Talking to People

About Housing & Homelessness in Hamilton

What we Heard...

A 10-year, person-centred plan to make sure that everyone in Hamilton has a home. The Action Plan is a partnership between the City of Hamilton, the Affordable Housing Flagship, many other community partners and the residents of Hamilton.

For more information:
www.hamilton.ca/HousingActionPlan

Everyone has a home... Home is the foundation

The second in a series of reports to inform the creation of a Housing & Homelessness Action Plan

“Home is a place you choose, not somewhere you are forced to stay out of necessity”

Community roundtable participant
What we Heard…

Talking to People

About Housing & Homelessness in Hamilton

➤ The second in a series of reports to inform the creation of a Housing & Homelessness Action Plan
What we Heard...

Talking to People About Housing & Homelessness in Hamilton

Report Summary .......................................................................................................................... 1

Introduction .............................................................................................................................. 2

  Many Perspectives from the Community .............................................................................. 4
  Link to Human Services Planning ....................................................................................... 4
  Why do Community Engagement? ......................................................................................... 5
  Overview of Ideas .................................................................................................................... 6

Sections

1 Community Engagement Process and Results .......................................................... 7

  a. Preliminary Consultations ................................................................................................. 7
  b. Community Facilitation Team ......................................................................................... 10
  c. Citizen Advisory Committees ......................................................................................... 10
  d. General Public Surveys ..................................................................................................... 15
  e. Community Roundtable Discussions ............................................................................. 19
    What we heard from...
      • People who use Food Banks ....................................................................................... 20
      • Aboriginal People ......................................................................................................... 21
      • Women Facing Homelessness ..................................................................................... 21
      • People who are Waiting for Social Housing ............................................................... 22
      • Pregnant/Parenting Teens ............................................................................................ 22
      • The Chamber of Commerce ......................................................................................... 22
      • People who Work and Live in Waterdown/Flamborough ........................................... 23
      • Front Line Employees .................................................................................................... 23
      • Persons with Disabilities ............................................................................................... 24
      • Seniors ........................................................................................................................... 25
      • City of Hamilton Employees ......................................................................................... 25
      • Social Housing Tenants ............................................................................................... 25
      • Homebuilders ............................................................................................................... 26
      • Women Facing Violence ............................................................................................... 26
      • Newcomers .................................................................................................................... 26
      • Homeless Youth .......................................................................................................... 26
      • Landlords ...................................................................................................................... 27
  f. Interviews ............................................................................................................................ 28
  g. Community Check-In Gathering ....................................................................................... 31
Community Engagement Strategy Process—Key Lessons ... 34

a. Five Key Community Engagement Lessons ................................................................. 34
b. Observations from the Community Facilitators .......................................................... 37

Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Next Steps .......... 40

Appendices ..................................................................................................................... 42

Appendix A – Citizen Advisory Discussion Guide ......................................................... 42
Appendix B – General Public Survey .............................................................................. 42
Appendix C – Community Roundtable Discussion Guide ............................................. 47
Appendix D – Community Roundtable Discussion Participant List ................................ 50
Appendix E – Interview Guide ......................................................................................... 52

Contact Us ..................................................................................................................... 55
Our Community Engagement Strategy has been such an important part of the Action Plan process. This report shares findings from our different Community Engagement activities, including stories, quotes, themes and analysis from interviews, surveys, roundtable discussions and a community gathering. It contains suggestions that made it into the final strategies (sometimes with the exact wording) and other ideas that did not make it into the strategies. We have included the ideas that did not make it into the Plan because they deserve to be heard.

This report is intended to reflect the stories and ideas we heard from the people we consulted, which we hope will benefit the broader community, and other communities who are doing similar processes.

This document is organized to report on the process and results of our Community Engagement Strategy activities.

This Action Plan is intended to be ‘person-centred’. By person-centred, we mean that people and their experiences should drive the way we respond to issues of homelessness and housing problems.

This Action Plan is intended to be ‘person-centred’

Tony started out renting apartments and sharing places with roommates when he was young. He eventually married and bought a house where things felt stable and secure. He divorced, lost his job in manufacturing, started using drugs and ultimately lost his house which started a long journey of homelessness. Tony was using drugs heavily, staying in shelters and sleeping on the streets and in places not meant for habitation (like abandoned buildings). He went on social assistance (Ontario Works), rented apartments and lost apartments for a variety of reasons and turned again to sleeping on the streets and staying in shelters. Tony recently got support to get on disability and got into social housing.

-From: Homeownership to Sleeping the Streets – a Housing Story
Housing is a fundamental human right. It is the foundation for the economic, social and physical well-being of Hamilton residents. It is the central place from which we build our lives, nurture our families and ourselves and engage our communities. In other words, it is our home.

The City of Hamilton is working with the Affordable Housing Flagship and the broader stakeholder community to develop a new 10-year Housing & Homelessness Action Plan for Hamilton.

The Action Plan will address the full range of housing issues for households with low and moderate incomes from homelessness to affordable homeownership. The Action Plan will be both a strategic plan and a work plan that will guide decisions that have an impact on homelessness and affordable housing in Hamilton and will include targets to help measure our progress.

“Having a place crash out when you are fighting to keep it (was the worst). I lived with my two kids – lost that apartment, worse than sleeping with 30 guys in the same room, worse than living on the side of a mountain – knowing that I disappointed those kids.”

- Interview Participant

This new 10-year plan will be action-oriented and person-centred.

This report is one of a series of reports to provide context and data that will help inform the development of the Action Plan.

This report shows our Community Engagement Strategy in action. The purpose of this report is to:

1. Report back to the community. This document captures the breadth of information collected and ensures that the stories and ideas we heard are not lost.

2. Share our work and our processes with other communities and sectors who might be interested in what we learned from our Community Engagement experience.
Some key definitions and considerations:

**This document says ‘we’ and ‘us’ a lot – who are the ‘we’?**

For the most part, the ‘we’ refers to the people who did the work of collecting the input for the Community Engagement Strategy – City of Hamilton employees. Sometimes, though, the ‘we’ might refer to the broader City of Hamilton or the larger community.

**What is ‘Community’?**

A community is a collective of people that share something in common – geography, an interest and/or a culture. When we talk about the “community” in this document, we are talking about the different players in housing and homelessness including (but not limited to): service providers, businesses, government, decision makers, the general public, researchers and, absolutely, people who have lived the experience of housing insecurity and homelessness.

**What is Community Engagement?**

Engagement describes a process of asking people and hearing their ideas and stories. For the purpose of this document, we are talking about the process that we went through to hear the stories and ideas of the community of people who live in Hamilton and have some interest (based on work or life) in housing and homelessness.

**What is ‘Person-Centred’?**

Being ‘Person-centred’ is a value that makes people and their experiences central to all planning and development considerations. It means that people should be supported in ways that make sense for their unique circumstances and their economic, cultural, and gender-based lives.

Engagement describes a process of asking people and hearing their ideas and stories.
Many Perspectives from the Community

Early in the process, we recognized that hearing from a variety of perspectives would make this plan meaningful and help create real change. To write this plan, we needed to hear from a range of different people.

Link to Human Services Planning

In the beginning of our process, we looked at the good work of the Human Services Planning Initiative (HSPI) and used their Community Engagement Framework to help guide the process. Please see the following website for more information on Human Services Planning:

http://www.hamilton.ca/HealthandSocialServices/SocialServices/HumanServicesPlan.htm

The Human Services Planning Initiative (HSPI) is an initiative that the City and the community are working on together. The goal of the initiative is to develop strategies that will help the community create a plan for delivering and investing in human services now. (From the Human Services Planning Initiative webpage - find more information at www.hamilton.ca/humanservicesplan).

