

Annual Report to Province - 2015

# Housing & Homelessness Action Plan in Hamilton

**Everyone has a home...Home is the Foundation**



On December 11, 2013, Hamilton City Council approved Hamilton’s Housing and Homelessness Action Plan. The 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan is a 10-year solution focused and person-centred plan that establishes outcomes, targets and strategies for addressing affordable housing and homelessness issues in the community. It is a comprehensive decision-making tool that links with and complements other key planning initiatives in Hamilton. The Action Plan is City led, but community owned. It is grounded in shared responsibility and collaboration and many of the accomplishments can be attributed to partnerships and efforts from our partners to implement. This report focuses on the work that has occurred during the second year of implementation of the Action Plan. This report provides 2015 highlights and is by no means reflective of all the good work going on in our community which contributes to the Action Plan

The Action Plan contains five outcome areas, a number of measurable targets and calls for the implementation of 54 strategies over a ten year period. 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**

## YEAR 2 – 2015 HIGHLIGHTS

### OUTCOME 1: THERE IS MORE AFFORDABLE RENTAL AND OWNERSHIP HOUSING IN HAMILTON TO HELP MEET THE NEED AND DEMAND.

- **Reviewed Incentives through the Downtown Renewal Community Improvement Plan:** Revised the Downtown Renewal incentive programs which include the facilitation of new residential development in downtowns and commercial corridors, to include a placeholder for an affordable housing component.
  - **Released a Request for Proposals for new rental construction** for financial assistance from the new rental construction component of the Federal/Provincial Investment in Affordable Housing-Extension (IAH-E) funding. This work commenced in 2015
  - **Hamilton Community Land Trust** received a Trillium Grant of \$75,900 to identify neighbourhood land-use priorities, pursue land acquisition opportunities and establish partnerships for the development of real estate projects that will meet community needs.
  - **Dedicated staff resource** in the Planning & Economic Development Department with a mandate to facilitate affordable housing in the West Harbour
  - **Community Feedback Sessions:** Three sessions were held as an opportunity to check in with the community on the progress being made on implementing the Action Plan. It was also an opportunity to highlight the Action Plan and gauge public awareness about the Plan. Several other City divisions and community agencies participated as part of an Information Showcase designed to link the public to specific services and leverage the resources that were committed to this community event. Overwhelmingly, the response was in favour of actions to increase the supply of affordable rental housing in Hamilton.
  - **Commencement of Good Shepherd Non-Profit Homes'** new construction of 35 new units at Mary/Cannon St., including six accessible units in 2015. Five additional permanent beds at Mary's Place for single women experiencing homelessness.
  - **Halam Park Co-op:** creation of 8 new one bedroom accessible units at Halam Park will help address over-housed households and free up some larger units
  - **Indwell's Rudy Hulst Commons** at 1430 Main Street East –Completion of 47 permanently affordable apartments in Hamilton's East end under the IAH program with official opening June 2016. This work was ongoing in 2015.
  - **Renovation of Strathearne apartment** building using Ontario Renovates funding by Indwell as a supportive housing model
  - **Sacajawea Housing** - Eight new units on Main St. E of housing for low income people from the Aboriginal community
  - **Partnership** between Women in Law & Habitat for Humanity Hamilton and the redevelopment of 2 units on Knappman Dr for homeownership
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- **Habitat for Humanity Hamilton** – preliminary work on 6 units on Sherman Ave for the purpose of homeownership

## OUTCOME 2: INCREASE PEOPLE'S HOUSING AFFORDABILITY, STABILITY AND CHOICE

- **Allocated 70 Housing Allowances for Housing First Interventions**, targeting those experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness. Housing First is an approach to ending homelessness that focuses on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into stable housing and providing additional supports and services as needed.
- **Landlord Engagement Strategy** creates safe and affordable rental housing options in Hamilton through developing a supportive and engaging relationship with landlords. Run through the City Housing Help Centre, staff have been actively participating at landlord tables building relationships to secure units
- **Down payment assistance program** using the Homeownership Revolving Loan Fund: is in the form of a forgivable loan for 10% of the purchase price for households who meet eligibility criteria. In 2015, which was the fourth iteration of the program, 23 households received \$456,455 in down payment assistance.
- **The 20,000 Homes campaign**: In April 2015, over 150 volunteers surveyed over 470 people experiencing homelessness as part of Hamilton's 20,000 Homes Registry Week.
- **2015 National Housing Day**: In partnership with The Social Planning and Research Council, Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, and the Realtors Association, the City held this half-day event with a focus on gentrification.
- **Partnership with McMaster University** to research the secondary rental market, neighbourhood change, and gentrification in Hamilton as part of a cross Canada study
- **Coordinated Local Implementation and promotion of the Ontario Electricity Support program which** provides monthly credits to eligible applicants.
- **Increased the Monthly Allowance for Personal Use** retained by residents of the Residential Care Facility Subsidy program to give them greater buying power and choice in recreational activities and personal needs.
- **Increased the per diem paid to Residential Care Facility Operators** to better reflect the cost of providing supports to residents.

