



Hamilton

INFORMATION REPORT

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency & Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 12, 2016
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Housing & Homelessness Action Plan Update (CES15033(a)) (City Wide)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SIGNATURE:	

Council Direction:

In December 2013, City Council approved The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Report CS11017(c). This report provides an update for the 2015 and 2016 reporting period.

As well, the City has an obligation under the Housing Services Act, 2011 to report to the province and the public on the progress made in the implementation of the plan. The 2015 report to the province is attached as Appendix A to Report CES15033(a).

Information:

Background

The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan is a community based, person centred plan that sets a vision, clear targets, goals and strategies to ensure everyone in Hamilton has a home. The Action Plan was designed as a comprehensive decision making tool through a collaborative effort of City staff and key community partners who make up the Housing and Homelessness Planning Group. The plan consists of five outcome areas:

- Create more affordable rental and ownership housing in Hamilton to help meet the need and demand
- Increase people's housing affordability, stability and choice
- Provide people with the individualized supports they need to help them obtain and maintain housing

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- Ensure people live in housing that is good quality, safe and suitable to their needs
- Provide people with respectful, quality service within a “user-friendly” system and experience equity in housing

2015 and 2016 have seen increased investments in Affordable Housing initiatives by all three levels of government. Some key examples include the Social Infrastructure Fund (Federal/Provincial) (Report CES16036), Social Housing Improvement Program (Federal/Provincial) (Report CES16040), Investment in Affordable Housing Extension (Federal/Provincial), increase to the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (Provincial), Municipal Capital Funding Program (Social Housing Repairs and Regenerations, Report CES16038) and the Hamilton Housing Allowance Program (City of Hamilton) (Report CES16028) for a total of \$32,152,515 .

Action Plan Highlights (2015 & 2016)

Engagement: (Strategy 3.7, 5.3, 5.7, 5.8, 5.9)

- **Planning Group** – Housing Services coordinates a cross sectoral working group that focuses on the implementation of the 10 year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan. This group also includes the Engagement, Communications, Outreach & Education Working Group. The Planning Group meets quarterly to collaborate on the implementation of The Plan. The Planning Group is co-chaired by the Director of Housing Services and the Executive Director of the Hamilton Housing Help Centre. Membership is attached as Appendix B to Report CES15033(a). In 2016, this group met to discuss priorities for the Social Infrastructure Fund, provided input on the City’s submission on the National Housing Strategy consultation and included special meetings related to the City Council’s motion supporting an investment in poverty reduction.
- **Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee** – In September 2016, the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee was launched with 15 Hamilton residents volunteering as members. The Committee’s mandate is to support the Plan by providing information, advice, and recommendations regarding the Action Plan’s successful and meaningful implementation.
- **Community Outreach** – In April 2015, Housing Services hosted two information sessions for prospective applicants for the City’s down payment assistance program. These two sessions were attended by 124 individuals. These sessions brought in the expertise of Horizon Utilities, Union Gas, Catholic Family Services,

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Realtors Association of Hamilton-Burlington and City staff to discuss home ownership readiness.

- **Eviction Prevention** – Increased collaboration between housing providers and Housing Services staff to prevent economic eviction of tenants. The City of Hamilton developed an eviction prevention toolkit in 2014. This toolkit is a community resource that is accessed by social housing and private sector landlords. Events were held in October 2015 and October 2016 for landlords to learn about the toolkit. These sessions were put on in partnership with Housing Services Division, Hamilton Housing Help Centre, Hamilton Community Legal Clinic and the Hamilton District Apartment Association. Additionally Housing Services staff facilitated a session with Good Shepherd for 25 front line community workers in June 2016.
- **Hamilton Housing Help Centre** – Landlord Engagement Project: outreach and support offered to Landlords focusing on finding the right balance between rights and responsibilities for both landlords and tenants. The Housing Help Centre, through their Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative funding, has Housing Workers who advocate on behalf of tenants to secure affordable and appropriate living spaces. The focus is on making sure their tenancy is successful and meets their needs.

New Construction and Capital (Strategy 4.1, 4.10, 4.11)

- **Good Shephard Non-Profit Homes'** start of construction of 35 new units at Mary/Cannon St., including 6 accessible units in 2015
- **Indwell's Rudy Hulst Commons** at 1430 Main St East – completion of 47 permanently affordable apartments in Hamilton's East end.
- **Ontario Renovates** – Assisted approximately 37 homeowners in 2015 and 32 in 2016 to stay in their rehabilitated homes. The program helps to rehabilitate aging privately-owned housing stock, as well as provide funding for modifications for persons with disabilities. Affordable rental buildings also qualify for funding. An example of a successful project was 311 Strathearne Ave. which received \$968,003 in 2015. This new permanent supported housing initiative serves 38 tenants seeking independent living with access to community health and housing supports on-site.
- **Social Infrastructure Fund** – In June 2016, the Province announced Federal/Provincial housing investments under the 2016 Social Infrastructure fund in order to improve the quality and increase the supply of affordable housing

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while also stimulating economic growth. This fund includes additional funding for Investment in Affordable Housing Extension and Social Housing Improvement Program.