The HSPI Community Engagement Framework was developed to help researchers and planners think about how much they are willing and able to engage the community in their efforts.

Work in the field of housing and homelessness has often remained on the more “Passive” end of the inclusion continuum – past efforts have included providing information and asking for input. Some historical examples do demonstrate
more participatory levels of engagement, but those efforts have not been sustained. The Action Plan processes (through the activities detailed in this document) have been in the “Reactive/Consult” and “Participatory/Involve” areas of the above framework and we have detailed some strategies that will move us further onto “Empowerment/Collaborate” and toward “Leadership/Empower”.

Why do Community Engagement?

There are two key reasons why we dedicated a good deal of energy and resources in this area. First, the Housing and Homelessness Planning Group (a committee of stakeholders who have been advising this process) challenged us to be bold and to make sure that we talked to many people who have current or past experience with homelessness or housing issues.

Second, the Action Plan will be more relevant and have more impact if we understand what real people want and need in terms of housing.

During Phase I of the Action Plan and to find out how we can develop solutions to homelessness and housing insecurity, we connected with more than 800 individuals who have had lots of different experiences.

“…a lot of people have never lived the life so how can they say you should do this or you should do that? They’ve never been there.”

- Interview Participant
Overview of Ideas

Connecting with 800 different people means that we heard many stories, many concerns and many potential solutions.

While we heard a real diversity of stories and solutions, we can pull out three common ideas

1. People reminded us that **safe, affordable and stable housing is a critical human need**. The challenges that people face include not being able to afford housing, but that is not all. Addictions, mental health issues, family breakdown, abuse, poverty and unstable employment all contribute to housing insecurity. Also, the benefits of stable housing go beyond the four walls and a roof. Stable housing is good for physical and mental health, good for employment stability, for family connectedness and for civic engagement.

2. Even though we know the benefits of stable housing, **people still experience barriers to housing**. We heard from people that they did not know how to access help, waited for a long time for supports and housing and felt discriminated against when trying to access housing. We also heard, many times over, that people cannot afford good housing and that social assistance and minimum wage rates were not adequate to live in stable and good quality housing.

3. We were challenged by many of the 800 individuals we connected with to **make this plan action-focused**. The time has passed for research and plans that do not change the situations of people who are in need. Also, there needs to be a variety of perspectives that help us make a plan truly action-oriented.

“Now that I’m housed my health has improved. I don’t shake as much and I’m well-fed.”

- Interview Participant

“(Do) not just listen to people but take up and implement their suggestions, proposals, etc. Involve (people) in actual decision making and implementation of decisions made.”

- Community Check-In Participant
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT PROCESS AND RESULTS

We talked to more than 800 individuals in Hamilton through a series of different Community Engagement activities including:

a. Preliminary Consultations
b. Hiring a Community Facilitation Team
c. Citizen Advisory Committees
d. General Public Surveys
e. Community Roundtable Discussions
f. Interviews
g. A Community Check-In Gathering

This document is organized to report on the process and results of our Community Engagement Strategy activities. Each section below details one activity and includes information about the process, who we talked to and what we heard.

The Project Team took the ideas we heard from the community, reviewed what is currently working in our community as well as promising work from other communities, and came up with our 54 strategies that form the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan. Please visit the website www.hamilton.ca/housingactionplan to see the first phase of the Action Plan.

a. Preliminary Consultations

WHAT WE DID

In May 2011, Paul Dowling Consulting completed an overview of the Housing and Homelessness service system which provided a foundation of research and data for the Action Plan. They talked to people who work, plan and access the system of supports related to housing and homelessness.

WHO WE TALKED TO

We contacted a total of 383 people – 169 people participated in focus groups or interviews and 214 responded to surveys.

Paul Dowling Consulting talked to the following groups:

• Employees from Wesley Urban Ministries – Claremont House Special Care Unit and Wesley Youth Housing
• Employees from Good Shepherd Centres – The Family Centre, Mary’s Place and Good Shepherd Square
• Employees from St. Matthew’s House
• Employees from Urban Native Homes Inc. – Koo gaa da win Manitou
• Members of the Street Youth Planning Collaborative
• Members of the Affordable Housing Flagship
• Members of the Hamilton Executive Directors’ Aboriginal Coalition Inc.
• Members of the Hamilton Emergency Shelter Integration and Coordination Committee
• Members of the Emergency Food Action Committee
• Members of the Hamilton Funders Network
• Members of the Hamilton Addiction and Mental Health Collaborative (Housing Working Group)
• Members of the Community Advisory Board
• Stakeholders from Housing Supports
• Stakeholders from the Disability services
• Stakeholders from the Corrections sector
• Stakeholders from the Seniors sector
• Stakeholders from the Physical and Mental Health sectors
• Tenants and service consumers
• Shelter users and people with experiences of homelessness
• City of Hamilton Employees
• Stakeholders from the Food Security sector
WHAT WE HEARD

The consultants’ analysis showed that over the past 10 years, government investment from senior levels has strengthened the Housing and Homelessness system in Hamilton. However, lack of funding stability, inattention to the root causes of homelessness and poverty and the variety of unique issues that different populations face continue to challenge the housing and homelessness system.

THEIR RECOMMENDATIONS INCLUDE THE FOLLOWING:

• Develop meaningful ways for consumers to be involved in the planning and design of housing and homelessness supports and programs.

• Make sure that the system of services works for people by:
  • Ensuring that no entry point is the wrong one,
  • Providing support in navigating the system and
  • Finding ways to make sure people do not have to repeat their stories many times over.

• Increase and continue advocating for more housing investment from senior levels of government and making sure that land use planning processes work for affordable housing development.
b. Community Facilitation Team

**WHAT WE DID**

In October 2011, we hired three Community Facilitators. The idea was to have people work alongside the project team who were not employees in government or housing and homelessness service agencies. They consulted on our process, lead the process of collecting surveys in different community spaces, analyzed data, co-facilitated focus groups and were instrumental in planning our Community Check-In Gathering. The three Facilitators we hired each brought a different community perspective to the project.

**WHO WE TALKED TO**

We partnered with the City of Hamilton Employment Services to find our Community Facilitators. We received 20 applications and ultimately hired three people.

**WHAT THEY SAID**

Under the ‘Key Lessons’ section of this report (see Pages 37–39) each of the three Community Facilitators – Ed McRae, Sharleen Ramon and Naseem Sherwani – have written personal statements about their experience.

c. Citizen Advisory Committees

**WHAT WE DID**

The City Council has a number of Citizen Advisory Committees that advise on a range of different issues.

We visited eight Citizen Advisory Committees and asked them to comment on the issues they thought were important to consider in this process. The Citizen Advisory Committees we visited were:

- Committee Against Racism
- Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Advisory Committee
- Immigrant and Refugee Advisory Committee
- Seniors Advisory Committee
- Status of Women Advisory Committee
- Tenant Advisory Committee
- Food and Shelter Advisory Committee

Please see Appendix A for our Citizen Advisory Committee Discussion Guide.
WHO WE TALKED TO

We connected with 85 different people through our Citizen Advisory discussions. While we did not collect their demographic information, the membership of the Committees generally reflected the populations they were meant to represent. Through those discussions, we spoke with people who represented the following communities:

- Women
- Persons with Disabilities (physical and mental)
- Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender people
- Tenants
- Immigrants and Refugees
- Seniors
- People of Colour

It is important to note that many identities overlap – for example, we spoke with women who are immigrants and we spoke with seniors who are tenants.

