

Date: Wednesday, January 6, 2021

Time: 10:00am – 12:00pm

Zoom: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/81161969426>

Introduction of Forum Co-Chairs

- Mark Aston, TAEH Chair and Executive Director, Covenant House
- Ashleigh Dalton, Manager, Strategic Policy and Service Planning, SSHA
- Fifty-eight participants joined the Zoom meeting for the THHSP meeting
- Welcome and happy New Year extended to the group. Everyone is invited to attend these forums, including TAEH partners as well. The goal is to have a forum with bi-directional information sharing and dialogue regarding services, policies and planning.

Welcome and Land Recognition

- Kira shared a land recognition with the group which highlighted the importance of thinking deeply about the purpose of land acknowledgements that are shared at these meetings. Land acknowledgements are critical to work being done in the homelessness sector, as land is a resource that we all share. Land acknowledgements are not historical, they are present reflections of the historical and ongoing impact of colonization, and our commitment to reconciliation with Indigenous communities.
- Kira shared a number of resources with the group:
 - <https://www.whose.land/en/>
 - <https://native-land.ca/>
 - <https://talkingtreaties.ca/>
 - <https://legacyproject.org/>

Agenda Review

Ashleigh provided an overview of agenda items.

Housing Secretariat Updates

Valesa Faria, Director, Housing Secretariat

Valesa provided an update on key elements of ongoing work of the Housing Secretariat (slide deck attached).

Recap – Covid-19 Housing & Homelessness Recovery Response Plan

Valesa recapped the City's COVID-19 Housing & Homelessness Recovery Response Plan, approved by City Council in October 2020 and highlighted that:

- The plan urges the federal and provincial governments to fast track investments to create 3,000 permanent affordable housing opportunities, 2,000 of which are intended to supportive housing. The estimated operating cost to provide supports for 2,000 residents is \$48 million annually (and ongoing). Costs include: rent subsidies, wrap-around health & social supports.

Update – Covid-19 Housing & Homelessness Recovery Response Plan, December 2020 Staff Report

Valesa updated that on December 18, 2020, City Council received and approved a staff report updating on the [24-month plan](#) that authorizes City staff to:

- Accelerate new supportive housing opportunities. 150 new units with supports will be online in 8 to 12 weeks. 510 housing opportunities will be online in 10 to 12 weeks, subject to availability of funding for supportive services.
- In addition to these units, a further 588 additional supportive housing units will be made ready for occupancy in 2021, subject to securing funding for supporting services. In 2021, a minimum of 1,248 supportive housing opportunities will be made available, however funding for 1,098 of these units still needs to be secured.
- City staff have identified that there is a pipeline of available units. Now it is necessary to work with other orders of government to secure funding to provide supports.
- The new housing opportunities are proposed to be delivered through:
 - Vacant TCHC units across entire portfolio
 - New acquisitions & renovations, including new homes through the federal Rapid Housing initiative
- In addition to housing opportunities, the report identified a number of other tools necessary to expand the supportive housing portfolio in Toronto, including the need for enhanced capacity in the non-profit sector to operationalize and manage the units, enhanced staffing capacity, operating funding dollars, immediate expansion of the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit, integrated service model and enhanced funding for health and community partners and expansion of the federal Rapid Housing initiative. Expropriation of land is also an active topic for both City Councillors and community members. While this topic is beyond the emergency housing timeline as it takes longer than 24 months, it is something that is being explored.
- Valesa highlighted that of the 21 recommendations approved by Council, two specifically involve TAEH:
 - Participation in the Housing and Homelessness Table, chaired by the City Manager. A number of organizations in addition to TAEH will be invited to participate in this table.
 - Also a request to work with TAEH executive team and Indigenous partners to engage the non-profit sector and select suitable operators, subject to operating funding.
 - Housing Secretariat and SSHA will be relying on supports & engagement with TAEH to move work forward
 - The report highlighted that in 2020, 778 new, permanent affordable housing opportunities were created for people experiencing homelessness. These opportunities were created through a combination of different approaches including modular housing, Rapid Housing (utilizing TCHC units) and the Open Door program.
 - In the next 24 months the goal is to deliver 3,000 more permanent housing opportunities, to improve social determinants of health such as employment, health and mental health. This goal will reduce the cost to

the public sector by \$60 -180 million dollars by moving people out of shelters and into housing. As well, public dollars will be saved downstream due to lowered involvement with the criminal justice system and health care savings.

- By 2030 the goal is to have the HousingTO 2020-2030 Action Plan fully funded and implemented, with support from all three orders of government. This will include 340,000+ households living in good quality, stable and affordable housing, chronic homelessness will be eliminated, seniors will be able to 'age in place', and there will be more housing opportunities available for Black and other racialized communities.

