



City of  
**Peterborough**

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**To:** Members of the General Committee

**From:** Sheldon Laidman, Commissioner, Community Services

**Meeting Date:** September 16, 2024

**Report:** Modular Bridge Housing Community Next Steps, Report  
CSSS24-018

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## **Subject**

A report to recommend extending the Modular Bridge Housing Community (MBHC) program at Wolfe Street beyond 2025 and expanding due to its proven success and financial considerations.

## **Recommendations**

That Council approve the recommendations outlined in Report CSSS24-018, dated September 16, 2024 of the Commissioner of Community Services as follows:

- a) That the Modular Bridge Housing Community project remain on Wolfe St. beyond November 2025 provided the site location is not needed for other city activities or services and that the Provincial Homelessness Prevention Program funding remains at its present level;
- b) That the Commissioner of Community Services have delegated authority to make decisions regarding physical and operational modifications to the former Rehill lot and 210 Wolfe Street in alignment with the best interests of the Modular Bridge Housing Community program, and to expand site capacity, within existing budgets;
  - i. That up to \$75,000 be made available from the Social Service Reserve to enhance the security infrastructure on Wolfe Street to strengthen impacts experienced by the MBHC program. The Commissioner of Community Services shall be granted the authority to expend these funds;

- ii. That up to \$1,120,000 be used from the Social Services Reserve to support the capital purchase of up to 16 more modular cabins for the site. The Commissioner of Community Services shall be granted the authority to expend these funds;
- c) That the Commissioner of Community Services be authorized to do such things and to execute such documents for the Modular Bridge Housing Community program for the duration of the program, on terms satisfactory to the City Solicitor.

## Executive Summary

- **Program Success and Recognition:** The Modular Bridge Housing Community (MBHC) on Wolfe Street has shown promising results in its first 7 months, positively impacting participants, the local homelessness system, and the surrounding neighborhood. The program's success has garnered national interest, and it received the PJ Marshall Award for Innovation from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario.
- **Recommendation to Maintain Current Location:** The report recommends that the MBHC remain on Wolfe Street beyond November 2025 unless the site is required for other city services, due to its proven effectiveness, possible challenges associated with relocation and the cost to relocate.
- **Authority and Budget Recommendations:** The report proposes delegating the Commissioner of Community Services the authority to make site modifications, expand site capacity within existing budgets, and up to \$75,000 for security infrastructure adjustments, as well as up to \$1,120,000 for purchasing additional modular cabins.
- **Community and Stakeholder Engagement:** The report highlights ongoing engagement with the Wolfe Street neighbourhood, including a liaison committee as well as a neighbourhood survey, which have generally shown support for the MBHC. Continued community involvement is emphasized to address concerns and adapt the program to meet local needs.
- **Financial Considerations of Relocation:** The estimated cost of relocating the MBHC is approximately a minimum of \$1.68 million, with additional expenses possible depending on the new site. These financial implications, along with the necessary continuation of the Homelessness Prevention Program funding, support the recommendation to keep the MBHC at Wolfe Street.

## Background

In May 2023, Council approved the Modular Bridge Housing Community (MBHC) to operate on Wolfe Street for 18 to 24 months under [Report CSSS23-013](#). Additionally, at

this time Staff were directed by Council to explore alternative public and privately-owned sites for the placement of modular temporary housing to provide potential alternative sites within the City.

The Wolfe Street site opened in November 2023, with contracts and leases secured until November 30th, 2025. To ensure adequate time for planning prior to the end of the temporary approval, the [Modular Community Update Report CSSS24-002](#), presented in March 2024, requested that Staff return to Council in 2025 with recommendations on the future of the MBHC.

Staff have formed an internal working group to assess sites and provide recommendations to Council for relocating the MBHC. Beginning with an assessment of city-owned properties, the Planning Department has identified approximately 12 city-owned sites that meet the basic requirements, including site size, proximity to electrical, sewer, and water services, accessibility to emergency services, surface suitability, and compliance with provincial regulations.