WHAT WE HEARD

Our conversations with the Citizen Advisory Committees included many questions about the Action Plan process and issues to consider when thinking about unique populations of people who face housing and homelessness.

Two common issues that were raised within the Citizen Advisory Committee discussions were:

PEOPLE’S UNIQUE IDENTITIES HAVE AN IMPACT ON THEIR HOUSING. People have increased barriers and different access to housing based on unique factors.

PEOPLE, REGARDLESS OF IDENTITY, WORRY ABOUT FEELING SAFE AND SECURE AT HOME. Nearly every group talked about safety as a key issue that they face in their various housing situations. The way people talked about safety, however, was different depending on their experience – some people talked about wanting to feel safe from crime while others talked about wanting to be secure against racism or homophobia.
Some people talked about wanting to feel safe from crime while others talked about wanting to be secure against racism or homophobia.

Transgender people have unique issues that make housing affordability a problem. At the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Committee we learned that people who are beginning to transition their gender (by dressing as their identified gender, taking hormones, undergoing surgeries) often cannot keep their jobs and, therefore, lose their housing because they are not as able to ‘pass’ as their identified gender. This, in turn, makes their housing unstable.

-From: the Gay, Lesbian, Bisexual and Transgender Citizen Advisory Committee

One member of the Immigrant and Refugee Advisory Committee described a situation when he was very new to Hamilton. He went to rent an apartment and was told that because he did not have an established credit history in Hamilton, he would need a co-signer. He did not have anyone who could fulfill that role and offered to pay for the entire year’s rent at that time. He was denied the apartment.

-From: the Immigrant and Refugee Advisory Committee
We also heard a number of ideas for solutions, many of which are incorporated into the strategies that are the Action Plan. Three ideas that we heard in the Citizen Advisory Committees were:

1. We need to make sure that employees within our service system are well-trained to deal with a diversity of people and their unique housing experiences,

2. People need help knowing where to go to get support with their housing and

3. We need tailored housing options.

We were told at the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities that we need to think about the unique needs of post secondary students with disability issues. Many students with disabilities have to travel to campus, sometimes quite long distances because the wait to get into accessible and affordable housing is too long and they’ve long since graduated once the housing is offered.

-From: the Advisory Committee for Persons with Disabilities
Rosa moved out on her own when she was 17 years old. She rented a room with a family and considers that to be her best housing situation to date. She felt safe and comfortable there. She moved in with her boyfriend and had to leave because of escalating abuse. After spending a month in a shelter where she had to repeat her story again and again in order to get her needs met, Rosa moved into a cheap and poor quality bachelor apartment with a person she met at the shelter. When her ex-boyfriend visited her in the apartment, he was shocked at the bad quality and told her she was moving back in with him. That made her feel ‘special’. The abuse started again quickly. Rosa had applied for social housing while she was in the shelter and was offered a unit while staying with her ex-boyfriend. She accepted a one-bedroom unit and was really happy at how clean and nice it was. She was surprised when she found herself feeling anxious and worried soon after moving in – feeling lonely and realizing that having this stability and consistency in her housing meant that it was up to her to build her life.

-From: Repeating the Same Difficult Tale Again and Again – a Housing Story
d. General Public Surveys

**What we did**

We recognize that everyone needs to be involved in the discussion about housing and homelessness but often the general public is not consulted. In November and December 2011, our Community Facilitators went out to community places to ask the public questions about their opinions on housing and homelessness and solutions they thought we should hear.

We conducted surveys in person in the following places:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SURVEY LOCATION</th>
<th>Number of Surveys</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Benetto Recreation Centre</td>
<td>34</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sackville Hill Seniors Recreation Centre</td>
<td>88</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dundas Community Pool</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Valley Park Community Centre</td>
<td>72</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ryerson Recreation Centre</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Central/West Apartment Building</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Steelworkers Union Hall</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dominic Agostino Riverdale Recreation Centre</td>
<td>30</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ancaster Rotary Recreation Centre</td>
<td>67</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>TOTAL</strong></td>
<td><strong>479</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

We chose these sites based on geographic and income diversity.

For a copy of the General Public Survey, please see Appendix B.
**Who we talked to**

We asked survey respondents to fill out a few questions about their demographics. Some highlights of those demographics include:

- 60% of respondents were female.
- Nearly half of the respondents were between 30 and 59 years old.
- Almost one-fifth (18%) of respondents had incomes below $25,000 and almost one-fifth (16%) of respondents had incomes above $100,000.
- More than one quarter (26%) of respondents were renters.

The demographics of the General Public Survey respondents mostly reflected the overall population of Hamilton.

**What we heard**

We asked four questions in our General Public Survey. Those questions were:

1. How important do you think the issue of homelessness is for the Hamilton community? Please rate the importance.

2. How important do you think the issue of housing is for the Hamilton community? Please rate the importance.

3. Does homelessness and affordable housing affect you in any of the following ways? Please check all that apply.

4. Think about housing and homelessness, what are the three biggest challenges in Hamilton, in your opinion? Do you have any ideas about how to solve the challenges you talked about?

**A synopsis from the results of each question is outlined on the next page**

- 95% of respondents said that the issue of homelessness is an ‘important’ or ‘very important’ issue for Hamilton.
- 93% of respondents said that the issue of affordable housing is an ‘important’ or ‘very important’ issue for Hamilton.
HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS EFFECTS

The majority of respondents answered that housing and homelessness affect their community and where they choose to live. It is important to note that respondents could choose multiple answers.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>EFFECT</th>
<th>TOTAL OF RESPONSES</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>They affect me personally</td>
<td>69</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They affect people in my family or my close friends</td>
<td>116</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They affect my community</td>
<td>271</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They affect where I choose to live</td>
<td>130</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They affect where I go in my community</td>
<td>106</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>They do not affect me</td>
<td>71</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>22</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
THE BIGGEST CHALLENGES

The greatest challenges identified through the survey were economic. Both renters and homeowners identified the same three greatest challenges related to housing and homelessness in Hamilton: 1) rent cost, 2) utility cost and 3) availability or access to affordable housing.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>CHALLENGE</th>
<th>Owners</th>
<th>Renters</th>
<th>No Response</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Rent cost</td>
<td>154</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>21</td>
<td>268</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>House purchase price</td>
<td>98</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>140</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Utility cost</td>
<td>128</td>
<td>63</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>201</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Quality and condition of home</td>
<td>93</td>
<td>30</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>135</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landlord relationship</td>
<td>59</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>74</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Discrimination</td>
<td>48</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>76</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Availability or access to affordable housing</td>
<td>151</td>
<td>56</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>219</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choice of housing</td>
<td>40</td>
<td>20</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>66</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Supports to live independently</td>
<td>81</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neighbourhood quality</td>
<td>68</td>
<td>23</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>103</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Street homelessness</td>
<td>114</td>
<td>31</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>158</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>13</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>16</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The solutions for the challenges varied widely, for example:

- Housing affordability – that we need more affordable housing options,
- Better wages to help people afford their housing,
- The need for supports and
- The need to increase the quality of housing, holding tenants and landlords accountable.
e. Community Roundtable Discussions

**WHAT WE DID**

We worked with the Housing and Homelessness Planning Group and different community organizations to set up discussions with people who have experienced, worked within or organized efforts related to housing and homelessness.

We also asked these same people to fill out surveys with questions about their demographics.

*Please see Appendix C* for our Community Roundtable Discussion Guide.

**WHO WE TALKED TO**

We talked to a total of 177 people in the Community Roundtable Discussions; more than half of whom had some recent or current experience of homelessness or housing problems.

