

Helping People Experiencing Homelessness from Equity-Seeking Groups to Access Supportive Housing

Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee

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Responding to EC18.3

City Council direct the Executive Director, Housing Secretariat, in collaboration with the General Manager, Shelter, Support and Housing Administration, to report to the Toronto Accessibility Advisory Committee in the first quarter of 2021 on an intersectional approach to support equity-seeking groups, including persons with disabilities experiencing homelessness, to access housing with appropriate supports.

Importance of Supportive Housing

Supportive housing combines affordable housing with coordinated support services. It is designed to provide people who have complex mental health and/or physical challenges with on-site supports such as case management, personal care, counselling, life skills training, medication reminders and assistance paying rent, which are key to:

- **Reducing chronic homelessness:** On-site supports replace reliance on services offered in shelters, promote independence, and help people maintain tenancies.
- **Achieving more equitable outcomes:** Case management support increases access to individualized services and referrals that can more nimbly respond to the needs of equity deserving groups with an intersectional lens.
- **Preventing adverse social outcomes:** Reduces homelessness, preventable and non-emergency hospital admissions and involvement with the criminal justice system.

Increasing the Supply of Supportive Housing 1/2

The HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan sets a target of 18,000 new, permanent supportive units by 2030. These supportive housing units will be delivered through initiatives such as:

Housing Now

- An initiative that uses City-owned land to create mixed-income and mixed-used communities near transit, with 17 sites comprising approximately 5,000 affordable units, of which a minimum of 20% are required to be accessible. The City also encourages universal design to be incorporated at these sites.
- Affordability ranges between 40% and 100% of average market rent, in order to provide housing options suitable for people in need of deeply affordable housing and essential workers. The City creates partnerships to layer housing supports on a portion of these affordable units.

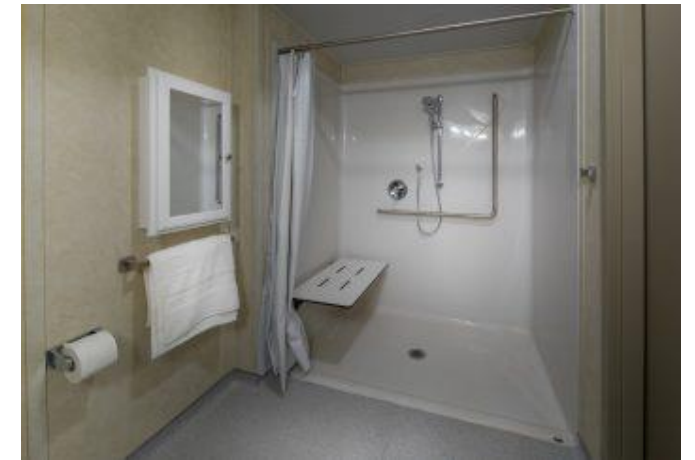
Open Door Affordable Housing Program

- A program that accelerates affordable housing construction by providing developers with City financial contributions, such as capital funding and property tax relief, and by activating public land.
- Open Door has created over 700 affordable units with supports attached.

Increasing the Supply of Supportive Housing 2/2

Rapid Housing Initiative/ Modular Housing

- With the support of the federal government, the City has opened 2 modular buildings to-date with a total of 100 supportive units. 25% of these new units are accessible.
- Equity-deserving groups prioritized in this program include persons with disabilities, seniors, Indigenous peoples, racialized groups, people who identify as LGBTQ2S+.



Coordinated Access System

- The City is implementing Coordinated Access, a system used to assess, prioritize and match people experiencing homelessness to housing that best meets their needs.
- Coordinated Access involves the use of a common assessment tool to evaluate need, including accessibility needs, and the types of supports required to maintain tenancy.
- The system supports equitable access to resources by prioritizing people most in need of assistance through an intersectional homelessness management system.
- The City's implementation was designed in consultation with organizations serving equity deserving groups to help address and respond to inequities.
- By March 2022, the Coordinated Access system will see enhancements that will enable the City to better connect people from equity deserving groups to housing and supports, including an improved triage and assessment process and availability of equity data.

Access Plan Requirements

- Some affordable housing projects under agreement with the City provide a portion of units with layered housing supports, filled through referral agreements with community agencies.
- Affordable housing providers are required to complete and submit an Access Plan for City staff review and approval, which governs how units are advertised and filled.
- Access Plans support fair access by requiring:
 - Transparency on how housing providers advertise and fill their units
 - Client referral arrangements and targets
 - Agreement to non-discriminatory tenant selection processes that are documented and communicated to applicants
 - Modified units to be reserved for applicants in need of those units and who meet all eligibility requirements

Modernizing the Centralized Waiting List

- The City manages a centralized waiting list for rent-geared-to-income units, where priority access is provided to applicants experiencing homelessness.
- Applicants to the centralized waiting list can indicate their accommodation needs in their application in order to be matched to available accessible units.
- In 2021, a new Choice-Based Housing Access Model will be implemented applying a modernized and client-centered approach to allocating rent-geared-to-income housing.
 - Staff consulted with accessibility experts and housing providers to ensure the new application system includes accessibility information about buildings and units
 - The new system design and processes were informed by consultations with stakeholders to ensure accessibility and inclusion of all applicants
 - Work is underway to remove language barriers by providing information and resources in multiple language and informing applicants of multilingual customer service available through 311



City Services that Improve Access to Supportive and Accessible Housing

- Access to Housing Resource Centre
- Housing councillors in shelters
- Street outreach program
- Funding for agencies to deliver outreach and support services, such as Housing Help Centres

Future Work

- Developing a new client-centered and centralized housing portal that will streamline access to all new affordable units, including accessible units.
- Improving collection of equity data in housing and homelessness, applying an intersectional lens.
- Convening the Housing Now Accessibility Stakeholder Working Group to inform revisions to the Affordable Housing Design Guidelines.
- Developing a Supportive Housing Plan with housing and health partners, and people with lived experience.