Questions –

(1) If funding can't be shared for supports, will the 1,000+ units being created for 'supportive housing' be made avail as affordable housing?

Yes, regardless of if funding for supports can be secured, these units will be affordable housing.

(2) What efforts are being made to identify people who don't need supports to move them quickly into housing?

The City is taking a rights-based approach to creating housing opportunities and so is focussing on the most marginalized and vulnerable individuals experiencing homelessness. The preference would be to use these units as supportive housing. The City agrees and acknowledges that not all individuals need supports and that some people just need affordable housing.

(3) Is there still potential to convert shelters into permanent housing?

Yes, we are still looking at conversion of shelters with SSHA, however this is a process due to planning & approvals. This is still being actively explored and progressed.

(4) Will there be Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) attached to the units so that there are goals to meet, to maintain permanent and long term housing options?

Absolutely. The report acknowledges that while these are new opportunities, we need to focus on maintaining the existing affordable housing stock. There are a number of KPIs attached to [HousingTO 2020-2030 plan](#), of which the 24-month plan is a subset of. As this work is advanced in partnership with TAEH & SSHA, we will continue to look at further enhancing performance measures. We are required by Council to report annually on this plan as a transparent and publicly visible process.

(5) What happens to the housing money if support services are not forthcoming?

If no support dollars are secured the units will be affordable housing units regardless. However, we will continue to urge other orders of government to support the creation of supportive housing units.

2021 Street Needs Assessment

Linda Wood, Manager, Street Needs Assessment, SSHA and Meredith Kratzmann, Program Coordinator, SSHA

Linda provided an update on key elements of the ongoing planning work for the Street Needs Assessment (SNA) (slide deck attached).

Background and Context of SNA

- Linda provided an overview and background of the context of the SNA, which is a city wide count and survey of individuals experiencing homelessness across Toronto. The SNA is a federal Reaching Home requirement. The 2020 SNA was postponed due to COVID, though five jurisdictions in Canada were able to hold their counts in March 2020. The SNA must be held between March 1 and April 30 of a given year. It is part of a national point in time (PIT) count that utilizes a standardized methodology and questions prescribed by the federal government. As such this creates limitations regarding ability to add localized questions.
- The SNA counts individual experiencing homelessness who are residing: outside/unsheltered, in shelters, in 24-hour respites, VAW shelters, health and treatment facilities and correctional facilities. The survey portion of the count contains 20+ questions to better understand demographics and service needs of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Approved Approach for 2020 SNA

- The current SNA being planned will be held in April 2021. Confirmed dates are: April 21, 2021 for the indoor/outdoor count; April 19 through 23 (indoor survey); April 27, 2021 (outdoor survey). Contingency dates are planned as well and secondary plans are in place for extenuating circumstances such as COVID outbreaks etc.
- Due to COVID, it is unlikely that individuals residing in health and treatment facilities will be surveyed, though the City is working with John Howard Society to connect with individuals within correctional facilities (something that hasn't been possible since the 2013 count).
- The redesigned approach for the current SNA coincides with COVID-19 support and facilitates a reduction in both staff and volunteer involvement. As well, through enhanced funding specific to the SNA for partner outreach agencies, the expertise of agency outreach staff will be utilized. Modernized data collection will occur through the use of digital data collection tools (CheckMarket Survey).

Key Adaptations for SNA 2021

COVID has been taken into consideration in the planning of the SNA. As such the use of phone and video to administer surveys is being explored. The survey data collection dates have been extended for a week, with flexible targets set for individual shelters based on capacity. Volunteers and Indigenous volunteers will not be deployed for the SNA due to COVID-19. Interpreters will be available via phone consultation. As well, training will be provided digitally and no physical kits will be provided.

Linda thanked Patricia and Kira, both part of TAEH and at the meeting today, for their commitment to the SNA Steering Committee.

Questions –

(1) Are you engaging Elizabeth Fry Society as well as John Howard Society to engage people in conflict with the law, or currently in correctional facilities?

No, we have not engaged Elizabeth Fry because the boundaries for the SNA are Toronto, and correctional facilities for women are outside of the Toronto boundaries. Meredith Kratzmann, Programs Coordinator, has been liaising with John Howard Society and is able to connect with the individual asking the question to follow up.

(2) The Province is now talking about curfews – is there a plan in place to ensure that the SNA outside count can still take place, even if a curfew is in effect?

While we had not heard about a firm curfew and who it impacts, a curfew wouldn't impact the indoor survey as this is done in shelters over the course of a week. SMIS is utilized to count the number of individuals staying in shelters. Partner funded outreach service agencies will be performing the outdoor survey and count. Consideration is also being given to shifting the time of the count to earlier in the morning. This is called a "next day count." If this is done, any curfew limitations wouldn't impact the count. The SNA is being designed to be nimble and flexible, given COVID-19.

