



## Program Details

July 2022



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## Summary:

HATS is a grassroots, incorporated non-for profit that aims to ease the homelessness crisis in Hamilton, where the current shelter system that is either at full capacity and/or unable to meet the individual needs of a number of homeless persons.

We're tackling homelessness in practical ways by setting up safe tiny cabins for those living unhoused in our community.

The program focuses on harm reduction, by providing people experiencing homelessness with consistent shelter and regular, site-delivered support services that respond to their individual, evolving needs.

HATS is currently funded solely by donations and grants. It is governed by a corporate board and steering committee that includes professionals with years of non-profit experience, serving the unhoused and marginalized members of the Hamilton community.

We have trained more than 50 volunteers, obtained contractors, secured donations and insurance, and coordinated support service delivery with existing agencies. This includes two trained social workers who will be seconded to the site by Wesley Urban Ministries.

The design and delivery of this alternative shelter model is inspired by other successful Canadian programs and is informed by our consultations with three dozen people experiencing homelessness. Tony D'Amato Stortz has been guiding our project using his knowledge and experience as a Site Superintendent at Kitchener's Better Tent City. The model applies best practice principles such as housing first, harm reduction, mobile support and "meeting people where they are at." In doing that, it enhances resident autonomy and dignity, meets their most immediate basic needs and helps transition them from survival mode to security and stability, enhancing their security and their opportunities to transition to suitable and permanent housing.



## Overview

The Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters is a community-led initiative of Hamilton residents and organizations that seeks to deliver a new successful approach to providing stability and a temporary home for residents experiencing homelessness.

The initiative is one of the diverse approaches to alleviating homelessness in Hamilton and providing shelter to members of the homeless community. The project therefore aligns with the with City of Hamilton's objective to eradicate homelessness, and to move unhoused persons, including encampment residents, into a form of shelter off the street where they are exposed to elements and high rates of violence. HATS fills a gap in the traditional shelter model which unintentionally excludes homeless persons who are unable to function or access it. City of Hamilton's Housing staff confirmed with council that the current shelter model does not work for all homelessness and cannot meet all needs.

This is a grassroots initiative formed by activists, volunteers, community leaders and organizations that serve the unhoused or precariously housed population, working independently of the municipality. Organizing this solution as a grassroots community effort has distinct advantages and challenges.

The advantages:

- Flexibility
- speed of action
- building partnerships
- innovative model
- entrepreneurial lens and
- responding to resident needs.

Fortunately, this initiative has overcome many of the challenges often associated with grassroots initiatives which include:

- Establishing credibility



- Fundraising
- Government/incorporation/charitable status

## Credibility

HATS has established credibility by virtue of steering committee members such as Don Seymour and Paula Whitlow, who have a combined 40+-plus years of experience responding to the needs of marginalized persons including the homeless population. Many of the policies enacted by the Wesley Day Centre will be integrated into HATS policies, resulting in an integration of best practices and adhering to accredited standards. Further, Wesley will be seconding 2 employees to the site with the appropriate training and skillsets to work with residents who seek and require support. Steering committee members have experience running organizations, including representation from the Social Planning Research Council, Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction and the Native Women's Centre. The Hamilton Community Legal Clinic adds legal advice to ensure that practices and policies adhere to the Ontario Human Rights Code, amongst other laws.

Critical to this initiative is streamlined support and delivery of services from agencies already responding to the diverse needs of the homeless population, and many have committed to extending their services in a coordinated low barrier delivery of service to the site. (See the chart in Part 8.)

## Fundraising

Ted Van Egdom, who was part of a team that successfully raised money to build the Youth Unlimited centre in Waterdown, has just joined us to head up our Fundraising Committee. HATS has already made significant strides in securing donations, which is also indicative of community support of this initiative and trust in the organization, management of funds and goals.

To date we have raised the following:



- The United Way of Hamilton Halton approved a \$24,000 Local Love in a Global Crisis Round 3 grant to the Social Planning and Research Council for HATS
- \$50,000 donated to date
- Commitments have been made to cover the costs of all 10 of the first cabins
- \$5,000 cabin sponsorship from the After 5 Rotary Club of Hamilton.

