

PROJECT CHARTER AND WORK PLAN

Lived Expertise Working Group (LEWG) Year 2

September 19, 2023

Section 1: Overview

1.1 What is Lived Expertise:

Lived expertise combines lived experiences of housing marginalization with advocacy experience and connections to diverse communities. Bringing all three elements together is important to ensure the group has the knowledge, experience and supports needed to act as a bridge between the City and diverse communities.

1.2 What is a Human Rights Based Approach:

The Human Rights Based Approach we take declares that everyone has the right to permanent and adequate housing.

That stable, secure, affordable housing is a human right and needs to be available for everyone (Housing For All Strategy, 2020).

Rooted in the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights and affirmed in the National Housing Strategy Act governments in Canada are expected to maintain the right to adequate housing. This has been further informed by developments in case law and the work of advocates, into a human rights lens that affirms everyone's right to safe and dignified housing.

1.3 Meeting Format

Evening meeting the first and third Wednesday of every month. Meetings are facilitated by the Social Development Centre Waterloo Region (SDCWR) and attended by Lived Experts, SDCWR staff, and City Planning staff.

Section 2: Working Group Member Roles and Responsibilities

2.1 Lived Experts

The Lived Expertise Working Group consists of 12 representatives from communities experiencing housing marginalization in the community who provide advise and collaborate on the implementation of the Housing For All Strategy.

2.2 Social Development Centre of Waterloo Region

Funds facilitation services (15hr/week) and administer stipends. The facilitation team acts as a bridge of communication and trust between the working group, the City and other members of the community as necessary.

2.3 City of Kitchener

Staff from the Planning Division who meet with the working group and connect them to projects and other City divisions to ensure lived expertise throughout City housing related initiatives. The City provides funding for stipends and associated meeting supports.

Section 3: Mandate

3.1 Housing For All Strategy 2020

A two-year pilot project for staff to work with and learn from a Lived Experience Working Group on addressing housing issues in the city, to gain advice on strategy implementation and monitor progress. (Housing For All Strategy 2020).

Section 4: Principles

- 4.1 Lived Expertise should be incorporated throughout all decision-making regarding housing, homelessness and poverty reduction: from planning to implementation to evaluation and accountability.
- 4.2 Lived Experts are irreplaceable. Municipalities may not have staff working in these areas that understand the impacts of housing marginalization and the solutions to prevent, mitigate and get people out of homelessness unless you have experienced it yourself.
- 4.3 Lived experts should be treated the same as other experts, including appropriate compensation (ie. stipends, travel, childcare) and respect.
- 4.4 The ongoing loss, harm and failure of the housing system needs to be acknowledged and dignified. Lived experience is the harms that arise from the failures and gaps of the system. Group members and consultants need to honour the loss and acknowledge the gaps.
- 4.5 Lived Experts authentically express themselves and all group members shall do the same. There are limitations such as legal and financial obligations, however group members need to be transparent about limitations.
- 4.6 The LEWG operates from a human rights-based approach and the enabling of permanent housing with individualized supports.
- 4.7 Bridges are necessary for success. Lived Experts are bridges to our communities and have very different experiences than others and help is sometimes needed to facilitate communication and understanding across that difference. Lived Experts have partnered with the Social Development Centre to help communicate across power and marginalization.

Section 5: Year 2 Work Plan

Working collaboratively with City Planning staff on housing related policy matters including the Official Plan review; Rental Housing, Eviction and Displacement Study, and; Housing For All Implementation and Monitoring (e.g. housing needs assessment, understanding and unpacking the success and challenges of implementing Housing for All, understanding housing needs for specific communities, and tracking and monitoring renovations).

Projects within the Scope of Year 2 include:

Updating the Official Plan

- Applying a Human Rights Based Approach
- Lived Expertise Informed Approach

Rental Housing, Eviction and Displacement Study

- Tenant protections
- Displacement toolkit
- Rental Replacement Options
- How the city facilitates information and tools to community
- Data collection

Housing for All Strategy Implementation and Monitoring

- Housing Needs Assessment
- Housing data and monitoring

Section 6: Evaluation

6.1 Metrics of success:

At the end of this pilot the working group, the City of Kitchener, and the Social Development Centre will collaborate on an anonymous review of the pilot to evaluate our work plan and our scope of work on the Housing For All Strategy. This review will assess our progress on our projects, how the City engaged the working group and incorporated our voices, and how the Social Development Centre facilitated the process. The review will result in a series of recommendations on how lived expertise engagement should continue moving forward.

Section 7: Assumptions

- Effective problem-solving approaches will be taken to resolve issues.
- Decisions, where required, will be made on a timely basis to keep the project on track.