

2014 ONPHA Conference and Trade Show



## 803: Reimagining the Wait List

Rob Cressman  
Director of Social Housing  
City of Toronto



## My Choice Rental

Piloting a choice-based system for social housing in Toronto



Connections

Toronto Community Housing



## Historical Context

- April 2013 – “Review of the Centralized Waiting List for Social Housing: Framework and Proposed Directions” report approved by Toronto City Council
- Summer of 2013, City of Toronto Shelter Support and Housing Administration (SSHA) Division did a broad consultation and heard more than 2000 voices

This consultation informed the 2014-2019 ***Housing Stability Service Planning Framework***

- One of the key actions in the framework: “create a proactive, coordinated access system for social and affordable housing...by implementing changes to City policies, modernizing system administration and empowering applicants with better information and more choices”.



Connections

Toronto Community Housing



2

## Service Integration

### *2014-2019 Housing Stability Service Planning Framework*

The City of Toronto SSHA is moving forward in implementing an integrated model for delivery of housing access services which includes:

1. *a common intake and assessment process to streamline eligibility determination for a range of services; and,*
2. *a multi-service housing registry to ensure that households are provided access to a range of options to meet their housing needs, in a fair and comprehensive way.*

This work will be coordinated with other human services integration initiatives by SSHA, Toronto Employment and Social Services (TESS) and Children's Services.



Connections

Toronto Community Housing



3

## Why a Choice Based Letting Pilot?

- Choice based letting is in line with these strategic directions
- Choice based letting is proven and well established in other jurisdictions:
  - Developed in the Netherlands in the 1980's
  - Adopted nationally in Britain in 2003
  - Made possible in Ontario with the Housing Services Act in 2012
- In February, 2014 the My Choice Rental pilot was launched as a partnership between the City of Toronto, Toronto Community Housing, and Housing Connections



Connections

Toronto Community Housing



4

## My Choice Rental

1. How does the current waiting list system operate?
2. Challenges with the current waiting list system
3. What is "My Choice Rental"?
4. Description of the pilot project
5. Pilot results and planned evaluation



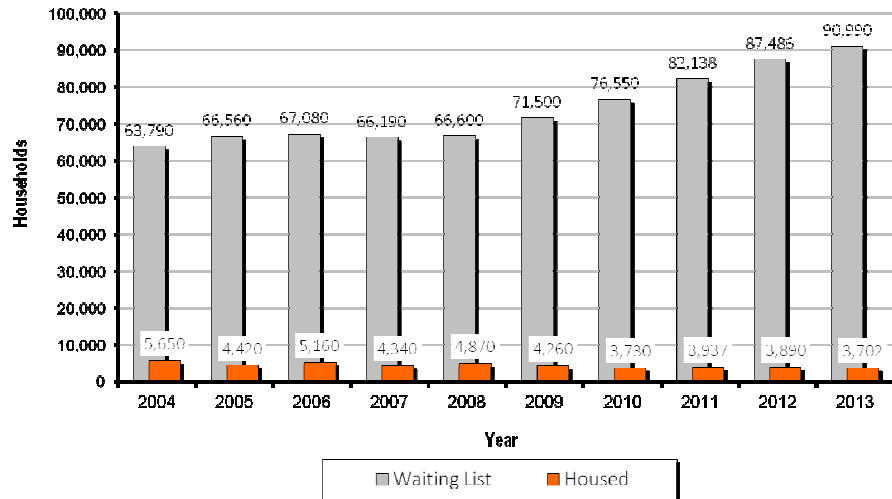
Connections

Toronto Community Housing



5

## THE CURRENT WAITING LIST SYSTEM



## How does the current system operate?

- The system comprises hundreds of subsidiary waiting lists.
- When applicants apply for social housing they typically select housing units by zone (there are 15 in Toronto).
- A household can receive a housing offer at any time for any unit among the providers/zones they have selected. (The average is 8-10 years for a 1 bedroom unit)
- Each year applicants must reconfirm their interest in remaining on the waiting list.
- Households can refuse up to 3 offers of social housing; after that, their application is cancelled.

## Challenges with the current system

- **9 phone calls** – the average number of calls made by housing staff to fill a rent-geared-to-income (RGI) vacancy in 2013.
- **45 days** – The average time it took to fill a RGI vacancy in 2013.
- **\$5,459,000** – Budgeted revenue loss for Toronto Community Housing as a result of unfilled RGI vacancies in 2013.
- **253 applications cancelled** – The number of households that dropped off the waiting list as a result of refusing more than 3 offers in 2013.



