



INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	June 22, 2015
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Housing and Homelessness Action Plan - 2014 Report to the Community (CES15033) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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Council Direction:

Not applicable.

Information:

The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan – 2014 Report to the Community, attached as Appendix A to Report CES15033, provides an overview of the progress made in 2014 towards implementation of the City's 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan. The 2014 Report to the Community also provides an update on the current state of affordable housing and homelessness prevention in Hamilton. The City has an obligation under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* to report to the Province and the public on progress made in the implementation of local Housing and Homelessness Plans. Staff will report on the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan annually with a report to the community.

Background

In December 2013, City Council approved the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (Action Plan) for Hamilton (Report CS11017(c)). The 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, including the City of Hamilton's Urban Hamilton Official Plan, the City of Hamilton Strategic Plan, the City of Hamilton's Equity and Inclusion Policy, the Neighbourhood Development Strategy and Hamilton Roundtable on Poverty Reduction.

The Action Plan was the resulting efforts of three years of work in collaboration with community partners and, as a result, is a true community plan. In addition to extensive public consultation, development of the Action Plan was informed by the Housing and Homelessness Planning Group – a committed expert group made up of representatives from various sectors that deal with issues relating to affordable housing and homelessness prevention. Initially formed to help develop the Action Plan, it now has a renewed focus on advising and assisting the implementation of the Plan.

The Plan in Action – Year One

The Action Plan established five outcome areas, a number of measurable targets and called for the implementation of 54 strategies over a ten year period. It also recognizes that there is good work already being done in the community and sets out ways to build on that work, rather than starting over. The first year's work and accomplishments reflect this approach.

In 2014, new resources were invested to coordinate and monitor the work undertaken to implement the Action Plan. As a result, there has been a lot of preparatory work such as planning, research, creating work plans, maintaining stakeholder relations and establishing the Action Plan as the framework for how the community responds to affordable housing and homelessness. The work that has been done in the first year will provide a solid foundation for gaining momentum and building on success in subsequent years.

Work has started on implementing many of the 54 strategies. A detailed overview of the progress of each strategy and the various steps taken for each of the 54 strategies is attached as Appendix B to Report CES15033.

Key Actions and Successes from 2014

The 2014 Report to the Community highlights many initiatives and successes that were either informed by or were the direct result of the Action Plan. Following are some of those processes, efforts and activities.

- **Establishing the *Housing with Supports Working Group*.** This working group is comprised of a range of community partners (including seniors, social housing providers, persons with disabilities, emergency shelters, and residential care facilities) who have committed to looking at the housing with supports system in Hamilton to inform better planning and integration of services. Specific work plans are being created based on the strategies of the Action Plan that focus on supports for housing. In addition, the Housing with Supports Working Group is committed to building stronger relationships with the healthcare, children's services and corrections sectors at the provincial level.

- **Government Relations.** In 2014, Housing Services staff actively met with the local Members of Parliament and Members of the Ontario Legislature to provide a comprehensive overview of Hamilton's Action Plan and the degree of need that exists in Hamilton. Staff encouraged elected officials at the provincial and federal government to acknowledge that to successfully address the affordable housing and homelessness needs in Hamilton require a strong partnership between all levels of government and the community and an adequate and sustainable source of funding.
- **Housing – Planning Liaison.** An internal team of City staff from Housing Services and various Divisions from Planning & Economic Development are meeting regularly to discuss issues of shared interest including the Action Plan strategies which call for changes to land use planning policies, the creation or expansion of incentives for developing new affordable housing, and managing the impacts of proactive rental housing enforcement.
- **Investment in Affordable Housing.** The Action Plan provided the framework to inform the best way to distribute Hamilton's funding allocation from the Investment in Affordable Housing Extension Program based on the established outcomes and targets. The Housing and Homelessness Planning Group provided additional consultation to ensure that community partners and stakeholders had an opportunity to identify shifting priorities for affordable housing before the funding distribution was confirmed to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing earlier in 2015.
- **Community Bed Bug Strategy.** In 2014, through a joint effort with Public Health Services, Housing Services hired a Senior Policy Analyst to develop a comprehensive community bed bug strategy. The development of this strategy is nearing the completion of the consultation process with a draft strategy to be introduced in the next few months and completed in the Fall 2015. This will complete a strategy of the Action Plan.
- **Homelessness Partnering Strategy & 20,000 Homes Campaign.** The Action Plan provided the framework for the development and approval of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) Community Plan. It also guided the review and approval process for the Call for Applications for HPS and Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative funding. In addition, the Action Plan supports participation in national movements and initiatives such as the 20,000 Homes Campaign which officially launches on July 1, 2015. Hamilton was chosen as a pilot community for this campaign and the Registry Week was conducted during the last week of April 2015 with a successful community debrief on April 30, 2015.