- **Social Housing Improvement Program (SHIP)** – Hamilton was allocated \$11,597,400 to fund and support repairs in Hamilton’s social housing stock (Report CES16040). Funding must be committed by March 31, 2017 and spent by March 31, 2019.
- **Investment in Affordable Housing Extension** – Hamilton was allocated \$12,064,800 to invest in the creation of new affordable rental housing, and providing new housing allowances (Report CES16036). The new rental housing funds were awarded through an RFP process to three projects: Indwell Community Homes/Hughson St. Baptist Church (56 units), Indwell Community Homes (42 units) and Sacajawea Non-Profit Housing Inc. (23 units) (Report CES16037).
- **2016 Municipal Capital Funding Program (Social Housing Repairs and Regeneration) (CES16038)** – On January 20, 2016, Council approved \$3 million for social housing repairs and regeneration. \$1.5 million went to CityHousing Hamilton and \$1.5 million to the other 42 social housing providers. These funds will positively impact 550 units.
 - 19 vacant units (including 11 large units) will be returned for occupancy
 - 63 units will be saved from becoming vacant in the near future; and,
 - 468 units will have serious health and safety impacts addressed.
- **Halam Park Housing Cooperative Inc.** – Creation of eight new one bedroom accessible units at Halam Park that will help address over-housed households and free up some larger units in this social housing co-operative. New co-op members have started to move in June 2016. This project was possible due to the City providing \$550,000 in Capital and waiving development charges in the amount of \$222,000. Halam Park was also able to install 39 new furnaces in units and complete necessary interior and exterior sewer repairs.

Program Highlights (Strategy 2.1, 2.3, 2.4, 2.5, 3.1, 3.8, 3.10)

- **Survivor of Domestic Violence Pilot** – City of Hamilton was awarded \$1.2 million over two years for a Survivor of Domestic Violence Pilot from the Province of Ontario (Report CES16045). This portable housing benefit will be able to assist approximately 120 survivors of domestic violence who are currently applicants on the social housing wait list.

- **Hamilton Housing Allowance Program** – As part of the 2016 operating budget, the City of Hamilton approved the new Hamilton Housing Allowance Program. This \$1.1 million, for the establishment and delivery of a portable rent subsidy program, will assist 240 households in securing stable housing (Report CES16028).
- **Residential Care Facilities Funding Increase** – Increase in the monthly allowance that residents retain was increased from \$138 to \$150 effective June 1, 2015 and the per diem was increase from \$48.25 to \$50 effective April 1, 2015 (Report CES16007).
- **Down Payment Assistance Program** using the Homeownership Revolving Loan Fund, in the form of a forgivable loan for 10% of the purchase price for renter households with lower and moderate incomes. 23 households were able to purchase homes (65 individuals including 32 children) targeted in the Neighbourhood Action Strategy priority neighbourhoods.
- **Housing First Program** supports homeless individuals or families to move 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, Good Shepherd, Catholic Children’s Aid Society, and the Aboriginal Health Centre) provide housing and supports that ensure the individuals are able to remain housed. The targets for housing first interventions for 2015-2016 and 2016-2017 are 121 and 138 respectively. In 2015-2016, 181 individuals were housed through this approach. The program is on track to meet the 138 person target in 2016-2017. Wesley Urban Ministries Transitions to Home Program had 91% retention of housing rate in 2015/16.
- **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.
- **Family Shelter System** – The City of Hamilton has funded a program that assists families with the provision of alternative temporary housing options, supports and interventions designed to reduce the likelihood that the family will wind up relying the emergency shelter system. In 2015 the Family shelter was able to divert 35% of families from the emergency shelter system.

Advocacy and Information Gathering (Strategy 1.1, 2.9, 3.10)

- **Point in Time Count** – The City of Hamilton did a point in time count in 2016. This saw 263 volunteers survey 504 individuals and 22 families experiencing

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homelessness in Hamilton. Of those surveyed, 57% identified as being chronically homeless.

