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Date April 10, 2024 **Report No.** 2024-164

To Chair and Members
Social Services Committee

From Brian Hutchings
Chief Administrative Officer
Acting Commissioner Community Services and Social Development

1.0 Type of Report

Consent Item ☐
Item For Consideration ☒

2.0 Topic **Housing Stability Services Update [Financial Impact: None]**

3.0 Recommendation

- A. THAT Report 2024-164 Housing Stability Services Update BE RECEIVED; and
- B. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to extend the existing contract with Grand River Estates to an upset limit of \$314,140 annually, fully funded by Homelessness Prevention Program provincial grant funding to allow for the wind down plan as described in Section 9 of this report; and
- C. THAT the City Clerk BE DIRECTED to forward a copy of the final resolution and staff report to the County of Brant.

4.0 Executive Summary

The Brantford-Brant Homelessness System of Care (BHSC) is comprised of multiple service providers who support individuals at risk of, or currently

experiencing homelessness, by promoting connections to programs that meet individual needs.

Effective February 1, 2024, SOAR Community Services (formerly St. Leonard's Community Services) began providing 24/7/365 Emergency Shelter Intake Services to individuals and families seeking emergency housing options within the City of Brantford and the County of Brant. SOAR Community Services is also responsible for delivering Housing Resource Centre (HRC) services to vulnerable populations in the City of Brantford and the County of Brant.

Report 2023-336 [Housing Stability Services Update](#) provided an updated on the outcomes of the Request for Proposal (RFP) that was issued in August 2023 for the emergency shelter system. Contracts with emergency shelter providers are currently one-year agreements and staff are commencing the work to review the system and investigate appropriate next steps in planning for beyond 2024.

Report 2021-63 [Homelessness System Update and Housing Stability Strategy Report](#) directed staff to explore alternate funding options to either eliminate or reduce financial subsidy through homelessness funding streams to the two Housing with Related Supports programs operating at Kayorie Manor and Grand River Estates. Report 2023-336 [Housing Stability Services Update](#) provided the rationale to wind down financial funding to Grand River Estates and advised that staff would report back in Q1 2024 on a wind down plan.

As the residents at Grand River Estates are vulnerable individuals, wind down plans are being approached with sensitivity and will be an attrition-based approach. Current residents in beds that are financially subsidized by the City will not be required to vacate their residence and the City will continue to provide financial support for current residents in subsidized bed spaces. Grand River Estates will refrain from accepting new residents into City-subsidized beds and when a subsidized bed is vacated, financial subsidy by the City for that bed space will end.

Within the Housing Stability Division, Continuous Improvement (CI) efforts in Q1 2024 have included re-establishing the Coordinated Access Advisory Committee and the Complex Case Conference Table. CI efforts will focus on system level quality improvement including standardizing policies and processes; improving communication and effectiveness across the entire homelessness system with all service delivery partners; focusing collaborative efforts to support homeless clients who have more complex needs; and seeking opportunities for cross-sector collaboration and problem solving that will improve the client and provider experience.

5.0 Purpose and Overview

The purpose of this report is to provide members of Social Services Committee and Council an update regarding the Brantford-Brant Homelessness System of Care and Housing Stability services.

6.0 Background

The Brantford-Brant Homelessness System of Care (BHSC) is comprised of multiple service providers who support individuals at risk of, or currently experiencing homelessness, by promoting connections to programs that meet individual needs.

The majority of housing stability services including emergency shelter intake, emergency shelter provision, and the Housing Resource Centre are contracted to be delivered by third party service providers. The City of Brantford as the Service Manager for Housing and Homelessness in the City of Brantford and the County of Brant is responsible for system oversight.

As outlined in Report 2023-183 [Housing Stability Services Update](#), staff issued a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) for the emergency shelter system in August, 2023, with the intent to ensure that individuals and families experiencing homelessness have access to services that suit their needs and fill any current gaps within the BHSC. As discussed in Report 2023-336, [Housing Stability Services Update](#), no local service provider could meet the requirements of the Emergency Shelter Service RFP, resulting in staff moving forward with entering into one-year shelter agreements with all four shelter providers¹.

These contracts outline services provided within emergency shelters such as case management functions in order to support individuals and families experiencing homelessness and an overall increase in shelter beds.

In addition to the newly added beds, an RFP was also issued for an Emergency Shelter Intake Line and awarded to SOAR Community Services. As of February 1, 2024, the intake line provides 24/7/365 emergency intake services for individuals seeking emergency homeless sheltering services, with a strong focus on diversion assistance, and connecting to services within the system of care within the Coordinated Access system.

¹ Nova Vita, Inc., Rosewood House, Inc, SOAR Community Services, and The Salvation Army

An RFP was issued and awarded in Q4 2023 for Housing Resource Centre (HRC) services to SOAR Community Services. As of February 1, 2024, SOAR aims to operate an effective HRC, implementing practices that aid individuals and households facing precarious housing situations, promoting housing stability, homelessness prevention, and facilitating suitable permanent housing solutions for those experiencing homelessness.