(4) How much refusal to participate was experienced in the last SNA, are you anticipating refusals this year, and how will you overcome this issue?

In general, we have about a 40 – 50% response rate from shelters, which is good given that survey response rates in general are usually quite low. We have heard from outreach staff that there may be a little more pushback from individuals residing in some encampments, but we are hoping to work with frontline staff and others supporting these individuals to engage them in being involved, as they have already established relationships.

(5) If people refuse to participate, do the reasons get recorded?

No, information is not collected on why an individual refuses to participate in the survey.

(6) Has there been thought to adding specific questions for refugees?

No. For the SNA the definition of homelessness relates to the particular timeframe that the count and survey is conducted. There is not thought to do a separate refugee-specific count, though this could be considered in the future, separately from the SNA count.

(7) Without a control group, how are you ensuring the survey is conducted adequately and data is sound?

We did not use control data in 2018 due to the drop-out rate of participants being high and rendering the data we did have to be statistically insignificant. Due to this we decided it was not essential going forward. This is in line with other jurisdictions that do not utilize a control group. While it is a 'nice to have', it is not essential to the count.

(8) How are you counting people if people aren't participating in the survey? Past SNA surveys included identification of whether the individual was homeless in the survey.

The initial screening questions regarding homelessness are still asked and tabulated. This consists of asking people where they are sleeping that night. The longer survey is more in depth and related to demographics and service needs.

SSHA Updates

Stephanie Malcher, Manager, SSHA – Phase II Rapid Rehousing Program
Brunilda Gjergi, Shift Leader, Covid Recovery Site

Rapid Housing Program Phase I Recap

Steph Malcher updated on the Rapid Rehousing Program (RHP). She shared a brief overview of the initiative that was started in response to COVID in April. This initial phase targeted connecting 300 households with vacant TCHC units. As of December 2020, 321 households (459 individuals) have been connected to vacant units.

Individuals must have a TAWL number to access the program and be connected through a partnering agency (either identified shelter, Streets to Homes or funded outreach partner agency). Currently only individuals requiring low-levels of follow up supports are eligible for this program.

Rapid Housing Program Phase II – Update

Steph shares that the City has been working with TCHC & community partners to fill an additional 300 vacant units in Phase II of the RHP.

In Phase II, the City is working more closely with furniture bank to coordinate the entire furnishing of apartments, along with the Toronto Office of Partnerships to secure more donations. As well, work is being done to improve the transfer of files between all agencies involved, and more strategically allocate the units to partner agencies.

The planned allocation of units is:

- 75% (225) have been allocated to bedded programs (respites or shelters) for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness, Indigenous individuals or youth
 - Within this stream, the average percentage of length of chronicity of homelessness of shelter-stayers has been reviewed, via SMIS data. The proportion of long-term shelter-stayers will be used to distribute units. Each shelter site will get at least 1 unit. As well there is priority being given to Indigenous-serving agencies per commitments in the Meeting in the Middle strategy.
- 10% of units (30) allocated to Streets to Homes (S2H)
- 10% (30) allocated to a handful of sites testing the updated intake & triage tool to help guide how this tool can facilitate the identification of needs to match appropriately with levels of support
- 15 units are being allocated to the VAW sector

Questions –

(1) This is not a hypothetical situation. If a young Indigenous woman, who is pregnant, is in a tent outside, how does she access a unit?

10% of all units are allocated to S2H. They will be working with partner agencies to identify appropriate referrals. The individual would need to be connected with S2H/partner agency to assess eligibility and to understand if their housing preferences match units available.

(2) Are refugees included in Phase II of the plan? They weren't mentioned.

While refugees are not identified as a priority population, refugee-serving programs are still receiving units based on individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.

(3) What are the sizes are the units?

Units being given to the Rapid Rehousing program are primarily a mix of bachelor and 1 bedroom units. There are some 2 bedroom units as well. The City has flagged to TCHC that larger larger units are an important resource for this program (and the family sector is then prioritized).

(4) Has there been thought to put together a housing-first program to provide supports through this program? Especially with respect to individuals with disabilities?

Yes, there has been consideration given to the level of support provided through follow up support programs, and if it matches the needs of a variety of clients. The City is currently working with community partners such as the Access Point to identify how to better meet the needs of clients with more intensive support requirements and leverage existing supports. This work is being done to support long-term relationship building. While individuals with a disability are not a priority population, they are certainly included in the Rapid Housing program and staff work to address accessibility needs on a case-by-case basis.

