



Tenant Engagement System and Implementation Plan

Item 12B

December 12, 2024

Board of Directors

Report: TCHC: 2024-83

To: Board of Directors (the “Board”)

From: Tenant Services Committee (“TSC”)

Date: November 25, 2024

PURPOSE:

To seek approval from the Board for Toronto Community Housing’s (“TCHC”) “Engage Together” model as part of the Tenant Engagement System.

RECOMMENDATIONS:

1. It is recommended that the Board:
 - a. Approve the “Engage Together” model as set out in this report;
 - b. Approve the Implementation Workplan, set out at page 6 of this Report, through which TCHC will adopt a phased approach to retiring the current tenant engagement model;
2. It is recommended that the Board direct the President and Chief Executive Officer forward the report to City Council, through the Economic and Community Development Committee, for its information.

TSC:

The recommendations were approved by the TSC on November 25, 2024.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDATIONS:

Through various channels, including TSC meetings, Tenant Community Action Tables (“TCAT”) and local meetings, tenants and stakeholders expressed concerns with the current Tenant Engagement System (“TES”) and its implementation. To review the current system and make recommendations on amendments, TCHC hired a dedicated staff in Q1

2023, to work with stakeholders, primarily tenants, to develop a proposal for revisions to the system.

At its meeting of April 22, 2024, the Board of Directors approved the Final Recommendations to improve the Tenant Engagement System and directed staff to prepare a plan setting out the actions to be taken to implement the measures described in the Recommendations.

[Report TCHC:2024-29 “Tenant Engagement System Review”](#)

At its meeting of May 22nd, 2024, City Council considered a Progress Update on Toronto Community Housing Corporation's (TCHC) Tenant Advisory Committee (PH11.7). In the context of its consideration of that Item, Council adopted the following motions:

1. City Council, as Shareholder, request the Board of Directors of Toronto Community Housing Corporation to direct the President and Chief Executive Officer of Toronto Community Housing Corporation to submit a report by the end of 2024 to the Board of Directors of Toronto Community Housing Corporation on the refreshed Tenant Engagement System and a comprehensive implementation plan, and such report be forwarded for information to the first meeting of the Economic and Community Development Committee in 2025; and
2. City Council, as Shareholder, request the Board of Directors of Toronto Community Housing Corporation to forward the report referenced in Part 1 above to City Council for information once approved by the Board of Directors of Toronto Community Housing Corporation.

The approved recommendations laid the foundation for the work that will be implemented over the coming year. To ensure that the Tenant Engagement Model aligns with the recommendations of the Tenant Engagement System review, TCHC staff have been engaging with tenants to enhance the TES, based on recommendations 2 and 3 of the TES Review. These recommendations address empowering Tenant Representation and Ensuring Inclusive Decision-Making.

TENANT PARTICIPATION IN MODEL CO-DESIGN

Since May 2024, TCHC staff have worked closely with tenant leaders, the Tenant Advisory Committee (“TAC”), and other stakeholders to craft a new engagement model. TCHC has heard from tenants that the model itself is less important than the method, resourcing and connections that bring the work to life. This work has resulted in the new ‘Engage Together’ model (as outlined in Attachment 1).

Elected community representatives provided input on the new “Engage Together” model during the September 24th to 26th, 2024 TCATs. Additional input from the TAC was received on June 12th, July 10th, and October 8th, 2024. The key recommendations and feedback from tenant leaders and the TAC include:

- Clear communication on the remodel of TES, its implementation process, tenant elections and the role and responsibilities of tenant leaders.
- The need for Tenant Council meetings to be discussion-based, as opposed to town halls, to ensure full participation.
- The role of elected tenant leaders in bringing information between the Tenant Circle and Tenant Council
- Flexibility and choice in how tenants engage with the TES model
- Additional funding resources needed to support the work of tenant volunteers and tenant leaders.
- The need for strategies to increase participation in communities where engagement is low.
- Proportional representation in the election of tenant leaders based on building size.
- The importance of every building and townhouse community having space for tenants to meet and engage.
- A clear mandate, defined tenant leader roles, accountability mechanisms, and removal procedures; seen by many tenants as essential to the success of the model.
- Adequate training is essential, particularly in notetaking, budgeting, and conflict resolution.
- Clear guidance on topics elected tenant leaders should bring to Tenant Council meetings.
- The TCAT should be co-designed by staff and tenants, with space for elected tenant leaders and all tenants to engage and share knowledge.