Community Partners

The 2014 Report to the Community acknowledges and celebrates the contributions by the community by recognizing that their work often directly and indirectly supports the outcomes and strategies of the Action Plan.

Community Feedback

Three community feedback sessions were held in the spring 2015 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.

Specifically, participants were asked to provide feedback on three primary areas:

- 2015 proposed focus areas for work planning purposes;
- System of supports for housing in Hamilton; and,
- Comprehensive community bed bug strategy.

The 2014 Report to the Community describes the various focus areas for 2015 which were presented at the feedback sessions. Overwhelmingly, the response was in favour of actions to increase the supply of affordable rental housing in Hamilton.

Challenges & Key Issues

The 2014 Report to the Community aims to observe and report on the effort that is directed to addressing affordable housing and homelessness in Hamilton through the guidance of the Action Plan. However, it also acknowledges that these are complex issues without easy solutions and describes some of the challenges and key issues that are significant obstacles to success. These include:

- **Lack of a National Housing Strategy.** Canada is the only G8 nation in the world without a national housing strategy which is a key component in an effective poverty reduction plan.
- **Precarious Employment.** A recent report, “Precarious Penalty”, produced by a consortium of researchers including McMaster University and the United Way of Toronto, shows that nearly 60% of Hamilton workers are in some form of precarious employment. Good, stable jobs are key to income stability, poverty reduction and improving housing affordability.
- **Inadequate funding to meet the full housing needs in the community.** The City cannot fund full implementation of the Action Plan from the property tax levy. The other levels of government need to increase their contribution in order to

achieve the outcomes of the Action Plan. To fully achieve the targets established in the Action Plan, the financial investment exceeds \$400 million over the Action Plan's 10-year span.

- **Social housing capital repair pressures.** Aging and deteriorating social housing stock not only threatens the health and safety of residents but also renders some units completely uninhabitable, putting further pressure on the already limited supply of rental stock in Hamilton. Utilizing a projection of the estimated costs of capital repairs for 10 of the 43 social housing providers in Hamilton that have completed building condition assessments and reserve fund studies since 2009, staff estimate that the cost to all of Hamilton's social housing stock could be \$500 to \$600 million over the next twenty years.
- **Changes to the rental market in Hamilton.** Despite being relatively affordable, the Hamilton rental housing market is getting tighter. Data from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation show a sharp decrease in vacancies and a corresponding increase in average market rents. This makes it particularly difficult to find affordable housing for clients of rent subsidy programs or who are considered hard to house.
- **Negative impacts of gentrification.** There is potential for individuals to become displaced from their neighbourhoods as a result of increasing housing prices. Low-moderate income households become priced out of certain neighbourhoods and increased property values push property taxes higher.
- **Chronic and episodic homelessness.** There is insufficient data available about the true numbers of people experiencing chronic and episodic homelessness in Hamilton.

2015 Priorities & Next Steps

Although work continues on many different aspects of the Action Plan during 2015, the 2014 Report to the Community also identifies some key focus areas for 2015.

- **Supply – new rental construction.** The City is allocated approximately \$8.25 million for new rental construction through the Investment in Affordable Housing Extension Program. A request for proposals will be issued in 2015 for new rental housing construction projects.
- **Community Bed Bug Strategy.** The development of the Community Bed Bug Strategy is currently underway. This strategy will incorporate information obtained from consultations with key stakeholders and from an environmental scan to identify issues and best practices. The strategy is expected to be completed before the end of 2015.