Early evaluation results from the first seven months of operations on Wolfe Street indicate promising impacts. The successes have garnered recognition with communities across the country expressing interest in learning more about the program. Additionally, the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) recently awarded the City of Peterborough the PJ Marshall Award for Innovation in recognition of the MBHC's innovative approach.

Staff recommend that the MBHC stays on Wolfe Street ahead of a full review based on the evaluation results, the anticipated costs of moving the site, the time required to assess all potential City-owned and private sites. In addition, staff are recommending that expansion within the existing location be explored, for the same reasons.

### **Modular Bridge Housing Community Project Extension**

Staff are recommending that the MBHC remain on Wolfe St. beyond November 2025, provided the site location is not needed for other city activities or services and the funding from the Provincial Homelessness Prevention Program remain at least at its current level.

The initial program impacts and preliminary evaluation data from the MBHC program indicate that the program is making significant strides in stabilizing residents' lives and positively impacting the surrounding community. The data is showing that there are improvements in resident stability, successful transitions to permanent housing, and residents making progress on goals and employment, all suggesting the program's effectiveness.

The MBHC has also addressed a critical gap in the local housing system by providing a transitional housing opportunity for chronically unhoused, higher acuity individuals to help individuals to integrate into the local housing continuum. Additionally, the program has contributed to a safer and more positive neighbourhood environment, evidenced by a decrease in police calls and favorable community feedback. While challenges remain,

particularly in meeting the broader demand for housing, the MBHC is a successful intervention that continues to evolve and adapt to meet the needs of its residents and the community. See Appendix A for more details on the data and the impacts.

By remaining on Wolfe Street, the program will be able to continue to operate in the location where it is showing promising early outcomes. The evaluation will continue to monitor the impacts of the program and will be able to better assess how the program supports individual residents, how it fits into the local housing continuum and longer-term impacts on the community.

The project is currently funded using an increased allocation from the Provincial government of the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP). It is anticipated that the HPP funding will be extended beyond March 2026; however, there is no guarantee of this and the Province has not confirmed this. If the increased allocation is not extended, Staff will return to Council at that time with options.

### **Rationale for Extending MBHC at Wolfe Street**

Staff have coordinated an internal working group involving Social Services, Planning and Finance and Corporate Services. With the basic criteria needed for a new site, there are 12 city-owned properties that will meet the size and infrastructure needs. Moving the site would require the working group to work collaboratively with the site operator to further determine the best option for moving.

There are several factors that have contributed to Staff returning to Council to recommend the site remain at Wolfe Street:

- The successes of the program as outlined in Appendix A, which include positive impacts on residents, the housing continuum and generally positive improvement to the neighbourhood.
- The HPP funding is not sufficient to cover the anticipated costs of moving the MBHC. A financial plan would be needed to determine how these costs could be covered. Staff are not aware of any funding available to do so other than using additional Social Services reserve funds.
- Getting the site up and running on Wolfe Street, determining procedures and working with other organizations on site have taken significant dedication by the site operator and City Staff. Much of the program will be transferable if moved, but there may also be significant impacts and site-specific processes that will need to be adapted.
- The staff have not identified any reasons to expect the site would function better in a different location.

Beyond these considerations there are also risks to moving the MBHC:

- Not all MBHC program residents may move to the new location. Typically, transitional housing programs see an acceptance rate of 40-60% among residents offered a unit. However, when the first 50 people were offered units at MBHC, the acceptance rate was an impressive 98%. This unusually high rate could be attributed to factors such as the time of year and cold weather conditions. Over the first seven months, the acceptance rate now stands at 91%, which is still significantly better than most programs. The location of the MBHC has been a significant factor contributing to this high acceptance rate. Following the initial move-in of the first 49 residents, a survey revealed that 78% of the 46 respondents considered the location important in their decision to accept a unit.
- The Wolfe Street/Rehill Lot has historically been a place of gathering. Moving the site and returning the site to a parking lot may result in a return to prior uses.

