

Annual Community Report -2022

# Housing & Homelessness Action Plan in Hamilton

Everyone has a home...Home is the Foundation



Everyone has a home...home is the foundation. This is the collective mandate that has been endorsed by the City of Hamilton and the Hamilton community. It is a mandate that requires collective action by all stakeholders and community members.

The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan is a community based, person centred plan that sets a vision, clear targets and goals to ensure everyone in Hamilton has a home. In August 2020, Hamilton City Council approved Hamilton’s Housing and Homelessness 10 year Action Plan update. The intent of the update was to create a streamlined plan focused on needed system changes. The plan is to be viewed as a living document that will be updated as required.

This report focuses on the work that has occurred during 2021, and notes significant disruption to the Action Plan due to the global pandemic. This report provides highlights and is not reflective of all the good work going on in our community which contributes to the Action Plan.

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.

## 2021 Highlights

2021 continued to be a year of disruption, response, and overall flexibility with the City of Hamilton and community partners working to best respond to the global pandemic's impact on the housing and homelessness sector.

In August 2020 Hamilton City Council endorsed the review of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP). The HHAP was built by the community with community input. This approach was repeated in the review, with over 500 people consulted. A dedicated working group provided in depth input throughout the review process. The five-year review of the HHAP was a comprehensive overhaul and refocusing of the HHAP, necessary due to significant changes in Hamilton's housing system and its context.

The HHAP will continue to focus on a system approach to solutions to housing challenges. The Action Plan's focus for system change is areas in which the City can take the lead to plan, fund, or implement solutions. The dynamic nature of the housing system means the HHAP is a living document that will be reviewed regularly. Being a living document that can grow and adapt as the needs and solutions evolve helps to ensure programs and funding continue to align with the strategic directions and ensure one off approaches won't be needed to address changing challenges.

The revised HHAP continues to build upon the five following pillars:

**OUTCOME 1:** Create more affordable rental and ownership housing in Hamilton to help meet the need and demand

- The YWCA brought online 35 Rent-Geared-to-Income units for women. These will be populated from Hamilton's By-Name Priority List or Access to Housing waitlist and are funded through Strong Communities Rent Supplements program. The project also has 15 affordable units priced at the low-end of market.
- Four projects were approved by CMHC for the Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) and they include:
  - A 6-unit modular build, three 3-bedroom and three 2-bed units
  - 12-unit office conversion, 11 1-bedroom and 1 2-bedroom units,
  - Commercial space conversion 14 1-bedroom units,
  - A project with 13 bachelor units.



**OUTCOME 2:** Increase people's housing affordability, stability and choice

- Improving the functioning of the Access to Housing waitlist for community housing and Rent Supplement Management System through software improvements the new Integrated Housing System will replace the current software. This improvement will provide increased choice for clients.

- Addressing the issue of renovictions has been a growing focus of the Hamilton community for a number of years. In 2021 the Tenant Defense Fund was expanded include tenants facing displacement due to renovictions.

**OUTCOME 3:** Provide people with the individualized supports they need to help them obtain and maintain housing

- From January 2020 to July 2021, 447 households were housed from Hamilton’s By-Name Priority List, representing 998 unique individuals.



- In 2021 approximately 250 Canada-Ontario Housing Benefits were allocated, beginning with households in receipt of housing allowances that were expiring to support housing loss prevention.
- The City of Hamilton entered into a partnership with St. Joseph’s Healthcare Hamilton and the Canadian Mental Health Association Hamilton Branch on a pilot project to stabilize the housing of 15-20 individuals experiencing chronic homelessness with high acuity mental illness and/or substance use disorder. The pilot integrates peer support, clinical health and addictions services, and City-funded Intensive Case Management program support and housing allowances, along with access to market rent units through CityHousing Hamilton.
- Investment of \$2 M for housing allowances for clients of City funded Intensive Case Management (ICM) programs as well as additional staffing support to assist in the administration of the new allowances that will serve up to 93 individuals or households over 4 years.
- Hamilton’s Housing Focused Street Outreach Team was centralized in the Housing Services Division. In order to better support the work of the Street Outreach Team, an expanded Outreach staff complement was expanded to 6 outreach workers, 1 Coordinator and a Supervisor.
- The Rent Ready program supported 389 households in remaining housed through rent arrears and utility arrears support.

