

To: Homes First Society Board of Directors
From: Patricia Mueller, HFS Chief Executive Officer
Subject: HFS Property Monitoring Update
Date: November 30, 2021

Recommendations:

That this report be received for information.

Background:

This report is an update of reports provided in previous years. Much of the information contained remains unchanged; however, this report does include updates where changes have been made.

This report does not include the temporary shelters or winter respites Homes First works closely with the City of Toronto when operating temporary shelters and winter respites and Homes First provides direction for the setting up of new sites. As the City has its own unionized maintenance staff, once a site is up and running, most of the maintenance is completed by the City's staff. However, there are some exceptions (such as graffiti) which Homes First is responsible for remedying. Our Property Department has worked together with the City to create a flowchart that clearly outlines areas of responsibility to ensure all maintenance and security needs are being met.

In response to Covid, all of our shelters and warming centres have been redesigned to allow for social distancing as set out by Toronto Public Health, as well as with the City's Shelter Support & Housing Administration (SSHA). Savards Women's Shelter was closed as there was insufficient space for social distancing. At present, program options for Savards are being discussed with SSHA.

Comments:

SUITABILITY:

BUILDINGS OWNED BY HFS:

Bellevue:

- The building currently houses a mixed adult population with a variety of addictions, mental health, and physical issues.
- The building style and neighbourhood location make Bellevue a very suitable setting for its existing mix of residents.

Huron:

- The building currently houses middle-to-older aged males with a variety of addictions, mental health, and behavioural issues.
- The current residents fit relatively well into this living arrangement and neighbourhood, as their issues and behaviours tend to be moderate.
- Because of its small size, Huron has the flexibility required to be adapted for use for a number of other underserved populations.

Meegwetch:

- The apartment building is extremely suitable to the needs of the hardest-to-house, single-adults living there; residents of the apartment building have a variety of issues including addictions, mental, and physical health.
- The townhouses have presented problems over the years; there were many underlying property issues, some of which have been addressed. The townhouses house low-income families.
- Homes First has a contract with CAMH (the Centre for Addiction and Mental Health) to house up to 15 clients at Meegwetch who were previously hospitalized in CAMH's Schizophrenic Unit.
- This combination of families and high-needs individuals is dysfunctional as these groups have competing needs that cannot be simultaneously satisfied. The dissonance between the approaches required to service two such disparate groups will always be extremely challenging. It has also been noted that HFS's expertise tends to be in the area of support of single adults, not families.

Pleasant Manor:

- The population at Pleasant Manor is comprised of middle-to-older aged men and women who are primarily former Street City residents and who have mental health, drug, and alcohol issues, or are in recovery.
- In the past, some of the neighbours have had issues with Pleasant Manor's residents. As we have identified this neighbourhood as being somewhat less tolerant, we keep this in mind when placing residents, which has resulted in improved neighbourhood relationships.
- The current residents fit relatively well into this living arrangement and neighbourhood, as their issues and behaviour tends to be moderate.

Savards:

- Savards is currently vacant, however, we have recently been contacted by the City of Toronto regarding the conversion of the n Savards Shelter into a shelter specifically for LGBTQ2S clients.
- The following information is that of the Shelter prior to this location's closure.
- Savards provides shelter accommodation 30 women with extreme mental health issues. These individuals often have other issues including addictions, physical health, and developmental issues. Many of Savards' residents are non-compliant with diagnoses/ medication.
- This is an appropriate clientele for Homes First and provides an excellent fit for our mandate. In addition, our staff are excellent at providing supports to this clientele.
- Although we adequately serve the residents of Savards with the equipment we have, the quality of life could be greatly improved with an increase of program and common area space.

Sheila Miller:

- Sheila Miller was repurposed from women fleeing domestic abuse to that of providing housing for individuals (both male and female) with mobility challenges.
- The units at this building are not fully accessible for people with high disability needs, but because of the size, layouts, and width of doorways of the units, these units are walker and scooter friendly.

- The repurposing has been done through attrition. Due to the low rate of attrition at the building, there are still many tenants from the original client placement strategy, however, it should be noted that both these populations work well with each other.

