

June 25, 2021

Planning and Housing Committee – June 28

**UHN Letter of Support**

RE: Rapid Housing Initiative - 150 Dunn Avenue (Part of a Larger Parcel of Land Including 74, 82, 130, 160, and 162 Dunn Avenue, 1-17 Close Avenue, and 74 and 78 Springhurst Avenue)

Dear City of Toronto Planning and Housing Committee:

University Health Network (UHN) is proud to partner with the City of Toronto and the United Way of Greater Toronto (UWGT) on this first of its kind in Canada, modular supportive housing taking place on UHN's EW Bickle Centre for Complex Continuing Care's South Parking lot.

We are pleased to be a part of this landmark project bringing together all levels of government, local municipalities, social service non-profits and healthcare agencies – groups joined by a singular focus of improving the quality of care and addressing health inequities facing the city's most marginalized populations.

At UHN we have seen the devastating effects of homelessness and housing insecurity on health and well-being. These factors contribute to poor health outcomes, high health needs, a disconnection from primary care and a higher proportion of hospital visitations.

- Prior to the pandemic just 234 patients accounted for more than 15,000 Emergency Department visits. The pandemic has only exacerbated these inequities.
- In 2019, 45.1% of all Emergency Department visits by Toronto's shelter residents were at our Toronto General and Toronto Western Hospitals. This is more than any other hospital network in the region.
- More than half of those experiencing homelessness in the city report having one or more health condition.

UHN's Gattuso Centre for Social Medicine was launched in 2019 to address these significant gaps in care. The Centre is focused on integrating the social determinants of health (poverty, unstable housing, and isolation) into care delivery and to improve the quality of care for disadvantaged populations. Supportive and affordable housing is one of UHN's Gattuso Centre's key commitments and presents a unique opportunity to reduce the high costs of hospital stays for medically and socially complex patients and help solve complex urban issues in Toronto.

Creating safe, affordable housing will be even more important during a pandemic recovery stage, as COVID-19 has been a catalyst to the historical and structural inequities in our society.

With the Social Medicine lens, we look forward to providing this project with an integrated approach that considers the principles of equity, dignity and self determination, fosters a sense of community connection and creates culturally safe spaces for residents.

Please accept this letter as confirmation of our support of the Rapid Housing Initiative and development of the 4-storey modular building that will create approximately 51 new supportive housing units for the city's homeless population, including UHN's highest need patients.

We hope this project and partnership is a creative solution that will be adopted by other organizations to better serve our communities and create A Healthier World.

Sincerely,

Dr. Andrew Boozary  
Executive Director, Social Medicine and Population Health  
University Health Network

Ms. Rebecca Repa  
Executive Vice President,  
University Health Network