




COMMUNICATION UPDATE

TO:	Mayor and Members of City Council
DATE:	November 18, 2024
SUBJECT:	Update #2: Temporary Emergency Shelter Expansion (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
SUBMITTED BY:	Michelle Baird Director, Housing Services Division, Healthy and Safe Communities
SIGNATURE:	

This update provides City Council with a progress update on the implementation of the temporary shelter expansion recommendations approved through Report HSC24027(b) / FCS24028 / PED24162 on September 25, 2024, as a follow up to the Mayoral Directive to Staff (MDI-2024-02).

INFORMATION

Since Communication Update #1 on October 31, City staff have advanced the operational plans for both the 192 temporary shelter beds and the Temporary Outdoor Shelter at Barton/Tiffany. This scale of rapid shelter expansion within such a condensed timeframe is unprecedented locally, and staff are working diligently to expedite efforts to bring these additional supports online as quickly as possible so that unhoused residents have access to safe indoor sheltering options as the winter approaches.

Housing Services staff are coordinating with community partners to bring the 192 beds online and it is expected that most of these beds will be operational by early December. For the Temporary Outdoor Shelter at Barton/Tiffany, City planning efforts across multiple departments had targeted a very ambitious December 1, 2024 opening date. However, necessary work in site plan development and environmental mitigation efforts as well as delivery of the cabins, has extended this timeline to later in the month. We remain committed to due diligence in implementing recommended health and safety standards on the approved lands and still aim to open as soon as operationally feasible to provide essential shelter and supports for unhoused residents while addressing neighborhood considerations. We are currently targeting a December 20 timeline.

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Progress on Temporary Emergency Shelter Expansion (192 Beds)

Staff have continued to make progress on the 192 temporary emergency shelter bed expansion, including finalizing agreements with multiple service providers and advancing the onboarding process for additional shelter sites. It is still anticipated that a majority of these 192 new temporary shelter beds will be operational by early December, and priority will be given to individuals currently living in encampments referred through the Housing-Focused Street Outreach Team. Referral pathways are being developed in coordination with service providers. Additionally, data tracking and reporting mechanisms will be in place to support effective program management, ongoing service improvements and to meet data reporting standards and requirements.

Barton Tiffany Site-Specific Progress

The first piece of work undertaken to prepare the site following Council approval and ratification of the recommendations in Report HSC24027(b) / FSC24028 / PED24162 on September 30, 2024 was to prioritize site mitigation measures, as outlined in sub-section (g) of the amended report:

That staff be directed to ensure appropriate mitigation measures are in place to ensure the protection of residents using the Temporary Outdoor Shelter site from any contamination present.

The City engaged an external review of environmental assessments for the Barton/Tiffany lands to identify health risk management measures for the temporary outdoor shelter. On October 30, 2024, the City received recommended mitigation measures on schedule, and is committed to implementing these before and during the shelter's operation, including:

- **Engineered Capping System:** An engineered cap will cover the entire shelter housing area to prevent exposure to contaminants. This capping may include either a soft cap (minimum 0.5 m of clean soil or granular material over a geotextile layer) or a hard cap (minimum 75 mm of asphalt or concrete with a granular base). This system will help reduce health risks by creating a barrier over any potential contaminants.
- **Waterproof and Vapour-Resistant Membrane:** Under the capping system, a waterproof, chemical-resistant membrane rated to block vapour intrusion will be installed. This 40-60 mil membrane will have sealed seams and protective layers, using certified materials and installers to ensure containment.
- **Fencing:** Fencing will surround the shelter site to secure it and restrict access to other areas of the property, reducing exposure to contaminants in adjacent areas not intended for public access.

- **Engineered Surface Water Drainage:** A drainage system will surround the capped area to manage stormwater runoff and prevent erosion, thereby containing impacted soil and preserving site integrity.
- **Administrative Controls:** Regular inspections will confirm system integrity and address any necessary adjustments due to seasonal or environmental changes. Secured monitoring wells, appropriate signage, and additional controls will be in place to alert for potential risks where necessary.
- **Health and Safety Protocols During Construction:** During site preparation and construction, specific health and safety measures will be enforced, including dust control, worker protective equipment, and restricted access to contaminated materials.
- **Soil and Water Management:** Procedures will be in place to handle any soil, groundwater, or ponded water that requires removal from the site, although this is not anticipated to occur. If it is necessary, Such materials will be tested and disposed of in compliance with provincial regulations to ensure full containment and safety.

The recommended measures align with environmental safety standards to mitigate health risks for workers, residents, pets, and visitors at the shelter site. On the same day the City received these recommendations, an external firm began Site Plan preparation to ensure the Temporary Outdoor Shelter meets all technical, health, and safety requirements. While staff aim to open the site as soon as possible, progress on the ground had to await the completed environmental review and recommendations, and we remain committed to thorough due diligence in executing these mitigation measures and finalizing the Site Plan.

Barton Tiffany Operations

Housing Services staff have worked to develop a service plan emphasizing a low-barrier, harm reduction approach, aligned with best practices in emergency shelter operations. This model includes 24/7 onsite supervision, security measures, and tailored support services to ensure a safe, supportive environment. An experienced non-profit organization specializing in emergency shelter operations has agreed in principle to operate the site under a one-year contract, with the potential for renewal. The plan addresses:

- **Low-Barrier Shelter Services:** the temporary outdoor shelter will provide 80 beds, prioritizing couples, individuals with pets, and those with complex needs, using trauma-informed, harm reduction, and Housing First principles.
- **Comprehensive Support:** residents will access mental and physical health services, addiction support, and housing-focused case management, with partnerships ensuring culturally relevant and inclusive care.
- **Secure and Functional Facilities:** private units with communal washrooms, showers, and common spaces will be available, along with meals provision and 24/7 staffing.

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- **Safety and Security:** on-site staff trained in harm reduction and de-escalation will provide continuous support, fostering a safe and inclusive environment in alignment with City emergency shelter standards. Additional security services will be present to monitor off limit areas on site, and prioritize the safety of all residents.
- **Monitoring and Outcomes:** data tracking and regular evaluations will measure success in occupancy, housing transitions, and resident satisfaction, guiding program improvements, both on-site and throughout the emergency shelter system.

Overall, the Barton/Tiffany site will offer tailored services to meet diverse resident needs, including case management, mental health and addiction support, and pathways to permanent housing. It will accommodate up to 80 residents in 40 private units (or double units for couples) and include essential facilities on site such as washrooms, showers, and laundry, available in common buildings. Community partnerships will expand available services, while collaboration with Animal Services will address pet management and neighborhood considerations. This approach aims to provide immediate shelter while fostering pathways to long-term housing stability.

Next Steps

As outlined, work continues to progress daily to move toward operationalizing the 192 temporary emergency shelter beds and the Temporary Outdoor Shelter to respond to the current unprecedented needs of unhoused residents in Hamilton. Supported by the City's Communications team, staff are working to establish a comprehensive communications plan to keep residents and partners informed. The Frequently Asked Questions (FAQ) section of the Temporary Shelter Expansion page has been updated at the release of this Communications Update, and questions highlighted are based on consistent feedback received from community to date via both email communication and the form submission section on the website. Updated FAQs and additional information can be found at: www.Hamilton.ca/TemporaryShelterExpansion

For more information, please contact Michelle Baird, Director, Housing Services Division, at Michelle.Baird@hamilton.ca or 905-546-2424 ext.4860.