Shuter:

- The population mix at Shuter is mixed, older single adults. These individuals are not necessarily seniors, but because many have been chronically homeless and marginalized, they often have physical and mobility issues similar to older persons.
- As the units are either 4-bedroom or 5-bedroom, there is the issue of shared bathrooms. Our centralized intake has enabled us to match roommates more effectively and have minimized the problems experienced in past years; however, difficulties flare up from time to time.
- The fourth and fifth floor of the building are dedicated to our tripartite arrangement with CAMH and Pilot Place housing 18 middle-to-older aged individuals who had previously been long-term patients in the schizophrenic ward unit at CAMH. None of the individuals who have been relocated to Shuter have had to be re-hospitalized and we are working with our partners to support these individuals to further integrate them into the community.
- The sixth floor is dedicated to a tripartite arrangement with St. Elizabeth and Inner City Health and is called the “Journey Home Hospice” Renovations have been completed merging the sixth floor’s east and west side as one occupied space.

During the renovation of the sixth floor, space was made available on the second floor’s east side for hospice residents, which in early 2021, was renovated to expand the program to a total of 14 units.

- An arrangement with the Community Care Access Centre (CCAC), enables the selection of clients who are harder to serve because of their physical and medical needs. This often means that the clients moving into Shuter are older (and marginalized) people.
- We will continue to place residents at Shuter with mental health/physical issues who may or may not have addiction issues, and whose level of independence and comfort would be enhanced by the services provided.

Vaughan:

- This building is populated primarily by mixed adult singles, and some single-parent families. Many living at Vaughan transferred to this building from other HFS sites.
- The individuals living in this building have minor to moderate mental health and addiction issues.

Wales:

- This building traditionally housed individuals who had been victims of torture, which initially meant that the residents originated from Central and South American countries. This building experienced mandate drift when frontline staff began to interpret this to mean that the residents of this building should be Spanish speaking instead of victims of torture.
- Due to the establishment of our centralized intake system, we have established new connections with the Centre for Victims of Torture, and the current residents of Wales are genuine victims of torture mostly from Eastern African countries.
- The individuals living in this building have minor-to-moderate mental health issues relating to posttraumatic stress syndrome.

BUILDINGS MANAGED BY HFS:

Brandon and Northcote:

- These sites are two houses with, collectively, eleven individual private rooms with shared kitchens/bathrooms, that houses single males.
- Our placement strategy is to accept clients who will have other support workers working with them to ensure full coverage, as these two buildings are inadequately funded.

Jarvis House:

- This building houses 24 single, older-adult males with issues of alcoholism and mental health, and its residents are typically referred to HFS by Seaton House.
- The clientele at this building are considered to be amongst the hardest to house, and as such, meet our mandate.

BUILDINGS LEASED BY HFS:

Lawrence Shelter (4117):

- 4117 Lawrence is owned by the City of Toronto and while Homes First is responsible for daily maintenance and its operations; capital repairs are the responsibility of the City.

Kennedy Shelter:

- Prior to the pandemic, the Kennedy Shelter provided shelter accommodation to 90 women, however, because of the need for physical distancing, the Shelter's occupancy is currently at 47.
- The Kennedy Shelter is primarily serving the growing aging population with mobility and health related issues, as well as many women fleeing violence.
- The majority of referrals come from the Streets to Homes Assessment and Referral Center, as well as other emergency drop-ins and City shelters.
- As part of our placement strategy, we also have a referral partnership with aboriginal agencies such as Anishnawbe Health to provide shelter beds to homeless aboriginal women in the Scarborough area.

St. Clair Shelter:

- The St. Clair Shelter is currently under review by the City's Shelter, Support & Housing Administration division to establish optimum occupancy numbers.
- Prior to the pandemic, the Kennedy Shelter provided shelter accommodation to 90 women, however, because of the need for physical distancing, the Shelter's occupancy is currently at 47.
- The shelter houses a mixed-adult population, most of whom are actively seeking housing and employment. Many of these individuals would not be classified as being chronically homeless and have successfully maintained housing in the past and are experiencing cyclical homelessness.

Spadina Houses:

- At present, 164 Spadina houses 6 females, and 140 Spadina houses seven males with moderate mental health, drug, and alcohol issues.
- These houses are suitable for the more functional spectrum of the hardest-to-house. As noted in earlier Board reports, these houses would work well for specialized populations, such as a dry

house. Other specialized populations could be transgendered or transsexuals, isolated low-income seniors, or sex trade workers.