## Government/Incorporation/Charitable status

HATS has incorporated, secured charitable status through partnership with the Social Planning and Research Council, and has acquired Directors' and Officers' Liability Insurance. The governance structure has been established and will continue to evolve, including expanding and diversifying representation to those who opt to live in the community.

## Land

The only hurdle that remains is land. We have worked closely with the City of Hamilton through Jason Thorne and Angie Burden to review vacant and affable property for the tiny cabins, but have not secured anything yet despite these efforts. The properties explored were insufficient to meet the needs of the project or unsupported by the councillor of the ward.

Municipalities across North America have provided land and funding to projects that take this form. Bill Johnston's research report speaks to this. The ideal situation for this program is a hybrid of an independent board with municipal support, which is exactly what we are seeking.

Communities across North America are experimenting with the concept of stabilizing unhoused people in small, 'sleeping cabins' with streamlined support services to support the progress of vulnerable individuals along the housing continuum. HATS hopes to build on the evidence-based successes of similar projects through a housing-first, human rights approach. Ours is a made-in-



Hamilton model; collaborating with service providers and community members, the aim is to provide those currently unhoused with:

- regular connection to services and healthcare
- stability and structure to help those experiencing homelessness to move along the housing trajectory more successfully
- to move them from dangerous conditions on the streets into a safer, and stable setting that provides protection from the environment, and regular connection to services and healthcare on a path to stable housing.

Foundational principles guiding the vision for HATS includes but are not limited to the following:

- low barrier access to occupying a cabin
- design and operations informed and envisioned by persons with lived experience and those occupying the space
- ongoing consultation with persons and organizations currently serving the unhoused and precariously housed population
- collaborations with transitional housing programs and housing providers
- independent living with individualized person-centered supports
- coordination with the current services providing outreach to this demographic, making access to services low barriers, streamlined and consistent
- meeting people where they are at and connecting relevant services to the person's stage in their journey to more permanent housing
- respecting the human rights and dignity of residents of the community

In addition:

- this initiative does not constitute "housing"
- this initiative is not permanent
- the initiative is exempt from the *Residential Tenancies Act*
- informed and guided by "housing first" principles



- informed and guided by the Ontario *Human Rights Code*

As an interim measure, we plan to build warm, insulated cabins for unhoused residents, with on-site staff and support services to provide a safer alternative to sleeping in doorways or in encampments. Inspired by other cities, such as Kitchener, London, Ontario, Duncan, Victoria, B.C. and Kingston, our group came together to search for a creative solution.