The list of people we talked to does not represent everyone who has previously expressed an interest in housing and homelessness. There were groups of people who had recently been consulted and we decided not to duplicate these consultations.

Out of the 177 Community Roundtable Discussion participants we asked to complete our demographics questionnaire, 124 (70% of participants) agreed. Some highlights of the demographics include:

- More than twice as many women responded.
- 12% of participants reported having no income, 30% reported being on social assistance.
- More than one quarter (29%) of respondents reported having a disability, compared with 18% of the Hamilton population who identified having a disability.
- Most of the participants identified as Caucasian, however, 10% of participants identified as Aboriginal.
- 23% of participants were not born in Canada (and 18% of them identified being in Hamilton for fewer than 5 years)

---

Based on our demographic findings, we talked to a higher percentage of people who face barriers to housing than the average population (we spoke with more persons with disabilities, more newcomers to Canada, more people on Social Assistance and more Aboriginal people than Hamilton’s average).

Please see Appendix D for a table that shows the groups of people we talked to, the community organization that helped us plan the discussion and how many people were in each group.

**What we heard**

We heard a lot of really great ideas. At the end of most of our Community Roundtable Discussions we asked the groups to pick out what they thought were the main ideas from their conversations. The following section reports those key ideas and they are organized based on the Roundtable Discussion groups.

Here is what we heard from…

**…People who use Food Banks:**

- We need faster transfers for tenants wanting to move between social housing units.
- Better information about housing needs to be provided to people who might have a language barrier.
- Each person’s situation is different so we need to work on lots of different solutions for housing and homelessness.

“We need more bachelor and 1-bedroom housing for singles (not shared) to honour people’s need for privacy and dignity.”

*Comment shared by: Aboriginal People*

Frank spent more than 20 years moving between Hamilton and the east coast where his hometown is. When he would head east, he would work and stay with family and friends, when he would come back to Hamilton he would stay in shelters. Frank got connected to a local team of supports and went on disability. He moved into a social housing unit and after a year decided to move into a rental apartment in the private market to have more privacy and room.

*From: Traveling Across the Country to Find Work…a Housing Story*
…Aboriginal People:

- People experience racism in housing; we need equal opportunity and fairness when being considered for tenancy.
- We need more housing: convert unused buildings into housing, provide supplements for landlords and look at the ‘Habitat for Humanity’ model. We need more bachelor and 1-bedroom housing for singles (not shared) to honour people’s need for privacy and dignity.
- We need “bridge” funding or quick and accessible money when a crisis happens.

…Women Facing Homelessness:

It is easier to be a homeless male in the City of Hamilton than a homeless female; we have more issues like medical, emotional needs, safety and privacy.
- We need more housing for women because times have changed.
- We need to improve the quality of housing for homeless women.

“Keep children central to the Plan and the solutions.”

—Comment shared by: People waiting for Social Housing
People who are on the waiting list need support, like case management or community supports.

- The Plan needs to include solutions for discrimination.
- The response to property standards should be proactive, not reactive. The City should enforce bylaws and do regular checkups. We need to take quality of living into account.
- We need more flexibility in the social housing system so that there is more focus on meeting people’s different needs instead of rules and regulations.
- Develop creative ways to implement solutions without government.
- Keep children central to the Plan and the solutions.

Landlords do not want to rent to people who are 18 years and under.
- Housing should be well maintained and in good repair.
- Sizes of apartments are too small especially for mothers with kids.

Landlords want certainty that all their units will be occupied. Housing allowance/rent supplement is a good program that helps to keep apartments filled for landlords so they don’t lose money on vacant units.
- We need to set up a process to allow investors to legalize housing that does not meet by-laws and codes.
- Density bonusing for new construction – offer incentives and concessions to developers if they include affordable housing.
- There is a strong business case for affordable housing, but we have to communicate it better.

“The Action Plan needs to think outside the boundaries of the old City of Hamilton and ensure planning is inclusive of rural experiences.”

—Comment shared by: People who Work and Live in Waterdown/Flamborough
People who Work and Live in Waterdown/Flamborough:

- The Action Plan needs to think outside the boundaries of the old City of Hamilton and ensure planning is inclusive of rural experiences. People in rural areas require different solutions to homelessness and housing insecurity than people in an urban centre.
- We need more supply of geared to income and affordable housing and need to think about different ways to provide this affordability beyond the traditional social housing approach.
- Education and engagement of all community members to develop solutions is crucial. Homelessness and housing insecurity needs to be normalized not stigmatized.
- Waterdown and Flamborough is a rapidly growing area and, therefore, housing and homelessness issues are also growing.

Front Line Employees:

- Don’t overlook refugee claimants.
- I have seen the power of supportive housing in the lives of people with mental health issues.
- People are people. Surely by being human, everyone deserves a measure of respect. Respect in this case, includes rights to autonomy, choice in housing, and ability to access supports.
- TEAMWORK. Private landlords, and City/Province working together is the key.
- Increase government funding for homes, and homelessness programs.
- Everybody needs to know how much money CHH spent in maintenance.
- Implement grants, and more funding for landlords.
- OW recipients do not have enough money to pay rent (for suitable housing, food, bus tickets).
- Housing should look into harm reduction for addictions, mental health and sexual health for youth.
- Think about this topic seriously, as must be addressed and acted on. It is important to hear from all sectors, community members, and service users.
- Everyone is of value and deserves to enjoy a space that they call home. Home is a place you choose, not somewhere you are forced to stay at, out of necessity.
“Based upon my work experience in Hamilton here, this is a critical issue that needs to be addressed. There are a lot of barriers that face a lot of residents in Hamilton, whether it be disabilities which can range from physical to mental in nature. These individuals lack the supports that are necessary that allow them to live in clean, safe housing with a degree of dignity.”

- Community Check-In Participant

...Persons with Disabilities

- Need to focus on safety and health quality.
- Too much paper work. I feel they are trying to drown me in paper so I just go away.
- Feel government is waiting for me to die because it will be cheaper to just bury me.
- People are under a huge amount of stress.
- Cannot speak to landlord because afraid of what might happen. Some people don’t feel this way; some are fine with telling landlord what’s wrong.
- More bed bug education is needed.

“People are people. Surely by being human, everyone deserves a measure of respect. Respect in this case, includes rights to autonomy, choice in housing, and ability to access supports.”

-Comment shared by: Front Line Employees
...Seniors

- Need more affordable housing available for seniors.
- We need to look closely at the overall cost for living compared to incomes.
- Need support to building better community.

...City of Hamilton Employees

- Transformation of the system: need to take the risks associated with this and focus on quality not quantity of interventions/services.
- Build on successes: don’t reinvent the wheel but invest in what is working and focus on sustainability.
- More collaboration and integration is happening now than ever before. This is encouraging however is it making the system better for people?
- Integration of data collection/analysis systems and more communication between departments.
- Focus on zoning.

...Social Housing Tenants

- We need more affordable housing.
- Rent geared to income and emergency subsidies should be available to everybody.
- Every person has a right to have safe and affordable housing.
- Listen to the people who know the hard core problems before making decisions. Decision makers need to know what it’s like to live in poverty.

“Every person has a right to have safe and affordable housing.”

—Comment shared by: Social Housing Tenants
...Homebuilders
- Mixed income development is best.
- Explore affordable homeownership opportunities targeted to low income neighbourhoods.
- Explore public private partnerships for affordable housing where the City can act as guarantor of a certain rate of return for the private developer who builds affordable housing (perhaps a small pilot project to investigate feasibility).
- Inclusionary zoning is not the best approach.
- Secondary suites can be encouraged by roughing-in the potential for those units in new-build homes.