- Any physical changes we would like to make at these buildings need to first be negotiated with the City of Toronto Facilities and Real Estate Division, but we would not have to negotiate with a funder.
- As these houses are not funded by RGI, we are not limited by the RGI legislation.

Strachan House:

- As recently reported to the Board, this building has some major structural issues resulting in substantial deterioration of the building and activities are currently underway for the residents' relocation and we are currently working closely with the City of Toronto to locate a suitable location.
- Strachan House is owned by the City of Toronto and while Homes First is responsible for daily maintenance and its operations; capital repairs are the responsibility of the City.
- The following information is that of the Shelter prior to the relocation of residents.
- The population is a mix of single adult men and women ranging in age from 21 and up. Because we deal with individuals with a history of chronic homelessness, and because there are other more specialized programs for homeless youth, Strachan's population tend to be over 40.
- All residents of Strachan are dealing with a combination of mental health, addiction, and physical issues. Many people who have not been able to access or successfully maintain long-term housing elsewhere, have been able to successfully maintain their housing at Strachan.
- The special partnership with the City of Toronto, through Streets to Homes, continues. The goal is to engage their clients and get them off the street and into the shelter room where we can begin working with them and connecting them to the supports they need and, eventually, moving them into a permanent unit within Strachan House.
- The Strachan population is a perfect fit for the building and for our mandate.

SECURITY NEEDS

Overall, Homes First Society's security needs are being met effectively throughout our portfolio. However, following is a building-by-building review of areas that have been improved upon since the last report, in addition to areas that could be improved upon.

BUILDINGS OWNED BY HFS:

Bellevue:

- The security at Bellevue has been improved; alarms have been installed on emergency exits to prevent them from being propped open. Interior hallway lighting has been improved, as well as the exterior lighting.
- A new basement entrance/exit has been installed. This has made what was once deemed by the Ontario Fire Code to be an unsafe, unusable space, into a new space for programming that meets all fire code regulations

- The camera system was replaced in 2019 with a high-definition, digital video recorder and upgrading the exterior cameras to infrared for improve night vision. Additional camera location have been identified that will be installed to furthermore improve security.
- In the past year, there has been a significant rise in graffiti at this location. To date, the only effected elements have been the back wall of the building that faces the alley. We will continue to monitor these events, but this area may benefit from camera installation.
- In 2020, a high-definition, infrared night-vision camera was installed on the roof and provides a large panoramic view of the property line for additional security.
- Throughout the pandemic, we have experienced a high number of individuals attempting to stay in Bellevue's emergency stairways after staff have left for the day. The Property Department staff have been managing the disposal of the abandoned items, the safe disposal of needles and biowaste, as well as the repair of the damage created by a fire in the stairway caused by a trespasser.
- There are two encampments within blocks of this building, one is Soya's Parkette and the other in Bellevue Square Park.
- To ensure the safety of our residents, security patrols were put in place during August and September to prevent trespassers from entering the building.
- Furthermore, the Property Department worked with Toronto Fire Services and secured the services of an architect who has provided conceptual design drawings for designs that would prevent trespassers from entering the building. Toronto Fire Services has approved the conceptual drawings, which are now being reviewed by the Toronto Building Department for the needed permits.
- Homes First has submitted an application for a funding stream for this work and is awaiting approval.

Huron:

- In 2014, seven security cameras were installed throughout the interior of the building. This has made for a very safe environment and the impact was almost immediately noticed, resulting in greatly reduced property damages and tenant altercations. The exterior has one camera aimed at the front entrance, in 2018 an additional 11 high-definition cameras and new 32 channel digital video recorder with a one-terabyte recording capacity was installed. The digital cameras around the exterior of the building provide complete coverage of the environment, day and night.
- In 2019, the exterior cameras were upgraded to night-vision for improved security. Additional exterior lighting would assist in preventing neighborhood nuisance calls from surrounding university frat houses.
- In 2020, two additional high-definition, infrared night-vision cameras were installed in the backyard and a new fence was constructed to prevent non-residents from accessing the backyard.

Meegwetch:

- Previous years' changes to the courtyard and garden has improved sightlines, and hence, improved security for all residents.