### Factors to Consider for Moving MBHC

#### Budgetary Implications:

If Council determines that the MBHC should be moved from 210 Wolfe St., there are significant budgetary and financial implications. A preliminary budget was developed to estimate the minimum costs to move the MBHC to a new location. The final cost will depend on variables related to the selected site and the list of factors outlined below.

<b>Expense</b>	<b>Amount</b>
New Site Install	\$940,000
Demolition on Wolfe Street	\$30,000
Purchase of a Community Building	\$450,000
Temporarily Re-Housing 50 Residents for 1 Month, including hotel, storage and moving costs	\$262,500
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$1,682,500</b>

#### Factors that may change the cost of moving the site, from the budget above:

- Site studies are required for each site that is fully reviewed with an estimated cost of \$13,660 per site. One review is included in the above budget.
- There may be a building on the new site that can be used as a community building similar to 210 Wolfe Street and there will be renovations necessary to install laundry facilities and a kitchenette. This cost cannot be estimated without a site selected. The renovation costs would replace the cost of the community building in the above budget.
- The minimum cost to connect the site to sewer, water and electricity is included in the above budget. If these services are further than estimated distances, the cost may increase.

- The ground may need grading and gravel to meet the site requirements. No costs associated with these items are included above.
- There may be additional costs to re-housing residents in addition to the budget, including additional security, damages, food and transportation.

There will be additional costs to purchase a private property.

### Planning Implications:

If Council decides that the MBHC should be moved, in addition to budgetary implications, an extension will be needed to operate at Wolfe Street beyond the current end of the approval period of November 2025 to ensure adequate planning and a successful transition off the site. The rationale for the extension options is outlined below.

Extension Required	To Evaluate Options and Move the MBHC to a:	Extension Rationale
To Summer 2026	City-owned property	Time to fully evaluate options, ability to return to Council for approvals as needed and follow internal processes. The processes were faster during the initial install in 2023 due to the emergency status and the project receiving a non-standard procurement exemption from Council.
To Summer 2027	Privately or City-owned property	Extra time to initiate an Expression of Interest with landowners, possible re-zoning, or land purchasing processes.

### Potential Expansion and Site Modifications at Wolfe Street

Staff are recommending that Council authorize the Commissioner of Community Services to make decisions regarding physical modifications to the former Rehill lot and 210 Wolfe Street in alignment with the best interests of the Modular Bridge Housing Community program, and to expand site capacity, within the constraints of existing budgets. This includes two additional sub recommendations:

- That up to \$75,000 be made available from the Social Service Reserve to enhance the security infrastructure on Wolfe Street to strengthen impacts experienced by the MBHC program. The Commissioner of Community Services shall be granted the authority to expend these funds; and

- That up to \$1,120,000 be used from the Social Services Reserves to support the capital purchase of up to 16 modular cabins for the site. The Commissioner of Community Services shall be granted the authority to expend these funds.

To be adaptable to the project and the community, it may be possible to continue to increase the capacity of the program to scale its impact within the site at 210 Wolfe Street. This recommendation will allow the project to increase its adaptability within the existing budgets. If expansion is approved, Staff would like to make some minor physical adjustments to the site, based on program evaluation after the last 7 months. Staff are recommending that there be changes to the fence line and supporting security cameras to better support the program operations and physical site.

Based the successes described above and, in Appendix A, as well as the available space within the site, staff are recommending that additional modular units be purchased and added to the site provided that operating costs can remain within the Provincial HPP funding allocation. Staff have done an evaluation of the site and have determined that up to 16 additional cabins could be placed on the site within the planning limitations of the site. This would be a one-time capital purchase to expand the reach of the program by housing and providing supports to an additional 16 people. The cost to purchase and install each cabin is estimated at a price of \$70,000 per cabin.