...Women Facing Violence
- Make housing accessible to people who have experienced domestic violence.
- Buildings need to be safer.
- People in charge need to be accountable in terms of cleanliness, safety and livable conditions.
- Homeless individuals need to be treated with respect.
- Housing needs more supervisors, developers with more connections with the tenants.

...Newcomers
- We need to prioritize people in housing who have unique needs.
- Families with children, youth and elders need attention and larger spaces in terms of better housing.
- More support from the Housing Office.

...Homeless Youth
- The cycle of poverty depends on the area you live in.
- Utilities make it hard to afford a place; include utilities in the price of rent.
- Housing should be up to standard before someone moves in; the quality of housing needs to be checked.
- We should be able to bring our pets into housing.
...Landlords

Supports for tenants is a big issue for landlords. How do landlords get supports for their tenants and where can they get information to help their tenants access supports?

• Better discharge planning is needed. Transitions to Homes is a good model because there are support workers involved and landlords are paid directly.

• Much more difficult to be a landlord today. Legislated requirements have changed the industry (e.g. Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act, Residential Tenancies Act etc.). The cost of managing rental is increasing so people are investing elsewhere.

• Provincial annual rent guideline uses the Consumer Price Index (CPI) to set annual rent increases, but landlord costs increases are generally higher than CPI, e.g. maintenance, repairs, insurance etc. This means that landlords have to apply for above guideline rent increases to the Landlord Tenant Board which is time consuming and costly.

• Housing affordability is mainly an income issue and rent control legislation is a way for government to not have to invest in social programs as heavily as if there were no rent controls.

• Bed bugs are driving up costs: higher vacancy loss.

• Mixed income buildings is a good model.

• Shelter subsidies should be paid directly to landlords.

“[It’s] Much more difficult to be a landlord today.”
—Comment shared by: Landlords
f. Interviews

**WHAT WE DID**

In May 2012, we talked to eight people who provided interviews on their housing stories, challenges and successes.

*Please see Appendix E* for the Interview Guide.

**WHO WE TALKED TO**

To hear and understand stories of housing and homelessness in a person-centred way, as well as what works and what does not work in housing, we talked to eight people. Of the people we spoke with:

- Four were men and four were women.
- The participants were between 30 and 75 years old.
- Two participants identified as Aboriginal.
- Two participants had long term experiences with Corrections.
- At least one participant was a single parent.

**WHAT WE HEARD**

We asked people questions getting them to talk about their own experiences of housing and homelessness. The questions were designed to help us better understand the complexity of experiences that people have in their housing situations and to see how they accessed the system of services. People told us about:

- Their housing histories,
- Their best and worst housing experiences,
- How the system was working and
- What would improve it?
The housing stories throughout this document are from the interviews; below are findings in addition to the stories already shared.

Describe an example of a housing situation that was really positive for you. What made that housing situation positive?

For most people that we talked to, their best housing situations included their own space that they knew they could afford. To describe why their housing situations were their best, people said:

- I always knew what was ahead.
- Things were private and stable.
- It was just a feeling.
- There was a sense of community.
- I knew I could afford it.

Describe an example of a housing situation that was really negative for you. What made that housing situation negative?

Unsurprisingly most people said that being evicted, staying in a shelter or sleeping on the street were their toughest housing situations. Lack of stability and not knowing what was going to happen were part of people’s worst housing situations:

- Staying in shelter, not knowing what’s coming next, all of the invasive questions.
- Getting evicted, seeing how disappointed it made my kids.

One person explained...saying, “It (the social services system) helps but it doesn’t work.”

“Did I deserve an apartment that looks nice? I felt like crap – the abuse did that – made me feel like I was worthless. I wouldn’t try to rent a nice place – I was too intimidated, my self esteem was so low and I didn’t want to explain myself anymore.”

- Interview Participant
How would you describe the social service system related to housing?

Most people agreed that the housing system works in some ways (gets people housed, helps them understand services) but is really complex and not user-friendly in many ways. One person explained this saying “it (the social service system) helps but it doesn't work”. People talked about the inadequacy of the system to help deal with the complexity of their lives (abuse, mental health, physical health and addictions issues) and about the invasive nature of the system processes (intake processes, reporting requirements).

We conducted the interviews mainly to hear the stories of people with experience in housing and homelessness issues. However, we also asked participants what they thought would help the housing situation in Hamilton. They identified three main ideas:

1. The system must become more person-centred; people need to be at the centre of all activities and decisions that affect them.
2. People need to know where to go for help and how to get their needs met.
3. We need more grassroots and outreach efforts on food security.

“(We need to have) people growing their own vegetables, community farming, better and healthier food. You feel more worthwhile if you sustain yourself, makes you feel good about who you are.”

- Interview Participant

We talked to Frank about his experiences with homelessness, substance use and jail. He hasn’t done crack, hasn’t been to jail and has been housed for the past year and a half – the longest stretch he’s ever experienced. What does he think is different this time around? For the first time, he left jail and had a place to live and someone that cared about him.

-From: A Place to Live and Someone that Cares…a Housing Story
g. Community Check-In Gathering

WHAT WE DID

On March 7, 2012, we held a Community Check-In Gathering. By then, we had collected a lot of information from the community.

We planned this gathering at a local coffee bar that was accessible on a number of bus routes. We set up the room with stations that detailed our process and what we had already heard. We put the strategies that would ultimately form the Action Plan up for review and comment. We provided people multiple ways to provide feedback: on feedback forms, on flipchart paper around the room and on video.

A total of 120 people came through the event, talked with the Project Team and provided written feedback.

Please visit www.hamilton.ca/housingactionplan to see footage from the event.

“I think this is great, it brings awareness to homelessness and housing, I’ve had many people help me today and actually I understood a lot and I’m glad I came today.”

- Community Check-In Gathering Participant

WHO WE TALKED TO

We asked people to identify what brought them out, and these were their responses (please note, people were able to choose more than one reason):

- 43 people identified that they were interested in housing or homelessness.
- 18 people identified that they have housing issues.
- 18 people identified that they work in the area of housing or homelessness.
- 17 people identified that they had been part of the consultation.
- 12 people identified that they work for government.
- 5 people identified that they are homeless.
What we Heard

There was general agreement with the overall set of strategies from the participants of the Check-In Gathering. Most of the feedback confirmed support for the strategies. We did hear additional information about food security (people need increased food security) and about the importance of pets in people’s lives.

We also asked people to prioritize the strategies on which there was some agreement. Most of those that were chosen as high-priority involved some level of advocacy to different levels and areas of government. The following is a list of strategies that received the first and second highest number of votes:

- Explore new housing initiatives and funding programs.
- Advocate to senior levels of government for new housing funding.
- Encourage mixed housing and mixed income in neighbourhoods.
- Advocate for changes to income policies (like Ontario Works).
- Develop formalized relationship with the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care and the Local Health Integration Network on homelessness and housing with supports issues.
- Advocate for increase to the Personal Needs Allowance.
- Expand programs to rehabilitate housing stock.
- Expand programs to modify housing.
- Develop made-in-Hamilton occupancy standards.
- Develop a system navigator role for the housing system.
- Develop landlord and tenant outreach and mediation with a focus on tenant rights.
- Create a general awareness campaign on housing rights/discrimination.
- Ensure that people are meaningfully engaged in planning and decision making in the areas that affect their lives.
We asked people to fill out evaluation forms at the event and 80 people responded. Most of the respondents felt that the gathering was a “good way” to communicate results. Some examples of comments include:

*It became obvious to me that a lot of research has been done, and at the right levels. I hope people in this project keep moving forward with the ideas and carrying them through.*

*Love the way the information was displayed*

*I saw a lot of my groups comments, and a lot more.*

Other respondents were more critical and challenging of the process. Some examples of comments include:

*Anybody who really cared could have come up with all of this, without years of meetings.*

*Expected more of the needy to be in attendance.*

Overall, the feedback from the Check-In Gathering reminded us that:

- People want to be given opportunities to be heard,
- Decision makers need to listen to people and most importantly,
- This plan must make a difference for our community and for peoples’ lives.