- The number of cameras at Meegwetch is more than adequate; however, to ensure their effectiveness, tree pruning must be done annually.
- Two new 32-channel digital high-definition recorders have been installed, providing exceptionally longer recording times; some exterior cameras have been changed to infrared night vision to further improve security.
- The complete interior common area lighting retrofit to LED has provided energy savings as well as improved hallway illumination.
- In 2020, a new high-definition, infrared night-vision camera was installed on the roof and provides a large panoramic view of the property line for additional security.
- Like Bellevue, this site has seen an increase of non-residents attempting to gain access to the building when staff are not present. On several occasions, staff found trespassers attempting to camp in the stairwells.
- Review of security footage showed that individuals had gained access by following residents into the building and security patrols during August and September were put in place to prevent access to non-residents.

Pleasant Manor:

- The security at Pleasant Manor has been improved through improvements to exterior lighting, as well as improved interior lighting in hallways.
- The improved exterior lighting has made it suitable for the installation of security cameras.
- The property department is in the process of reviewing a lighting retrofit for high efficiency LED fixtures. This will provide improved hallway illumination and energy saving as well.
- In 2020, a new high-definition, infrared night-vision camera was installed on the roof and provides a large panoramic view of the property line for additional security.

Savards:

- As noted earlier in this update, this building is currently vacant.
- The improvement of the installation of a fire door, as well as lighting and a canopy in the smoking area, has increased resident safety and security.
- The complete interior common area lighting retrofit to LED has provided energy savings as well as improved hallway illumination.
- Rooftop safety railings have been installed to provide safe working environment for in-house maintenance workers, as well as for subcontractors. This installation was required to meet the Ontario Health & Safety Act.
- Emergency door alarms have been installed on the rear fire emergency exit; these alarms are to prevent residents from allowing non-residents in from the alley behind Savards. The alarms signals are connected to the main staff office to notify staff when this door is opened.
- The existing security camera system was upgraded and improved with a high-definition, digital video recorder and included the upgrading of the exterior cameras to infrared in 2020.

Sheila Miller:

- Pigeon-proof meshing of all patios has been provided to all units of the building, allowing the residents to enjoy their outdoor space.

- The area in the front of the building that provides access and egress for garbage and recycling has been fenced off. Previously, our residents were quite frightened of this area (especially during the evening) as illegal activities were taking place.
- The replacement of the hydraulic elevator took place in 2017. The new elevator has several safety features including security camera, improved interior cab lighting, audible floor destination announcements, safety rails, and bumper guards to prevent scooter damage, LED floor direction arrows, and number panels.
- The complete interior common area lighting retrofit to LED has provided energy savings as well as improved hallway illumination.
- Cameras in the laundry room and community room for increased safety.
- In 2020, the cameras were updated with new high-definition, infrared night-vision cameras and included installing cameras on rooftops to provide a large panoramic view of the property line for additional security.
- As reported in the past, one security concern has been with individuals sleeping in the lobby's vestibule. While encampments in the Rosedale Valley are not new, a younger, more aggressive population has moved into the area and is creating new challenges. Access to the building is gained by following residents into the building, and as the population of this building is primarily women who have experienced abuse and men with physical limitations, we have engaged security patrols.
- Working with the residents, the Property Department has developed a conceptual design for the main entrance and the relocation of the lobby Entryphone. The plans have been submitted to the Toronto Building Department for a permit and we are presently awaiting the approval of funding.

Shuter:

- In 2019, the security systems were upgraded with a high-definition, digital recorder, and infrared night vision cameras which has greatly improved security.
- A central door access system software has been installed to manage all HFS fob-activated properties (including Bellevue, Meegwetch, Pleasant Manor, Shuter, Sheila Miller, and Vaughan) from the property management office at Shuter. This technology provides instant security controls to manage all fob access points from one central location.
- In 2020, new high-definition, infrared night-vision cameras were installed on the roof and provide a large panoramic view of the property line for additional security.
- Also in 2020, a complete, interior common-area lighting retrofit to LED provided energy savings as well as improved hallway illumination.
- Shuter had had some criminal activities take place at the exterior of the building; in 2020, all exterior ground level cameras have been upgraded to high-definition infrared cameras.
- In 2021, we secured the services of contract security staff for evenings and weekends.

Vaughan:

- In 2019, the replacement of the existing security camera systems with high-definition, digital recorders, and infrared night vision cameras greatly improved the security.
- Exterior lighting improvements would benefit the overall security of the building.