Staff would work with other City departments to ensure that the installation of any additional units would meet all existing site requirements and infrastructure. Although there would be a one-time capital costs for the units, Staff would ensure that there would be no further financial implications to the existing operating budget.

## Strategic Plan

Strategic Pillar: Community & Well-being

Strategic Initiative: 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

Strategic Pillar: Governance & Fiscal Sustainability

Strategic Initiative: 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

This liaison committee brings together representatives from the neighbourhood next to the modular community, neighbouring businesses, and police, alongside City Staff and Housing and Homelessness Co-Chair representation to create a forum to better understand the impacts and concerns of the Modular Bridge Housing Community program on the neighbourhood.

The committee currently meets bimonthly.

### Neighbourhood Evaluation

An invitation to participate in an online or phone survey was dropped off to 85 mailboxes in the surrounding area to the modular community after five months of operations. The survey was intended to receive feedback on the impact of the MBHC and neighbour's experiences since the program began. Residents, businesses and organizations were all invited to respond. Results of this survey are included in Appendix A.

### Modular Community Residents

A move in survey was completed by residents in December 2023, to help understand the high rate of acceptance the MBHC saw with 49 out of the first 50 people accepting a unit.

The site operator has been collecting significant stories from staff and residents about changes that residents have experienced to provide more context to the quantitative data. Some results of the survey and excerpts from the stories are included in Appendix A.

The site operator is also working with support from Staff and facilitators to establish a Resident Committee, beginning in September 2024 to be able to better hear the perspectives of residents and adapting the program where possible.

## Budget and Financial Implications

- i. Recommendation A has no budgetary or financial implications if Council determines the project can remain at 210 Wolfe Street beyond November 2025. The program is currently being funded through provincial Homelessness Prevention Program Funding. It is anticipated that the HPP funding that pays for the operational costs will be extended beyond the committed 3-year increase ending March 2026. If the HPP funding does not cover the costs of operations, Staff will return to Council to present options for next steps at that time. In considering the recommendation to remain on Wolfe Street, the cost of moving the site is a significant factor. The financial implications for moving the program away from 210 Wolfe St., are outlined in the third bullet point below.



- ii. Recommendation B has financial and budgetary implications, as it cannot be achieved within the existing budget. The enhanced site adjustments and expansion of additional units on the site will be up to \$1,195,000 but this additional funding can be accommodated within the existing Social Services Reserve which has a current balance of \$5,766 000.00
- iii. If Council determines that the MBHC should be moved from 210 Wolfe St., there are significant budgetary and financial implications. The estimated cost of relocating the MBHC is approximately a minimum of \$1.68 million, with additional expenses possible depending on the new site. There is no current allocated budget to cover these costs. It would be anticipated that the Social Services reserve would need to be used as the only funding source for such a move.

## Conclusion

In conclusion, the Modular Bridge Housing Community (MBHC) project has demonstrated significant success in its initial phase at Wolfe Street, with clear positive impacts on the residents, the local community, and the broader housing system. The recommendations provided in this report are guided by the strong preliminary evaluation data, the program's national recognition, and the logistical and financial considerations associated with relocation.

The proposal to maintain the MBHC at its current location beyond November 2025 is rooted in the need to build on the program's success, minimize disruption to residents, and ensure continued positive outcomes for both the participants and the surrounding neighborhood. Additionally, the authority granted to the Commissioner of Community Services to manage site modifications, expand capacity, and allocate resources will ensure that the program can remain responsive to evolving needs and challenges.

Ultimately, these recommendations aim to strengthen the MBHC's role as a critical component of the city's housing strategy, supporting the community's well-being and fiscal sustainability, while addressing the ongoing challenges of homelessness. The continued engagement with the Wolfe Street community and stakeholders will be essential to maintaining the program's effectiveness and addressing any emerging concerns as the project progresses.

