



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the General Committee

From: Sheldon Laidman, Commissioner, Community Services

Meeting Date: March 11, 2024

Report: Modular Community Update, Report CSSS24-002

Subject

A report to provide an update on the Modular Bridge Housing Community project.

Recommendations

That Council approve the recommendations outlined in Report CSSS24-002, dated March 11, 2024 of the Commissioner of Community Services as follows:

- a) That the presentation be received as information; and
- b) That staff provide a report to Council in 2025 with recommendations regarding the next steps of the Modular Bridge Housing Community.

Executive Summary

- **Operational Success:** Project initiated with Council approval in May 2023, opened doors on November 27, 2023, achieving a 98% move-in rate in the initial occupancy.
- **Program Features:** The modular community comprises 50 units, a separate bathroom unit, and 24/7 security. It is operated by Elizabeth Fry Society with on-site 24/7 support and managed by Finally a Home as the landlord.
- **Early Successes:** Minimal site issues reported in the first 10 weeks, demonstrating effective site and client stabilization. Positive mental and physical improvements observed in residents shortly after moving in and initial positive feedback from Neighbourhood Liaison Committee.

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- Next Steps and Future Planning: City staff to monitor, evaluate, and build on early successes. Active risk management to address timeline adequacy, resource sufficiency, and housing exits. Proactive collaboration with similar projects and exploration of options for beyond November 2025, considering financial implications and strategic planning.

Background

Program Plan Development

Following Council approval of [CSSS23-013 Homelessness Update Report](#) in May 2023, Staff across multiple departments, led by Social Services, began planning the project. The goal was to have the Modular Bridge Housing Community program operational by Fall 2023, providing homes for 50 people who had been living outside as part of the winter response plan.

Main Site Features

Construction of the modular homes and outdoor facilities concluded in November 2023, with the 210 Wolfe Street building finalized in late December 2023. Key features include:

- A secure, fully fenced site with 50 modular homes and a separate bathroom unit
- Operated by Elizabeth Fry Society, with two support staff on site 24/7
- Finally a Home, a subsidiary of Peterborough Housing Corporation acts as a landlord
- 24/7 security
- Indoor community space at 210 Wolfe Street, featuring a kitchenette and laundry facilities, with allocated space for external agency meetings

Program Description

The Modular Bridge Housing Community provides housing for individuals in Peterborough who are facing homelessness due to challenges accessing appropriate shelter or housing options. The site operator, Elizabeth Fry Society aims to stabilize individuals as they transition out of homelessness, supports them in identifying their individual goals and when possible, works to help individuals find more permanent housing solutions that are suitable for their situations.

Key Program Features:

- Dinner is provided daily for all people living on the site
- Individuals are supported with personalized care plans that support individual goal-setting related to stabilization, maintaining housing, employment, and health.

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- Staff support for goal achievement, including case conferencing with Social Services outreach staff and the FourCAST Mobile Support Overdose Resource Team (MSORT).
 - Facilitation of external service referrals to agencies in the community.
 - Ensuring adherence to occupancy agreements.

Program Moves to Operational Phase

In preparation for the opening of the Modular Community, outreach teams from local agencies collaborated to identify individuals to be offered a unit. Priority for a unit was given to people based on the following criteria:

- SPDAT (Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool) scores, when available. This standardized tool is used to prioritize individuals living unsheltered and identify their housing and support needs.
- Currently living at the Wolfe Street encampment or other outdoor locations in Peterborough
- Facing barriers to accessing local shelters
- Previously participated in local housing programs
- Individual needs appropriate to the level of support and design of the site

The community opened its doors on November 27, 2023, with 49 out of 50 individuals moving in. This remarkable 98% move-in rate surpasses the typical range of 40-60% move-in rates that are often seen in transitional housing programs. This may be attributed to the careful selection process of individuals, the outreach teams' efforts in building relationships prior to move-in, the modular community's location, and key features of the site.

Early Successes

Site Stabilization

- In the initial 10 weeks, there have been minimal issues on site, with only four emergency service calls, demonstrating improved site stability compared to encampment scenarios.

Stabilization of Individuals

- When people move from chronic homelessness into housing, there is often a period of destabilization for individuals. In the modular community, people who moved into the community quickly adapted to their new homes, showcasing positive mental and physical improvements within days. This observation has been shared by both clients who are on site and agency staff who are supporting them.

