

Staff Report



Corporate Services Department

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REPORT TO: Community and Infrastructure Services Committee

DATE OF MEETING: March 7, 2022

SUBMITTED BY: Elin Moorlag Silk, Interim Director of Equity, Anti-Racism & Indigenous Initiatives

PREPARED BY: Andrew Ramsaroop, Social Planning and Affordable Housing Program Lead, Equity, Anti-Racism & Indigenous Initiatives

WARD(S) INVOLVED: All Wards

DATE OF REPORT: February 7, 2022

REPORT NO.: COR-2022-104

SUBJECT: Housing for All Program Update – 2022 Year in Review

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council receive report COR-2022-104 (Housing for All Program Update – 2022 Year in Review) for information.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to provide Committee and Council and the public with an update on the work done to date to advance the actions within *Housing for All* along with the proposed workplan for 2022.
- The report also includes a list of challenges that continue to be a barrier to realizing the right to housing locally, as well as successes as a result of the implementation of *Housing for All*.
- This report supports A Caring Community through the City's commitment to recognizing that stable, secure and affordable housing is a human right. Further, that the City will use equity, diversity and inclusion principles to realize the right to housing.

BACKGROUND:

In response to concern over homelessness and housing affordability the 2019-2022 Strategic Plan included an action to develop an affordable housing strategy for the City of Kitchener. The City conducted a comprehensive process with an advisory committee made up of members of the public, members of Council, non-profit providers, the development community, and the Region of Waterloo to determine what actions the City of Kitchener could uniquely take to support the Region of Waterloo in ensuring everyone has a place to call home. In December 2020, Council approved *Housing for All* which contained 44 actions focused on advancing 7 key priority areas that would help the City of Kitchener realize the right to housing locally and work towards creating more housing opportunities across the housing continuum. One of the 44

actions in Housing for All was to provide regular reports on success and challenges in implementing the strategy. This report serves that purpose.



Figure 1: Housing for All's Seven Priority Areas

Issues of housing availability and affordability as well as the number of people who are experiencing unsheltered and hidden homelessness continue to be a top issue locally and nationally. *Housing for All* was recognized by the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) as an innovative strategy and received its P.J. Marshall Award for Municipal Innovation. The strategy has positioned the City to be a leader in recognizing lived expertise, the right to housing, and demonstrating the role a lower-tier municipality can play on advancing housing opportunities. This report focuses on progress made by city staff in collaboration in community partners on implementing *Housing for All*, actions that are currently underway and actions that will form the work plan for the next year.

The Housing Actions List summary (Appendix A) provides a summary of progress made on the *Housing for All* program. The 2022-2023 *Housing for All* Workplan is attached as Appendix B.

REPORT:

Staff have prepared a summary of the *Housing for All* program since its approval by Council in December 2020. The below graphic is a visual representation of the progress the City has made on the housing strategy. *Housing for All*, as approved by Council, can be found [here](#).