## Attachments

### Appendix A: Initial Program Impacts and Preliminary Evaluation Data

Submitted by,

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## **Initial Program Impacts and Preliminary Evaluation Data**

Data is continually being collected to assess the success of the program, primarily focusing on the impacts on residents, determining how the program fits in and supports people to enter the local housing continuum and the impacts on the neighbourhood.

In addition to summative data, a developmental evaluation approach is also being employed which utilizes feedback from staff, residents, neighbours and others to collaboratively adapt and improve the processes, the infrastructure and the program to ensure the project is having the intended impacts. The evaluation mechanisms are becoming more formalized as the project grows. For example, a resident committee is currently being formed to streamline feedback from residents.

The numbers presented here are based on data from the day the site opened on November 27, 2023 up until the end of Q2, June 30<sup>th</sup>, 2024, unless otherwise specified.

### **Resident Impacts**

It is still early to assess the full extent of the MBHC impact on residents and their lives. There are some preliminary data which show how the project is making an impact on individuals:

- The site operator made 121 referrals for community supports since move-in
- From Apr 1 to June 30, 2024, there were:
  - 11 residents participating in the on-site work program
  - 19 participating in the volunteer program
  - 4 working in off-site employment
- 1 person has transitioned to permanent housing and 1 more is waiting for their unit to be ready and will be moving shortly
- 10 more people have been assessed by the site operator and are ready to move to more permanent housing
- 33 people have been housed for 6+ months
  - With this group, there was an improvement in stability as indicated by an average 9-point increase on the adapted Self Sufficiency Matrix.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The Elizabeth Fry Society of Peterborough has adapted the Self-Sufficiency Matrix (SSM) Tool and uses it across all of their programs. It is a tool that measure's a person's ability to live independently assessing domains such as income, employment, housing, health care and safety. When utilized at different times in a person's journey, it can show progress over time.

Staff are also collecting stories from site staff and residents to better understand the changes occurring with people on the site. The following are a few excerpts that highlight the scope of success on the site:

**Site Operator Staff Quotes:**

“The biggest change I have noticed... is hope. Hope that they will be able to move on from the modulars and are picturing a future where they are housed”.

“[They] are applying [themselves] 100% to the program and bettering [their] life but is also actively engaging with other residents to try and connect with them and form better relationships within [their] community.”

“[T]hey were visiting the hospital 4-5 days a week... We have just celebrated a full month with no visits.”

**Resident Quotes:**

“I am able to feel human again”.

“I have had the opportunity to apply to school again and am currently awaiting a reply.”

“I have no more criminal charges... for just trying to survive.”

“It [MBHC] simply saved my life and my way of thinking.”

“[I get] to see my family more and having somewhere where I can have them over.”

It is important to acknowledge that the program has not been a success for every person who has moved in. When residents enter the program, they sign an occupancy agreement which outlines the expectations on the site. Evictions occur for the safety of both residents and staff. Expectations include a no violence policy, fire safety measures, following the guest policy and participating in a care plan where the individual sets goals for themselves. As of August 2024, there have been 17 people who have not met the expectations of living at the site and have been evicted.

The rate of evictions is decreasing over time. Four of the 17 evictions occurred in the last 3.5 months and the remaining 13 all happened in the preceding 5.5 months. This can be explained by the change and stabilization of the site as well as improved onboarding processes and supports for new residents.

Additionally, there are also a few people who have decided that the MBHC is not a fit and have voluntarily withdrawn from the program.

**Impact on the Local Homelessness System**

The MBHC stands as the only 24/7 transitional housing program in Peterborough dedicated to housing individuals who are living outside. This program specifically targets those who are chronically unhoused within the city, offering them an opportunity to secure housing through the local By-Name List. By providing an option for those who are unable to access other shelter services, the MBHC addresses a critical gap in the local housing system.