*Aaron is 59 years old. He stopped working two years ago due to deteriorating health. He survived a year on his income tax return and the kindness of family. When he applied for Ontario Works he had worn out his welcome with family and was living in his truck. With Ontario Works funding, he was able to find a temporary accommodation with friends and pay rent, while he looked for a place of his own. With the financial support of Ontario Works and the assistance of his Ontario Works Case Manager, he completed an application to Access to Housing, and was accepted into geared to income housing. He applied for CPP and ODSP. His health continued to deteriorate and he was so thankful the day he got his keys to his subsidized unit, knowing he would have a secure, affordable place to live as he battles health issues, and his rent would be based on what his monthly income could afford.*



### **OUTCOME 3: PEOPLE HAVE THE INDIVIDUALIZED SUPPORTS THEY NEED TO HELP THEM OBTAIN AND MAINTAIN HOUSING**

- **HPS Funding for 2015-2019:** On January 21, Hamilton City Council approved recommendations to support Housing First and Homelessness Prevention projects in Hamilton. This report was the culmination of the work completed with the Homelessness Funding Implementation Group (HFIG). As a result the City of Hamilton entered into 17 HPS funding agreements with 11 different community agencies.
- **Transitional Bed Program:** In collaboration with St. Joseph's Home Care and the Community Care Access Centre, the Hamilton Niagara Haldimand Brantford Local Health Integration Network provides beds for people who are unable to return straight home from the hospital, but either don't need or can't access long term care. The City of Hamilton provided capital funding for the conversion of 4? Units to become fully accessible. The LHIN provided capital for equipment and ongoing operation.
- **Housing First Program** moves homeless individuals or families from the streets or a shelter into their own apartment as well as provide intensive case management services to assist people in maintaining their housing stability. Four agencies; Wesley Urban Ministries (transitions to home), Good Shepherd (supporting our sisters), Catholic Children's Aid Society (housing first for youth), and the Aboriginal Health Centre (homeward bound) provide housing and supports that ensure they are able to remain housed. In 2015 Housing First Programs successfully moved 121 individuals into safe permanent housing
- **Eviction prevention** - Expanding eviction prevention opportunities with social housing providers
- **Women's Emergency Shelter System.** The City of Hamilton has funded a four person mobile case management team to support women who do not qualify for housing first, but need assistance to leave the shelter system.

- **Five additional permanent beds** at Mary's Place for single women experiencing homelessness. Mobile case management team for single women who do not qualify for Housing First Program
- **Completed planning process with Women's Housing Planning Collaborative** to identify short and long term system needs. WHPC consists of shelters for single women, victims of abuse, second stage housing and criminalized women.
- **Native Women's Centre** – A temporary 15 bed shelter for single women opened at Mountain View in December 2015.
- **Recreation Pilot for Domiciliary Hostels, through** a partnership with Wesley Urban Ministries. Five Domiciliary Hostels were selected to participate in the pilot project which is intended to improve the participation of the residents in recreation activities suited to their interests and needs. A recreation therapist will work with the five Domiciliary Hostels' staff and residents to develop a recreation plan specific to each home. The recreation plan will be a combination of activities to be delivered by the recreation therapist, Domiciliary Hostel staff or outside agencies.
- **Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT):** The City continued to move forward with implementing the Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT), an evidence-informed approach to assessing an individual's or family's level of vulnerability. Plans are underway to integrate this as a standardized intake and assessment process for all people experiencing homelessness in our community. This is aligned with Hamilton's community priorities.
- **The Staying Home Program Pilot** supported over 250 individuals (families and single women) maintain housing. Good Shepherd Family Centre – Shelter Diversion Pilot
- **Indwell's affordable housing portfolio** includes a group home and a range of supported semi-independent and independent living. Indwell's Stratherarne Program includes highly supportive housing with 39 units and 8.5 FTE on-site supports

**From The Housing First Program:** *“Eric has been living on the streets since he was 17 years old. He accessed services at Notre Dame. Having no income, made it difficult to survive. Living on his own was not something he could afford, but going back to parents was not an option. When the Housing First for Youth started, Eric struggled to be on time for viewings, was in and out of jail, but with determination Eric found a safe place to live. Now at 19, Eric is finally living in a bachelor unit with a Housing Allowance. Eric is registered at school and hasn't returned to shelter.”*



*93% of **Housing First** clients remain housed after 6 months of being involved with the program*

