

Tenant Selection Policy

Co:Here Building

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this document is twofold:

- To ensure that Salsbury Community Society (SCS) is providing affordable, stable housing to a mixed-income group of tenants from a range of backgrounds in line with our organizational mandate and values, and as governed by applicable operating agreements; and,
- To be transparent to prospective and existing tenants about our decision-making process.

This Policy establishes consistent criteria to ensure that prospective tenants and existing tenants are matched with housing that is equitable and appropriate.

This Policy applies to tenant selection in the Co:Here building.

Note: this policy does not address setting rents, for which there is a different policy.

2. Policy Statement

SCS seeks to match applicants' needs with available housing units, while ensuring that the process is transparent and just.

All tenant selection decisions are made by staff. Staff use tools, such as an application form, interviews, reference checks, and income and asset testing, as well as consultation with existing tenants to ensure the match is appropriate, equitable, and serves those that need it most.

SCS staff consider the following in order to match tenants' needs to available housing units:

- Household size, in accordance with National Occupancy Standards;
- Accessibility needs;
- Input from the building's Community Builders Group;
- Input from tenants on the floor with the vacancy; and
- In the imbalance of this world's economy, people differ greatly in their financial resources and housing opportunities through no fault or merit of their own. SCS aims to find tenants who will flourish in a deeply affordable and community-minded home.

Throughout this process, staff proceed with reference to all relevant laws, regulations, and organizational policies on topics including, but not limited to:

- Confidentiality;
- Privacy; and,
- Non-discrimination.

3. Definitions

Accessibility refers to the construction or modification of suites to enable independent living for persons with disabilities. There are two wheelchair accessible units in the Co:Here building, and they are intended for people with mobility challenges.

Community Builders Group is a group of tenants and staff who meet regularly and work together to nurture community and address issues that come up in the building.

Internal Suite Reallocation is a process where an existing tenant requests to move units within the same building. Salsbury considers internal suite reallocation a way of supporting current tenants for extenuating circumstances.

National Occupancy Standards are national standards many housing operators use to determine the most appropriate number of bedrooms an applicant is eligible for at the time that they become a tenant. The NOS are:

- No more than two people per bedroom.
- Spouses and couples share a bedroom.
- Parents typically do not share bedrooms with children.
- Dependants aged 18 or older have separate bedrooms.
- Dependants aged 5 or older of the opposite sex have separate bedrooms.

Waitpool is the term used for those individuals that have submitted and completed a housing application or renewed their interest to SCS that year. Waitpools are refreshed annually in September and October. New applicants can submit a new application, or previous applicants can 'refresh their application' by contacting the office and asking for their application to re-enter the waitpool. Unlike a waitlist, the waitpool is not accessed in numerical order. Rather it is reviewed by unit type (Studio, 1-bedroom, 2-bedroom, or wheelchair accessible).

4. Why Apply to SCS Housing?

SCS provides an opportunity to live in community, offering affordable housing in an integrated neighbourhood context for people from a range of backgrounds. We do this in an attempt to foster a community of healthy relationships and promote human flourishing. At the heart of building this community life together is an invitation for tenants -- as neighbours -- to move from exclusion and isolation to belonging and engagement.

Grounded in relationships rather than social services, our vision for intentional community housing emerges out of relationships, such as those that SCS and its partner organizations in Grandview Woodlands have with individuals and households who are vulnerable to homelessness and have been marginalized in society. This initiative is driven by an ongoing commitment to developing and deepening those connections.

5. Eligibility

Prospective tenants are eligible if they meet the following criteria:

- **Demonstrated connection to the neighbourhood in which the building is located.** This connection can be physical (e.g. currently live, work or go to school there), or relational (e.g. has strong relationships with people in the neighbourhood).
- **Communicated interest in living in a community-minded building.** Willingness to share in the work and life of the community. This means participating in regular community rhythms (i.e. eating together, joining committees, washing dishes, addressing harms, reconciling, neighbouring).
- **Willingness to disclose financial information to validate current annual income.** SCS is committed to offering stable, affordable housing while operating a model which ensures that tenants do not pay more than 30% of their total income. As such, incomes are assessed annually.
- **Ability to direct their own mental and physical health care.** SCS provides housing with a strong emphasis on neighbour relationships, and where neighbours can support each other. SCS does not provide *supportive* housing, which is a model of housing that typically includes 24/7 professional support and regular programming from staff trained in relevant healthcare expertise (e.g. health, addictions, etc.). Prospective tenants who have mental and physical health challenges must have existing formal and/or informal support networks in place outside of Co:Here. Prospective tenants who have significant mental or physical health challenges require a level of care that we cannot provide.

