To: Chair and Members
   Emergency and Community Services Committee

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Date: April 24, 2007

Re: Transitional Housing for Youth: A Partnership Between CityHousing Hamilton Corporation and Wesley Urban Ministries (City Wide) (ECS07043)

Council Direction:

Not applicable.

Information:

The purpose of Information Report ECS07043 is to describe a partnership between Wesley Urban Ministries and CityHousing Hamilton Corporation to provide transitional housing for youth by renovating two floors at the existing apartment building at 191 Main Street West.

The Youth Transitional Housing initiative will provide much needed housing and program space to serve as a home-base for a number of existing community supports for youth. Transitional housing is for individuals who desire a more stable housing environment but who require some degree of temporary support and guidance in order to transition to permanent housing. It is important to note that transitional housing is not emergency housing or an overnight drop-in shelter. Within the housing continuum, transitional housing is a step on the path from emergency shelters to secure, affordable, permanent housing.

The Youth Transitional Housing initiative underscores the commitment of the City of Hamilton in being a municipal leader in affordable housing solutions. The project also demonstrates the strength of partnerships to solve affordable housing issues in community.

Background:

In October 2005, the Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC) released the report “Addressing the Needs of Street-Involved and Homeless Youth in Hamilton”. The report...
identified a range of issues affecting youth including “housing” and made 27 recommendations. Specifically, Recommendation #19 stated:

That the community work to increase the range of transitional housing options for street-involved youth who require a variety of housing options. This range should be creative, flexible and offer a range of levels of support and structure. There are a number of community stakeholders who need to be involved including the City of Hamilton, the Street-Involved and Homeless Youth Managers and the Street-Involved Youth Network.

CityHousing Hamilton also recognized that responding to special housing needs in the community is critical. As part of developing a comprehensive Operational Plan for CityHousing Hamilton, one goal was identified pertaining to housing supply. The Operational Plan was endorsed by the CityHousing Hamilton Board of Directors on May 15, 2006, and included the following goal:

Goal #4: Reinvest in Communities and Increase Affordable Housing

- Objective # 4.3
  “Investigate affordable housing development opportunities for unique community housing needs, i.e. single room occupancies, youth transitional housing.”

In early 2006, preliminary discussions were held between CityHousing Hamilton and the Street Involved and Homeless Youth Managers (Alternatives for Youth, Good Shepherd Centres, Living Rock, Wesley Urban Ministries) to explore potential partnership opportunities.

At the same time the City of Hamilton received a one-year extension to its agreement with Human Resource Development Canada (HRDC) (now named Service Canada (SC)). The extension was to fund $4.2 million dollars of programs to facilitate the community plan established under Supporting Communities Partnership Initiative (SCPI). Due to Federal budgeting practices the deadline for spending the funds was March 31, 2007.

On April 13, 2006, a “Call for Applications” was made by the City of Hamilton, in partnership with Service Canada. The goal was to fund capital projects focused on providing transitional housing for youth and parenting teens. The call noted:

“Applications for capital expenses relating to the purchase, renovation, equipping of new Transitional Housing for Homeless Street-Involved Youth are being accepted. The goal is to help youth develop the skills and resources to eventually transition into independent housing. It is envisioned that this project will link with existing services and help strengthen the service system.”
The transitional housing model should include a program component in addition to accommodation which would provide key services or linkages to the services. A multi-tiered model, allowing youth to move from more intensive to less intensive services as appropriate, is preferred.”

Recognizing the Street Involved and Homeless Youth Managers (SIHYM) could provide the program component, and CityHousing Hamilton could provide the housing component a partnership was formed. A joint proposal was submitted to create transitional housing for 19 at risk youth on two floors of the existing CityHousing Hamilton building located at 191 Main Street West. The partnership between CityHousing Hamilton and SIHYM, led by Mr. Paul Johnson of Wesley Urban Ministries, was successful in obtaining $1,000,000 in Federal funding under the Call for Applications.

The partnership was successful in obtaining funding because it addresses an important missing link in the supportive housing continuum and will be a permanent solution to homelessness. Providing a continuum of housing and program support to youth during and after their stay will help graduates successfully live independently and not re-enter the supportive housing system. Features that made the proposal attractive were that it was:

- Sustainable - Wesley Urban Ministries and the SIHYM were committing ongoing program funding;
- Realistic – the bulk of renovations were to be completed before the March 31, 2007, Federal spending deadline; and,
- Feasible - Wesley Urban Ministries has extensive program experience as do the other members of the SIHYM, combined with CityHousing Hamilton’s development and housing operations experience.