In 2021, staff were directed to explore alternate funding options to either reduce or eliminate homelessness subsidies to the two current Housing with Related Supports providers: Kayorie Manor and Grand River Estates (formerly Penmarvian). Unlike emergency shelter providers, both Kayorie Manor and Grand River Estates provide beds at subsidized rates based on clients' income along with additional supports.

Thirty (30) beds are currently funded through Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) provincial grant funding at Grand River Estates. The annual funding totals \$314,140.

Grand River Estates is a retirement residence facility that offers independent, enhanced and subsidized living. The majority of transitions to Grand River Estates are by individuals who have been referred from the hospital, or require enhanced care not available at other supportive housing facilities. Admissions from the emergency shelter system are minimal. As such, staff are reporting back on a wind down plan as Grand River Estates does not fit within the provincial Homelessness Prevention Program funding guidelines.

7.0 Corporate Policy Context

This report supports:

City of Brantford Council's 2023-2026 Strategic Theme 6 (b): invest in a long-term strategy and plan to manage the homelessness crisis, inclusive of the related issues of mental health and addiction issues and safety and security concerns.

[County of Brant Strategic Plan 2019 – 2023](#), Strategic Priority 5, Healthy, Safe, and Engaged Citizens

[Brantford-Brant Housing Stability Plan \(2014-2024\)](#)

8.0 Input from Other Sources

Grand River Estates

9.0 Analysis

9.1 Emergency Shelter Intake Line

Effective February 1, 2024, SOAR Community Services (formerly St. Leonard's Community Services) began providing [Emergency Shelter Intake Services](#) to individuals and families seeking emergency housing options within the City of Brantford and the County of Brant. The purpose of the intake line is to provide consistent emergency shelter intake services for individuals and families seeking emergency sheltering options, with a strong focus on diversion assistance, connecting to natural supports, and appropriately directing people to applicable services within the Coordinated Access system.

Staff are available 24 hours a day, seven days a week, 365 days a year and provide:

- Shelter diversion at time of first contact;
- Support with accessing appropriate emergency housing options; and
- Transportation arrangements.

Quality improvement activities have already begun within this new contract, including updating the required diversion screening tool used across the system. SOAR has partnered with [the RAFT](#) in other projects and the City has received permission to use the RAFT's diversion questionnaire. This diversion questionnaire is an improved tool that focuses on natural supports and engaging clients in housing solutions that will avoid entering the shelter system.

This tool is now available in the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) to be used across the Coordinated Access system in Brantford-Brant.

9.2 Emergency Shelters

Report 2023-336 [Housing Stability Services Update Report](#) provided an updated on the outcomes of the Request for Proposal (RFP) that was issued in August 2023 for the emergency shelter system. Contracts with emergency shelter providers are currently one-year agreements and staff are commencing the work to review gaps within the system and investigate appropriate next steps in planning beyond 2024.

The intensification in system capacity achieved by the RFP represents an average 19% increase to the shelter system from previous years with a seasonal increase incorporated during winter months.

Table 1 – Emergency Shelter Beds

Population Served	December 1, 2023 – March 31, 2024	April 1 – October 31, 2024	Transitional Beds
Men	44	49	2
Women	26	20	2
Youth (ages 16-29)	12	10	1
Women-led families	6	5	0
Total Beds in System	88	84	5

While an increase in shelter capacity is helpful, it does not fully address the needs of the emergency sheltering system. Local motels continue to be used as an extension of the emergency sheltering system for those who cannot be placed in a bed space maintained by an emergency shelter provider.

Staff have noted an increase in households seeking emergency sheltering services who cannot be accommodated by service providers within the current emergency sheltering system. These are couples, families with dependent children (couples and single parents), as well as individuals who have experienced domestic violence. There is a substantial financial cost to support households in motels and staff are monitoring the use of motels closely.

9.3 Housing Resource Centre (HRC)

Effective February 1, 2024, SOAR Community Services (formerly St. Leonard's Community Services) began delivering [Housing Resource Centre](#) services to vulnerable populations in the City of Brantford and the County of Brant.

The Housing Resource Centre aids individuals and families experiencing housing instability, are precariously housed, at risk of homelessness, or experiencing homelessness. HRC staff assist in seeking permanent housing options within the City of Brantford and County of Brant.

The HRC has staff available Monday to Friday, 8:30am – 4:30pm to assist individuals and families with:

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- Referrals to internal and external resources including addictions and mental health services, employment services, legal clinics, identification and tax clinics, income support services, and food bank services;
 - Completing applications to financial housing benefits including rent-geared-to-income housing through the centralized waitlist, the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB), and the Housing Stability Fund;
 - Housing Searches;
 - Acting as a Landlord Liaison; and
 - Education on rights and responsibilities as a tenant.