## Organizational Details & Structure

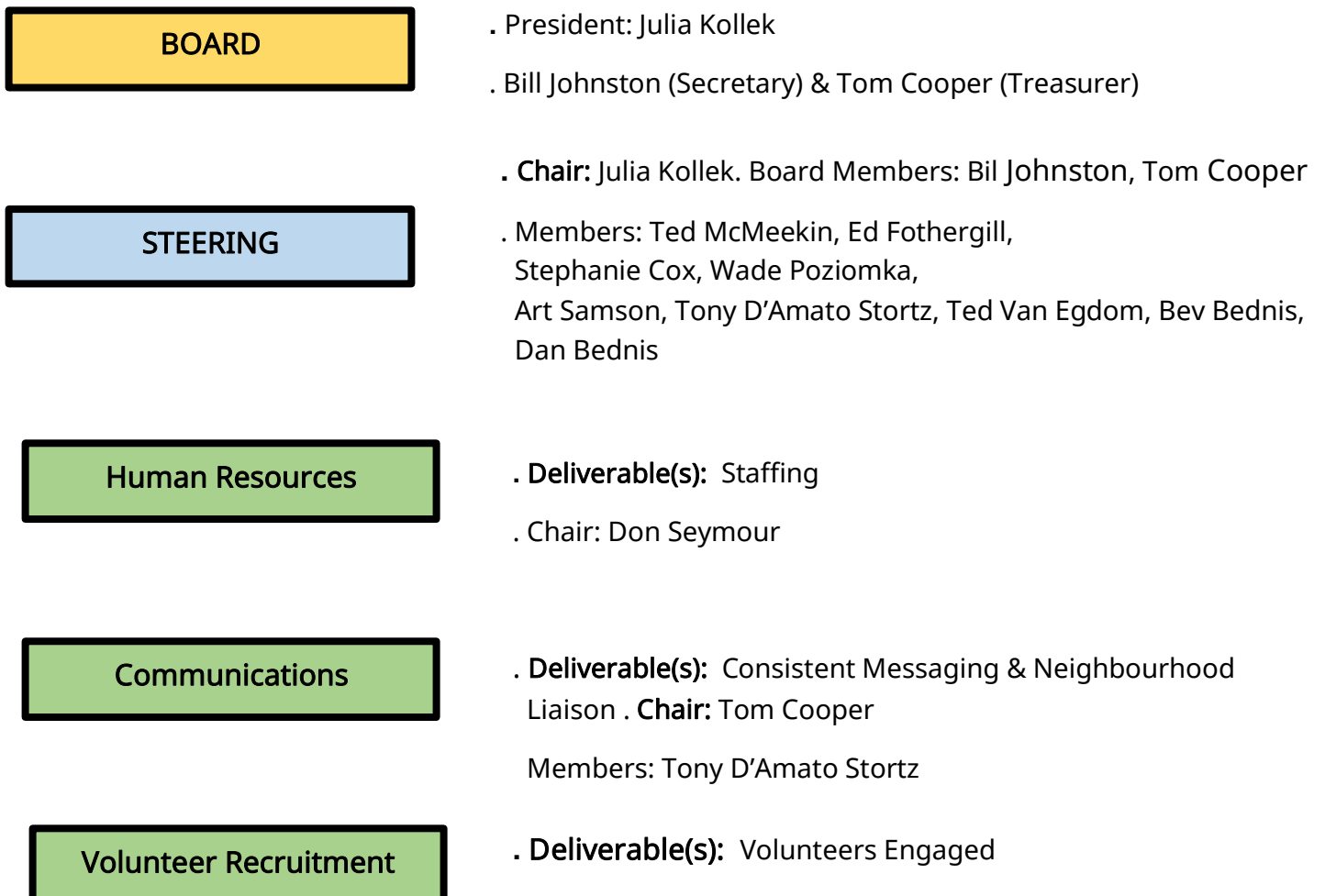
Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters (HATS) is a Non-Profit Corporation:

Corporation No. 1379127-1

Website: [www.hats.hamiltonpoverty.ca](http://www.hats.hamiltonpoverty.ca)

Email: [info@hats.hamiltonpoverty.ca](mailto:info@hats.hamiltonpoverty.ca)

Our Governance Structure is as follows:





## BOARD

- . President: Julia Kollek
- . Bill Johnston (Secretary) & Tom Cooper (Treasurer)

## STEERING

- . **Chair:** Julia Kollek. Board Members: Bil Johnston, Tom Cooper
- . Members: Ted McMeekin, Ed Fothergill, Stephanie Cox, Wade Poziomka, Art Samson, Tony D'Amato Stortz, Ted Van Egdom, Bev Bednis, Dan Bednis

## Human Resources

- . **Deliverable(s):** Staffing
- . Chair: Don Seymour

## Communications

- . **Deliverable(s):** Consistent Messaging & Neighbourhood Liaison . **Chair:** Tom Cooper
- Members: Tony D'Amato Stortz

## Volunteer Recruitment

- . **Deliverable(s):** Volunteers Engaged
- . **Chair:** Bev Bednis

## Cabins & Site Establishment

- . **Deliverable(s):** Cabins & Sites Secured
- . **Chair:** Ed Fothergill
- . Members: Dan Bednis, Julia Kollek, Tony D'Amato Stortz

## Support Services & Resident Relations

- . **Deliverable(s):** Adequate Support Services & Residents' processes/commitments/Partnership relationships with support organizations
- . **Chair:** Stephanie Cox .