---

Susan was 60 years old when her husband of 40 years left because of her increasingly complex health issues. She entered a women’s shelter and was quickly moved into a social housing unit. Susan has many physical disability issues and as she ages needs to carefully think about the accessibility of where she lives – her individual unit, the building or complex it is in and the neighbourhood as well.

-From: Accessibility is Critical…a Housing Story
The community challenged the Project Team to talk to lots of people who live with housing insecurity and homelessness and to make it meaningful.

In the beginning of the Action Plan work, the Project Team was eager to read about how other communities approached their consultation processes when doing housing and homelessness planning. We found a gap in that information and saw a need to share our community engagement process, challenges and benefits.

a. Five Key Community Engagement Lessons

The Project Team has identified five key lessons that we learned from this Community Engagement Strategy. The lessons are outlined below with examples from the work.

Lesson #1: People want to be consulted

Through the surveys, focus groups, interviews and gathering, a number of people identified that they were glad to be asked their opinion about what should be done. Some of these people were from communities or groups we don’t often hear from like: the Chamber of Commerce or the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, Transgender community. Some were people who have spent a lot of their life trying to get their housing needs met within the system. One man who was interviewed had been homeless on and off for 25 years; his comment was that “it’s just cool that you’re talking to me”.

Also, we did not have trouble recruiting people for the most part. The Community Roundtable Discussions were well attended, people made time in their busy lives to tell us what they think about the state of homelessness and housing insecurity in our community.

One man who was interviewed had been homeless on and off for 25 years; his comment was that “It’s just cool that you’re talking to me.”
Lesson #2: People not only want to be consulted – they want to be engaged and they have high expectations

While Lesson #1 was that people want to be consulted, they reminded us that they want that consultation to matter, to be meaningful. Everyone we consulted came up with really excellent ideas and recommendations but lots of the groups reminded us that the most important thing was to make sure that some sort of action came from this plan; it cannot just sit on a shelf and collect dust. We also needed to worry about (and still do) how to make sure that we are seeking input but balancing that with the reality of current financial and policy pressures. Also, this cannot be a one-off consultation. People from a variety of perspectives want to be engaged more frequently in decisions that affect their lives. According to one Community Check-In Gathering participant:

The people who need the housing need to be listened to more and allowed to be more involved directly and not have that power taken away.

So, what is on our ‘meaningful engagement’ to do list?

• We need to make sure that what we heard during the engagement effort is reflected in our Action Plan. People need to see their voices reflected in the strategies.
• We need to maintain the relationships that we have in the community and develop new ones to keep the conversation going.
• We need to find the right communication tools to keep a two-way dialogue timely and meaningful.
Lesson #3: Community engagement takes lots of planning, time, resources and creativity

Meaningful community engagement is not an easy process. In retrospect, we needed more time than expected to recruit for our Community Roundtable Discussions and Interviews. It also took a lot of employee time, a lot of bus tickets and many grocery vouchers to conduct all of our conversations.

But it’s not just about employees, money and time. It is also about flexibility, creative ideas and consultation methods that will encourage the most meaningful participation. Two examples from our Community Engagement Strategy that worked particularly well and demonstrate this creativity are:

1. Hiring a Community Facilitation team. We hired three members of the Hamilton community who brought different professional, educational and life experiences to the role. This team proved invaluable in getting the Engagement activities done, bringing a new perspective to those activities and a different perspective to the analysis.

2. The Community Check-In Gathering. To be transparent and provide a venue to hear (in a meaningful way) how we did, we invited everyone who participated in the Community Engagement Strategy to join us for a drop-in session at a local coffee bar. We displayed all of the information we had collected so people could give us their impressions and suggestions in a variety of ways: written on forms or on flip charts, through a video booth set up and by talking to employees.

Lesson #4: Community engagement takes a variety of different perspectives for it to be meaningful

We know that homelessness and housing insecurity affect different people in different ways; a woman who is a senior has a different experience in her housing than a young family who are refugees in Hamilton. For this plan to work for the whole community, we knew that we needed to talk to people with different identities, who come from different communities and who have had different experiences.

The challenge, however, was also recognizing that within all of that difference there is complexity; for example, not all senior women will have the same experience, some will have different cultural identities, some will have different levels
of ability. So, how do we manage that complexity? Also, how do we balance the tension between respecting peoples’ difference and pitting different communities against each other in these economically strapped times? The lesson we learned here is that while it’s complex, community engagement takes a variety of different perspectives for it to be meaningful.

**Lesson #5: It’s worth it**

The good news? Despite all of the time, energy, resources and complexity, it’s worth it! We think that our Action Plan is a much better guide for our community to deal with issues of housing and homelessness because of how many people with whom we connected.

**b. Observations from the Community Facilitators:**

The following is a statement of reflection that our Community Facilitation Team – Ed McRae, Sharleen Ramon and Naseem Sherwani co-wrote:

The City organized an orientation program for us focused on: Organizational Structure, Affordable Housing and Homelessness Action Plan, and Job Specification. This information was a valuable addition to our existing knowledge.

As community facilitators we assisted in developing the protocol, co-facilitating 22 focus groups (roundtable discussions), taking notes, analyzing the qualitative data using content analysis technique, and developing themes to interpret voices of the community in the Action Plan. Each focus group had different characteristics and had to be run in a unique way, requiring facilitators to adjust skills to create an environment conducive to open dialogue. We actively assisted in developing surveys, administering the general public surveys at 9 locations around Hamilton. We also prepared code books related to variable labels and values, set up ground work for data entry of the General Public and Demographic surveys, entered data in MS Excel, cleaned the data inconsistencies, transferred files from MS Excel and merged data into Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) software. We efficiently analyzed 470 subjects’ data using Descriptive Statistics. In a tight deadline, we made visual presentations of preliminary findings in the Planning Group meeting.

As Community Facilitators, we played a key role in event planning for our community check-in event on March 7, 2012. We engaged anyone and everyone who wanted to be involved by putting up posters at buildings and we also went back to the community who provided us with the feedback inviting them to the event.
The event was full of information but also we provided tools to evaluate and hear more feedback about the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan process so far.

Our overall analysis and statistics were essential in supporting the process and the development of the strategies. Each facilitator embodied different experiences and educational backgrounds which made this process even more dynamic. Planning group members positively shaped the plan representing different sectors and populations within the community and advocated on their behalf both with passion and professionalism.

The primary strength of the Action Plan is and will continue to be the foundational core values. Through the experience of this project there were regular check-ins and the core values were not just written but lived in each action and contact.

Recording information was significant because this made the plan more complex but tailored to the community needs.

The biggest challenges were to fit the core values into a system perspective. Keeping focus with such a broad scope that affordable housing and homelessness are major issues. It was extremely important to hear the voices of people regarding all aspects of their experiences with housing and homelessness. Recording information was significant because this made the plan more complex but tailored to the community needs. Another challenge was hearing people’s basic needs not being met and not being able to offer immediate results. As facilitators, we required life experiences to be shared and for people to relive their experiences for the purposes of developing a plan but yet there are no promises that they will get anything in return. This process required a lot of sensitivity and awareness from a person-centred perspective.