- **Developing and adopting a citizen engagement model.** Housing Services Division will be developing and adopting a citizen engagement model in 2015 that will reinforce a person-centred approach to all of the Division's work. It will build upon the city-wide Citizen Engagement Strategy that is currently being developed by staff in the Neighbourhood and Community Initiatives Division.
- **Social Housing - building condition assessments and capital repair strategy.** A request for proposals will be issued in 2015 to retain a consultant to complete outstanding building condition assessments and capital repair reserve fund studies. This will be followed by a system of prioritizing capital repairs to inform strategic planning around capital funding and building life cycles to minimize the potential loss of housing stock through deterioration.
- **Housing with Supports – system review.** Throughout 2015, the Housing with Supports Working Group will focus on specific aspects of the housing support system and creating deliverables for short term successes but also providing a foundation for addressing more complex problems and finding longer term and innovative solutions.
- **Communications and Outreach.** Developing communications and outreach strategies that work to strengthen relationships between tenants, landlords, community agencies and the City.
- **Women's shelter system – addressing pressures.** Emergency shelters serving single women are operating a full occupancy and have had to turn away high numbers of women. Housing Services will work with the Woman's Housing Planning Collaborative to implement additional ongoing shelter beds by December 2015 and to look at more affordable housing options for women.
- **Youth Shelter System.** During the second half of 2015, Housing Services Division staff will undertake a review of the housing and homelessness system serving youth to develop a comprehensive picture of the current system and to explore a long-term and sustainable funding model that will meet the needs of street-involved youth in Hamilton.

Financial Investments 2014 & 2015

Significant financial investment is required in order to meet the current and future housing needs of Hamilton residents. Available funding is markedly less than is needed for the full and effective implementation of Hamilton's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan. The approved 2015 budget for Housing Services Division for all of the housing and homelessness programs is approximately \$101 million. Approximately 52% of the overall budget is funded by the municipal tax levy. The remaining 48% is

made up from contributions from the provincial and federal governments for programs such as the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative and the Extension to the Investment in Affordable Housing Program.

Following is a list of the major investments approved by City Council for the 2014 and 2015 budget years to support implementation of various strategies within the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.

- **Existing Reserve Accounts.** On June 11, 2014, Council approved Report CS11017(d) – Housing & Homelessness Action Plan which authorized \$1,951,098 in reserve funding to be allocated towards implementation of the Action Plan through investments in the down payment assistance program, rent subsidy assistance for targeted populations such as Housing First participants, emergency home repairs for social assistance recipients and capital funding for CityHousing Hamilton;
- **Homelessness Partnering Strategy.** On January 19, 2015, Council approved Report CES14005(b) – Housing First and Homelessness Prevention Call for Applications Update which authorized \$757,950 in reserve funding for homelessness prevention programs previously funded through federal and provincial homelessness funding for up to one-year to support a transition process;
- **Comprehensive Bed Bug Strategy.** As part of the 2013 Capital budget process, Council approved \$350,000 for bed bug eradication. This funding is used to address bed bug issues in Residential Care Facilities, to develop a comprehensive bed bug strategy (for completion in 2015) and for an assistance program for low income vulnerable homeowners and tenants;
- **Social Housing Capital Repairs.** As part of the 2015 Capital budget process, Council approved \$500,000 in funding to be used for social housing capital repairs; and,
- **Women’s Emergency Shelter System.** On May 27, 2015, Council approved Report CS13051(b) - Pressure at Emergency Shelters Serving Single Homeless Women which authorized an estimated \$350,000 in reserve funding (subject to a Call for Applications) to supplement the cost of 20 additional shelter beds and mobile case management supports to the women’s emergency shelter system.

Reporting on Progress

The Action Plan commits to annual reports on the incremental progress being achieved through implementation of the 54 strategies.

A more comprehensive report will be developed and released following the mid-point (year 2018) of the Action Plan to evaluate progress in achieving the targets for the outcome areas and provide analysis as to the reasons for not achieving targets. This report will also include recommendations for the remaining five years of the Action Plan and provide a broader environmental scan and critical assessment of the political, social and economic landscape.

A final report will be developed following the final year (year 2023) of the Action Plan which will provide a 10-year retrospective analysis of the full spectrum of progress made on achieving the targets and implementing the strategies. This will also include a critical assessment of the achievement of the outcome areas.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CES15033: Housing & Homeless Action Plan in Hamilton –
2014 Annual Report to the Community

Appendix B to Report CES15033: 2014 Strategy Progress Update