## Fundraising

- . **Deliverable(s):** Funds & Donor Engagement
- . **Chair:** Ted Van Egdom
- . Members: Dan Bednis, Julia Kollek, Ted McMeekin

## Governance Oversight

- . **Deliverable(s):** Optimized Operations
- . **Chair:** Dan Bednis, Bill Johnston



## Organizations Represented on the Steering Committee

- Social Planning and Research Council, represented by Kim Martin
- The Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty represented by Tom Cooper
- Tony D'Amato Stortz, past Kitchener-Waterloo "Better Tent City" Site Superintendent
- Bill Johnston, representing the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton
- Hamilton Community Legal Clinic
- Wesley Urban Ministries, represented by Don Seymour

**HATS Resident Association** This will be set up with persons living in the community informing the Steering Committee and Corporate Board of Directors

## Insurance Policy:

HATS has secured Directors' and Officers' Liability Insurance and arranged for Commercial and General Liability insurance to be initiated once we have secured a site.

## Budget and Financial Accountability:

A: Our funds are being held and dispersed through our charitable partner, The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton. "Canada Helps" issues our charitable receipts.

B: Donations:

- In late February, the United Way of Hamilton Halton approved a \$24,000 Local Love in a Global Crisis Round 3 grant to the Social Planning and Research Council for HATS
- We have an additional \$25,000 donated to date
- We have received commitments to cover the cost of all 10 of the first cabins
- \$5,000 commitment to a cabin form the Rotary Club

## Site Operations:

**A: Permanent Staff**



Staff persons with at least one on-site at all times, trained and employed by HATS

**Roles:**

- i. Assist and intervene with conflict resolution
- ii. Manage internal community relations
- iii. Coordination of soft referrals to agencies/outreach supports
- iv. Hold community accountable to commitment statements
- v. Report to the Steering Committee and Board
- vi. Respond to practical issues: disrepair etc.

**B: Partnering staff seconded to site**

Wesley Urban Ministries has committed to the development of the program entitled "Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters (HATS) Intervention and Support Team." Wesley Urban Ministries will be hiring two Assertive Outreach Intensive Case Managers who will fulfill the following roles at the HATS site:

**Roles:**

- Working in a team-based environment composed of HATS staff, community service providers and volunteers, this position provides intensive case management services to assist in the active engagement of people who are profoundly marginalized, homeless, living in encampments and other unsafe situations, live in emergency shelters or are vulnerably housed in the wider community.
- Using a trauma-informed approach, provide assertive outreach services that focus on client needs, individual choice, promotes client involvement and is flexible in response to a client's situation and needs
- Provide assertive outreach through culturally appropriate interventions that are client centered and promote community inclusion
- Use evidence-based tools to assess the vulnerability of outreach clients in order to respond to those individuals that are most vulnerable and require a rapid response, the prioritisation approach is to assist the person to exit homelessness, reduce the likelihood of severe trauma, illness.
- Attends daily HATS briefings and team meetings.
- Provide assertive outreach services by directly approaching people in their environment, who are homeless or at risk of homelessness who potentially

are in poor mental and physical health, experiencing substance use issues, and/or experiencing profound deprivation

- Provide clients with the skills, information and options they need to be empowered and make informed choices about their behaviour.
- Connect clients to drug and alcohol, housing, health, mental health and other mainstream services, through supported referrals or other appropriate means.
- Develop networks and work collaboratively with support services, government agencies and other appropriate service providers in order to provide clients with seamless and 'joined up' services.
- Collaborate with internal and community partners to ensure client access to community based supports.
- Proactively engage individual clients to assess their readiness, motivation and confidence to move through change using a strengths based, non-judgmental, client centered approach.
- Support and empowers participants in enhancing their health, wellness and community inclusion
- Lead and/or participate in the development of client-centered goal based case plans when necessary
- Assist with program assessments, goal planning, and appropriate referrals of clients to facilitate client movement into stable housing or other supportive living environments.
- Actively develops and encourages client-led activities.
- Accompany clients in the community as needed.
- Document, as required, within individual client files and program communication logs and data bases.
- Respond according to program protocols to emergency or crisis situation.
- Attend and participate in all relevant HATS meetings, staff meetings and training.
- Attend and participate in community meetings.
- Develop and provide follow-up support within the community to clients who have transitioned into housing and other living situations.
- Provide coverage, for other team members on shift, as required.
- Provide administrative support as required.