As part of the co-design process, the above feedback has been incorporated into the new TES model, as well as the implementation workplan. TCHC staff noted that tenants repeatedly voiced that feeling welcome and properly supported is essential to their participation and the success of the Engage Together model.

In support of clear communication on the TES remodel, communication has been sent to the tenants providing an update on the redesigned model and

seeking additional feedback through a three-question survey, that can be completed online.

The Proposed “Engage Together” Model

The “Engage Together” model moves away from a hierarchical structure of engagement and is built around four equal components: Tenant Circle, Tenant Council, Tenant Community Action Tables and the Citywide Tenant Committee. It is designed to encourage and strengthen participation at every level of the engagement system.

The new model is designed to foster participation and empowerment irrespective of how a tenant may choose to engage, so that tenants can have a meaningful impact whether through formal leadership opportunities as selected members of the Citywide Tenant Committee, as elected tenant leaders to Tenant Council or through more fluid and flexible participation opportunities through Tenant Circles at the building/townhouse community level and Tenant Community Action Tables at the regional level.

This model supports increased participation and develops collaboration between tenants, TCHC staff and community partners. As the model is implemented, there will be flexibility to amend the application of the model, including but not limited to the frequency of meetings and the potential addition of tenant forums in non-election years.

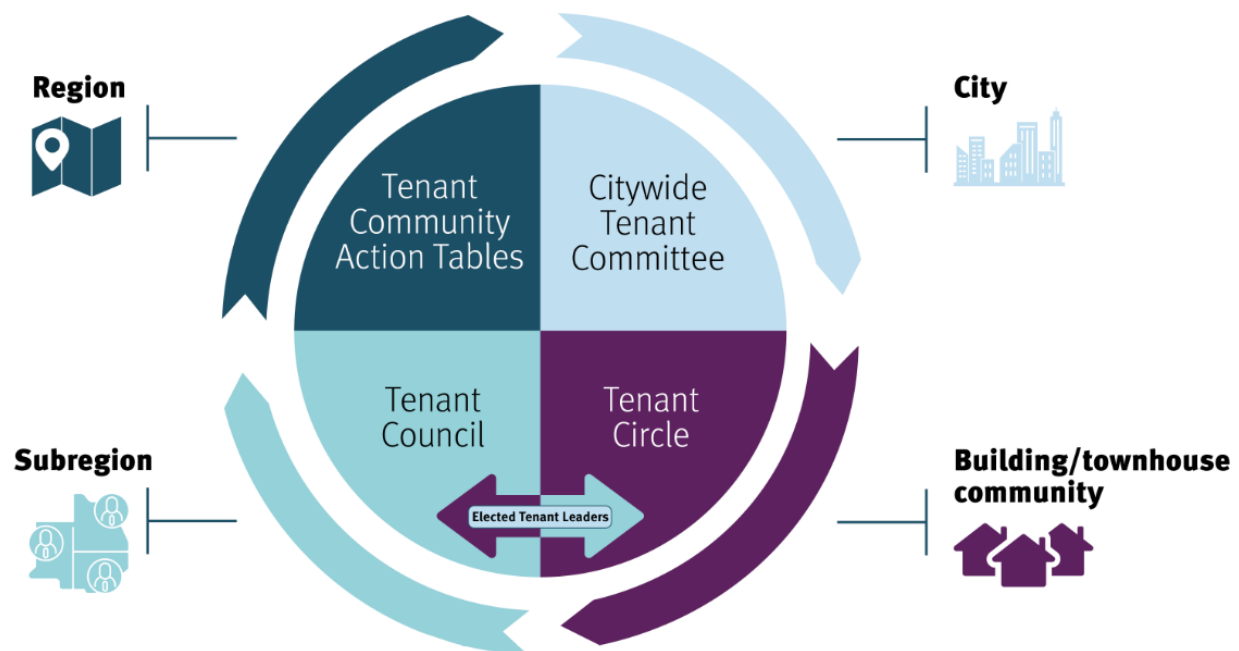


Figure 1: Engage Together Model

1. **Tenant Circles:** All tenants will be invited to join their building or townhouse community's Tenant Circle. At the start of the year, tenants will get together as part of the annual planning process, to democratically establish the building/townhouse communities' specific priorities related to tenant engagement. Once priorities are established by tenants, they will work with TCHC staff to allocate tenant funding program dollars (Local Initiative Funding for Tenants, "LIFT") and identify opportunities for community partnerships, external funding and more. Elected tenant leaders will act as the bridge, ensuring communication and information flow between tenant circles and tenant councils.
2. **Tenant Councils:** Elected tenant leaders from each building or townhouse community will participate in Tenant Councils. These councils will focus on leadership development, community priorities, and tenant-led initiatives. To maintain structure and functionality one elected tenant leader from each building/townhouse community will attend Tenant Council meetings. Based on current data, Tenant Councils at full complement may have up to 30 tenant leaders in attendance.
3. **Tenant Community Action Tables (TCATs):** Every tenant is invited to participate in the transformed TCATs that will be co-designed by tenant and TCHC staff input. There will be spaces for tenants to share knowledge, discuss what works well, and learn from each other. These Tables will give tenants more opportunities to engage with subject matter experts including TCHC staff, community partners, and service providers. Tenants will also be able to give feedback on tenant-facing programs, processes and policies.
4. **City-Wide Tenant Committee:** A group of tenants will represent the broader tenant community and provide input on the overall TES, as well as corporate policies and initiatives. The group of tenants will be selected through an open-call application process.

Implementation Plan

The implementation of the "Engage Together" model will involve:

- Effectively implementing the 10 recommendations of the TES Review.
- Enhancing tenant participation and satisfaction.
- Ensuring ongoing evaluation and reporting on programs and initiatives of the TES.