Why Establish a Partnership?:

CityHousing Hamilton has significant resources in the form of land and buildings. While the facilities are well utilized to meet affordable rental housing needs, there are opportunities to better utilize existing buildings for specialized needs. With a large building portfolio, CityHousing Hamilton has the flexibility to identify a location and building type well suited to the needs of youth.

The agencies comprising the SIHYM provide excellent support programs for at-risk youth in Hamilton. For many years they have identified the need for new transitional housing opportunities for youth that supports and complements delivery of their programs. Through a partnership, a more effective use of the existing CityHousing Hamilton portfolio will be achieved. In the case of the Youth Transitional Housing initiative, CityHousing Hamilton is responsible for the “bricks and mortar” while Wesley
Urban Ministries and SIHYM provide the 24-hours, 7-days a week on-site support, supervision and guidance for youth. This allows each organization to focus on what they do best.

Better Utilization of Housing Resources:

The CityHousing Hamilton building at 191 Main Street West (south-east corner of Main Street West and Hess Street South) was originally intended to be constructed as a hotel in the early 1960s. After financial troubles and the building structure sitting dormant for many years, Ontario Housing Corporation (OHC) assumed ownership and completed construction. Recognizing the floor plate design was already in place for hotel suites, OHC determined that bachelor units for senior citizens would be the most appropriate solution. In total, there are 222 bachelor units in the building.

The 191 Main Street West building was very successful through the 1970s and 1980s for senior citizens; however, this can be generally attributed to the OHC policy of requiring senior households to first live in a bachelor unit before being permitted to move into a one-bedroom unit. In the early 1990s this policy was eliminated and senior citizen households were able to move into one-bedroom units without previously occupying a bachelor unit. As a result, the number of vacant units in the building increased. Beginning in the late 1990s, the bachelor units were offered to McMaster University and Mohawk College students who would pay a market rent and the dwelling units were at least being utilized.

In early 2006, Housing Division staff recognized there was an opportunity to address the need for youth transitional housing in Hamilton through modifications to part of the 191 Main Street West apartment building. After reviewing the building it was determined the best approach would be to renovate floors four and five to provide accommodation and program space for 19 at risk youth. An exterior elevator is also being constructed linking these floors to the ground level and the Career Development Centre to keep the youth transitional housing entrance separate from the other building residents.

The site is well suited as it will serve youth already living in the area. Programs for youth are often within walking distance or a short bus ride on the high volume bus line located beside the building. The area is close to programs, employment, and recreation opportunities youth frequent.

The youth program benefits from this site because the renovations are occurring in 11,000 square feet of existing apartment space. If the project were to be built on vacant land, the cost to construct the structure, walls, and systems that are already in place at 191 Main Street West would be prohibitive. Meanwhile, the City and CityHousing Hamilton benefit as space in the 35-year old building is upgraded to current standards, and better utilized to respond to the range of housing issues and needs in our community.
From the perspective of Wesley Urban Ministries and the SIHYM, the youth transitional housing initiative will have the significant benefit of providing housing in tandem with existing support programs. The provision of safe, secure, affordable housing removes one barrier for youth on their path to independence. Once youth are housed, the program will focus on building skills so that the youth will be successful in securing and maintaining permanent housing in the future.

Programs for Youth:

Youth typically have family supports to help them move gradually into independence. The SIHYM observe that street involved youth most often do not have these “natural” family supports. Thus, supportive, transitional housing is crucial to the successful independence for many homeless youth. This project will offer youth a place to live with many built-in supports. In addition, proximity to the Career Development Centre is also a strong element of promoting independence and skills training.

The transitional housing program has three stages. Youth will be assessed to determine which stage will best meet their housing needs and their readiness for independent living.

In the first stage of the project, youth will reside in semi-private accommodations. Staff will be on site 24-hours per day. Core staff will work with youth in individual and group settings to build life skills and provide the necessary supports to move youth to independence. In addition to core staff, there will be a number of community partners who engage youth in this space around health, sexual health, addictions issues, mental health issues, income support, etc. Core staff and the community partners will work together to ensure that youth are receiving support and skill building around cooking, shopping, laundry, healthy relationships, budgeting, education and employment. The first stage of the project will be housed on the fourth floor.