## Volunteers

More than 50 volunteers have been trained and are ready to go to work with staff to launch and operate the sites. Others have volunteered to help create community gardens, arts programs and other opportunities to enhance the experiences of residents. Tony D’Amato Stortz and Volunteer Coordinator Bev Bednis oversee the volunteer program.

## Coordinated and Streamlined Support Services to the HATS residents

**Table of services that support the unhoused population and that will extend services to members of the HATS community on a case by case or routine basis**

Service	Agency	Mobile to site or off site
<p><b>Case Managers – System Navigation and Support x 2</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• System navigation: OW/ODSP/Housing referrals/coordinating and attending appointments/soft referrals to services required by HATS member</li> <li>• Lend support to respond issues as they arise</li> <li>• Overdose response trained</li> </ul>	<p>The Hub</p> <p>“Our team works closely with <b>physicians, social work, nurses, housing and shelter workers, police, public health officials, and community organizations</b> to develop <b>comprehensive</b> housing and/or addictions plans for our clients”</p>	<p>On site on a routine basis and responding to issues and concerns on an additional ad hoc basis 24 hours a day, with reasonable response time. On site/mobile.</p>
<p><b>Assertive Outreach Intensive Case Manager x 2</b></p> <p>Description of role in Part B above</p>	<p>Wesley</p> <p><b>Program:</b> Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters (HATS) Intervention and Support Team</p>	<p>Wesley has committed to hiring two case managers specifically for providing case management support to the HATS community. They will be on site/mobile.</p>
<p><b>Medical outreach – basic medical care – overdose response</b></p>	<p>The Hub</p>	<p>Hybrid model, on and off site.</p>
<p><b>Medical outreach – Overdose response</b></p>	<p>The Shelter Health Network (SHN) &amp; the Hub partnership</p>	<p>SHN operates out of the HUB and HATS residents can attend the HUB to access the</p>

Service	Agency	Mobile to site or off site
		treating physicians, just as unhoused persons currently do. Mobile support to the site can be provided on a case-by-case basis.
<b>Harm Reduction Supplies on site</b>	The Hub and Aids Network will deliver and maintain stock	Supplies delivered on site
<b>Food Bank Delivery</b>	Neighbour to Neighbour Program	Delivery to site
<b>Overdose response</b>	EMS /the Hub	EMS to site on case by case basis
<b>Mental Health Outreach</b>	CMHA	Routine weekly site visits
<b>Conflict Resolution Community Mediation</b>	The Hub – Liz (licensed community mediator)	On site on an as needed basis
<b>Violence/Conflict</b>	Social Navigation with Police	Streamlined process to site on an as needed basis
<b>Indigenous Supports</b>	HRIC (Audrey Davis)  Hamilton Community Legal Clinic - Indigenous Outreach Worker, Lyndon George	Extension of services on site and consultation
<b>2 On-site staff: Daily operations and logistics</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Occupant relations</li> <li>• Referrals and coordination with support services</li> <li>• Emergency response</li> <li>• Conflict response</li> <li>• Enforcement of rules</li> <li>• Working in tandem with case managers from Wesley</li> </ul>	HATS employees	On site staff employed by HATS

## Harm Reduction:

- Harm reduction is the idea that the harms associated with a behaviour can be mitigated, even if the core behaviours persist. These behaviours are often associated with addiction and drug use, but can be extended to other impacts of street life. Harm reduction agencies often focus on bringing safe drug use supplies, removing used paraphernalia and offering support for the side effects of chronic drug use.
- Harm reduction ideology says that, while the addiction is the core of the behaviour, there are many harms associated with the addiction that do not involve the substance itself. Contracting blood-borne illness from sharing drug paraphernalia, engaging in crime or sex work to supply the substance, and incarceration are all harms related to addiction but are not a direct effect of the drug use itself.