## OUTCOME 4: PEOPLE LIVE IN HOUSING THAT IS GOOD QUALITY, SAFE AND SUITABLE TO THEIR NEEDS

- **Financial Investment** - Capital funding for social housing providers was provided through the City of Hamilton's annual Tax Support Capital Budget allocation. For 2016, CityHousing Hamilton was allocated \$2.3 million and another \$1.5 million was allocated for the other social housing providers. Capital funds distributed from the annual capital budget are made in the form of grants to local non-profit social housing providers to purchase, construct, or renovate capital assets.
- **Community Bed Bug Strategy** is a three-year plan intended to reverse the growing trend of bed bugs and reduce the impact of bed bugs for those residents that are exposed to them through a framework of resources and public education. It will contribute to achieving the targets about reducing bed bug complaints and incidents of re-infestation. This strategy incorporated information obtained from consultations with key stakeholders and from an environmental scan to identify issues and define the problem; establish service needs, identify hotspots, relevant legislation and best practices. This strategy is supported with \$415,000 in funding.
- **Ontario Renovates** assisted approximately 37 homeowners to stay in their rehabilitated homes, which contributes to achieving the Action Plan target of rehabilitating 3,500 units by 2023. The Ontario Renovates program helps to rehabilitate aging privately-owned housing stock (both rental and low-income homeowners), as well as provide funding for modifications for persons with disabilities.
- **The Emergency Repair Program:** a grant program of up to \$5,000 was launched for homeowners on Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program to fund serious and urgent repairs
- **Social Housing – Building Condition Assessments**-The City assisted social housing providers in completing building condition assessments and capital reserve fund studies with a strategy to prioritize repairs and make strategic investments in preserving housing infrastructure. Aging and deteriorating social housing stock not only threatens the health and safety of residents but also renders many units completely uninhabitable, putting further pressure on the already limited supply of available rental stock in Hamilton.

### WHAT ARE BED BUGS?



*Hamilton City Council committed \$1.06 million towards a three-year bed bug strategy. It provides a coordinated approach by providing resources to support vulnerable residents.*

**OUTCOME 5: PEOPLE RECEIVE RESPECTFUL, QUALITY SERVICE WITHIN A “USER-FRIENDLY” SYSTEM AND EXPERIENCE EQUITY IN HOUSING**

- **Housing & Homelessness Advisory Committee-** Creation of a new citizen advisory committee to City Council providing advice on implementation of the action plan. This committee includes those with lived experience, seniors, youth and individuals working in the sector
- **Engagement, Communications, Outreach & Education Working Group (ECOE)**  
Established to achieve the vision and implement the ECOE strategies of the Action Plan in a mutually reinforcing way that supports broader matters of shared interest. They will guide the process for implementing the ECOE related strategies, seek opportunities to ensure inclusion of input from a wide variety of stakeholders and facilitating collaboration as needed.
- **Hamilton Housing Guide** was revised as a result of focus groups of diverse newcomers and other consultation to better meet the needs of newcomers and be appropriate for anyone looking for housing in Hamilton. It includes extensive information such as listings of agencies and organizations that can assist in finding housing, tenant rights and responsibilities, and sources of help for various tenant concerns.
- **Hamilton East-Kiwanis Homes/VPCH/SPRC** Partnership implemented asset based community development from a Ontario Trillium Foundation grant of \$175,000
- **Eviction prevention** discussions between housing providers and Housing Services staff for cooperation to prevent economic eviction. The Hamilton District Apartment Association encourage their members to use the Eviction Prevention Toolkit



## FOCUS AREAS AND INVESTMENTS IN 2016

The City of Hamilton is reviewing a number of incentives and potential policy changes that would encourage private sector development of affordable housing units for both ownership and rental. These include:



**Transition of illegal rental units** that do not meet zoning, building code or property standards to safe, legal units

**Incentives:** Adding affordable housing components to existing City incentive programs, adding new incentives, and developing a program to package all of the affordable housing incentives

**Inclusionary Zoning** as part of every new residential development



**Housing Allowances** - Hamilton City Council committed annual funding of \$1.1M towards Housing Allowances available to those on the Social Housing Waitlist. This is considered a key strategy in the Action Plan's target to reduce the waitlist by 50% by 2023.



**End of Federal Operating Agreements** means social housing providers may divest themselves of holdings no longer connected with a reliable funding model which may result in a loss of rent-geared-to-income rental stock. The City will work closely with social housing providers to find solutions to mitigate this and continue discussions with the Provincial and Federal governments about their respective roles in maintaining the existing stock

**Sharing information-** The Hamilton community has seen strong collaboration in the Housing sector, including the creation of new information tools. The Hamilton Immigration Partnership Council housing guide that has been translated to Arabic and distributed and the City created a senior specific housing guide as part of the Age Friendly City initiative.



Everyone has a home...Home is the Foundation



**A 10-year, person-centred plan to make sure that everyone in Hamilton has a home**

*Questions regarding this report should be directed to:*

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Hamilton