Connections

Toronto Community Housing



8

## What is My Choice Rental?

- A new “choice-based” system for accessing social housing.
- Empowers households with information and options, similar to what they might see on MLS or viewit.ca, so that they are better able to find housing that meets their needs.
- Premised on more involvement from households so that the system works more efficiently and individuals feel more invested in housing outcomes.
- Accommodation and support are provided to vulnerable households to ensure that no one is disadvantaged.
- Operates within all existing rules of the social housing system: offers are still made according to priority and wait times.



Connections

Toronto Community Housing



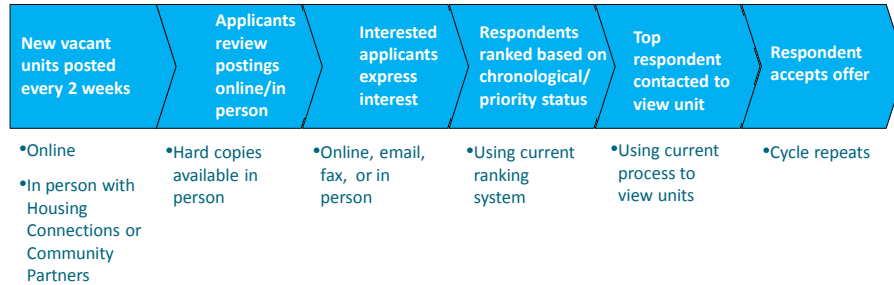
9

## Scope and Approach

### Scope

- 8 month pilot began February 13th
- 12 TCHC developments were included
- 1,950 applicants were invited to participate

### Process



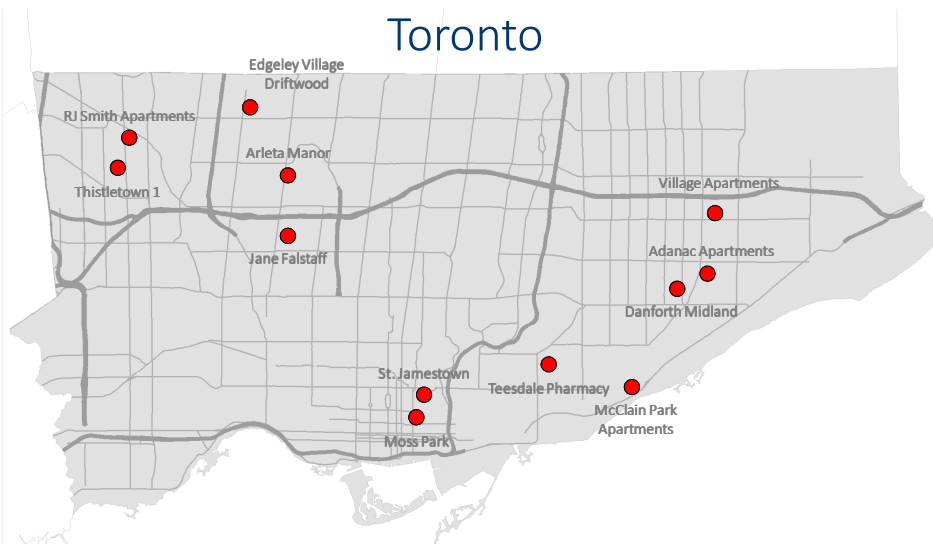
Connections

Toronto Community Housing



10

## 12 pilot developments located across Toronto



Connections

Toronto Community Housing



11

my  
choice  
rental

Choose it. See it. Rent it.

Welcome. You are logged in.

If you need help please call  
416-981-8128 or send an email to  
mychoicerental@housingconnections.ca

Listings Rules Help Log Out


### Community Listing

The table below lists community information on the left and whether or not vacancies are available in that community, on the right. Read the instructions on how to participate below the table.