- **National Housing Strategy** – The City of Hamilton provided comments to the National Housing Strategy consultation done by the Federal Government in October 2016. The themes of the City’s comments were affordability, sustainability, inclusivity and flexibility.
- **Ontario Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy** – The City of Hamilton continues to respond to the Province’s 2016 update of the Affordable Housing Strategy. This includes developing a framework for the implementation of inclusionary zoning, addressing secondary units and portable housing benefits.
- **Completed Planning Process with Women’s Housing Planning Collaborative (WHPC)** to identify short and long term system needs. WHPC consists of shelters for single women, victims of abuse, second stage housing and criminalized women.

Challenges & Key Issues

- 1) Significant additional investment in the affordable housing sector is needed to fully implement the Action Plan. Current funding enhancements and programs envelopes from all levels of government have contributed to only partially achieving some of the targets in the plan. The current level of funding and enhancements over the last three years are not on track of reaching the investment of \$427 million over 10 years which is required to fully achieve the targets identified in the plan.
- 2) The Hamilton housing market is very heated with the price of an existing home in Hamilton increasing by about 14% in the last year, with the average home price climbing to \$441,619 in October 2016 as reported by CMHC. This increase in house price puts a strain on the ability of individuals and families to afford quality housing in Hamilton. The continued migration of commuter population to Hamilton drives up the cost of housing and rental for individuals who live and work in Hamilton.
- 3) The most recent data from October 2015 from Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation report the vacancy rate for buildings with 6 or more units was 3.8%. CMHC projected in their Fall 2016 Housing Market update for Hamilton that the rental apartment vacancy rate will edge consistently lower until 2018.
- 4) In 2001, Social Housing was downloaded by the province to municipalities with insufficient one-time capital funding. The overall budget for subsidies to social housing providers is currently \$67 million annually. Approximately \$46 million of this is funded from the property tax levy. The social housing budget is benchmarked by

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the Housing Services Act, 2011. Currently all social housing providers in Hamilton have insufficient reserves to fully address the cost of outstanding capital repairs and most would need to approach the City for funding for any serious emergency repairs. The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan targets 3,500 units to be rehabilitated by 2023 and requires an increase in capital funding to properly fund these rehabilitations. Staff estimate that the cost to rehabilitate all of Hamilton's social housing stock could be \$500 to \$600 million over the next twenty years.

- 5) Increased financial challenges for people living in poverty, including but not limited to rising utility costs and rent increases, are driving greater take-up on eviction prevention funding, in particular the Housing Stability Program (HSB). The HSB budget will be fully expended by the end of December 2016, leaving a significant funding shortfall to the end of the fiscal year (March 31, 2017). The HSB is part of the City's implementation of provincial homelessness funding under the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI).

2017 Workplan Activities Priorities

West Harbour – The City of Hamilton has been exploring the disposition of lands in the West Harbour for the implementation of the City's Waterfront Development plan. Two of these properties are currently social housing and owned by CityHousing Hamilton. These two properties are important affordable housing locations. Overall it is important for the creation of balanced neighbourhoods in Hamilton and that the developments of the West Harbour lands include affordable housing in the long term. On November 2, 2016, City Council approved a minimum of 5% of this development would be affordable homeownership. (Strategy 2.2, 2.8)

Incentive Programs – In 2017, staff will be presenting Council with a report on an incentives program to encourage the development of affordable housing in Hamilton. This affordable housing report will include components of the existing City incentive programs, adding new incentives, and developing a program to package all of the affordable housing incentives. (Strategy 1.3, 1.4, 1.5, 1.6, 1.8, 1.9)

End of Federal Operating Agreements – Social Housing providers may divest themselves of holdings when no longer required to maintain the units as social housing once operating agreements expire. This could 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. (Strategy 1.11)

Engagement – The implementation of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan is predicated on strong engagement of those currently living along the affordable housing continuum, service providers providing supports and the broad community to highlight

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the importance of affordable housing. The key aspects of engagement in 2017 will be the continuation of the Planning Group, the first year of the Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee to Emergency and Community Services Committee and dedicated engagement evaluating the progress of the plan as we approach the five year half way point of the plan. (Strategy 5.7, 5.8, 5.9)

Reporting on Progress

The Action Plan yearly updates will continue to act as an annual report on the incremental progress being achieved through the implementation of the 54 strategies. A more comprehensive report will be done at the five year mark of the plan. This report will show the progress so far on the targets in the plan, and evaluate the expected successes of the plan based on past performance. This will include an analysis of investments to date and critical shortfalls and their impact on the success of the plan.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

Appendix A to Report CES15033(a): Housing & Homelessness Action Plan in Hamilton – 2015 Annual Report to the Community

Appendix B to Report CES15033(a): 2016 Membership of the Housing and Homelessness Planning Group