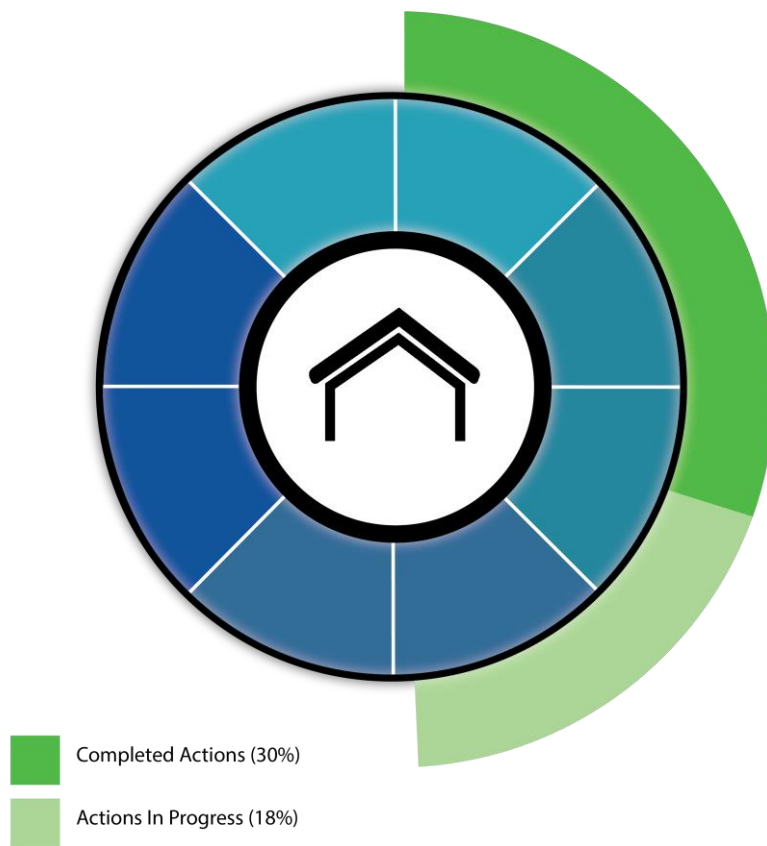


Figure 2: Graphic depiction of Housing for All's action implementation status.

Update on Housing for All – Kitchener’s Blueprint for a more Caring Community

Since the approval of Kitchener’s first comprehensive housing strategy by Council in December 2020, the City has begun to undertake the implementation of the 44 actions focused on created more housing opportunities in our community.

Completed Actions

Together City staff from across various Departments and Divisions have collaborated to advance these actions. In Table 1 (below) are actions that have been completed to date. Please note that some of these actions are ongoing and iterative. The first year of implementation was focused on setting the program on a foundation for success, resourcing the body of work and learning how to collaborate both within the City and pan-Regionally.

Collectively, 14 actions have been largely completed accounting for approximately a 30% completion rate in the first year of implementation.

Table 1: Completed Actions

Action
Provide sufficient resources to realize the right to housing.
Advocate for ShelterCare to gain a permanent home.
Work with the Region and operators to facilitate development of: » OneROOF supportive housing for youth » YWCA supportive housing for women » A transition plan for A Better Tent City to move to an alternate location and provide innovative supportive housing that meets resident's need » Indwell redevelopment of St Marks Church for supportive housing » Housing for people in encampments, in shelters and leaving homelessness
Advocate for the Region to address encampments incorporating a human rights-based approach.
Jointly develop a Region/City Charter to ensure collaboration and opportunities to identify and address housing challenges in Kitchener.
Continue improving the development approval process with input from the development industry and the community
Consider fast tracking non-profit and affordable housing developments through city processes
Consider establishment of an Affordable Housing Reserve Fund to support affordable housing initiatives
Request the Region to prioritize collaborative determination and designation of Major Transit Station Areas in the Regional Official Plan.
Request the Region to consider feasibility and implications for funding for growth related (future) affordable housing developments in creating development charge policies
Provide regular public reports on success and challenges in implementing Housing for All.
Develop an annual work plan to implement Housing for All including timing and responsibilities, to be used to inform annual budgets
Recommend an annual operating amount to support housing initiatives.
Provide staffing to support implementation of the Affordable Housing Strategy.

Progress on the strategy advances Kitchener's commitment to equity:

- Providing program updates, work plan updates and the public accessibility of staff help to ensure the community is being provided with adequate information to be able to make meaningful contributions.
- Resourcing the Housing for All program, providing dedicated staffing to prioritizing supportive and affordable housing developments and using our position as a municipality to advocate moves our community closer to a place where everyone is adequately and safely housed.
- Leveraging opportunities for collaboration, inter-municipal discourse and joint advocacy ensures we are all working towards the same goal in complementary and meaningful ways.

