phone and over 50 comments and questions were addressed.

On June 16 and 23, 2020, City staff held two community engagement sessions for the 11 Macey Ave. proposal. There is one additional meeting scheduled for July 8, 2020. In total 66 households joined the first two meetings online or by phone and some 40 comments and questions were addressed.

At each of the online meetings, a presentation was provided and City staff from the Housing Secretariat, City Planning, CreateTO, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration (SSHA), Parks, Forestry and Recreation (PF&R). Additionally architects from Montgomery Sisam Architects Inc. were available to respond to questions from residents. For the 150 Harrison St. engagement sessions, the Superintendent from 14 Division also attended the meetings.

KEY FEEDBACK THEMES

The following is a summary of comments and feedback received through the community engagement process. Overall, there was general support for the City to develop new affordable and supportive housing with some residents expressing strong support for these projects as a dignified and efficient approach to addressing homelessness. There were also a number of questions raised and concerns expressed about building and site design, the planning approval process for the projects, as well as who will operate the projects and how they will operate.

An analysis of feedback received to-date shows a number of overarching themes for both modular housing sites:

Support for creating permanent housing for people experiencing homelessness

Majority of residents who have provided input on this project recognize the need to help vulnerable residents including those experiencing homelessness access safe, affordable housing. Some have also commented that federal and provincial governments need to join the City in tackling the issue of homelessness.

The City also received some support from local residents for the proposed projects at both sites with residents offering to help prepare care packages for the new residents or offering to volunteer with the selected non-profit housing providers to support the new residents when they move in.

Concerns about the expedited engagement process

While residents have acknowledged they understand the urgency and importance of assisting vulnerable residents given the COVID-19 pandemic, one of their main concerns is the overall speed of the project including the expedited engagement process. Residents are concerned about the limited opportunities available to them to provide input and have their concerns and questions answered. Specifically because of

the limitations regarding in-person meetings due to COVID-19, some residents have suggested decisions on this project be delayed until the City is able to hold in-person engagement meetings in each community.

Concerns about expedited development review and approval processes and Building Design

Through the community engagement process, staff received a number of comments and questions about the expedited development review process. In some instances, community members were concerned that the modular housing proposals for both 150 Harrison St. and 11 Macey Ave. would not be subject to the City's typical development review processes, by-laws and guidelines, and that these two sites would be reviewed differently than other development proposals in the area. Community members also expressed concern that the proposed project time-line and target occupancy date of fall 2020 would prevent City staff from undertaking a thorough review of the site plan applications.

In addition to concerns about the development review process, staff also received questions about the expedited approval process. Community members inquired about the process for obtaining the required zoning changes in order to meet the target occupancy of fall 2020.

Staff received a number of questions, comments and suggestions about the design of the modular housing proposals and their relationship to the street and pedestrian realm. In particular, a number of community members expressed concerns about the colour of the 11 Macey Ave. proposal, stating that at night this building would be very dark. Staff also receive comments about the building facades lacking of animation.

Concerns about community safety

Community members also shared some concerns about the overall safety of their neighbourhoods, specifically for seniors and school children, and potential increases in crime rates when the modular buildings open in fall 2020.

Concerns about property values

Some residents have also raised concerns about potential drop in property values because of proximity to the modular supportive housing project.

Questions about operation of the modular buildings

Residents from both communities have raised questions about the future operators of the modular buildings given they are responsible for providing support services to future tenants. There are questions about the selected non-profits' experience, and the type of support services they are able to offer, and the level of staffing available to ensure the modular buildings are well-maintained and tenants are well-supported.

Site Specific Feedback

11 Macey Avenue

- Residents noted that there already are some concerning activities and behaviors around the 11 Macey Ave. site and Madelaine Park given their proximity to a beer store and LCBO. They shared their concern that residents of the modular supportive housing may further contribute to these issues.
- They shared that 11 Macey Ave. site is currently used as an informal public open space by local families, and that the community needs additional green space because of increased density at 11 Macey Ave. and other developments in the area.
- The community noted their concerns about a new supportive housing project being proposed in close proximity to the 777 Victoria Park site which is slated for the Housing Now Initiative to create 508 new purpose-built rental homes (254 of which will be affordable rental).
- A number of community organizations, including the St. Dunstan's Catholic Church and West Scarborough Neighbourhood Community Centre are in support of the project.

