


Hamilton

CITY OF HAMILTON
HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT
Housing Services Division

TO:	Chair and Members Emergency and Community Services Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	August 15, 2019
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Hamilton Housing Summit (HSC19037) (City Wide) (Outstanding Business List Item)
WARD(S) AFFECTED:	City Wide
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SUBMITTED BY:	Edward John Director, Housing Services Division Healthy and Safe Communities Department
SIGNATURE:	

RECOMMENDATION

- (a) That Report HSC19037 be referred to the Government Relations Sub-Committee to further inform the development of a government relations strategy to address Hamilton's housing issues with a focus on increasing rental housing supply, particularly affordable rental housing, better meeting the needs of the aging population, and repairing the ageing social housing stock; and,
- (b) That the Outstanding Business List item identified as Hamilton Housing Summit, be considered complete and removed from the Outstanding Business List.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Hamilton Housing Summit (Housing Summit) was held on May 21, 2019, at City Hall in Council Chambers, with 230 people attending.

The objective of the Housing Summit was to raise awareness of the challenges facing the housing sector, specifically affordable housing issues in Hamilton, by engaging community partners and subject matter experts in a conversation to explore innovative and creative ways to address these affordable housing challenges. The conversation included two keynote speakers, an expert panel, a video of interviews with people with

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lived experience of housing instability, and delegations from industry experts, housing service delivery agencies, and citizens.

The Hamilton Housing Summit was well attended with 230 people present at City Hall, including several representatives from the Federal and Provincial Governments and City Council, representatives from the full spectrum of housing related services including publicly funded agencies and the private sector, media, and the community at large. It provided a forum for disparate parts of the housing sector who do not normally directly interact, to hear each other's perspectives. As the Summit was also live-streamed others were able to listen on-line.

The information provided at the Summit and the discussions that occurred can further shape the City of Hamilton's work with senior levels of government to address critical housing needs in Hamilton.

Alternatives for Consideration

Not applicable

FINANCIAL – STAFFING – LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

Financial: The total cost of the Hamilton Housing Summit was \$4,943, within the \$5,000 budget approved by Council, and fully covered by the existing Housing Services Division budget.

Staffing: Existing staff completed the work relating to the Housing Summit.

Legal: There are no legal implications associated with Report HSC19037.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

On February 27, 2019, Council approved a motion instructing staff "to plan and execute a Hamilton Housing Summit through which members of Council and the public can hear directly from community partners and subject matter experts on the challenges being faced in the housing sector, and any efforts that governments of all levels can make to support the housing industry." The motion also directed staff to "report to the Emergency and Community Services Committee with a summary of the Hamilton Housing Summit, along with recommendations for a longer-term Engagement Strategy with the Federal and Provincial governments, by September 30, 2019."

Housing Services Division staff assembled a multidisciplinary team which included staff from Facilities, Information Technology, Communications, the Clerk's office, Children's Services and Neighbourhood Development, and Creative Design Services to plan and execute the Housing Summit.

On May 21, 2019, the Housing Summit was held in Council Chambers. Registration for the event reached capacity with 230 people attending, and more watching through public live streaming.

POLICY IMPLICATIONS AND LEGISLATED REQUIREMENTS

None

RELEVANT CONSULTATION

Staff from the following City divisions were consulted in the planning and execution of the Housing Summit and this report:

- Corporate Services Department - Finance and Administration, City Clerk's Office
- Planning and Economic Development Department - Economic Development Division

Housing Services Division staff used the Housing Summit as an opportunity to consult attendees and experts on the Five-Year Review of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan. Attendees completed an exercise to vote for the housing issues they believed should be prioritized for action in the revised Housing and Homelessness Action Plan. There were 326 responses, with up to four per person, which are informing the priorities in the final revised Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.

ANALYSIS AND RATIONALE FOR RECOMMENDATION(S)

Event Overview

The Housing Summit was a successful half day event that engaged subject matter experts, local MPs, MPPs, City Council, and the public on Hamilton's housing challenges. The Housing Summit team worked hard to obtain high quality panellists and keynote speakers. These were:

- Dr. Steve Pomeroy (CEO of Focus Consulting Inc. and Senior Research Fellow for the Centre for Urban Research and Education, Carleton University), who outlined evolving conditions and challenges in Canada's housing system.
- Dr. Jim Dunn (Director of McMaster Institute for Healthier Environments), who presented on Opportunities for Action at the Intersection of Housing and Health and local issues and barriers.
- Natasha Findlay-Clairmont (local resident with lived experience), Katherine Kalinowski (Chief Operating Officer, Good Shepherd Centres, Hamilton), Victoria Bomberly (Indigenous Social Planner, Social Planning and Research Council),

and Tom Hunter (CEO, CityHousing Hamilton) who participated in a panel discussion on the challenges and potential opportunities amidst Hamilton's housing crisis. The discussion was moderated by Dwayne Cline (Pastor, Hughson Baptist Church).

To include the voices of more people with lived experience of housing challenges and successes, a video was produced by the City's Communications Division, in which three residents of community housing shared their personal stories of housing barriers and challenges, overcoming many of those challenges, and how the housing supports provided to them positively changed their lives.