Neighbourhood Impact

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- An early evaluation with the Neighbourhood Liaison Committee has highlighted that over the last few months, there has been an observable positive change in the Wolfe Street neighbourhood. The results have shown that the neighbourhood is feeling tidier, quieter and safer from the perspective of this group.

Next Steps

City staff will monitor and evaluate the project, build on early successes, connect and learn with similar communities; and build a plan for after the 2-year term of this project ending November 30, 2025.

1. Monitoring and Evaluation

The evaluation will include both formative and summative assessments, documenting program operations, identifying areas for improvement, and conducting an overall assessment of the program's success in meeting its goals. Monitoring and Evaluation are key to the success of the Modular Bridge Housing Community project, and also to support understanding, identifying and closing gaps across the homelessness system.

Indicators

Project data will be collected to help quantify and support understanding of how the initiative contributes to the following areas:

- Stabilization of program participants.
- Development of skills supporting future housing
- Sufficiency and appropriateness of supports
- How the modular units, as a low-barrier entry point to the housing system contribute to Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion.
- Participants' ability to support the transition to alternative, more permanent housing, identifying barriers and assessing the program's role in filling gaps in the local housing system
- Impacts on the neighbourhood

Sources of Data for the Evaluation

- Regular check-ins with the site operator.
- Quarterly performance measurement reporting by the site operator.
- Formal and informal feedback from individuals in the modular and neighbouring community.
- Utilization of other local data sources, such as emergency calls for service and 911 reporting.

2. Quality Improvement

Evaluation processes will support continuous project improvement, assessing policies, procedures, on-site support, personal goal achievement, and the local Coordinated Access System's role in facilitating transitions to more permanent housing. Quality improvement will be a collaborative effort between City staff and the dedicated work of the Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough.

3. Knowledge Exchange

City staff will share project lessons with communities across Ontario and Canada, fostering collaborative learning and expanding the impact in Peterborough. As more communities are adopting similar projects to meet immediate needs of people who are unsheltered, it also provides an opportunity to learn from other communities.

4. Post-Project Planning

In collaboration with portfolio-attached Councillors, staff will research and identify options for the project and its residents beyond the November 2025 end date.

Risk Factors

It is important to highlight that while there have been initial indicators of success for the project, staff have identified a number of risk factors for the program including the following:

Timeline Adequacy to Assess Success:

- Considering whether a two-year timeline is sufficient to comprehensively assess the success and impact of the program, especially in the context of the complexities associated with the target population;

Resource Sufficiency for Complex Needs:

- Assessing whether the program possesses adequate resources to effectively stabilize a group with pronounced mental health, substance use, and physical health challenges, particularly those with a history of prolonged homelessness;

Complex Health Issues Among Participants:

- Addressing the significant mental health, substance use, and physical health issues among some participants poses potential challenges to achievements within the program; and

Lack of Appropriate Housing Exits

- **Limited Availability in Other Housing Programs:** Scarcity of available spaces in alternative housing programs may strain the capacity to accommodate individuals who would be able to move out of the modular units.
- **Challenges with Supportive or Transitional Private Market Units:** Dependence on private market units for supportive or transitional housing potentially limits housing options for specific individuals, as landlords may reject individuals.
- **Lack of 24/7 Supportive Housing Options in Peterborough:** The shortage of 24/7 supportive housing spaces in Peterborough may present challenges in meeting the continuous needs of program participants to move out of the Modular Program and into more permanent housing.

Staff are working with the site operator and partners across the local housing system to work through and address these risks to the project. The evaluation for this project will help to document these gaps in the housing system and the barriers for individuals

exiting the Modular Bridge Housing Program, while collaborating with City Housing staff to create plans and work towards solutions.

Strategic Plan

Community and Wellbeing

Work proactively with provincial and federal governments to explore all options and seize opportunities to provide housing support for people experiencing homelessness, and to respond to mental health challenges, addictions, and the need for family physicians.

Encourage our neighbourhoods to be safe, diverse, accessible, and affordable across all ages, incomes, and abilities.

Work proactively with local community partners to find an amicable workable solution towards reducing homelessness, mental health, and addiction issues within our community.

