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July 23, 2024

Mr. John Elvidge, City Clerk
City Clerk's Office
100 Queen Street West
12th Floor, West Tower
Toronto, ON M5H 2N2

Dear Mr. Elvidge,

Re: Administrative Inquiry Regarding 39 Dundalk Drive Modular Housing

Councillor Thompson submitted an Administrative Inquiry to seek information regarding the operations of the supportive, rent-geared-to-income (RGI) units at 39 Dundalk Drive. This letter provides responses to Councillor Thompson's questions and was developed in collaboration with the Housing Secretariat and Toronto Shelter & Support Services divisions.

Introduction

In April 2020, as an urgent response to the COVID-19 pandemic and its disproportionate impact on people experiencing homelessness, the City launched the Modular Housing Initiative to rapidly create at least 250 new RGI and supportive rental homes using modular construction. The City secured federal capital funding through the Innovation Fund and the Rapid Housing Initiative as well as provincial operating investments through an increase in Reaching Home, Canada's Homelessness Strategy.

Four of five projects have since been tenanted, providing safe, affordable homes for over 200 residents formerly experiencing homelessness, with wrap-around support services to help them achieve housing stability and promote health and well-being. There are an additional two modular sites that are opening later in 2024, that will also provide supportive rental homes.

The building at 39 Dundalk Drive provides 57 self-contained studios, that are fully furnished, and which are all RGI homes with supports, including 20 barrier-free homes.

Response

Please find below responses to each of the questions submitted.

1. What was the selection process to identify tenants for housing at 39 Dundalk Drive? How many Dundalk tenants were selected from the 22 Metropolitan Road and Delta shelters? How many tenants from 22 Metropolitan Road were formerly sheltered at Strachan House?

The selection process for tenants at 39 Dundalk Drive is completed under the terms of the City's Contribution Agreement with the housing provider, including the Access Plan which describes how access to the units will be managed. Under the terms of this Agreement, the housing provider is required to provide a range of wrap-around support services to all tenants. As part of the Access Plan, 45 units were designated to be offered to residents of the Homes First shelter at 22 Metropolitan Road. (Strachan House, a site where Homes First provided supportive housing, was closed as a result of the building conditions becoming unsafe and the building uninhabitable, requiring tenants to move to 22 Metropolitan Road.)

- There are 57 units at 39 Dundalk. Currently, 45 of the units have been tenanted.
- Of the 45 units that have been tenanted, 38 residents are former residents of 22 Metropolitan Road, which included individuals who are former tenants of Strachan House.
- Of the 45 units that have been tenanted, seven residents were selected through the City's Priority Access to Housing with Supports (PATHS) direct matching process, which is described below.
- Of the 12 units that remain to be tenanted, residents will be selected through PATHS.

2. What selection process is used to identify tenants for housing at other modular housing sites?

The selection process for other supportive housing sites, including modular housing, starts with a Contribution Agreement and associated Access Plan, which outlines the housing program, support services, and pathway for potential tenants to access the units.

In most cases, tenants are identified using the City's Priority Access to Housing with Supports (PATHS) direct matching process. Through this process, the City works with housing and homelessness service providers to refer people on the By Name List (i.e. mandated real-time list of people experiencing sheltered homelessness in City-funded shelters and overnight service spaces) to City-funded supportive housing opportunities. This includes using standardized tools and processes to match potential tenants with the type and intensity of supports provided and make a housing offer to them. Tenants can then determine if they would like to view a potential unit, proceed with an offer and ultimately sign a tenancy agreement.

3. What selection process will be used to identify future residents for 39 Dundalk Drive?

New residents for the remaining and future vacancies at 39 Dundalk Drive will be identified using the City's PATHS process, described above.

4. What criteria is used to assess tenants' housing readiness?

The City is guided by its Housing Charter that has a stated goal of the progressive realization of the right to housing, and takes a Housing First approach in programs and services to address homelessness and promote housing stability. Housing First is an approach to addressing homelessness that focuses on helping people secure permanent housing as quickly as possible, with the supports they need to maintain it. The underlying philosophy of Housing First is that access to housing is not dependent on 'readiness' but is instead focussed on providing trauma-informed care and the appropriate supports to individuals to maintain their housing and address any physical or mental health challenges an individual may face. A large body of research has shown that an individual is more likely to have success in overcoming these challenges once they have access to permanent, stable and affordable housing with supports.

Individuals being offered a housing opportunity in supportive housing complete a collaborative assessment tool with their referring worker to ensure that the individual's support needs, goals and preferences will be met and supported with the housing opportunity on offer.

5. What programs are in place to support and/or treat the tenants with severe mental health and drug addiction issues? Is 39 Dundalk providing the appropriate level of care?

Homes First has the necessary funding, staffing and partnerships in place to provide support for residents with complex health, mental health, and substance use issues.

There is a team of professionals (22.8 full-time equivalent positions) to support tenants including: two Intensive Case Managers and a Supervisor of Intensive Case Management, who are required to support tenants with complex needs, as well as a Housing Manager, Shift Supervisors, Site Manager, Community Housing Workers, Personal Support Workers, Cooks, and a Supervisor of Living Standards.