Tenant Engagement Review Implementation Workplan

Recommendations by Priority	Tasks	Timelines
1. Strengthen Community Services Coordinators (“CSC”) Teams	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish CSC priorities. • Create KPIs for work. • Assess CSC training needs. • Rollout training program for CSCs. 	Q1 – Q4 2025
2. Empowering Tenant Representation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Draft guidelines for fair and equitable tenant leader elections. • Seek tenant input on electoral process review. • Hold elections for tenant leaders. • Reinstate Tenant Councils at sub-regional level. • Transform TCATs with tenant input. 	Q4 2024 – Q4 2025
3. Inclusive Decision-Making and Prioritize Tenant Voices in Stakeholder Engagements	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enhancing decision-making at the building/community level (i.e. tenant funding programs). • Seek tenant input on tenant facing program, policy and process changes. • Develop and promote opportunities for tenant feedback. • Transform TCATs with tenant input. • Continue collaboration with the TAC on the 	Q3 2024 – Q4 2025

Recommendations by Priority	Tasks	Timelines
	progress of tenant engagement.	
4. Prioritize Assistance for Tenants to Secure Funding	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support tenants to access funding from various partners and agencies. • Assess available resources and explore additional funding sources for tenant engagement. 	Q3 2024 – Q4 2025
5. Enhance Communications	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide support to Communication team with their Tenant Focus Group that provides input on tenant facing and/or public communication. • Explore alternative communication channels for tenant updates, e.g. SMS texts. • Provide input on the key communication materials in buildings/ townhouse communities. 	Q3 2024 – Q4 2025
6. Improve Customer Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support relationship between District Managers and elected tenant leaders to address community opportunities and initiatives. • Continue to implement front line staff training and supports to improve customer 	Q3 2024 – Q4 2025

Recommendations by Priority	Tasks	Timelines
	service at a building level.	
7. Sharing Best Practices	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identify and document best practices for engaging tenants with focus on equity-deserving groups. • Using TCATs as spaces for tenants to showcase their work in their communities. • Share best practices across teams/ divisions. 	Q3 2024 – Q4 2025
8. Performance Measurement and Accountability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Participate in TCHC's Corporate Data Strategy to enhance tenant engagement data inclusion. • Review system application to track TES programs and results. 	Q3 2024 – Q4 2025
9. Training Surveys and Diverse Trainers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establish tenant training needs based on existing data and input from tenants and staff. • Identify the skills and capacity of tenants to become mentors in training programs. • Implement a tenant training program with subject matter experts (both tenant and non-tenants) to deliver requested capacity building sessions. 	Q3 2024 – Q4 2025

Recommendations by Priority	Tasks	Timelines
10. Board of Directors – Reports and Visits	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Integrate tenant engagement updates as part of quarterly COO report. Schedule opportunities for Board members and executive leadership to engage tenants. 	Q1 2025 – Q4 2025

The implementation plan is established in tandem with a business case submission to City Council requesting an increase in funding to support the resourcing for the implementation of the TES Review recommendations. The executive lead will be the Chief Operating Officer with the centralized Tenant Engagement team responsible for its administration including support from centralized and regional staff.