There were many more opportunities for us to take a lead in various roles extending the messages, facts and data to the public or existing planning group members’ sectors. As facilitators, we had an instrumental role and this was obvious in the continuum of this experience by the project team regularly inviting our opinions and feedback. We learned that the community is in vast need of a housing and homelessness plan and people want something to be done as they share their struggles, challenges and concerns not just for themselves but for everyone around them, children, friends, family etc.
The following is a series of personal statements from each of the three Community Facilitators.

My personal thoughts on the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Action Plan have been extremely positive. With great care in trying to involve so many people with lived experience, local community groups, business leaders, and front line workers, this has been clearly worth the time and effort that was put in. In the report that was submitted to the City of Hamilton, it becomes abundantly clear that this document reflects the thoughts of the community. This is something that all involved should be proud of, as this should allow us to continue to move forward on this important issue. I’m very thankful to have been given the opportunity to help in developing of the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.

Ed McRae

I learned that Housing and Homelessness—an indicator of a decent and quality standard of living has a much broader scope. I was excited to transfer my strong research, training and facilitation skills on a project for the people even in situations of stringent deadlines. On the one hand, I was touched with the stories of people who can barely meet their ends but lack of affordable housing and homelessness has added sufferings and stigmatization. On the other hand, the commitment of planner groups about affordable housing at each and every meeting helped to achieve the successive milestones. I was also impressed by the dedication the project team put into the planning process for the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Action plan. I now feel fully equipped on the stages of developing a community planning program process in Canada.

Naseem Sherwani

The detail, feeling and thought shared by you, I hope you all can see somehow integrated into the strategies we present in this plan. Housing and Homelessness are unified, so to address both offered a complex, interrelated; strategic undertaking that was truly personalized by the community we talked to. It is not just the start but rather a gathering of the existing strengths of this community as well. Most importantly, thank you to every single person who shared their experiences with us and every individual that had played a role in this process of developing a Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.

Sharleen Ramon
If a plan is not effectively implemented, it is only as good as the paper on which it is printed. To be successfully implemented, resources, participation and support from all stakeholder groups are necessary.

Phase Two of the Housing & Homelessness Action Plan will mean creating an implementation framework for the aspiration, values, outcomes and strategies identified in this Phase One portion of the Plan. The implementation framework will answer the following questions:

- Who will lead implementation of each of the 54 strategies of the Action Plan?
- Who else needs to be involved for each strategy to be effectively implemented?
- How will the specific needs of different populations be addressed when implementing each strategy?
- What is the timeline for implementing each strategy? Is it immediate (now), short term (1-2 years), medium term (3-5 years), long term (5+ years) or ongoing?
- What targets should be set?
- How much will it cost?
- What are the sources of funding?
- How will progress towards achieving our outcomes be measured, evaluated and reported on?

Developing Phase Two of the Action Plan will involve further community collaboration to create the implementation framework and answer the above questions. The target for completing Phase Two is first quarter of 2013.

“There needs to be more help, places for them (people experiencing homelessness) to go. So much more is needed. And for a lot of people who have no understanding of what it would be like to be in that kind of situation, you’ve got so much to learn…housing is so important and we have so much more that needs to be built around it.”

- Community Check-In Gathering Participant
If a plan is not effectively implemented, it is only as good as the paper on which it is printed. To be successfully implemented, resources, participation and support from all stakeholder groups are necessary.
Appendix A–Citizen Advisory Committee (CAC) Discussion Guide

**AGENDA:**

1. **Introductions (Project Team and Advisory Committee Members)**
2. **Broad Overview of the Action Plan to date**
   - Based on FAQ (handout)
3. **Community Housing Issues**
   - From your perspective, what are the top housing issues in Hamilton that we need to consider in our plan?
4. **Ongoing Communication**
   - Is the Action Plan and housing/homelessness something that the CAC is interested in on an ongoing basis?
   - What are some ways we can keep you in this conversation?

Appendix B–General Public Survey

**SURVEY SITES:**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Benetto</th>
<th>Steelworkers Hall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Ancaster</td>
<td>Valley Park</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Dundas Pool</td>
<td>Sackville</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Riverdale</td>
<td>Ryerson</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
General Public Survey

Thank you for agreeing to take part in this survey. We are using the results to help us with our local Action Plan for housing and homelessness.

The Action Plan looks at all kinds of housing from homeless shelters to public housing to affordable homeownership. The focus is on people who live with low to middle income. For this survey we are interviewing as many members of the general public as we can. No matter what your housing experience is, we feel that you have an opinion to share. We want your input about this.

Your name will not be taken for this survey. The answers you provide will be looked at along with the answers other people provide. You will not be identified with your answers in any way. You can feel free to not answer any questions that you do not want to answer.

1. How important do you think the issue of homelessness is for the Hamilton community? Please rate the importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2. How important do you think the issue of affordable housing is for the Hamilton community? (For this question we are talking about rental and homeownership situations that would be affordable to people with low to middle incomes). Please rate the importance.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1</th>
<th>2</th>
<th>3</th>
<th>4</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Not Important</td>
<td>Very Important</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
3. Does homelessness and affordable housing affect you in any of the following ways? Please check all that apply.

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>They affect me personally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>They affect people in my family or my close friends</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>They affect my community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>They affect where I choose to live</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>They affect where I go in my community</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
| ☐ | Other (please specify): ____________________________
| ☐ | ______________________________ |
| ☐ | They do not affect me |

4. Think about housing and homelessness, what are the three biggest challenges in Hamilton, in your opinion? (Ask people to identify the challenges and mark them on the form; check with them to make sure they reflect their answer).

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Rent cost</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Choice of housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>House purchase prices</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Supports to live independently</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Utility costs</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Neighbourhood quality</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Quality and condition of homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Street homelessness</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Landlord relationships</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Other (please specify):__________________________</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>Availability or access to affordable housing</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you have any ideas about how to solve the challenges you talked about?

This next section just asks you to tell us about yourself. Your answers will remain anonymous but will help us to understand who we talked to through these surveys.

What is your gender?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Female</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Male</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Transgender</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is your age?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0 – 19</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>20 – 29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>30 – 45</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>46 – 59</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>60 +</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What is your household income?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Less than $25,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$25,000 – $45,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$45,000 – $70,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$70,000 – $100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>More than $100,000</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Do you rent or own your home?

<p>| | |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th></th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Own</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Rent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>No Answer</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

What ward do you live in? __________

If you are not sure, what are the first three letters of your postal code: __________
## Appendix C–Community Roundtable Discussion Guide