Actions that are currently underway

In addition to the completed actions, 8 out of the 44 actions are actively underway (see table 2, below) with dedicated staff support. This is equivalent to about 18% of the 44 actions. City staff continue to collaborate across the Corporation, with community partners, area municipalities and the Region of Waterloo on prioritizing housing options, as well as support the right to housing by centring lived expertise in evaluating the strategy's success.

Table 2: Actions in progress

Action
Collaborate with the Shift on a two-year pilot project to localize implementation of housing as a human right.
Work with community organizations, to proactively identify and eliminate socioeconomic barriers to participation.
Create and implement 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.
Facilitate the creation of 450 units of new transitional and supportive housing. This includes: 60 housing units for youth, 70 housing units for women, 170 housing units for men, 50 housing units for people with acute concurrent mental health and addition challenges, 100 units for people with cognitive challenges
Identify City lands suitable for others to develop for affordable housing and seek to incorporate community housing, below market rental and below market ownership units.
Pilot 2 city sites involving community housing in proximity to transit /major transit station areas
Develop a strategy for the use of city lands for affordable housing and play a leadership role in advancing innovative mixed housing communities, as a model for other Canadian communities to replicate.
<p>Jointly advocate for Provincial and Federal funding for housing for community building, sustainability and economic recovery, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • House of Friendship seeking 2 sites and funding for the ShelterCare integrated health and transitional housing concept (80 units) and for supportive housing project (60 units) • YWCA-KW seeking a site and funding for approximately 50 one-bedroom units of affordable supportive housing for women • The Working Centre to acquire and renovate a second site (Water Street 2.0) and add 40 units of housing to their portfolio • Kitchener Housing Inc (KHI) seeking a site and working in partnership with a developer to create new community housing and to purchase buildings to preserve affordable housing • OneROOF proposal to develop approximately 58 units of supportive housing for youth who are homeless on their site • A Better Tent City moving to an alternate location with innovative supportive housing that meets resident's needs • Waterloo Region Habitat for Humanity seeking sites for affordable home ownership • Indwell St Mark's Redevelopment and 2-3 more sites in Kitchener for approximately 120 to 180 supportive housing units • Menno Homes seeking funding to complete project under development • KW Habilitation seeking funding for a supportive housing project • Reception House Waterloo Region seeking a site and funding for the development of a Refugee Services Hub. • Thresholds Homes and Supports is seeking to develop 2 supportive housing sites • KW Urban Native Wigwam Project is seeking to develop a site for affordable housing • John Howard Society Waterloo Wellington seeking funding for a fulltime staff to help develop a housing strategy/model

- Church and Religious Institutions within the City have expressed interest in redeveloping their surplus lands to accommodate affordable housing and need capital funds and development expertise
- Private Sector Affordable Housing developers have expressed interest in developing more affordable housing units, but face barriers around acquiring sites and capital funds.

Actions in-progress on the strategy advance Kitchener's commitment to equity:

- Housing for All boldly declared and positioned the community to recognize the right to housing. A core tenant in the right to housing is centring lived expertise in decisions that affect them most like housing and homelessness policy. Accountability, relationship building and meaningful longer-term engagement helps the City to foster and repair strong relationships.
- Identifying what resources the City can provide to advance housing locally helps to get much needed supportive and affordable housing built. This has a direct impact on lifting our most vulnerable community members out of precarious housing situations and homelessness.

Program Challenges and Success

State of Housing and Homelessness Locally

The City of Kitchener along with the Region of Waterloo, local community partners and the other area municipalities are working in collaboration with one another in new and innovative ways. There has been an increase in national and local attention on housing and homelessness with an increased desire to end homelessness in our communities.

The latest Point in Time (PiT) count taken in the Region of Waterloo put the number of people experiencing any type of homelessness was 1,085 including 412 who were living completely unsheltered. This is an increase from the 2018 PiT count which reported 333 people experiencing any type of homelessness. It should be noted that the method used in the PiT count meant an expanded count, however the number more closely represents the anecdotal reporting from service providers within Kitchener's Housing Needs Assessment.