**Cycle 12: Jul 17, 2014 to Jul 28 2014 12:00PM**

Community	View Map by Postal Code	Unit Sizes	View Vacant Units
<a href="#">Robert J Smith Apartments</a>	<a href="#">M9V 1V1</a>	Bachelor	<a href="#">4 units available</a>
<a href="#">McClain Park Apartments</a>	<a href="#">M1N 1J4</a>	Bachelor	<a href="#">1 units available</a>
<a href="#">Adanac Apartments</a>	<a href="#">M1N 2E8</a>	Bachelor	<a href="#">6 units available</a>
<a href="#">Village Apartments</a>	<a href="#">M1G 3S8</a>	Bachelor	<a href="#">1 units available</a>
<a href="#">Arleta Manor</a>	<a href="#">M3L 2E2</a>	Bachelor	
<a href="#">Danforth Midland</a>	<a href="#">M1K 4H8</a>	1 Bedroom	<a href="#">1 units available</a>
<a href="#">Moss Park</a>	<a href="#">M5A 1W4</a>	1 Bedroom	<a href="#">3 units available</a>
<a href="#">Edgeley Village</a>	<a href="#">M3N 2P7</a>	3 Bedroom	
<a href="#">Jane Falstaff Apartments</a>	<a href="#">M6L 2C9</a>	2 Bedroom	<a href="#">2 units available</a>
<a href="#">Teesdale Pharmacy Apartments</a>	<a href="#">M1L 1L2</a>	2 Bedroom	
<a href="#">Thistletown 1</a>	<a href="#">M9V 3M8</a>	3 Bedroom	
<a href="#">Wellesley Street</a>	<a href="#">M4X 1G3</a>	1 & 2 Bedroom	


Building



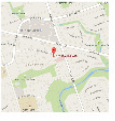
Floor Plan




Kitchen



Map



View



Click to view larger image

Development	
Main Intersection	Kipling Avenue & Albion Road
Building Addresses	101, 121 Kendleton Drive
Landlord	Toronto Community Housing
Development Type	One 11-storey apartment building and one 7-storey apartment building. Built in 1965.
Parking	\$50.00 (Surface)
Pets	Yes
Common Amenities	Recreation Room; Laundry Room

Neighbourhood	
Area Features	The surrounding neighbourhood features shopping (Albion Plaza), schools, a community centre, library and parks
Public Transit	5 minute walk to 2 major bus routes (Albion Road or Kipling Avenue). 30 minute bus ride to Kipling Station.
Area Facilities	Albion Community Centre, Albion Library and Etobicoke Albion Arena are all within a 10 minute walk of the development.

### Vacant Units

Cycle 12: Jul 17, 2014 to Jul 28 2014 12:00PM

Map No	Type	Floor	Address	Move In Date	Sq Foot	Balcony	View	Closets	Storage Closets	Utilities	Description
2002	Bachelor	2	101 Kendleton Drive	Available for move in upto Aug. 16, 2014	216	Yes	North	1		Hydro not included	Unit is freshly painted
2003	Bachelor	2	101 Kendleton Drive	Available for move in upto Aug. 16, 2014	216	Yes	South	1		Hydro not included	Unit is freshly painted
1084	Bachelor	8	121 Kendleton Drive	Available for move in upto Aug. 16, 2014	216	Yes	South	1		Hydro not included	Unit is freshly painted
1087	Bachelor	3	121 Kendleton Drive	Available for move in anytime upto Aug. 16, 2014	216	Yes	North	1		Hydro not included	Unit is freshly painted



Connections

Toronto Community Housing



14

## Results from the Pilot

Number of calls by housing staff required to fill an RGI unit

- 2013 base line 9 phone calls
- My Choice Rental 1.6 phone calls

Acceptance rate for offered units

- 2013 base line 24%
- My Choice Rental 73%

Length of time to fill a vacant unit from posting to lease signing

- 2013 base line 45 days
- My Choice Rental 20 days
  - A decrease of 56% or potential savings of \$3,057,000 in vacancy loss for TCH



Connections

Toronto Community Housing



15

## More Results from the Pilot

Total number housed through My Choice Rental

- 147 households

Engagement rate, based on attendance of information sessions, contact with program representatives and online activity

- Approximately 50 to 60% (above average for similar programs)

Participation rate

- 24% (462 participants who actually bid on units)
  - A survey mid pilot identified the following issues among invited participants that were not bidding
    - Did not receive the invitation letter (50%)
    - Did not like building choices (27%)
    - Did not understand program (35%)