150 Harrison Street

- Some residents noted that a previous proposal for this site to create 13 affordable homeownership opportunities for families is a better fit for their neighbourhood.
- Some residents raised concerns about their safety in their neighbourhoods specifically because of proximity of the proposed site to schools and day care centers.
- Given the close proximity of the 150 Harrison St. site to 14 Division station, some residents are concerned about future interactions between the new residents and police officials. Some residents have also noted that this close proximity helps with maintaining safety and security in the neighbourhood.
- Some residents have asked about the possibility of increasing the density on the site or including bigger size units for families within the proposed project.
- A number of community organizations, including the West Neighbourhood House and St. Clare's Multi-faith Housing are in support of the project.

RESPONSE TO FEEDBACK

Engagement Process

A number of comments received from residents following the first week of virtual meetings were incorporated in the opening introduction and responses during the second week of virtual meetings. For instance, the meetings were extended beyond the initial 90 minutes and the facilitator limited the speaking time per person to allow for more questions to be addressed. In addition, questions that came up previously were raised and answered.

Staff will continue working with local communities, and local Councillors in the coming months to answer questions and address additional concerns regarding the proposed project through email, phone calls, and where needed through virtual or in-person meetings.

Expedited development review and planning approval processes

Site Plan Process

In response to concerns and questions about the expedited development review process, staff outlined the measures implemented to facilitate a streamlined site plan control application review and approval process. These measure included:

- Creating a modular housing internal review team made up of dedicated staff members from all commenting divisions – Toronto Building, Parks Forestry and Recreation, City Planning, City Legal, Transportation Services, Urban Forestry, Urban Design, Toronto Water, Engineering and Construction Services, and Solid Waste Management amongst others.
- Initiating a robust pre-application review process to identify issues and concerns during the conceptual design stage and provide solutions and/or alternatives in advance of the submission of the Site Plan Application;
- Organizing working group meetings with internal staff and CreateTO and their consultants to identify issues and develop solutions to matters affecting the site plan applications;
- Prioritizing the Site Plan Application review process for both Modular Housing Proposals in order to compress the application review timeline; and
- Establishing set deadlines within the application review timeline.

Staff confirmed that the Site Plan Application review process for both modular housing sites has followed all of the City's standard practices, procedures and guidelines and is currently undergoing a thorough review as per the City's standard practices. The streamlined approach has not eliminated any process details that would normally be addressed through the typical site plan approval process. Rather, it enabled staff to focus their attention on these two sites, enabling for an expedited site plan review process.

Zoning Approval

In response to questions about zoning compliance and the required zoning approval process, City staff acknowledged that changes to the zoning by-law would be required to facilitate the modular housing proposals on both selected sites. Under the Planning Act, there are three methods to obtain zoning compliance: a Zoning By-law Amendment approved by City Council, a Minor Variance approved by the Committee of Adjustment, or a Minister's Zoning Order (MZO) made by the provincial Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. Staff advised that the City response to how best to facilitate the approval of the changes to the zoning regulations would be available in the report to Council which would be publically available on June 25, 2020.

Urban Design and Sustainable Design

Based on a review of community feedback, changes have been proposed to the facades of the proposed buildings to introduce a variety of materiality, textures and colours including the incorporation of wood elements to provide pedestrian scale,

articulation and interest. In addition, City staff are looking to refine and modify the proposed landscape design to ensure the provision of native plants and trees, accessible outdoor amenity spaces, secure bike parking, sufficient lighting, and appropriate screening around waste storage areas. City staff are also looking for ways to revise the landscape plans for both sites so that future residents will be able grow their own food in the outdoor amenity spaces.

The proposed improvements to the design, combined with the generous amount of landscape planting proposed, will help the buildings fit-in with the surrounding context of Macey Ave. and Harrison St. sites.

Questions were also raised regarding opportunities to incorporate green roof and/or Toronto Green Standard performance measures. Given that these projects are low scale developments under 5 storeys, these projects are not required to meet the Toronto Green Standard.

City Planning has been working with CreateTO and their consultants to incorporate TGS performance measures including, but not limited to, energy star appliances, energy efficient windows, landscaping with native species, improved on-site stormwater retention and roof materials that can support the achievement of a cool roof (higher SRI values). TGS performance measures incorporated into the design of each modular housing proposal will be confirmed and secured as part of the Site Plan approval.