As progress is made on the implementation process, regular updates will be provided to TAC and the TSC, as we implement the program updates.

NEXT STEPS

To ensure the advancement of the new model:

- Pending Board approval TCHC staff will work with supporting TCHC business units to communicate the “Engage Together” model prior to year-end.
- From Q4, 2024 to Q1, 2025, TCHC staff will focus on initiating, planning and developing the necessary materials to support the implementation of the workplan. Stakeholder engagement will be a particular focus area in support of the implementation milestones.

IMPLICATIONS AND RISKS

The City's Shareholder Direction requires TCHC to maintain a democratic system of active tenant participation and involvement that will provide the following:

- Opportunities for tenant engagement regarding their housing and the complete TCHC housing portfolio.
- Opportunities for tenants to provide input on TCHC corporate decisions, including capital plans, operating budget, service levels, service delivery and Tenant facing policies; and
- Opportunities for tenant input on setting local spending priorities; and

- Information about opportunities for engagement in other City and community initiatives.

In addition, TCHC's approach to tenant engagement will respect the terms of the Shareholder Direction and the financial targets and performance benchmarks established for TCHC by the Service Manager.

The Tenant Engagement Program is supported by a combination of existing centralized funding and additional budget requests to enhance and expand program delivery.

To address identified gaps and implement key program improvements, TCHC has submitted an additional budget request as part of the 2025 budget process. This request aims to secure the necessary resources to fully scale the model, improve the tenant experience, and support new engagement activities, such as enhanced local spending initiatives and expanded capacity-building opportunities for tenants. Approval of the budget request is critical to meet increasing tenant demand and align with the broader goals of fostering democratic, tenant-led engagement.

Failure to secure the additional funding may require scaling down certain aspects of the program, which could limit its overall impact and effectiveness.

SIGNATURE:

“Nadia Gouveia”

Nadia Gouveia
Chief Operating Officer

ATTACHMENT:

1. Presentation – Engage Together Model

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Tenant Services Committee

November 2024

torontohousing.ca/tes

Engage TOgether

Introducing TCHC's enhanced Tenant Engagement Model

Based on the Tenant Engagement System
Review recommendations

Summer / Fall 2024



June TAC
Sought input on engagement model.

July TAC
Presented three proposed models to gather input.

August
Developed an enhanced engagement model .