Homes First's on-site support services staff offer: basic needs supports (including a meal program, life skills training, and personal support), mental health and harm reduction services including an on-site pharmacy, support accessing social and recreational activities, and support accessing employment, education, and training opportunities.

Homes First staff also provide referrals and advocacy for clients in accessing health, mental health care and addiction treatment services, including in hospital and community-based settings. Additional psychiatric care and follow-up supports are provided for tenants through several agencies including the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health (CAMH) and Assertive Community Treatment Teams.

There is a staff to client ratio of 1:15. There is a dedicated team of three frontline Community Housing Workers and management on-site and on-call 24/7. Their responsibilities include providing tenant support, crisis intervention, conflict resolution, access control management, guest monitoring and community liaison.

Further, Homes First has engaged One Community Solutions (OCS) for Community Safety services. OCS's specialized team, which provides staff 7 days/week, from noon-8 pm, is well-equipped to manage crises, assist with paraphernalia removal, and coordinate with emergency services and the community as required. City staff will work with Homes First to monitor the program's success and make recommendations to support ongoing community safety.

6. How are decisions being made in the best interests of tenants who are unable to act on their own behalf, due to impaired competency?

Should a resident's competency be impaired during their tenancy at 39 Dundalk Drive such that they are not able to act on their own behalf, Homes First staff would facilitate connections with a qualified capacity assessor for a mental capacity assessment under the Substitute Decisions Act, 1992. Individuals deemed mentally incapable with no one to act on their behalf are supported via the Office of the Public Guardian and Trustee.

7. What is the relationship between Homes First and the City?

- a. What is the contractual responsibility of Homes First to match the level of service and care to the needs of the tenants?**
- b. What oversight does the City have over service providers and how is it structured?**
- c. What is the evaluation process and what are the performance standards for service providers?**

The City has had funding and service agreements with Homes First for more than 30 years. Homes First operates nine City-funded shelters accommodating approximately 1,800 individuals nightly. In addition, Homes First manages 15 supportive housing sites across Toronto supporting approximately 500 tenants.

- a. The relationship between Homes First and the City is outlined in a sub-lease, a Contribution Agreement, and a Support Services Agreement.

Through the sub-lease, the City outlines the responsibilities of Homes First as the lessee of the modular building, including ongoing management of the property, repair and maintenance of the building, and capital reserve contributions and repair planning.

The Contribution Agreement sets out requirements of the housing provider related to the operating budget of the building, housing affordability, the Access Plan, annual reporting, and the provision of a range of support services.

The Support Services Agreement establishes more detailed requirements in terms of support service provisions, the City's funding contribution towards those services, outputs and outcomes for tenants, and reporting requirements.

- b. Through the monitoring of these agreements, review of all required reports, and annual site visits at a minimum, the City fulfills its oversight role in ensuring Homes First is complying with the terms of its agreements, including to ensure support services are provided to meet the needs of tenants.

The reporting requirements of Homes First are important to fulfilling this oversight role. Homes First is required to submit annual reports on RGI subsidies and annual Financial Statements as part of the Contribution Agreement, and mid- and end of year reports on tenant support outcomes as part of the Support Services Agreement. As stated above Homes First Society is providing other homelessness and housing services that also receive funding through City contractual arrangements.

- c. Housing Secretariat staff are responsible for reviewing these reports as part of ongoing monitoring and evaluation of this supportive housing program, and including any follow-up or corrective action. Specific reporting on program and tenant outcomes is required and is reviewed by staff. Ongoing funding is contingent on Homes First meeting all program requirements and is reviewed regularly as part of this reporting process.

8. How is the Housing Secretariat evaluating the program management and the effectiveness of supportive housing in meeting the needs of tenants by service providers?

The Housing Secretariat is responsible for monitoring all City-funded supportive housing projects. All these supportive housing projects submit bi-annual financial reports as well as reports documenting tenant outcomes. Staff review results against targets set out in the contractual agreements. Additionally, annual site visits at a minimum are conducted by program staff. During site visits, staff review budgets, targets, and results, and other contractual obligations to ensure compliance. Staff prepare site visits reports and include any action items that require attention.

In addition to the ongoing oversight described above and in response to question 7, this fall (Q3 2024), the Housing Secretariat will be procuring the services of an evaluation consultant to undertake an independent evaluation of City-funded supportive housing programs in the City, including modular housing and other rapid housing opportunities. Since 2020, the City has rapidly scaled up the supply of new supportive housing opportunities. This evaluation will assess the effectiveness of a range of supportive housing programs in the City, with a focus on their ability to meet the housing stability, health, safety and well-being needs of tenants, relationships with local communities, and provide recommendations for continuous improvement of supportive housing programs. This evaluation is expected to be complete by the end of 2024.

Sincerely,



Paul Johnson
City Manager

cc:

Jag Sharma, Deputy City Manager, Development & Growth Services

Paul Raftis, Deputy City Manager, Community & Social Services

Gordon Tanner, General Manager, Toronto Shelter & Support Services

Abigail Bond, Executive Director, Housing Secretariat