Strong applicants are those who:

- Are in need of housing and fit our eligibility criteria;
- Would flourish in a community environment;
- Have the desire and potential to build relationships with others as a result of their own life experience;
- Are self-aware and mature enough to understand and articulate their own needs and boundaries, especially as related to supporting others;
- Show a positive attitude and willingness to live in a diverse community;
- Actively participates in the neighbourhood, and have developed relationships with others in the neighbourhood (e.g. paid or volunteer work, attends clubs or groups, participate in local social, cultural, or spiritual organizations etc.);
- Has a vibrant community life that offers practical supports; and

- Demonstrate willingness to be present and participate in the community, and/or who have experience developing relationships across differences (e.g. income, age, race, religion, culture, etc.).

6. Suite Allocation

SCS aims to follow the National Occupancy Standards (see definitions) when providing accommodation. These standards are used by staff to determine the most appropriate suite size for a prospective tenant(s) and, in particular, the number of bedrooms necessary for the tenant(s). These decisions are made by staff with the information on hand at the time an applicant becomes a tenant.

Changes in a tenants circumstances do not guarantee a change in suite.

To maximize the use of limited one-bedroom units, priority for available one bedroom units is given to doubles. Staff may use discretion if there are extenuating circumstances.

7. Application Process

SCS accepts new applications from prospective tenants annually in September and October. We announce the process on our website, and communicate it to our tenants, board members, and supporters. We also remind our key partners in the neighbourhood, and provide existing wait pool applicants an opportunity to refresh their application(i.e. confirm their interest, add additional information).

Applications are available on our website or in hard copy from the SCS office, and Co:Here mailbox area. All eligible applicants are placed in a wait pool. SCS does not rank applicants in order of application date or need of housing.

Prospective tenants must fill out an application form that includes:

- Confirmation of eligibility
- Letter of Introduction (opportunity for you to tell us about yourself)
- Household/personal information
- Current accommodation
- Health and mobility information
- Financial information

- References

Prospective tenants are also asked whether they agree with the values statement of SCS, as follows:

7.A. Value Statement

Together we:

- Extend **welcome** in a diverse community.
- Live in **solidarity** with one another.
- Create a place of **belonging**.
- **Steward** the building, common spaces, garden and relationships.
- Are held in **grace**; hold others in grace.

7.B. Values Explanation

- **Welcome**: We will all find ourselves in need of welcome throughout our lives, and will also have the ability to welcome others, and invite them to find rest from trying to be someone other than themselves. This practice of welcoming the other is rooted in a sense of shared humanity and invites us all into deep community.
- **Solidarity**: We choose to intentionally come alongside others who live similarly or differently than we do. We come with open eyes to see and celebrate the good in each other and an open heart to learn from them. We foster unity between each other, even when it costs our own sense of pride, or having the upper hand.
- **Belonging**: We cultivate community life in which every person feels important, accepted, and can grow in their own gifts.
- **Stewardship**: We give thoughtful care to our buildings, our spaces, and each other, honouring the fragility and resilience of one another and our environment.
- **Grace**: We offer one another forgiveness knowing that we love poorly, acts of restoration knowing that we are all in this together, and laughter knowing that it is the best medicine.

8. Tenant Selection Process

When a vacancy becomes available, SCS staff will first consider whether there is a necessary and appropriate internal suite reallocation. If so, these are considered first, before considering the perspectives of tenants. Communication is important to us and SCS will seek to communicate about a vacancy, internal moves and new neighbors in a quick and timely manner. Prospective tenants are contacted if they are being considered for a vacancy.