**OUTCOME 4:** Ensure people live in housing that is good quality, safe and suitable to their needs

- CityHousing Hamilton (CHH) and the City of Hamilton received confirmation through a Letter of Intent from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) for \$145,688,880 in funding over eight years. This funding is delivered through the National Housing Co-Investment Fund – Repair and Renewal Stream and will support \$194,251,800 in repair and renewal projects impacting 6,290 CHH units.



- Residential Care Facility Liaison position was created; the role receives and triages phone calls and emails from RCF residents and/or their families, friends, caregivers, staff, etc. who have serious concerns or complaints about their residential care facility.
- Opening of Ken Soble Tower at 500 MacNab St. This project includes 114 rent geared to income units and 32 market rent. This renovation is the largest passive house project outside of Europe completed to date.

**OUTCOME 5: Provide people with respectful, quality service within a “user-friendly” system**

- Housing Services in consultation with Hamilton’s urban Indigenous community created Indigenous educational training on the history of Indigenous peoples in Canada.
- In the spirit and action of reconciliation, the City of Hamilton continues to directly invest in Indigenous-led solutions. Respecting Indigenous autonomy, 20% of federal funds, including COVID-19 investments, are dedicated to Indigenous-specific interventions. These investments are selected by the Indigenous Community Advisory Board.

**COVID-19 RESPONSE**

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- The rental of hotel rooms for expanded temporary housing, staffing and additional supports, cleaning, food and associated services in the approximate amount of \$7.1 M for the period of July 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021
  - Continuation of COVID-19 related supports for the homeless-serving system, including but not limited to security services, enhanced cleaning, food and associated services in the approximate amount of \$2 M for the period of July 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021
  - Continuation of operation of COVID-19 isolation services for people experiencing homelessness in the approximate amount of \$1.1 M for the period of July 1, 2021 to December 31, 2021
  - Continuation of enhanced drop-in services including but not limited to The Living Rock Ministries, Mission Services of Hamilton Inc., Wesley Urban Ministries Inc. and The YWCA.
  - Temporarily increase the women’s emergency shelter system capacity by up to 70 beds over and above the two existing women’s emergency shelters
  - Providing isolation services for households who have a residence but are unable to isolate in-place. Support was also offered to shelter staff and immigrants to Canada who were sponsored by local Hamilton agencies.
  - Expanded Winter Planning Services
    - Staff have secured the operation and availability of 15 additional temporary emergency shelter beds and required supports to serve single homeless women at Mission Services Emma’s Place, which was recently approved by Council.
    - Expansion of 21 Rooms at an existing hotel serving homeless women and couples.
    - Invested in the operation of four drop-in centres serving men, women and youth that will support the needs of vulnerable individuals throughout the winter months.

## Did you know

In 2021 the average market rent continues to increase. Overall it increased from \$1,118 to \$1,190 for all units. Significant increases were seen in one bedroom and two bedroom units. With increases of 4.6% and 4.4% compared to only 4.3% increase overall.

**Vacancy Rates:** Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation reports the vacancy rate for buildings with 6 or more units was 3.2% in 2021. For units with rents under \$750 and within the range of \$750 - \$999 the vacancy rate was 2.7% and 1.8%, but for units with rents of \$1,500+ the vacancy rates was 6.3%

The revised HHAP includes S.M.A.R.T. targets for all outcome areas. These are:

- Specific,
- Measurable,
- Achievable,
- Relevant,
- Time Bound.

To ensure that the community need was not lost in the revised Action Plan the outcome areas also include stretch targets.

Question regarding this report should be directed to:

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