

TO: **Planning and Housing Committee**

DATE: Tuesday, March 2, 2021

RE: Modular Housing Initiative: Phase Two Sites (PH21.1)



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Thank you for the opportunity to speak with you today on behalf of the Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH). As you know, the TAEH is a network of partners reaching across the city, all united in the vision of ending homelessness. We also serve as your non-Indigenous Community Advisory Board, and co-chair the Toronto Housing and Homelessness Service Planning Forum with SSHA.

We are here today to put our unequivocal support for the Phase Two modular housing sites on the record.

As we noted in earlier committee and Council deliberations in 2020 the City's Modular Housing Initiative is a critical tool in meeting the range of housing options needed in Toronto to end homelessness. The Initiative is also essential to meeting Council's own approved targets of building a minimum of 18,000 new supportive homes before 2030 and meeting the goal of 3000 new permanent homes in the September 2020 2-year housing action plan.

Since then, the City has successfully opened the first 2 buildings, creating 110 permanent new homes for people who were previously homeless – and all within 8 months! Both buildings are operated by a partnership of two proven non-profit community and supportive housing providers and have opened and continue to operate smoothly. This is an unprecedented success.

Of course, not everyone is immediately welcoming of including housing for people previously homeless in their neighbourhood. There are many reasons for this, but experience has shown – here in Toronto and in many other places – that adding new homes like these do not result in the outcomes some first fear. The TAEH website has a collection of [resources on why supportive housing works](#) – it is only one of many available.

It also is worth restating today that there is homelessness in every neighbourhood in Toronto. If you do not see it is because people are trying to survive in unsafe and “out of sight” places like ravines, cars, or are couch-surfing. And anyone can become homeless – even people who are currently secure in their housing, jobs, and families. We have seen this over and over again. We also know that if people can find support and services once homeless in their own communities, they are much more likely, and quickly, to turn things around and return to housing. This means that we need more affordable and supportive housing in every ward, in every neighbourhood, in Toronto.

This is also why we urge you to approve the recommendation in today's report to request the Minister's Zoning Order from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing. This was requested and received in Phase One and Minister Clark was pleased to grant it, noting in his public remarks the value of the Modular Housing Initiative to Toronto and to our collective efforts to address homelessness.

I speak to you today in my capacity with the Alliance. But I can also speak to the process of building a modular housing site in Phase One from personal experience. I am a mother and property owner, living very close to one of the first sites and participated in the community consultation process. I found that almost every initial concern of residents was addressed when people were given a chance to learn more about what the actual facts tell us of the impact of housing and services for people experiencing homelessness in neighbourhoods really is.

After engaging with evidence that supportive housing does not affect property values or increase crime; and learning more about how people experiencing homelessness are not that much different, overall, than people with housing in their rates of mental health, addictions and criminality my fellow community members became more comfortable and the conversation shifted to one of how we could best welcome and include our new neighbours.

I note this to offer encouragement that integrating supportive housing in communities is possible, and that I have seen the Housing Secretariat's commitment to, and success with, community consultations firsthand.

## **CONCLUSION**

In conclusion, TAEH also wants to place today's discussions in the context of this Committee's and Council's commitments to delivering more housing for people experiencing homelessness in Housing TO and other initiatives. This includes meeting your target of building 1000 modular housing units.

We and many others noted the almost unanimous and impassioned response to the Phase One of this initiative during the April 2020 committee and Council cycle. We were proud of our City representatives. Do not stop now in championing housing that ends homelessness, even if it can be rough in some steps along the way.

Thank you,  
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