The MBHC is being integrated into the local system through partnerships with transitional and supportive housing programs, allowing residents who have stabilized in the Modulares to move on to more permanent housing options. This approach helps ensure that the program serves as a steppingstone for those ready to transition out of chronic homelessness.

Despite successes, the MBHC does not address all the gaps in the local housing landscape, particularly for individuals who are homeless and accessing other forms of temporary shelter, and those who are aging, with significant mental health challenges, or in need of medical supports. Additionally, the number of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness surpasses the demand for a unit at the MBHC.

As mentioned above, there are currently 10 people who are ready to move into permanent housing opportunities. City and site operator staff are working to determine appropriate, affordable exits for these individuals.

When a modular unit is available, the MBHC continues to offer units to new residents from the By-Name List or previous residents whose situation may be different now, aiming to maintain a balance of 50% men and women, with a minimum of 35% Indigenous individuals. Currently, approximately 40% of the program's residents are Indigenous.

The MBHC represents a significant advancement in filling a critical gap within the local housing system, providing a pathway for those who are chronically unhoused to exit homelessness.

### **Neighbourhood Impacts**

Prior to the MBHC project, the Rehill lot hosted a 75-person encampment which had a significant impact on the neighbourhood. The MBHC was proposed as a solution specifically for individuals who were chronically unhoused.

Since July 2023, the Wolfe Street Neighbourhood Liaison Committee has met every 1 to 2 months to assess the impact of the MBHC on the community. To date, most concerns raised have related to ongoing issues of homelessness outside of the modular community. However, many residents have reported feeling safer and more positive about their community, noting a decrease in noise levels. This perception is corroborated by data from police and emergency services. There has been a noticeable decrease in police calls for service compared to the same period during the previous

year when the encampment was present. This data underscores a significant improvement in the neighborhood's environment.

Date	Police Calls
November 27, 2022 to June 30, 2023 (Encampment)	95 calls for police to 210 Wolfe Street
November 27, 2022 to June 30, 2023 (MBHC)	4 calls for police for residents inside modulars
% Change	96% decrease

This data does not account for fire or paramedic calls for service.

Additionally, in May 2024, City Staff conducted a survey among residents, organizations, and businesses in the vicinity of the MBHC to gauge any challenges the neighborhood might be facing due to the program. The survey was distributed to 85 mailboxes in the area. Despite the limited number of responses—only seven—the feedback was predominantly positive:

- 4 out of 6 respondents for this question noted that the neighborhood is cleaner.
- 6 out of 7 reported an increased sense of safety since the MBHC opened.
- 6 out of 7 stated that the overall impact on the neighborhood has been positive.

While the sample size is small, the data suggests that there are no significant negative feelings about the MBHC's impact on the neighborhood. The lack of responses may indicate that there were no pressing issues to report, supporting the conclusion that the MBHC has not contributed negatively to the community.

### Conclusion

In conclusion, the initial evaluation of the MBHC program reveals a positive trajectory in its impact on both residents and the surrounding community. Preliminary data suggest that the program is making significant strides in stabilizing the lives of its residents, as evidenced by the number of referrals, employment participation, and successful transitions to permanent housing. The reduction in evictions and the increased sense of hope and stability among residents further underscore the program's effectiveness.

Additionally, the MBHC has filled a critical gap in the local housing system by providing a transitional option for those who are chronically unhoused, contributing to a broader effort to address homelessness in the region. The program's integration into the local housing continuum and its role as a steppingstone to more permanent housing are particularly noteworthy.

The positive impact extends beyond the residents to the broader neighborhood, where a marked decrease in police calls and a generally favorable perception among community members reflect the program's success in improving local conditions. While there are

still challenges to be addressed, particularly in accommodating all those in need, the MBHC represents a significant and successful intervention in the local housing landscape. Continued evaluation and adaptation of the program will be crucial in ensuring its ongoing success and addressing any emerging needs.