Tiny cabins as a whole can be seen as a harm reduction measure. A stable shelter like a cabin reduces the harm because it mitigates exposure, robbery, and being moved along by the police if the homeless person is evicted from a public space.

## Policies:

It is critical that the policies and design of the project is not grounded in a middle-class lens. This set of preconceived notions, values and expectations brought into an organization where the person has no experience of homeless or street culture must be set aside in favour of the voices of persons with lived experience. It is crucially important to be aware of this lens and thoughtful about how it could distort thinking; otherwise, bias can lead to bad decisions and a project that does not work for the most important group - the residents.

Consulting people on the street is critical to embed the insight and experiences of the residents to guide this project and its evolution.

This is why HATS has completed a survey with unhoused persons and collaborated with experts from organization serving the needs of the population.

### (a) Resident Application Process:



1. Applications and streamlined referrals through front line trusted intermediaries and services that support this demographic, such as the following non-exhaustive list: Wesley, Shelters, The Hub, Hamsmart, K6, Shelter Health Network, Hamilton Regional Indian Centre, AIDS Network, CMHA; and, Access to Housing, City of Hamilton Housing Services, By Names List; and,
2. Direct contact to HATS

**(b) Eligibility:** Prospective residents will have to meet the following eligibility:

1. Unhoused, and
2. A proven inability to substantially and routinely access the traditional shelter system, and
3. One on one meeting with partnering support services to discuss and assess suitability.

**(c) Responsibilities of residents of the HATS community**

- a. Compliance with contractual agreement between residents and HATS (Commitment Statements)

Note\* The agreement to occupy a cabin meets the exemptions outlined in the *Residential Tenancies Act (Act)*, meaning that this Act does not apply.

- b. Direct Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program shelter allowance to HATS.

**(d) Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution responses will be commensurate with the level of conflict itself and will only escalate to police involvement if the offending conduct raises to a level of severity that requires intervention by Social Navigation with the Hamilton Police Services.

The primary focus is to prioritize a restorative justice model of conflict resolution.





The Hub has offered their licensed community mediator to respond to conflict and any escalating behaviours, with police involvement only as a means of last resort and in serious circumstances where imminent risk is involved. Conflict resolution will be a coordinated effort that will utilize the skills and talents of the community members, the supporting and partnering agencies, Wesley staff onsite, staff on site and where required through our streamlined and coordinated process with SNP. The procedural responses align with those adopted by both the Hub and Wesley Urban Ministries.

HATS will employ practices that recognize the disproportionate risk of criminalization of marginalized unhoused community members and racialized and indigenous persons and mitigate against such risk.

Community concerns or third parties can contact the staff of HATS working on site. The number to reach will be widely distributed and made publically available.

*Additional concerns can be directed to the President of HATS, Julia Kollek.*

#### **(e) Contractual agreement between land owner and HATS**

HATS will be the lease holder with the property owner and wishes to enter in a lease for a period of 1-3 years.

#### **(f) Tents on HATS leased land policy**

Tents will not be permitted on the property leased by HATS. Only occupants and their guests will be permitted on the property. Only two persons can occupy a cabin.

HATS will have the property owner execute a standing Notice of Trespass to be used against any persons that should not be on the property.

#### **(g) COVID Policy**

Policies enacted by Wesley Urban Ministries Day Centre and consistent with public health directives will be adopted.



## Consultation with Homeless Persons

In addition to consultation with other cabin communities and local agencies that work with the homeless population, HATS held one-on-one conversations and a questionnaire with homeless persons in Hamilton to establish their needs and gather the views of those persons currently experiencing homelessness. This research will ground the program's design and policies with the lived experience of prospective users.

### **Persons with lived experience informing the design and policies of HATS:**

Please refer to the attached Appendix A for the results of the conversations and questionnaires used in the consultation process.