(4) Where are additional 300 units in city? Thinking of external resources that might be accessed.

Units are scattered across the City in a variety of geographic locations and buildings. Great point around matching and additional support capacities. The current agreement with TCHC is targeted for individuals with low support needs. Longer-term planning includes a lens on supporting individuals with higher support needs.

(5) Is there a commitment to TCHC to enable harm reduction services?

We are unaware of the specific provision of harm reduction services through TCHC, though follow-up support providers are doing a great job providing harm reduction supports and demonstrating to TCHC how individuals can best be supporting. Part of the ongoing work with the Rapid Rehousing program is supporting relationships and growth between all partners, which includes with TCHC.

(7) How many units are currently available and what is the process for making a referral?

28 units have initially been furnished with the remaining units being allocated to the program on a rolling basis. This was done to balance the capacity of the Furniture Bank and partner agencies for follow up supports, as well as the work

required to move people in. All shelters, hotels and respite sites have been allocated units and referrals must come through these programs. The Rapid Rehousing program is beginning with shelter sites who have the most allocated units (e.g. 5+ units per site). This was done in consideration of the administrative effort required to allocate and match the units with individuals. As more units are added on a rolling basis, will move down the list.

(8) A comment in the chat thread was made with support from TAEH members that it would be great to have a TCHC representative as an active participant of TAEH.

(9) Are there any updates to the winter plan with respect to warming centres, especially as more spaces are locked down?

There are no additional changes to the winter plan. Ashleigh will follow-up and share back with the group any updated materials/information.

COVID Recovery Program – Brunilda Gjergi, Shift Leader

Brunilda updated on the COVID isolation and recovery site for people experiencing homelessness. The site is a partnership between the City of Toronto and community partners to provide a medical model facility, including: ICHA, University Health Network (UHN), Neighbourhood Group (provides peer supports), and Parkdale Queen West Community Health Centre (provides harm reduction supports).

The admission for criteria to the recovery site are that the individual is homeless and has been identified as being in close contact with someone who has been diagnosed with COVID, are showing symptoms of COVID, or have been diagnosed with COVID. Referring shelters send a referral form to the Assessment Centre which is then reviewed by the UHN nursing team. Once screened and deemed eligible, transportation is arranged to bring the person to the site. The referral process will be shared with Kira to distribute to the group.

The recovery site has capacity for 163 individuals. Currently there are 54 individuals on site.

Questions –

(1) Are there attendants on site to support folks with mental health?

Yes. There is a comprehensive medical team with experience in supporting mental health issues. As well, all frontline staff on site have at least 2 years experience and have experience working with individuals with mental health issues. When required, referrals to more intensive forms of mental health support can be made.

Toronto Alliance to End Homelessness (TAEH) Updates

Kira Heineck, TAEH

Kira provided an overview of the current work of the TAEH (slide deck attached) including:

- Ongoing work with the Housing Secretariat to determine the role of TAEH in the support of the Emergency Housing Program.

- TAEH will be engaging the Toronto Mental Health and Addictions Support Network (TMHASH) to support this work in the 3rd week of January.
- TAEH is looking forward to participating in the Housing and Homelessness Action table and is working alongside community partners to increase the role of community in the development of a community-wide data strategy.
- Ongoing advocacy efforts with the Province (2021 budget) and Federal government (operational funding) have been identified as key priorities due to the identification of housing opportunities mentioned earlier in this meeting, but gaps in funding to provide ongoing supports and operational costs. TAEH will be developing communication messages to move this work forward.
- TAEH continues to increase the role of the People with Lived Experience Caucus, and support for this initiative. Intentional work to engage Black communities and other communities of colour not currently active with TAEH is beginning.
- TAEH continues to work on developing a formal CAB-to-CAB relationship with the Indigenous CAB.

Questions –

(1) Will TAEH be sending out key messages for the municipal budget consultation sessions as well?

At this time, TAEH is not sure. Social Planning Toronto does a great job on communicating out about the municipal budget. TAEH commits to working on what we can share to potentially have key messages. Certainly for the provincial budget, key messages will be released related to the supportive housing growth plan.

Other business/close

Kira called for other agenda items. Ashleigh notes that a colleague working on the vaccine roll-out for shelters/individuals experiencing homelessness has been invited to attend the next meeting.

Kira reiterates the inquiry of whether more information on how to best support women who are pregnant or post-natal in homelessness systems would be useful for this group. Support expressed by membership to add this to a future agenda. As well, Kira referenced a recent [Star article](#) on this issue.

Finally, there is ongoing commitment to continue talking about the Emergency Housing Program at TAEH meetings.

Next meeting – February 3, 2021