Connections

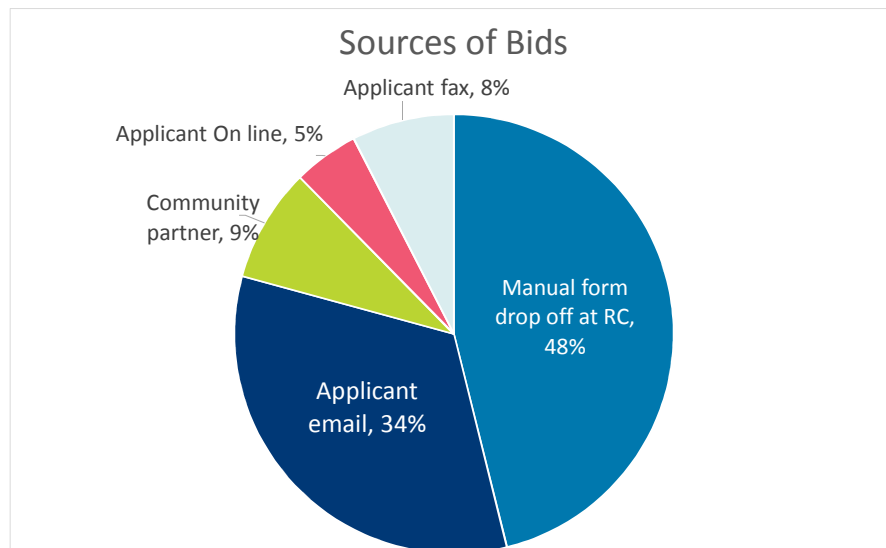
Toronto Community Housing



16

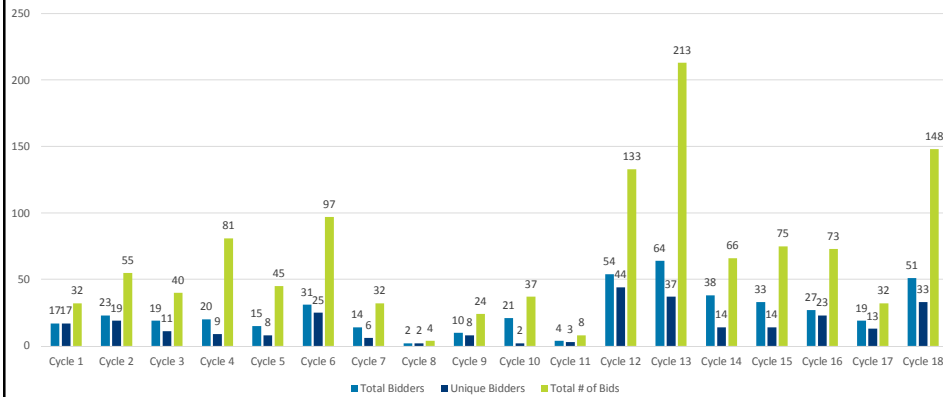
## More Results from the Pilot

Bidding Channel Preferences



## More Results from the Pilot

**Bidding Volumes by Cycle**



- Cycle 12 – 650 additional participants added to the pilot, 2 bedroom units posted
- Cycle 13 – 3 bedroom units posted
- Cycle 17 – Notice sent to participants about final cycle in pilot

## Early lessons from My Choice Rental

- Higher level and more sustained communication and outreach may be necessary to increase participation
- Larger bidding pool improves bidding on less desirable or “hard to rent” units
- Preference for manual and email bidding presents a challenge to administering bidding process

## How will we measure the success of My Choice Rental ?

### Improvements in efficiency

- Reduction in turnover time and fewer housing offer refusals
- Increase in demand for hard-to-rent units
- Improved ease of use/administration
- Fewer housing offer refusals

### Supports informed housing choices

- Applicants bidding on units beyond original selections
- Greater levels of household engagement and participation
- Positive reviews of advertised information on units and developments

### Equitable and transparent treatment of all households

- Minimal barriers to access
- Vulnerable or disadvantaged households receive the levels of support needed to participate fully
- Rules are clear, well understood and improve perceptions of transparency and fairness

### Reduced vacancy loss

- Reduces the allocated vacancy loss dollars in the annual budget



Connections

Toronto Community Housing



20

## Next steps

### July 2014 Council approval

- Based on positive preliminary results from the My Choice Rental Pilot, Toronto City Council has approved the implementation of a choice based letting system

### Evaluation of My Choice Rental Pilot

- A full evaluation of the pilot is underway

### Additional pilot(s)

- New pilots are under consideration to complement learning and build operational readiness

### Implementation Plan

- Will be developed concurrently with ongoing pilots

### Full roll out



Connections

Toronto Community Housing



21

Questions?



**Connections**

Toronto Community Housing



22