In the second stage of the project, youth will reside in bachelor apartments with less staff support. Staff will still be available, on the fourth floor, but will encourage the youth to be more independent in getting their needs met such as booking doctors appointments and cooking meals. The second stage of the project will be housed on the fifth floor to ensure that youth are still able to access support when needed.

In the third stage of the project, youth will be able to reside in bachelor apartments outside of the two floors designated for this project, but in the same building. At this stage the young person is essentially living on his or her own but outreach supports are still available as they build the confidence to be independent.

Best Practices:

The project reflects existing best practices by connecting housing to support programs. This removes the barriers for youth to access the support programs and also facilitates a broader variety of daily life skills programs.
The initiative reflects what may become new best practices in two areas:

- Cost efficiency
- Continuum of housing and supports

Through the SCPI program other municipalities in Canada have purchased land and constructed new buildings for youth transitional housing. While well-designed good quality projects have resulted it is an expensive model. The cost of the new construction model is a barrier to developing youth transitional housing in many communities. Hamilton has overcome this barrier by utilizing 11,000 square feet of existing space at 191 Main Street West. This results in a project that has a modest federal and municipal investment and is more realistic for medium and small-sized Canadian municipalities to duplicate.

One feature that makes this site unique compared to youth transitional housing in other Canadian cities is that the continuum of housing options exists within the neighbourhood, and within the building. It also creates the opportunity for an outreach program to graduates who no longer require transitional housing but are residing in permanent housing elsewhere in the building.

Cost and Funding:

The total project cost for the youth transitional housing project is $1,685,242. As part of the $1.0 million in SCPI funding, CityHousing Hamilton was allocated $985,000 with the remainder, $15,000 allocated for Wesley Urban Ministries.

The funding sources for the remaining $800,242 were as follows:

- The Employment, Income Support Division contributed capital funds for the new 3rd floor elevator vestibule and interior renovations on the third floor as part of the Career Development Centre - $120,000;
- The CityHousing Hamilton annual capital works budget provided approximately $96,000 as the original capital work planned for these two floors in 2007 and 2008 would not be required - $96,000;
- Approximately $140,000 of a previously approved $150,000 Capital Budget allocation for a CityHousing Hamilton development on the Hamilton Mountain was shifted to the youth transitional housing project - $140,000; and,
- The CityHousing Hamilton operating surplus of approximately $2.8 million was utilized for the remaining required funds - $344,242.

The use of the CityHousing Hamilton operating surplus was temporary until housing block funding of $500,000 was approved April 24, 2007, by Council as part of the 2007 Capital Budget. Funds utilized from the CityHousing Hamilton operating surplus for the youth transitional housing will now be compensated by the capital budget monies.
Utilizing the CityHousing Hamilton operating surplus allowed the renovation to start without delay January 2007 and fully capture the entire SCPI allocation by the March 31, 2007, deadline.

### Project Cost and Funding Summary

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### Expected Outcomes and Evaluation:

By engaging youth who are staying in shelters and on the street, the ultimate outcome is to house absolutely homeless male and female youth ranging in age from 16-20 years old. Once housed, the program will focus on working with youth to build skills so that they will be successful in permanent housing in the future.

The first, or most supportive, stage of the project will house nine youth at a given time. The second stage of the project (bachelors connected to supports) will house 10 youth at a given time. Youth will be encouraged to move through the different stages of housing as their capacity for independence is fostered and grows.

It will be important to evaluate this partnership in two dimensions. Firstly, from the perspective of CityHousing Hamilton in adapting underutilized building space for evolving housing needs in the community; and secondly, from the perspective of SIHYM to ascertain the medium and long-term success of program graduates to secure employment and maintain permanent housing in an independent manner.

The program will maintain statistics and the SIHYM will monitor these statistics to ensure that the program is being delivered effectively. Appropriate program delivery will be measured through the progress of youth through the different stages and the number of youth who eventually move into totally independent, affordable housing.
Next Steps – Moving Forward:

The bachelor unit renovation on two floors to independent youth transitional housing and program space will be complete by July 2007. Youth will begin moving into the transitional housing as early as July with the units gradually filling over the summer and early fall. Programs will start at the same time.

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