



Committee Report

To:	Warden Milne and Members of Grey County Council
Committee Date:	September 14, 2023
Subject / Report No:	CSR-CW-19-23
Title:	Emergency Housing Options
Prepared by:	Josh Gibson, Manager of Housing Programs
Reviewed by:	Anne Marie Shaw, Director of Community Services
Lower Tier(s) Affected:	County-wide
Status:	

Recommendation

That report CSR-CW-19-23 regarding Emergency Housing Options be received for information.

Executive Summary

In follow up to report CSR-CS-14-23 Grey County Homelessness & Transitional Housing System Enhancement Plan this report brings forward a system enhancement option which lowers ongoing operating costs and improves services delivered to members of the community experiencing homelessness.

As the Service Manager, providing Emergency Short Term Housing options is part of Grey County's ongoing mandate. There is a need to review opportunities to transform the current Short Term Shelter Program through acquisitions transforming it into supported emergency housing provides a long term solution and improvements in how service can be delivered while maintaining the current capacity to provide safer shelter options for those sleeping rough.

Background and Discussion

The current emergency homelessness system has barriers including cost, lack of control due to private business ownership, lack of capacity and does not scale well with increasing need in the community.

This report and the costing within are based on the current demand in real time in the community for emergency short term shelter in combination with the demand experienced in the Winter of 2022-23. Demand continues to climb, the expected minimum demand for Emergency stays is estimated to be 13,000/year.

In combatting the homelessness crisis, the exploration of acquiring property and/or structures to control short term shelter services is consistent with what other Service Managers across the province are doing as they struggle with increased need and acuity of residents.

Current Demands

From June 1, 2023, to August 31, 2023, demand for shelter services continued to grow despite traditionally being a time of year when less demand is seen for temporary shelter. To save resources in order to provide enhanced services during the more dangerous winter month's the program was capped at 15 rooms per night except in emergencies.

The revision of service delivery would allow operating savings to allow for some capacity growth.

Emergency Housing Options

Current Motel System

Description: The system uses four motels regularly depending on seasonality and demand. Rooms are rented directly from the motel owners as availability allows.

Capacity: Varies given availability of private market rooms.

Barriers with this option: As currently operated the program is unable to operate independent of limitations by business owners. Intake staff are limited in their ability to support individuals experiencing homelessness if they have been banned previously due to actions at the motel despite being months or years later. The cost per night is very high as well as our obligation to cover exceptional cleaning and repairs which staff have no control over in terms of quality or timeliness of repair.

Barriers exist with pets as most of the motels do not accept pets.

Opportunities of this Option: As operated the motel program has provided individual room opportunities for many households experiencing homelessness safely over the year.

Capital Cost: No capital costs associated with this project.

Operating Cost: The current average room cost including damages and maintenance is \$120/night. A total yearly cost to operating this option at 14,055 nights of shelter is \$1,686,600.

Revised Operations through Acquisition

Description: Grey County acquired emergency housing dwelling with separated rooms and opportunity to convert space to Office and Support space for services and staff.

Capacity: Forecasting a capacity of up to 30 households a night depending on acquisition options available.

Barriers with this option: Would require changes to program delivery including overnight security or staffing at the property for afterhours check ins and to monitor the facility.

Opportunities of this Option: Allows staff to support community members without barrier of private ownership discretion. Other improvements include allowance of pets, space for families and opportunity for increased capacity with double occupancy where possible. Staff would have control over maintenance timelines and discretion around repairs and improvements.

The motel option provides significant dignity by providing a private space including storage for food and private washroom facilities.

Cost compared to renting individual rooms provides opportunity for long term savings.

Commitment to building capacity for the homelessness system including available beds and improved access to program opportunities.

Capital Cost: Purchase cost to be funded through the Affordable Housing Build Fund. Future Capital to be prioritized with Provincial or Federal program dollars.

Operating Cost: The projected cost to operate this facility including overnight staffing is \$66.61/night or \$656,397 annually providing 9,855 nights of accommodations.

The additionally required 4,200 nights of shelter to support with winter demand would be provided under the existing model at a cost of \$504,000.

The cost to operate an acquired location including overflow totaling 14,055 nights is budgeted at \$1,160,397.

Comparing Options

Moving forward with the acquisition of the motel allows the Short-Term Shelter Program to enhance services, control the environment and eligibility, reduce operating expenses and develop a more consistent capacity. This option improves capacity slightly however the primary reason for acquisition is to control program eligibility, and costs while continuing to deliver services consistent with our homelessness mandates.

Acquisition Option		Existing Motel Model	
Nights of Accommodations		9855	
Operating Cost per Night	\$ 66.61	Operating Cost per Night	\$ 120.00
Annual Operating Cost	\$ 656,397.25	Annual Operating Cost	\$ 1,182,600.00
Overflow Needs for Winter Additional 4,200 Nights at \$120/night			
Overflow Cost	\$ 504,000.00	Overflow Cost	\$ 504,000.00
Total Annual Cost	\$ 1,160,397.25	Total Annual Cost	\$ 1,686,600.00
Annual Savings <i>(Based on 14,055 Nights of accommodations)</i>	\$ 526,202.75		

Additional Options Explored

Staff explored multiple options prior to recommending these expansion options including;

1. Congregate Shelter (Purchase and Lease Options)

- Staffing required would at minimum be 3 per shift 24/7
- Would require meal preparation to operate suitably as units are not equipped for meal storage or heating
- Bathroom facilities are all shared causing significant congregate living issues
- Max occupancy of 16 individuals providing 4,928 nights.
- Estimated cost to operate exceeds \$130 / bed night

2. Modular Build Congregate

- Purchase a resale modular housing option formerly used as employee housing
- Requires a landsite with preparations and servicing
- Estimated cost to acquire exceeds that of existing structure and is not permanent
- Congregate living without private bathrooms
- Meals would need to be provided
- Staffing required would at minimum be 3 per shift 24/7
- Solution is not permanent, lacks supportive services space for outside agencies to deliver supports.

3. Small Temporary Outdoor Shelter Options

- Costs range from \$15,000 - \$80,000 per unit not including site prep, foundation, electricity, water, heating, generator
- Site would require additional buildings with laundry, food supports, dining, washroom, shower facilities and staffing.
- Staffing requirements over and above that of self-contained motel units
- Temporary structures, unknown lifespan dependent on the users of the service
- Units are impacted heavily by the elements opposed to a self contained option where washrooms are within the units
- Lacks dignity compared to more private and spacious options

Measuring Outcomes

- Operational Cost Savings
- Reduction of Turnaway's from the Homelessness System
- Movement from STSP to Housing
- Percentage of households who re-access STSP after housing
- Increased capacity of the program to support total number of households year over year.

Legal and Legislated Requirements

Financial and Resource Implications

The acquisition cost will be funded from the Affordable Housing Fund that is anticipated to have a balance of \$3.3 million at year end. Initial property upgrades to be funded from Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiatives and will not result in a levy impact.

Ongoing operating costs related to the property would be covered through the Homelessness Prevention Program which is provincially funded and would not require a levy impact as long as the program continues.

The cost of capital repairs would be included in the annual budget and projects prioritized as needed through program funding including the Canada -Ontario Community Housing Initiatives and Ontario Priorities Housing Initiatives. Should funding streams be discontinued, this would result in a levy requirement.

Relevant Consultation

- Internal: 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, Finance Department
- External: Provincial Service Manager Tables

Appendices and Attachments

[CSR-CS-14-23 Grey County Homelessness & Transitional Housing System Enhancement Plan](#)