Governance and Fiscal Sustainability

Support a culture of continuous improvement, safety, and innovation to enhance cost effective delivery of City programs and services.

Engagement and Consultation

Wolfe Street Community Liaison Committee

As directed by Council in May 2023, staff, with the support of the Co-Chairs of the Housing and Homelessness portfolio established a community liaison committee. The committee brings together representatives from the neighbourhood next to the modular community, neighbouring businesses, and police, alongside city staff to create a forum to better understand the impacts and concerns of the Modular Bridge Housing Community program on the neighbourhood.

The committee was established in July 2023 and currently meets monthly. It is facilitated by Arising Collective.

Consultations with People Experiencing Homelessness

City outreach staff and the site operator consulted with individuals living unsheltered in preparation for the opening of the Modular Community to identify expectations and needs for the future site.

Community Partner Consultation

Prior to CSSS23-013 Homelessness Update Report being presented at Council, Staff brought together community partner representatives from housing, mental health, addictions, and justice to discuss potential solutions with the increased provincial funding. With support from homelessness-serving agencies, it was determined that the

City would put forth the recommendations included in report CSSS23-013, with the primary focus being on building the Modular Bridge Housing Community.

Budget and Financial Implications

The Modular Bridge Housing Community has stayed within the additional \$2.5 million provincial Homelessness Prevention Program funding allocated in 2023. This funding was provided in an amount of \$2,5 million for three years ending in March 2026. A breakdown of costs have been separated into two tables below. Table 1.0 highlights the construction costs associated with the preparation and construction of the units, while Table 2.0 highlights the expected ongoing operating costs associated with the program.

Table 1.0, Modular Bridge Housing Community Construction Costs

The following table outlines the construction costs, including the improvements made to the existing city owned building at 210 Wolfe Street.

Modular Bridge Housing Community Construction Costs	
Modular Cabins including Washrooms	\$1,340,688
Site Preparedness	\$821,726
Set up for the 50 units	\$65,199
210 Wolfe Street Building Modifications	\$220,165
Total	\$2,447,778

Table 2.0, Expected Modular Bridge Housing Community Operating Costs

The following table outlines the current expected annual operating costs of the program. For further description of the program, see the Program Description of the Background section.

Expected Modular Bridge Housing Community Operating Costs	
Bridge Program Administration and Supports	\$855,741
Security	\$638,821
Property Management	\$48,850
Meal Program	\$177,253
Repairs, Maintenance, Waste Disposal	\$159,488
Rent on 210 Wolfe Street	\$124,458
City Operating Costs	\$150,000
Insurance	\$28,367
Neighbourhood Liaison	\$16,026
	\$2,199,003
Less: Rental Revenue	-\$240,000
Total Net Costs	\$1,959,003

It is worth noting that the construction costs and expected annual operating costs of this program are similar to those of the Erb Road program in Waterloo that also supports 50 people to live in modular homes. The Erb Road program is reported to have a cost of \$2.8 million for construction and \$2.1 million annually to operate.

Timeframe and Next Report to Council

While Council Report CSSS23-013 provided approval for this project, this approval was only granted for 24 months which will expire November, 2025. As described elsewhere in this report, staff will be monitoring and evaluating the success of the project to be able to provide a proper analysis of the project to Council in the first or second quarter of 2025. It is expected that this report will also include a range of options for Council's consideration related to the future of the project. Staff will endeavour to have this report in the first half of 2025 to ensure enough time to implement Council's directions on the future of the project and its clients.

Conclusion

The modular community opened its doors on Wolfe Street in November 2023 with 49 of the 50 people who were offered a unit moving in shortly after opening. In the first 10 weeks of this project, there are some promising early successes.

Staff will monitor and evaluate the project, continue to build on early successes, connect with other communities with similar projects to learn and share the Peterborough experience. Planning for beyond the Council-approved 2-year term of this project has already begun. Monitoring and Evaluation are key to the success of the Modular Bridge Housing Community project, but also in supporting understanding, identifying, and closing gaps in the rest of the homelessness system.

While there are some risks to the success of the project, the Modular Bridge Housing Community is an opportunity for some people who are unable to access alternative forms of shelter to stabilize and move towards more appropriate housing as it becomes available.

Submitted by,

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