Green roofs are not incorporated in these two proposals as the projects are not subject to the green roof by-law. Based on the feedback received, the City will be exploring opportunities for green roofs in future modular projects.

Operation of the Modular Buildings

The Housing Secretariat and SSHA divisions are leading the work in selecting non-profit housing providers for each of the sites. A Request for Proposals was issued on June 15 and successful proponents are expected to be announced during the week of August 17, 2020. The selection process will ensure qualified and experienced organizations are selected that are able to address residents' needs, improve their community integration and connectedness, and resolve any issues regarding their tenancy.

The new residents of the modular supportive housing buildings are considered tenants and they are subject to all the rights and responsibilities as established by the Residential Tenancies Act, 2006. The City does not expect an increase in crime rates or the need for additional safety or security measures following the occupancy of the modular housing buildings.

Staff will hold additional engagement sessions when a non-profit housing provider is selected for each site in mid-August to ensure local communities have more opportunities to ask questions and share their input.

Lack of Green Space around 11 Macey Ave.

The former City of Scarborough acquired 11 Macey Ave. as part of a land assembly for parks and recreation purposes. However, over time it was determined that this land was not required and 11 Macey Ave. was left as undeveloped open space. This site was declared surplus to PF&R's operational needs for the purpose of affordable housing purposes.

The PF&R division is currently undertaking a number of improvements in the Madelaine Park, including playground enhancement and pathways. Capital work will be completed this summer.

Concerning Behaviors and Activities in Madelaine Park

Staff have also reached out officials from 41 Division to seek their input on this project and to address feedback from the community on existing concerning behaviors and activities in the Madelaine Park. Police officials will continue to address these concerns in collaboration with staff from PF&R division.

Building Design at 150 Harrison St.

Staff have undertaken a site visit of the 150 Harrison St. Site with officials from 14 Division, seeking their input on crime prevention measures that can be incorporated into the design of the modular housing proposal for that site. Based on input from the Crime Prevention and Community Relations team at 14 Division, the proposed fence between the future park and the subject site is setback from the Dovercourt property line so that there is a larger view corridor along the street and into the future park. In addition, a combination of landscaping and fencing is proposed to buffer the existing TPA lot and the proposed outdoor amenity space to mitigate impacts of the parking lot on future residents.

Improvements to the TPA Parking Lot near 150 Harrison St.

There were a number of issues raised by residents and 14 Division officials regarding the parking lot near 150 Harrison St. site. City staff are working with TPA staff to explore options for adding sensor lighting or cameras in the parking lot, and cutting back the shrubs at the entrances for clear site lines from the street into the parking lot.

NEXT STEPS

The community engagement process for the modular housing proposals at 11 Macey Ave. and 150 Harrison St. is ongoing. A third engagement session is organized for the proposal at 11 Macey Ave. on July 8, 2020. Staff will also continue to respond to inquiries received through the email address and provide updates through the project webpage.

Additional community information sessions will be organized when a non-profit housing provider is selected for each site in August. This is to develop a good relationship between the Operator and the community, and to ensure new residents of the modular

buildings are welcomed into local communities when the modular housing buildings open in fall 2020.

Following the completion of the community engagement process in fall, a final report will be prepared by the City's consultant summarizing all feedback received.

CONCLUSION

Prior to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic, Toronto was already experiencing an unprecedented demand for homeless services due to various factors including a lack of affordable housing options in the city. By implementing modular supportive housing to provide homes for those living outside or in our shelter system, the City is creating permanent housing solutions to help some of our most marginalized residents live in dignified housing with supports.

Since the community engagement process was launched on June 2, 2020, over 350 households have attended virtual engagement sessions and over 250 email inquiries have been received and a response provided.

Throughout the community engagement process, City staff received comments, questions and suggestions about the overall design of the two modular housing proposals. These remarks are currently under review and City staff are working with CreateTO and their consultants to explore, for example, different colour options, façade improvements and alternative landscaping for each modular housing proposal.

An analysis of the feedback received to-date shows support for creation of affordable and supportive housing and concerns around the expediency of the overall project. The City will continue engaging with local communities and addressing questions and concerns as they arise.

CONTACT

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SIGNATURE

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ATTACHMENTS

Attachment 1 – Brochures

Attachment 2 – Site Signs Installed at 11 Macey Ave. and 150 Harrison St.

Attachment 3- List of Local Organizations Contacted