If an internal suite reallocation is not necessary, staff will begin to consult with tenants in the building for feedback before reviewing waitpool applicants. Staff will specifically consult the tenants on the floor that has the vacancy in two ways:

- The floor CBG representatives will call a meeting for their floor within a week to discuss the vacancy. Existing tenants on the floor will be asked to consider their desires for a new neighbour, diversity, community contributions, etc. CBG floor representatives are responsible for communicating this feedback to SCS staff within two days of the meeting (pop by the office and/or email esther@salsburycs.ca).
- Tenants on the floor that has the vacancy will be sent a survey to fill out to provide feedback directly to staff. Tenants will be asked to consider: a.) what will be missing on the floor; b) what the ideal new neighbour would be like; and c) any additional comments. Tenants are always welcome to come by the office and/or email esther@salsburycs.ca with their suggestions.

8.A. Internal Suite Reallocation

Internal Suite Reallocation is possible, in particular to accommodate those who are underhoused according to the National Occupancy Standards. All decisions about eligibility for internal suite reallocation are made by staff.

Internal Suite Reallocation will be considered if:

- There has been a change in family size.
- There is an unmet accessibility need and an accessible suite has become available.
- Tenants must still meet the eligibility criteria (see above), and must share current financial information to facilitate a new rent-setting process.

Internal Suite Reallocation will not be considered if:

- A tenant is currently appropriately housed according to National Occupancy Standards and accessibility criteria. (Note: an individual is

considered appropriately housed in a studio and will not be considered for a move into a one bedroom suite.)

- A tenant has a preference for a particular suite (ie. tenant wants more space).

8.B. Waitpool Tenant Selection Criteria and Considerations

If no internal suite reallocation occurs, staff will review the waitpool applicants and select two-three appropriate candidates. In order to protect the privacy of applicants, existing tenants are not permitted to assist with this task. SCS staff will do background checks (e.g. references provided by the applicant including previous landlords, health professionals, and/or appropriate contacts). Staff will present appropriate candidates for an interview based on multiple factors including:

- Fit with the Co:Here vision and values
- Demographics and diversity of the floor
- Budgetary Considerations

These prospective tenants will be invited to an interview with a maximum of three interviewers including at least one member of SCS staff, and one CBG representative. The purpose of the interview is to determine whether the candidate is a good fit with Co:Here vision and values. Following the interview, the CBG representative(s) will be invited to share their perspectives with staff, and indicate whether the prospective tenant is a good fit.

Staff will work with prospective tenants on the confidential aspects of the tenants application. This includes, but is not limited to, financial disclosures, mental and physical health, and safety background checks. Such components are necessarily invisible to existing tenants so as to comply with privacy law and the SCS Confidentiality Policy.

Staff aim to collaborate with the CBG on tenancy decisions. Final decision on whether to offer housing to a tenant is always made by staff. When selecting new tenants from the eligible pool of prospective tenants, SCS staff will give due consideration to the eligibility criteria noted above.

8.C. Adding Household/Family Members and Considerations

There are two reasons why a person may be added to an existing tenancy. In both cases, SCS considers this addition as an extension of the family unit (not a 'roommate'), in accordance with the lease agreement.

- Reunification: An existing tenant welcomes a spouse/common law partner or dependent family member who they've been waiting for, due to immigration status

- Change in the family status: adding a child, a long-term relationship with a spouse / common law partner as defined in law, or an adult dependent

Tenants will notify SCS staff of the change within 2 weeks of the person arriving. Staff will confirm with the tenant in writing that the tenancy is being expanded to include additional family members, and make proper arrangements including:

- Formally adding the new family member(s) to the lease;
- Making plans to increase the rent pursuant to SCS policy on household income;
- Revising payment arrangements for rent; and,
- Any other new or revised arrangements as necessary.

Note that for new partners and adult dependents to be added to the lease, references may be called, and/or an interview may be required prior to move-in, in order to verify and ensure suitability. SCS reserves the right to decline requests to add members to households.