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>AGENDA ITEM</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>15 Minutes</td>
<td>Introduction and Welcome</td>
<td>Introductions of Facilitators and participants.</td>
<td>Frequently Asked Questions - Handout</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
|      |             | Discuss confidentiality – that everything disclosed in the discussion will be kept confidential by the City of Hamilton team; we will not be using any names or identifying information in the report. There may be some specific situations in which we can’t keep your confidentiality – for example if you talk about hurting yourself, someone else or discuss a specific incident of child abuse. We have a set of really simple group rules – anyone have anything they want to add? | Flip chart with the following rules (with room to add):  
• Don’t interrupt each other  
• No disrespectful or discriminatory language – everyone’s opinion is valid  
• Ask for clarification if you don’t understand something  
• We want to hear from everyone so everyone should be given equal opportunity to speak |
<p>|      |             | Explain the agenda of the focus group – issues identification, brainstorming solutions and developing a statement for reporting back. | Flip chart with the agenda |</p>
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>TIME</th>
<th>AGENDA ITEM</th>
<th>DESCRIPTION</th>
<th>MATERIALS NEEDED</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>30 Minutes</td>
<td>Issues Identification</td>
<td>We’re going to show you a list of issue statements about the housing situation in Hamilton.</td>
<td>• Flip chart with issues and room for more</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Peoples’ current and future housing need is not being met.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• People with low incomes don’t have enough options for housing – the type and location of housing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• People who need supports to stay housed don’t have them.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• People with low incomes are finding it tough to afford housing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• People are living in poor quality housing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• People are living in housing that is not suitable.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• People are experiencing stigma and discrimination in housing.</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>a.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Would you agree with that list? Is there anything missing?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>b.</td>
<td></td>
<td>Are there any issues within that list that you think are especially important for you or for your community? (We will go around the table and let everyone identify their core issues – see if there are any themes – there does not need to be consensus around just a few, we will work through solutions to seven issues if that is the will of the group).</td>
<td>• Blank flip chart to document the identification of core issues for the group</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>TIME</td>
<td>AGENDA ITEM</td>
<td>DESCRIPTION</td>
<td>MATERIALS NEEDED</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-----------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
<td>-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
<td>------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>30 Minutes</td>
<td>Issues Identification</td>
<td>For each of those issues we are going to think about solutions. When we are thinking about solutions, we want to make sure they are ‘person-centred’. Person-centred just means that the experience and needs of people drive the solutions – not the needs of systems or agencies.</td>
<td>• Blank flip chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• Definition or description of ‘person-centred’ printed out for reference</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Minutes</td>
<td>Wrapping Up</td>
<td>We are going to be putting together a report based on all of our conversations in the community. We would like you to tell us the top 3-5 points from today’s discussion. What stood out as a theme? What do you think is important to capture?</td>
<td>• Blank flip chart</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Demographics Survey</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Thank people for coming and explain again the timeline and expectations for next steps. Ask people to provide their contact information if they would like to be invited to any upcoming events related to the Action Plan. Ask people to fill out the demographics survey – explain that they may choose to not answer any questions but they must hand it back in to receive bus tickets and gift cards.</td>
<td>• 2 Bus Tickets Per Person</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>• 1 Gift Card Per Person</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
## Appendix D—Community Roundtable Discussion Participation List

### Discussions with People with Personal Experiences of Homelessness or Housing Issues (94)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roundtable Group</th>
<th># of People</th>
<th>Community Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Women Experiencing Homelessness</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>The YWCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Women in the VAW System</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Good Shepherd Women's Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Homeless Youth - Pregnant and Parenting</td>
<td>9</td>
<td>St. Martin's Manor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. People Accessing Food Banks</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>Neighbour to Neighbour</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Homeless Youth</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>Good Shepherd – Brennan House</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Social Housing Tenants</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Halam Park Co-op and Kiwanis Non-Profit Homes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. People on the Social Housing Wait List</td>
<td>6</td>
<td>Housing Help Centre (incl. employees)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. People on the Social Housing Wait List</td>
<td>4</td>
<td>Access to Housing</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Aboriginal People</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Hamilton Executive Directors Aboriginal Coalition</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10. Seniors</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>St. Joseph’s Homecare</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11. New Canadians</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>The YMCA</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12. Tenants in Housing with Supports</td>
<td>11</td>
<td>Homestead Christian Care</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Number of People**: 94
## Discussions with People who Work within Homelessness or Housing Areas (83)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Roundtable Group</th>
<th># of People</th>
<th>Community Organization</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>13 Market Rent Landlords</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Hamilton and District Apartment Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14 Academic Community</td>
<td>16</td>
<td>McMaster University, Various Disciplines</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15 Cross Departmental City of Hamilton Employees</td>
<td>8</td>
<td>Planning Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16 Cross Departmental City of Hamilton Employees</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Various Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17 Cross Departmental City of Hamilton Employees</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Various Human Services</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18 Private Sector</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>Chamber of Commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19 Front Line Employees</td>
<td>17</td>
<td>Various Agencies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20 Rural Perspective</td>
<td>12</td>
<td>Through Ward 15 Councillor’s Office</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21 Housing Developers</td>
<td>7</td>
<td>Hamilton Halton Homebuilders Association</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>22 Social Housing</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>City Housing Hamilton Tenant Engagement Consultants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**Total Number of People** 83
Appendix E – Interview Guide

INTRODUCTION

- Introduce self, thanks for agreeing to participate
- Explain the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan

INFORMED CONSENT & CONFIDENTIALITY

- We are going to be recording this interview. Is that alright? The recordings will be used to make sure we get your story right. We will keep it secure for one year and then we will erase them.
- All answers will remain confidential. At no point will your name be connected to any of your answers. Your name will not appear at all in the final report. Explain situations where confidentiality may need to be broken (harm to self, others, child abuse disclosures).
- We really appreciate you participating but understand that some questions might be sensitive and personal. If you are uncomfortable answering any of the questions, we can skip them. You can stop the interview anytime you’d like and you will still get the incentive for participating.
- Do you have any questions about confidentiality? Do you agree (provide your consent) to participate in this interview?
- What you tell us is going to help us write a report on how to deal with housing and homelessness over the next 10 years. The report will be complete in early 2013. We’ll have some information available through the summer. If you give us your contact information, we can let you know when it’s done.
1. For the Action Plan, we are interested in hearing people's housing and homelessness stories. Could you please start off by talking about your housing history?

**Prompts**
- Where have you lived?
- Have you ever been homeless?
- How many times have you moved?
- Have there been times when it was tough to afford housing?
- What are the neighbourhoods that you’ve lived in like?
- What is your housing situation like today?

2. Describe an example of a housing situation that was really positive for you. What made that housing situation positive?

**Prompts**
- Did that positive housing experience impact other parts of your life? How?

3. Describe an example of a housing situation that was really negative for you. What made that housing situation negative?

**Prompts**
- Did that negative housing experience impact other parts of your life?
- How did they impact your life?

4. Do you think there is anything about your identity (like gender or race or ability) that has an impact on your housing?

**Prompts**
- What are they?
- How have they impacted your housing?
5 How would you describe the social service system related to housing?

Prompts

• Do you think it works?
• If yes, what works?
• Do you think it does not work?
• If not, what does not work?

6 Is there anything else you would like to add?

Prompts

• Anything you want to ensure we hear that can help inform the development of our plan?

CLOSING INTERVIEW

• Thank you very much for your time
• We will keep your identity confidential however if you would be interested in having your story shared more broadly to help educate people about the issues and possible solutions to housing please let us know.
• Would you like to get updates from us on the development of the plan? If yes, what is the best way to reach you? If you have an email address, please provide it.
• Thanks again- (provide envelope with honorarium and bus tickets)
The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan is currently in the development process. This report is one of a series of products coming out of the Action Plan project.

We would like to hear from you:

• Is the information in this report useful to you?
• Have you found any of this information surprising?
• What does this information tell you?
• What other housing and homelessness information would you like to see?
• How would you like to be part of the Housing and Homelessness Action?

Please contact the Housing & Homelessness Action Plan project team

HousingActionPlan@hamilton.ca
www.hamilton.ca/HousingActionPlan
A 10-year, person-centred plan to make sure that every one in Hamilton has a home. The Action Plan is a partnership between the City of Hamilton, the Affordable Housing Flagship, many other community partners and the residents of Hamilton.

For more information: www.hamilton.ca/HousingActionPlan

"Home is a place you choose,
not somewhere you are forced to stay out of necessity"
Community roundtable participant

What we Heard...
Talking to People
About Housing & Homelessness in Hamilton

The second in a series of reports to inform the creation of a Housing & Homelessness Action Plan