



# HOUSING & HOMELESSNESS

**ACTION PLAN IN HAMILTON**

**ANNUAL COMMUNITY REPORT 2023**

# INTRODUCTION



The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP) is a community based, person-centred plan that sets a vision, clear targets, and goals to address housing challenges and 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 updated HHAP is a streamlined plan that focuses on needed system changes and identifies areas in which the City can take the lead to plan, fund, or implement solutions. Updating the plan offered the opportunity to change our approach to how we measure our progress as it relates to Action Plan items through the inclusion of “SMART” goals and “stretch targets” which prioritize results-based accountability. The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan is a living document that will be updated as required, adapting to changing needs and providing solutions to ensure that programs and funding continue to align with the City’s strategic directions.



# REPORT OVERVIEW

This report focuses on the work that has occurred during 2023, underscoring the intensifying housing crisis that is creating significant challenges across the housing spectrum. Post-pandemic economic challenges, rising housing costs, and an escalating opioid crisis continue to place strain on individuals in our community and across the country, with a disproportionately negative impact on our most vulnerable citizens. These increasing challenges have necessitated altering the way in which we deliver services, invest money, and plan for the future of the housing and homelessness serving systems at the City of Hamilton. What remains steadfast during difficult and tumultuous times is the collective mandate that guides this work and demands immediate action by all stakeholders and community members:

**Everyone has a home... home is the foundation.**

This report provides an update on work that occurred in 2023 as it relates to the Action Plan's five outcomes. Highlighting only some of the work from the City's Housing Services Division and community partners, it should be noted that this report is not reflective of all the good work occurring in our community which contributes to the Action Plan.

**The Action Plan is guided by seven core values:**



# HIGHLIGHTS

## Tenant Support Program

### Action Plan Connection

*Outcome 2: People have more housing affordability and choice*

In August of 2023, The Housing Services Division developed a comprehensive Hamilton Tenant Support Program to address issues related to bad-faith evictions as a result of renovations, often referred to as 'renovictions'. Renovictions are increasingly leaving tenants vulnerable within the housing system as they are displaced by landlords seeking higher profit margins on rental properties. This program was approved in tandem with the City's Renovation License and Relocation Listing Bylaw, which together aim to reduce exploitative renovictions and support tenants in navigating these eviction situations. This program is the first of its kind in the province and is a critical step in providing supports so individuals can maintain housing. \$897k has been invested in The Hamilton Tenant Support program along with 4 dedicated staff.

Hamilton's Tenant Support Program is comprised of four key areas:

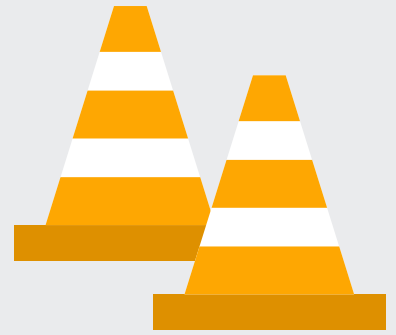
#### 1) Tenant Defence Program

- This new program model provides streamlined legal assistance to tenants with an expanded area of focus, now including N12 evictions (notice to end tenancy when a landlord wants to move into the unit) and advice for the Landlord Tenant Board adjudication process around T6 applications (filed by tenants when a landlord is not adequately maintaining or repairing the rental unit).
- This re-modeled program funds the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic, increasing its capacity to support tenants, and will provide 200 tenants with support through the Landlord Tenant Board process annually.



## 2) Tenant Organization and Capacity Building

- This new program supports community organizations, such as ACORN (Association of Community Organizations for Reform Now) and Hamilton Housing Help Centre to create tenant support programs that provide assistance via direct outreach to tenants who are displaced through renovations but plan to move back into the unit upon completion of work.



## 3) Tenant Education

- The City is developing educational materials and will share them through dedicated campaigns to increase awareness around landlord and tenant rights, responsibilities, and available supports.

## 4) Community Research Table

- This table will be co-led by Housing Services Division staff and community partners, providing a forum for communication between the two.

# Housing Emergency Fund

## Action Plan Connection

*Outcome 2: People have more housing affordability and choice*

The City of Hamilton invested \$3.7M into a newly created Housing Emergency Fund that provides financial supports for residents with low income to assist in maintaining or acquiring a house. This fund was created by combining the City's Housing Stability Benefit and Rent Ready programs. Establishing and further investing into the new Housing Emergency Fund allows Hamilton to better meet current community needs for housing-related financial assistance and increases the flexibility of funding, supporting upwards of 2,000 people per year. 2 new staff positions were created to support administration of the Housing Emergency Fund and provide enhanced client service.

## Encampment Response

### Action Plan Connection

*Outcome 5: All people experience equity in housing and housing-related services*

As the housing crisis intensifies, more individuals are living unsheltered in encampments across the City. In order to respond to the needs of residents living unsheltered in Hamilton and to address growing community concern over the issue, the City invested \$4.6M and dedicated 4 new staff to an Encampment Response. Community consultation, a jurisdictional scan, and a public engagement campaign supported the recommendations and development of numerous encampment response initiatives, including:

- 24/7 access to washrooms and showers
- The integration of peer support workers and Indigenous workers within the encampment response
- Enhanced waste collection and clean-up in encampment areas
- Encampment Protocol that provide guidelines for encampments on City property

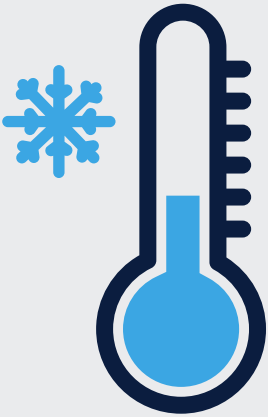
This work has required a collaborative, cross-departmental approach between Housing Services, Parks, and By-Law Services.