Wales:

- The park located directly across the street from this property, Bellevue Square Park, was overtaken by a large encampment, and as a result, we experienced an increased amount of vandalism, including the theft of the Heritage plaque located in front of the building. (Heritage Toronto has been contacted and will replace the sign, however, due to materials shortages, the expected replacement timeframe is late 2022.)
- The security patrols we engaged for Bellevue, also patrolled this house which has helped the residents' sense of security.
- Also during the past year, there was a significant rise in graffiti, however it was restricted to the fence surrounding the heritage home.
- We will continue to monitor events and are exploring the possibility of the installation of cameras as it would increase the residents' sense of security, as well as potentially assisting the police.

BUILDINGS MANAGED BY HFS:**Brandon and Northcote:**

- Toronto Community Housing Corporation is responsible for building maintenance.

Jarvis:

- During the past few years, we have vastly increased security at the building by the addition of security cameras at the front and rear entrances.
- Additional cameras on the exterior of the building could improve security within this changing neighborhood.
- In 2020, new high-definition, infrared night-vision cameras were installed on the roof and provide a large panoramic view of the property line for additional security.
- Encampments encroached on this property on the vacant land behind the building; working with the City of Toronto's Municipal and Licencing Standards and Streets To Homes departments, we were able to successfully relocate this population and a fence has been erected to prevent future access.
- This property would benefit from additional security cameras in the back.

BUILDINGS LEASED BY HFS:**St. Clair Shelter:**

- The safety and security issues at the St. Clair Shelter are due to the landlord's neglect of building repairs and the property.
- In 2019, Homes First replaced the men's showers. Several more improvements are required to both the men and women's bathrooms.
- To improve staff safety, Homes First is considering the renovation of staff offices to accommodate secondary exits.

Kennedy Road:

- Since taking over operation of the shelter, we have upgraded the security systems, including the installing additional cameras, lighting, and door fob system for increased security.

- Currently, the property department is investigating options to add a second exit to the main staff frontline office to improve staff safety.
- In 2020, the main staff office was redesigned to create a second emergency exit.

Strachan:

- The complete interior common area lighting retrofit to LED continues to provide energy savings as well as improved hallway illumination.
- In 2019, the replacement of the existing security camera systems with a high-definition, digital recorder and infrared night vision cameras greatly improved the security.
- During 2020, an additional security measure was put in place by the installation of a fob-access entrance to the main staff office.
- In 2020, new high-definition, infrared night-vision cameras were installed on the roof and provide a large panoramic view of the property line for additional security.

GREENING

In previous years, the exterior lighting was converted from incandescent to LED at Bellevue, Meegwetch, Pleasant Manor, Scarborough, Shuter, and Strachan; and in 2020, the Kennedy Shelter, Sheila Miller, Huron, and Savards.

In recent years, the interior lighting was retrofitted from fluorescent to LEDs in all common areas of Sheila Miller, Meegwetch, Savards, and Strachan House; and in 2020, this was completed at Shuter, the Kennedy Shelter, Pleasant Manor, and Huron.

Higher-efficiency air make-up units are in place at Pleasant Manor and Savards, as well as one of the two units at Strachan.

The design of the roof and terrace of Shuter has the potential for the installation of a green roof. The HFS Property Department is exploring this possibility with architects who specialize in green roof programs and government incentives for funding.

CAPITAL REPAIRS AND IMPROVEMENTS

During the past year, a number of capital projects were undertaken, all of which have been, or are about to be, completed.

Bellevue:

- Foundation waterproofing
- Window replacement (ongoing)
- Access prevention at building access points (ongoing)

Brandon:

- TCHC covers capital replacement.

Huron:

- Heating system analysis (completed); system reconfiguration drawings completed in preparation for installation in 2022

Jarvis:

- TCHC covers capital replacement.

Kennedy:

- Redesign of the intake offices to ensure all covid prevention protocols are met (in progress)

Meegwetch:

- Flat roof replacement
- Laneway Paving (beginning November 6, 2021)

Northcote:

- TCHC covers capital replacement.

Sheila Miller:

- Roof replacement (completed)
- Garbage carousel replacement (completed)
- Boiler replacement (in progress)
- Front entrance re-design (tendering)
- Commercial kitchen (tendering)

Shuter:

- Garbage carousel replacement (complete)
- Green roof (planning in progress)
- Natural gas generator (planning in progress)

Strachan House:

- Investigation of structural integrity and the shoring of a temporarily brace structure (completed)

All Sites:

- Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) compliance upgrades (quotation stage)