

Region of Waterloo
Community Services
Housing Services

To: Community and Health Services Committee

Meeting Date: August 13, 2024

Report Title: 84 Frederick Operating Model

1. Recommendation

For information.

2. Purpose / Issue:

To provide an update on the proposed operating model for an emergency shelter at 84 Frederick Street, Kitchener.

3. Strategic Plan:

This report addresses Strategic Priority 1: Homes for All, Strategic Priority 3: Equitable Services & Opportunities, and Strategic Priority 4: Resilient and Future Ready Organization in the Region’s Corporate Strategic Plan 2023-2027.

4. Report Highlights:

- In the current absence of dedicated beds for women and gender-diverse individuals, the operating model at 84 Frederick will serve single women and gender-diverse adults without dependents with an initial occupancy of 66 beds based on the previous operating capacity. Other existing initiatives are also underway to increase emergency shelter beds to address the significant occupancy pressures that continue to persist across the system.
- Engagement was conducted to develop the proposed operating model and Request for Proposal (RFP) for the emergency shelter at 84 Frederick Street. A survey and drop-in engagement session for Plan to End Chronic Homelessness (PECH) co-creators, housing stability system partners, and lived/living experts were conducted. Three in-person engagement sessions were also held with the Lived Experience Working Group (LEWG) and People’s Action Group (PAG) to embed their knowledge within the model and its implementation.
- City of Kitchener staff are a part of the core team to develop the proposed

operating model, which includes the operator working with the City of Kitchener Ambassador program and setting up either dedicated community liaisons and/or a community advisory committee.

- Through the proposed operating model, the shelter is expected to support single women, gender-diverse, and non-binary adults, while also supporting other various demographics through on-site supports. The proposed operating model prioritizes harm reduction, restorative justice, relational models for support, and 24/7 access to support and services for both those experiencing homelessness and the broader community - delivered through a community hub framework. On-site supports include housing, primary and mental health, cultural, life skills, and service navigation. Valuing and incorporating lived/living experiences of homelessness is a fundamental part of this model. The model also aims to be responsive to the increasing diversity of the Waterloo region and the continued marginalization of Black, Indigenous, and Racialized individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

5. Background:

On June 19, 2024, the Region of Waterloo approved the purchase of 84 Frederick Street, Kitchener for use as an emergency shelter, with the potential for affordable housing in the future. The use of this site for a permanent emergency shelter provides an opportunity to balance increasing demand and limited resources by providing stability to the community, funded shelter system partners, and the Region more generally. In the current absence of dedicated beds for women and the gender-diverse, there are existing co-ed spaces in the system and staff continue to work with system partners to respond to this system gap and provide additional support. As the Service System Manager, the Region also has existing initiatives underway to increase emergency shelter beds to address the significant occupancy pressures that persist across the system. This includes developing a second hybrid shelter location and finding a location for a women's shelter with Cambridge YWCA as part of Budget 2024.

Engagement was conducted to inform a proposed operating model and Request for Proposal (RFP) for the emergency shelter at 84 Frederick Street. Through the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness (PECH), engagement with a wide array of community voices is part of processes related to responding to and addressing homelessness. The resulting proposed operating model (Appendix A) attempts to position the Region and system partners to be able to respond to needs as they change over time through a Housing-First approach, while also directly responding to current system gaps and including lived expertise in both the development of the model and its operation.

This model prioritizes the need for 24/7 access to supports and services for both those experiencing homelessness and the broader community, allowing those who transition into housing, are at risk of experiencing homelessness, and/or are living in poverty to access support, services, and programming in one place. Harm reduction, restorative justice, and relational models for support are highlighted throughout the model. Lived experience of homelessness and peer workers are a fundamental part of this model in terms of staffing and ensuring that those who have been/are impacted by homelessness are provided with pathways to contribute their knowledge in meaningful ways and have it recognized both within the operation of the shelter and in the broader system.

The shelter operator will work with lived experts and shelter residents to develop staff training, on-site programming, a restorative justice model that prioritizes non-carceral approaches for dealing with harm and conflict resolution, and an auditing process for on-site services to ensure all services align with a harm reduction lens. The model also attempts to position the shelter as responsive to the increasing diversity of the Waterloo region by ensuring that staff are set up to support non-English speakers, cultural programming is expected on-site, and smudging and other cultural practices are explicitly permissible. The operator is expected to be able to support various demographics but will begin with supporting single women, gender-diverse, and non-binary adults.