## Winter Response and Extended Services Strategy

### Action Plan Connection

*Outcome 5: All people experience equity in housing and housing-related services*

The City's existing Winter Response Strategy was enhanced through increased drop-in service offerings and the addition of more warming spaces during the winter months. The Strategy was also expanded this year by activating the Response to run for the duration of the winter season (December 1 to March 31), rather than only operating when weather falls within a pre-determined cold-temperature threshold.



In addition to the Winter Response Strategy, the City has increased the amount of available drop-in services between April 1 and November 30, resulting in 24-7, year-round drop-in services available for individuals in Hamilton. These services focus on low-barrier access to spaces and will support the creation of 100 new year-round daytime drop in spaces through a call for application process. As part of these strategies, new initiatives such as an overnight warming bus and the use of recreation centres with extended hours as drop-in spaces are being piloted. This \$3.2M investment with 1 staff equips community partners to scale-up and expand their offerings to provide access to year-round spaces and services that are critical for unsheltered individuals.

## Low-Barrier Permanent Housing - Dorothy Day Place

### Action Plan Connection

*Outcome 2: people have more housing affordability and choice.*

*Outcome 5: All people experience equity in housing and housing-related services*

After many years of supporting the development of the Good Shepherd Centre's permanent housing project, Dorothy Day Place opened in 2023. The building provides low-barrier, permanent-housing with supports for women, transgender, and non-binary people experiencing homelessness. Acquired in 2021 with financial supports from CMHC and the City of Hamilton, the property required an additional capital investment of \$3.6M in 2022, which was provided by the City. This investment was necessary to complete renovations and operationalize the housing, which now provides support to 73 people. Dorothy Day Place is the first housing of its kind to be directly linked to housing people in Hamilton's homeless-serving system and is part of a larger strategy that focuses on transitioning emergency shelter sites and resources to serve permanent housing needs.

# Emergency Shelter Response

## Action Plan Connection

*Outcome 3: People have the individualized supports they need to obtain and maintain housing*

With the number of unsheltered individuals on the rise, the City has continued to invest its greatest portion of funding within the homeless-serving sector to Emergency Shelter Response. Hamilton's Emergency Response was assessed to determine the post-pandemic shelter needs in the City and identify how to continue to serve the unsheltered population while also shifting focus to permanent housing solutions. The Social Planning and Research Council of Hamilton was engaged to conduct an assessment of the current response, and a three-pronged approach was developed, focusing on the following:

- Continued investment in interim emergency response interventions, including hotel overflow space for families and additional shelter beds.
- Investments in immediate housing solutions including portable housing benefits.
- Longer-term strategies to invest in the creation of permanent and supportive housing.

Emergency shelters received an investment of \$17.7M, with 5 new staff to support the increased workload in 2023. Two new Emergency Case Managers will support the expanded shelter capacity while a Senior Project Manager, Housing Support Worker, and Housing Services Clerk will support the design and administration of programs offering permanent housing solutions. As part of this investment, 24 units of supportive housing were developed in collaboration with CityHousing Hamilton and Indwell in 2023. Individuals who have been living in encampments are set to move-in September 1, 2024.

With growing encampment numbers, the City's Emergency Shelter Response has continued to be a priority, requiring a thoughtful and balanced approach to meet the needs of the unsheltered while addressing community concerns.



# End of Mortgage Strategy

## Action Plan Connection

*Outcome 1: There is more affordable and rental ownership housing in Hamilton to meet the need and demand*

*Outcome 4: People live in housing that is good quality and safe*

The City's provincially-funded social housing projects have been reaching End of Agreement, with the first wave of mortgages ending in 2021. Despite the continued funding provided to these projects as determined through the Housing Services Act, they are severely underfunded as the capital investment requirements to retain an aging housing stock are not being met. Following updates to the Ontario Housing Services Act, which allows for new service and exit agreements with housing providers, Hamilton has approved and extended their commitment to do so through 2024 and beyond. To support this work, the City developed a new End of Mortgage Renewal Strategy, which will help to ensure that the new agreements meet legislative expectations and adequately support the social housing units that were originally funded by the province. The Strategy includes a set of principles and guidelines, funding options, a process approach, and a financial model. The City has invested \$20.9M over 4 year as well as approved 2 staff to support the End of Mortgage Strategy to ensure that social housing continues to be adequately funded.



# CONCLUSION

The Housing and Homelessness Action Plan continues to provide guidance and strategic direction on how to address some of the most pressing housing and homelessness issues facing our community. From encampment response to drop-in services to permanent housing solutions, the HHAP has proven to be a key resource when determining how to approach and prioritize the many needs we see in the Housing Services sector. Although we will continue to centre our work around the concept of “home is the foundation”, we are cognisant that the circumstances that prevent one from obtaining a home – or make it very challenging to do so – are constantly changing, fueled by the deepening housing crisis. With this in mind, we as a community will continue to anchor our work around the measurable and time-sensitive goals that the HHAP sets out, and will update the Action Plan as needed.

Questions regarding this report can be directed to:  
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## Housing Stats in Hamilton

### Average Market Rent

increased to \$1,431 in 2023 from \$1,242 in 2022, a **15.2% increase**.

### Vacancy Rates

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation reports the average vacancy rate for buildings with 6 units or more at 2.2% in 2023 with only a 1.3% vacancy rate for units costing between \$700-\$999.



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.