9.4 Grand River Estates – Wind Down Plan

Thirty (30) beds are currently funded through Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) provincial grant funding at Grand River Estates. The annual funding totals \$314,140.

Report 2021-63 [Homelessness System Update and Housing Stability Strategy Report](#) directed staff to explore alternate funding options to either eliminate or reduce financial subsidy through homelessness funding streams to the two Housing with Related Supports programs operating at Kayorie Manor and Grand River Estates and to explore alternate funding sources.

[Report 2023-336 Housing Stability Services Update](#) provided the rationale to wind down financial funding to Grand River Estates and advised that staff would report back in Q1 2024 on a wind down plan.

As the residents at Grand River Estates are vulnerable individuals, wind down plans and changes to funding are being approached with sensitivity and due diligence.

The wind down plan for Grand River Estates will be an attrition-based approach for reducing the number of City-subsidized beds at the retirement facility.

Current residents in beds that are subsidized by the City will not be required to vacate their residence. Under the wind down plan, the City will continue to provide financial support for current residents in subsidized bed spaces.

Grand River Estates will refrain from accepting new residents into City-subsidized beds. When a subsidized bed becomes available due to a resident's departure, financial subsidy by the City for that bed space will end.

City staff review bed occupancy on a monthly basis and with attrition, the monthly financial funding to Grand River Estates will decrease as utilized beds are reduced.

This wind-down plan is client-centered, and offers a humane approach to reducing subsidized beds at Grand River Estates, while maintaining the financial support current residents depend on to continue to reside in the retirement facility. By implementing this wind-down plan with sensitivity and a focus on gradual reduction through attrition, Grand River Estates can also navigate the transition in a manner that prioritizes the well-being of its residents, staff, and community stakeholders. Through attrition, the subsidized beds will be reduced, and Grand River Estates can offer the now non-subsidized bed.

Grand River Estates has provided concurrence on the wind-down plan.

9.5 Continuous Improvement (CI)

Staff received approval by way of confidential report 2023-579 to implement changes to the Housing Stability Division to ensure that staffing resources and federal grant funding continue to be used in the most efficient manner. This resulted in the reduction of two Full Time Equivalent (FTE) temporary positions and the creation of one (1) Senior Project Manager – Homelessness FTE.

The Senior Project Manager – Homelessness role provides oversight and facilitation of the successful implementation and continual evaluation of systems, projects, and policy initiatives pertaining to homelessness programs and services. This includes Coordinated Access, the By Name List, Community Advisory Board activities, encampment response strategies, emergency sheltering solutions, emergency shelter intake services and Housing Resource Centre services.

This role enables the City of Brantford to have strong system oversight, data-driven decision making, and continuous quality improvement in collaboration with system partners and is pivotal in advancing the mission to address homelessness effectively and comprehensively.

Efforts in Q1 2024 have included re-establishing the Coordinated Access Advisory Committee, with an emphasis on system level quality improvement.

Current focus is on standardizing policies and processes to improve communication and effectiveness across the entire emergency shelter system with all service delivery partners.

The Complex Case Conference Table has also been re-established, with a focus on collaborative efforts to support homeless clients who have more complex needs. This table will provide opportunities for cross-sector collaboration and problem solving that will improve the client and provider experience.

Cross-sectoral system level improvements have begun in collaboration with the Brant Community Healthcare System, specifically regarding streamlining the Emergency Department experience for those experiencing homelessness. This has included mapping out processes and identifying opportunities for improvement in the patient journey, and resource usage. The systems have also enhanced communication, resulting in better responses to client and population-level concerns, such as complex cases and cold weather alerts.

The focus of all 2024 quality improvement efforts across the homelessness-serving system will be:

- Streamlining services;
- Improving communication;
- Standardizing policies and processes;
- Ensuring the most effective use of funds; and
- Aiming to decrease homelessness in Brantford-Brant.

10.0 Financial Implications

There are no direct financial implications with this report.

11.0 Climate and Environmental Implications

There are no direct climate and environmental implications as a result of this report.

12.0 Conclusion

The Brantford-Brant Homelessness System of Care (BHSC) is comprised of multiple service providers who support individuals at risk of, or currently experiencing homelessness, by promoting connections to programs that meet individual needs.

The City of Brantford as the Service Manager for Housing and Homelessness Services in the City of Brantford and the County of Brant is responsible for system oversight. This report provides an update on cross-sectoral collaboration, current housing stability services including emergency sheltering and the Housing Resource Centre, and information on the wind down plan for exiting Grand River Estates from financial subsidies from homelessness grant funding.



Brian Hutchings
Chief Administrative Officer

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Attachments (if applicable)
N/A

Copy to: N/A

In adopting this report, is a by-law or agreement required? If so, it should be referenced in the recommendation section.

By-law required ☐ yes ☒ no

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and/or City Clerk ☐ yes ☒ no

Is the necessary by-law or agreement being sent concurrently to Council? ☐ yes ☒ no