Twelve community stakeholders and members of the public made delegations on matters such as the challenges of developing affordable housing, being a landlord, providing legal services to vulnerable tenants, and much more, all of which is documented on video. Delegations included members of the public, Indwell Community Homes, the Social Planning and Research Council, Hamilton Roundtable for Poverty Reduction, Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, Hamilton & District Apartment Association, Dynamic Supports, and the Women's Housing Planning Collaborative. It is notable that such a broad range of people from the public and various organizations heard each other's perspectives, some for the first time.

Communications Strategy

To make the Housing Summit successful and accessible to the community, a comprehensive communications strategy was deployed:

- The Housing Summit was promoted heavily through social media and the City's website;
- Invitations were sent by email to local stakeholders;
- Two opinion editorials, one from Indwell Community Homes, the other from the Social Planning and Research Council (SPRC), were in the Hamilton Spectator in the week prior, promoting the event. One op-ed discussed the barriers to affordable housing development, and the other presented data about Hamilton's affordable housing challenges.
- An interview with the Senior Program Manager, Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP) and the Co-chair of the HHAP Planning Group, that aired on Cable 14's City Matters show, promoted the Housing Summit and presented some of Hamilton's affordable housing challenges to the public;
- City employees from a range of departments were invited to the Summit;
- The Summit was publicly livestreamed; and,
- The video of the entire Summit, including all presentations, the expert panel discussion, and delegations is available at <https://www.hamilton.ca/city-initiatives/priority-projects/hamilton-housing-summit>.

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Summit Participation

The Housing Summit hosted 230 people in person. The event was also made available publicly via livestream, and through a video on the Summit webpage. As of July 28, 2019, there were 401 views of the Housing Summit livestream video.

What We Heard

There was a consensus that Hamilton requires well-designed initiatives and responses to address its current housing affordability crisis. All levels of government must be responsible for solutions; however, there is growing concern about the reduction of investment by senior levels of government which leaves municipalities with a greater proportion of the financial responsibilities for housing. Hamilton must continue to place work with the other levels of government to increase the funding available to meet the growing housing affordability challenges.

The Housing Summit identified four primary areas of concern:

- 1) the need to increase rental housing supply;
- 2) housing affordability challenges;
- 3) changing demographics creating new and different needs; and,
- 4) the need for repairs to the ageing housing infrastructure.

Housing Services Division staff recommend that the Government Relations Sub-Committee address these areas of concern in the development of a government relations strategy (Federal and Provincial Governments).

A detailed description of the discussion at the Housing Summit is below:

1) Rental Housing Supply

Challenges

- Currently, all new rental supply built without government subsidy is at the high end of the rental market. This leaves low income Hamiltonians seeking affordable places to live with few, if any, options.
- The high costs of land and construction, as well as operating expenses, make it cost prohibitive to build rental housing affordable to those with low to moderate incomes unless there is significant public investment. Over the last three years the costs of construction have significantly increased.

Opportunities

- Opportunities from investment in Canada's National Housing Strategy (NHS) must be maximized to create new affordable housing supply and address homelessness.

- Greater financial incentives are needed to enable the non-profit sector to build more affordable rental housing.

2) Addressing Housing Affordability

Challenges

- Since 2012, city-wide rents have increased an average of 4.1% per year, twice the rate of inflation. Hamilton's apparently healthy vacancy rate masks the lack of supply of units with affordable rents.
- Hamilton needs more funding for supports to enable people to remain housed. Supports are needed to meet health, addictions and accessibility needs.

Opportunities

- A Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit must be based on the local market conditions and individual needs.
- Subsidy and support program flexibility is needed to meet deep affordability needs.

3) Changing Demographics

Challenges

- The number of people 80+ years old is and will continue to rise significantly. These people will require appropriate, age-optimizing neighbourhoods to accommodate their unique needs for housing, transportation, social opportunities, and services.
- Governments must address the years of intentional discrimination and inequity against Indigenous peoples. A disproportionate number of those who identify as Indigenous experience homelessness in Hamilton.

Opportunities

- The Housing First approach has proven successful in Hamilton. Continued investment into Housing First initiatives is required for Hamilton to make additional progress towards ending homelessness.
- The City of Hamilton has a strong working relationship with the urban Indigenous community and has made considerable progress constructing Indigenous led affordable housing projects and providing housing and homelessness services tailored to the needs of Indigenous people. Additional support and funding are needed to continue this work and scaling them to meet the need.

4) Repairing Ageing Infrastructure

Challenges

- Deeper levels of funding are needed to repair and maintain ageing community housing infrastructure. Failing to reinvest in ageing infrastructure will result in units going offline and remaining uninhabitable for long periods.
- Hamilton needs to improve the physical quality of housing at the low end of the private rental market to protect health and stabilize tenancies; however, it is important that this investment does not displace those with low incomes.

Opportunities

- Hamilton has completed building condition assessments for all its social housing stock and is ready for action if provided funding for repairs.
- Coordination of legislation, programs, and services between all levels of government and ministries must improve. This is particularly important given the amount and pace of change in the last several years.

These themes are consistent with Hamilton's 10-year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION

None

ALIGNMENT TO THE 2016 – 2025 STRATEGIC PLAN

Community Engagement and Participation

Hamilton has an open, transparent and accessible approach to City government that engages with and empowers all citizens to be involved in their community.

Healthy and Safe Communities

Hamilton is a safe and supportive City where people are active, healthy, and have a high quality of life.

APPENDICES AND SCHEDULES ATTACHED

None