

Annual Community Report -2020

# Housing & Homelessness Action Plan in Hamilton

Everyone has a home...Home is the Foundation



Everyone has a home...home is the foundation. This is the collective mandate that has been endorsed by the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton community. It is a mandate that requires collective action by all stakeholders and community members.

The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan is a community based, person centred plan that sets a vision, clear targets and goals to ensure everyone in Hamilton has a home. In August 2020, Hamilton City Council approved Hamilton’s Housing and Homelessness 10 year Action Plan update. The intent of the update was to create a streamlined plan focused on needed system changes. The plan is to be viewed as a living document that will be updated as required.

This report focuses on the work that has occurred during 2020, and notes significant disruption to the Action Plan due to the global pandemic. This report provides highlights and is not reflective of all the good work going on in our community which contributes to the Action Plan.

The Plan is guided by seven core values:



Our Community Aspiration “*Everyone has a home...Home is the foundation*”, acknowledges that good, safe and affordable housing is the foundation for good quality of life. Research clearly shows better health, learning and economic outcomes for people who are appropriately housed.

## 2020 Highlights

2020 was a year of disruption, response, and overall flexibility with the City of Hamilton and community partners working to best respond to the global pandemic's impact on the housing and homelessness sector.

In August 2020 Hamilton City Council endorsed the review of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP). The HHAP was built by the community with community input. This approach was repeated in the review, with over 500 people consulted. A dedicated working group provided in depth input throughout the review process. The five-year review of the HHAP was a comprehensive overhaul and refocusing of the HHAP, necessary due to significant changes in Hamilton's housing system and its context.

The HHAP will continue to focus on a system approach to solutions to housing challenges. The Action Plan's focus for system change is areas in which the City can take the lead to plan, fund, or implement solutions. The dynamic nature of the housing system means the HHAP is a living document that will be reviewed regularly. Being a living document that can grow and adapt as the needs and solutions evolve helps to ensure programs and funding continue to align with the strategic directions and ensure one off approaches won't be needed to address changing challenges.

The revised HHAP continues to build upon the five following pillars:

**OUTCOME 1:** Create more affordable rental and ownership housing in Hamilton to help meet the need and demand

**OUTCOME 2:** Increase people's housing affordability, stability and choice

**OUTCOME 3:** Provide people with the individualized supports they need to help them obtain and maintain housing

**OUTCOME 4:** Ensure people live in housing that is good quality, safe and suitable to their needs

**OUTCOME 5:** Provide people with respectful, quality service within a "user-friendly" system



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The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan is a systems wide approach to creating more affordable housing, quality housing options, and working to end chronic homelessness. The pandemic's impact on this work has created significant challenges that were met with successful impacts in 2020. The focus of these actions were related to responding to the impact of the pandemic on homelessness, working towards a systems approach to homelessness, and the capital work done to create more quality supply of affordable housing.

Pandemic response to those experiencing homelessness:

The impacts of the pandemic were felt across the homelessness serving sector. The City of Hamilton in partnership with upper levels of government and the entire sector contributed to a strong response to best serve the clients experiencing homelessness. Some of the highlights of this work include:

- Development of the new Housing Focused Street Outreach Team under the supervision of Housing Services Division. The Street Outreach Team operates as a collaborative community partnership, with workers seconded from community agencies, supporting unsheltered individuals to access shelter and/or housing supports.
- Creation a temporary shelter for men with a capacity of up to 75 at the First Ontario Centre to reduce capacity in current shelters and allow for physical distancing.
- Creation of a temporary men's shelter at the former Cathedral Boys School with a capacity for 45 men.
- Overall expansion of the shelter system with operations in three hotels with up to 48 rooms for families, 35 for single men and couples, and 28 rooms for women. This capacity changed overtime to meet the changing needs of the system.
- Investments related to serving the homeless population during the pandemic were supported by Federal and Provincial funding. Financial support helped fund community services such as expanded operations at Living Rock, Wesley Day Centre, Carol Anne's Place, and Willow's Place.
- Support of more than \$550K from the Provincial and Federal government to 27 local agencies for expenses such as food, enhanced cleaning, and personal protective equipment.
- Investment of \$400K was used to fund capital costs at the Salvation Army Booth Centre to renovate the facility for proper physical distancing and to create 30 additional single rooms.

System level responses to ending chronic homelessness:

- A Call for Applications (CFA) will be launched in October 2020 to seek a permanent solution for emergency shelter services for cis women, trans feminine and non-binary adults. This will allow an opportunity to consult with the Expanding Housing and Support Services for Women and Transgender Community Sub-Committee.
- This call for applications will expand Violence Against Women (VAW) beds in Hamilton and will result in a total of up to 40 emergency shelter beds for women and gender diverse adults, up to 25 additional VAW beds for women experiencing gender-based violence, and a minimum of 65 Single Room Occupancy housing units.

## Capital for affordable housing:

Throughout the pandemic the need for affordable housing has continually been highlighted. Investments to improve existing housing stock and create new supply are vital actions required to achieve the goals in the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.

## Highlights from 2020 include:

- Repairs and renovations for 510 units at an average cost of \$1,700 per unit, total cost of \$867 K. The following was achieved:
  - 10 chronically offline units (units that stood vacant for 18 months or longer) were brought back online (ready for move in);
  - Three offline units (units that stood vacant for 3-6 months) were brought back online (ready for move in); and,
  - 497 units in multiple buildings were repaired, increasing cost and energy efficiencies. Work completed included LED lighting retrofits, balcony safety measures, mechanical upgrades, kitchen replacements, and installation and repairs of windows and doors.
  
- Two projects were supported through conditional grants in the total amount of the development charges:
  - The 43-unit building of the 95-unit Indwell Community Homes, 225 East Avenue North affordable rental housing development project in the approximate amount of \$379,260; and
  - The 40 units of the 60-unit Hamilton East Kiwanis Non-Profit Homes Inc., 6 – 14 Acorn Street affordable rental housing development project in the approximate amount of \$1,000,903

## Did you know

In 2020 the average market rent continues to increase. Overall it increased from \$1,055 to \$1,118 for all units. Significant increases were seen in bachelor and one bedroom units. With increases of 6.5% and 7.3% compared to only 6% increase overall.

**Vacancy Rates:** Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation reports the vacancy rate for buildings with 6 or more units was 4.0% in 2020. For units with rents from \$650 to \$899 for one bedroom and two bedroom units was 1.4% and 0.5%, but for the same unit types with rents of \$1,400+ the vacancy rates were 12.3% and 7.8%.

The revised HHAP includes S.M.A.R.T. targets for all outcome areas. These are:

- Specific,
- Measurable,
- Achievable,
- Relevant,
- Time Bound.

To ensure that the community need was not lost in the revised Action Plan the outcome areas also include stretch targets.

### Future Planning

Hamilton East Kiwanis Non-Profit Homes Inc. (Kiwanis) is in the process of implementing its strategic plan which includes building 1,000 new units over 10 years. To fund this development Kiwanis plans to sell approximately 180 single-detached units. As a pilot project, Kiwanis has proposed working with the City and the Hamilton Community Foundation (HCF) on an affordable down payment assistance program (DPAP) to sell these units to low income households. The Kiwanis Homes Down Payment Assistance Pilot Program (KDPAPP) will support the sale of 30-40 Kiwanis homes to qualifying social housing tenants, first targeting Kiwanis tenants who are paying market rent.

Question regarding this report should be directed to:

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