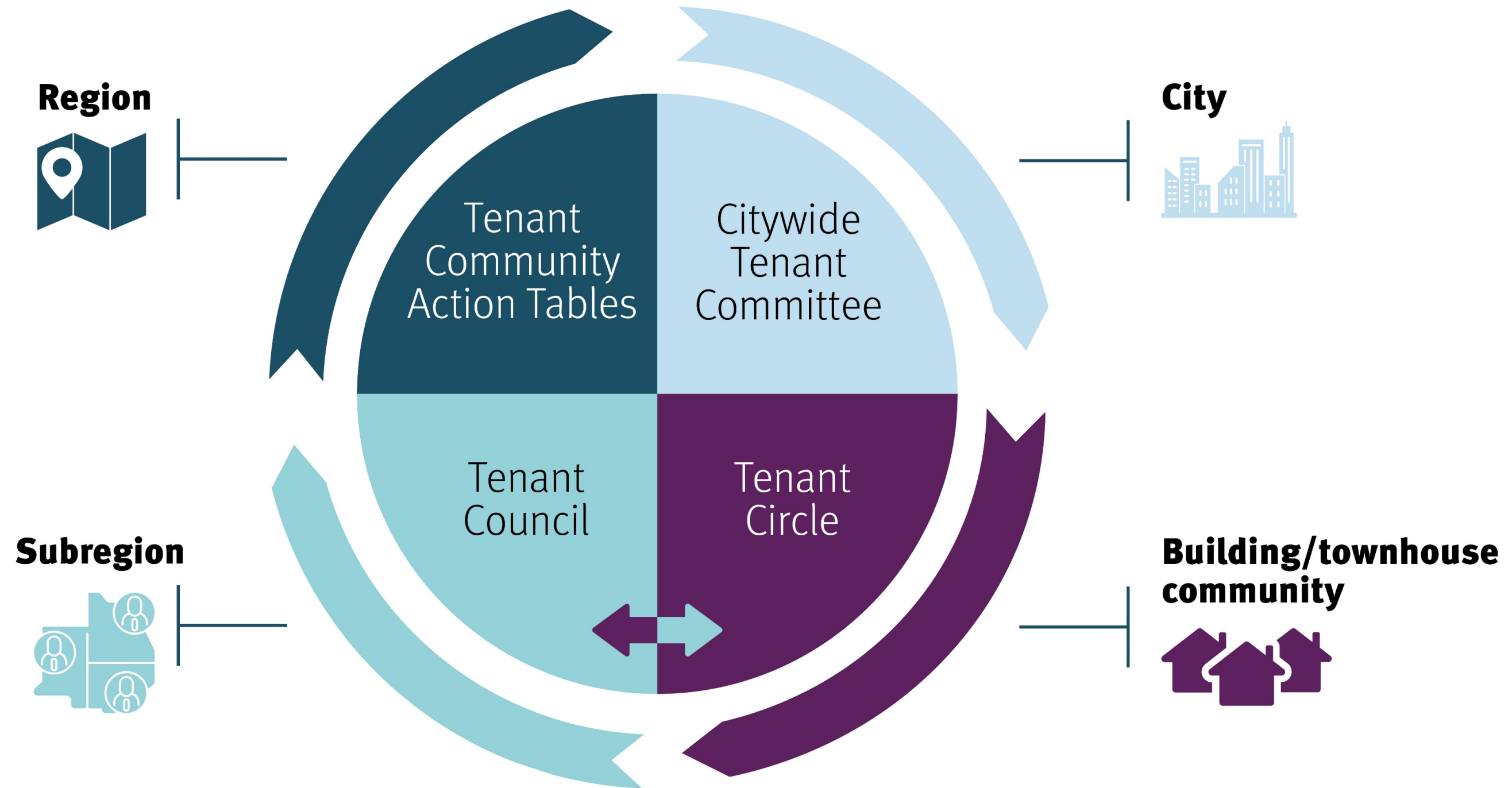
September TCAT
Presented model for review across all the regions.

October TAC
Presented model to TAC for additional input.

Communication sent to broader tenant population to present design & gather input.

November TSC
Present/ report model to Tenant Services Committee

Engage **T**Ogether



Engage TOgether: Building/Townhouse Community

Tenant Circle



- **Total**
One (1) per building/townhouse community that expresses interest.
- **Who**
Open to all interested tenants; the elected tenant leader participates as a member, supported by local **Community Service Coordinators, Engagement.**
- **Purpose**
Tenants meet in their building/townhouse community to identify priorities for local community engagement plan; allocate Local Initiative Funding for Tenants (LIFT) to local engagement priorities; promote programs, services, and events by tenant groups, TCHC, and partner agencies; share information.
- **Meeting frequency**
Up to ten times a year.

Engage TOgether: Subregion

Tenant Council



- **Total**
Nine (9) Tenant Councils, three per region.
- **Who**
Elected tenant leader from building or townhouse community.
- **Purpose**
The Tenant Councils will focus on leadership development, community priorities, and tenant-led initiatives. Through active collaboration, Tenant Councils will focus on identifying broader opportunities for tenant engagement.
- **Meeting frequency**
Up to four times a year.

Engage TOgether: Region

Tenant Community Action Tables



- **Total**
Three (3) Tenant Community Action Tables
- **Who**
Open to all interested tenants.
- **Purpose**
To offer a platform for tenants to exchange best practices, engage with subject matter experts (TCHC staff, community partners, service providers), and provide feedback on tenant-facing programs, processes and policies.
- **Meeting frequency**
Twice a year.

Engage TOgether: City

Tenant Committee



- **Who**
A committee of selected tenant leaders, including honorary participation from tenant members of the TCHC Board of Directors.
- **Purpose**
To amplify the voices of all TCHC tenants by providing input on Tenant Engagement initiatives and programs, as well as corporate policies that affect the entire tenant community.
- **Meeting frequency**
Up to ten times a year.

Next Steps

- **Work with supporting TCHC business units to communicate the Board decision regarding the “Engage Together” model prior to year-end.**
- **From Q4, 2024 - Q1, 2025, TCHC staff will focus on initiating, planning and developing the necessary materials to support the implementation of the model along with the additional recommendations arising from the Tenant Engagement System Review.**