6. Communication and Engagement with Area Municipalities and the Public

Area Municipalities: Area Municipalities are regularly engaged, consulted, and updated on work conducted by Housing Services across the regional housing continuum, including emergency shelter sites and operations. Frequent meetings are facilitated by Regional Staff and attended by Area Municipal Staff to address emergency shelter sites and operations, maintain transparent communication, and develop shared strategies to support individuals experiencing homelessness and the surrounding neighbourhoods and businesses.

The City of Kitchener was consulted and engaged with before the acquisition of 84 Frederick. From this engagement, these Area Municipalities provided feedback based on site feasibility, surrounding land use, and community impact, which informed the acquisition of the site. City of Kitchener staff were invited to the in-person drop-in engagement session hosted at 150 Frederick to review preliminary survey results and provide further feedback for the proposed operating model. City of Kitchener staff provided Region staff with direct feedback on behalf of the City of Kitchener Mayor and CAO, which informed the proposed operating model. City of Kitchener staff are also included in the core team to develop the proposed operating model. Further enhancements under the PECH to the Unsheltered Support Worker and Outreach

teams are underway and will further support and align with the work of the Ambassador Team.

Public: Lived experts through the Lived Experience Working Group (LEWG) and the Peoples Action Group (PAG) were engaged in three different in-person engagement sessions to ensure their knowledge was central to the development process of a proposed operating model. Their full recommendations are outlined in Appendix B and are embedded within the proposed operating model. Beyond the operating model, lived experts expressed deep concern regarding the existing instability of emergency shelter beds in the Waterloo region and the current lack of enough beds available to support those who are experiencing homelessness.

Broader engagement was also conducted, specifically targeting Plan to End Chronic Homelessness co-creators, housing stability system partners, and lived/living experts. 134 respondents took the survey, with 120 respondents reaching the end, while 21 individuals from 10 different groups and organizations attended the drop-in. Appendix C provides an overview of both the survey and drop-in engagement results.

The proposed operating model includes that the operator has a neighbourhood community engagement plan in place before the opening of the emergency shelter and establishes dedicated community liaisons and/or a community advisory committee, along with an incident response plan. Through experience with other emergency shelters, it has been found that neighbourhood engagement is key to minimizing conflict, addressing resident concerns, and ensuring community safety for both shelter residents, and those who reside and work in the area.

7. Financial Implications:

The acquisition cost for the purchase of 84 Frederick was \$6.6M. The 2024 Housing Services Capital Budget was amended to accommodate this cost and the cost for immediate capital renewal works. Staff will draft the 2025-2034 capital program to incorporate future estimates of renewal works as they are refined.

The 2024 approved Operating Budget includes \$4.1M to cover the annual operating costs for King St. Emergency Shelter and will be used to offset the operating costs for the newly purchased 84 Frederick Street. With the acquisition of 84 Frederick, the 2025 operating budget will be increased \$1.2M to cover incremental debt servicing and lifecycle costs associated with the acquisition. The King Street Shelter may need to remain operating through March 31, 2025 to allow for some transition and if that is the case, temporary operating funding will be required to cover the overlap. Staff estimate that approximately \$1M may be needed to fund the overlap and propose to fund any temporary expenditures from the Tax Stabilization Reserve if appropriate.

8. Conclusion / Next Steps:

Providing safe and adequate emergency shelter spaces is critical in Waterloo region as rates of homelessness continue to rise. The Plan to End Chronic Homelessness (PECH) supports the collective work of creating stability across the homelessness system while transitioning toward homelessness prevention. The knowledge of lived expertise is embedded throughout both the development of the model and its expected implementation. Through access to 24/7 on-site supports and programming, the proposed operating model facilitates individuals to have appropriate support in their housing journey. The scale and form of the model also ensures that the emergency shelter contributes to vibrancy and inclusivity within downtown Kitchener, while acknowledging the need to grow with care across the Waterloo region. Next steps include building renovations, collecting Request for Proposal (RFP) submissions and evaluating bids.

9. Attachments:

Appendix A: Proposed Emergency Shelter Operating Model for 84 Frederick Street

Appendix B: Recommendations from Lived Experts for the Emergency Shelter Operation at 84 Frederick Street

Appendix C: 84 Frederick Operating Model Survey and Drop-In Engagement Results

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