Along other parts of Kitchener's Housing Wheelhouse, the housing landscape continues to be a point of concern. Asking rents continue to rise, along with increased prices for market housing and land to develop affordable housing. When the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation releases new housing data as well as the release of 2021 Census Data from Statistics Canada is available and staff have the capacity to do so, Kitchener's Needs Assessment will be updated.

Supportive Housing in our Community

Housing for All focused on ending homelessness as one of its key priorities. The creation of additional supportive housing is one way to directly lift people out of homelessness. Since the adoption of the strategy the City has supported the creation of 128 units of supportive housing through a mix of financial support, fee waivers, city land and expedited approvals.

Further, there is approximately an additional 115 units of supportive housing confirmed in the development queue that staff will also support in collaboration with community partners and the Region of Waterloo. This means that there is 243 units of supportive in various parts of the development process which brings the City to just over 50% of its target of 450 supportive housing units in its first year.

A Better Tent City (ABTC) Alternative Housing Pilot

Housing for All positioned the City to support ABTC as a program that filled unique housing gaps in the community, in particular during the COVID-19 pandemic, and the increasing presence of unsheltered homelessness. The City's support of the temporary use of City land and other resources along with support from the Region of Waterloo and the community has ensured that 50 individuals experiencing homelessness could still have a place to call home. The City and the Region of Waterloo continue to work closely with ABTC leadership for a long-term solution for this program.

Advocacy

Through the creation of the strategy the City undertook the 'Big Ask', which identified a number of community partners who were looking to build units. In addition to the 243 units slated to be built in Kitchener, the City was an early advocate for House of Friendship's ShelterCare model which successfully found a home in the City of Waterloo. Further, the City was also an early supporter of the KW Urban Native Wigwam Project which successfully secured funding for an additional housing site in the City of Cambridge.

Future Direction and Conclusion

The recommended 2022-2023 workplan is attached to this report as Appendix B. The future workplan leverages a number of timely opportunities:

- Further demonstrate the City's commitment to the right to housing and equity through the establishment of the Kitchener Housing Lived Expertise Working Group in partnership with the Social Development Centre of Waterloo Region.
- \$2M one-time funding infusion from 2022 Budget to create Affordable Housing Reserve Fund. Council will be presented with a recommended policy later this quarter.
- Holistically look at incentive and fee waiver offerings in conjunction with the Region of Waterloo's Building Better Futures plan and our area municipal partners.
- Holistically look at housing related policies in conjunction with the Region's Regional Official Plan Review and the Tri-City Inclusionary Zoning Working Group.
- Dedicated staffing to support and streamline Affordable Housing Development and Purpose-Built Rental Construction.
- Leverage the expertise of the new Realty Team to help establish and track local housing related data.

The workplan was co-developed with internal stakeholders across the Corporation to ensure dedicated resourcing to advance the plan was available. Future workplans and reports will include the input of the Kitchener Lived Expertise Working Group who will also be responsible for measuring the success of implementation.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports A Caring Community.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

Capital Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Capital Budget.

Operating Budget – The recommendation has no impact on the Operating Budget.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

INFORM – This report has been posted to the City’s website with the agenda in advance of the council / committee meeting.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- [DSD-20-214](#) – Housing for All – City of Kitchener Housing Strategy
- [DSD-20-108](#) – Draft Housing Strategy
- [DSD-20-034](#) – Council Strategy Session – Affordable Housing Issues and Options
- [DSD-20-006](#) – Affordable Housing Strategy Phase 2: Housing Needs Assessment
- [DSD-19-135](#) – Affordable Housing Strategy – Work Program Overview

APPROVED BY: Victoria Raab, General Manager, Corporate Services
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ATTACHMENTS:

Appendix A – *Housing for All* Actions Summary
Appendix B – 2022-2023 *Housing for All* Workplan