## The Site: Selection Criteria

### **Must Have:**

1. Be outside of the City core
2. 0.75-2 acres
3. Served by public transit
4. Hydro services
5. Water services
6. Preferred Commercial Zoning
7. Minimal impact to residential neighbourhood(s)
8. No major environmental issues
9. Available minimum 1 year

### **Nice-to-Have:**

1. Site with minimal investment in time & money required to readily accommodate cabins
2. Available more than 1 year
3. Property is already fenced in whole, or in part
4. Not in a residential area
5. Clear of structures (i.e., vacant land)
6. Light industrial area
7. North end of Hamilton
8. Close proximity to wrap-around services
9. Sewage facilities available

## Can Be:

1. Privately-owned vacant land
2. Municipally-owned vacant land
3. Parking lot
4. Property of a Faith group
5. School Board land

## Cabins

A 10-cabin community on leased land to the HATS legal entity. The structures are built to a high standard, from top-quality and fireproofed materials.



## Cabin Specs:

- Dimensions 8 x 10
- 2 windows
- Number of cabins = 10
- Occupant has exclusive access with keys; staff do not have keys
- Layout is compliant with fire safety
- Fire code compliant

## Included in the Cabin:

Each cabin will be equipped with:

- A bed, mattress, bedding and pillow
- Small fridge
- Microwave



- Fire extinguisher
- Shelving
- Electrical outlets

### **Services on the property:**

- Cabin for meetings/appointments with supports
- Toilets
- Electricity
- Waste collection with contract for weekly garbage removal. A culture of waste collection includes providing residents with tools to stay clean, including garbage bags, bins, shovels, brooms and other materials. Residents will be responsible for maintaining cleanliness and they will be supported in these efforts by staff, support persons and volunteers.
- Maintenance of Cabins: the hope is to use skillsets of the residents and provide additional support in maintaining the structural soundness of the cabins and general maintenance with the help of volunteers.

### **Mobility of Cabins**

- The cabins themselves can be lifted with a forklift allowing them to be transported to another lease location at the expiry of lease terms using forklifts and flatbed trucks.

### **Connecting to Electrical:**

The drawing power to the site will be coordinated; the ideal site has power to draw from.

The power requirements for each home, location of the disconnects, and electrical inspections are all details to be taken into account for the final installation plan.

Inspection of the electrical system will be through the Electrical Safety Authority.

### **Fire:**

The cabin materials are sprayed with fire retardant prior to construction.

Their placements will reflect the fire inspector's direction and each cabin will be equipped with a fire extinguisher.

### **Plumbing and Sewage:**

Depending on site facilities, the possibility of using a mobile trailer for washroom facilities will be explored. Regularly serviced porta-potties are a good interim solution where washrooms are unavailable. This will be coordinated depending on the site needs.

## Neighbour Relations

Inherently HATS values an inclusive community. We want to be good neighbours, be welcomed, and to build good relations that aim to combat nimbyism and stigmatization of individuals who are homeless, with the hopes of building compassion and understanding. Establishing an ongoing community liaison group is one potential option to explore.

HATS has developed a community outreach plan, and has already hosted a town hall and an in-person event open house that was attended by 130 people. We wish to continue to collaborate with city councillors to respond to their concerns, to local issues and to have the same reciprocated to the HATS community.

Inviting the neighbourhood to the site for a bbq, bringing them for tours in small groups, making a video to address the neighbours directly, or recruiting them to volunteer are all great ways to build bridges between the original community and the new additions.

### **Alternative Complaint Line:**

Even with proactive measures in place, there will be potential concerns about this community among surrounding neighbours. An email and phone number to raise concerns will be made publically available.

## Transitional Supports for Occupants Seeking Permanent Housing

- Outreach support through Wesley and The Hub will provide hands-on support to facilitate applications to respective housing programs that suit the needs of the residents; and
- Coordinated support with Indwell



## Transitional Supports for Occupants Required to Leave the Community Due to Failure to Comply with Commitment Statements and HATS Policies

- Where a resident is required to leave the HATS community, the HATS team will coordinate transition planning that meets the needs of the departing resident.