

Staff Report



Development Services Department

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REPORT TO: Planning and Strategic Initiatives Committee

DATE OF MEETING: June 17, 2024

SUBMITTED BY: Rosa Bustamante, Director Planning and Housing Policy, 519-741-2200 ext. 7319
Garett Stevenson, Director Development and Housing Approvals, 519-741-2200 ext. 7070

PREPARED BY: Natalie Goss, Manager Policy & Research, 519-741-2200 ext. 7648
Garett Stevenson, Director Development and Housing Approvals, 519-741-2200 ext. 7070

WARD(S) INVOLVED: ALL

DATE OF REPORT: May 30, 2024

REPORT NO.: DSD-2024-277

SUBJECT: Housing for All Strategy Lived Expertise Working Group Next Steps

RECOMMENDATION:

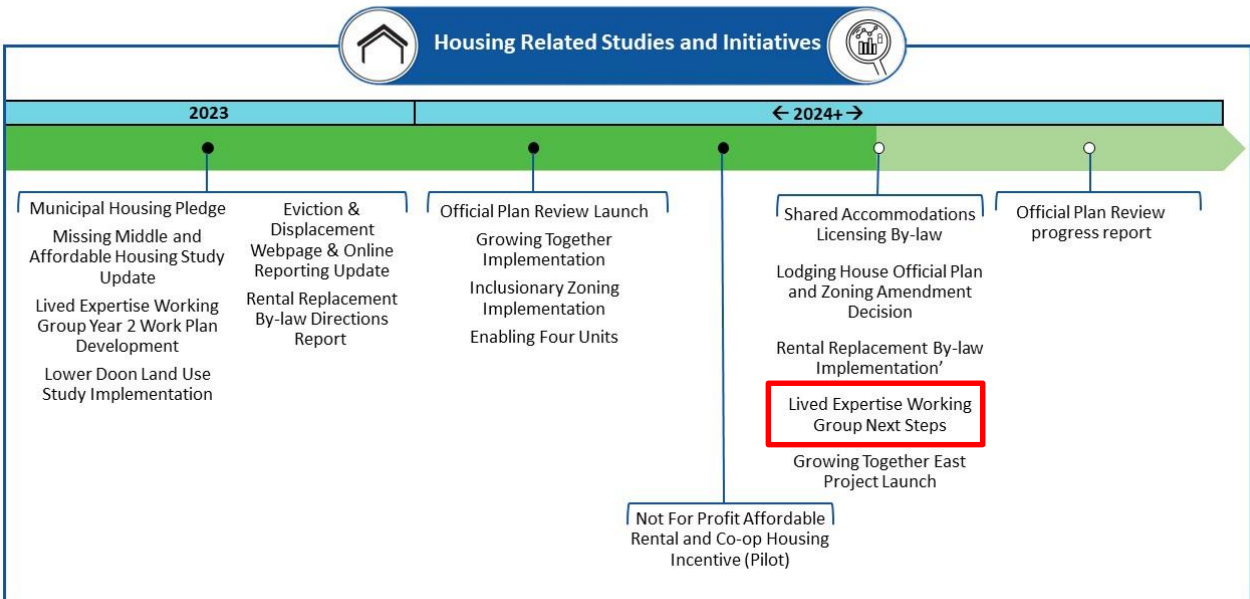
That the Lived Expertise Working Group pilot be extended to June 2026 as outlined in DSD-2024-277 and be resourced by City staff to allow for the continued implementation of Kitchener's Housing for All Strategy and a continued lived expert's lens on the Official Plan project.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS:

- The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Lived Expertise Working Group (LEWG) 2-year pilot and outline next steps for lived expertise in city housing related matters.
- City staff will be administering the LEWG with existing staffing resources. Membership remuneration/honorariums will be administered by the city and will be included within Planning budgets for 2025 and 2026.
- This report has been posted to the City's website with the agenda in advance of the Council/Committee meeting. Over the past year conversations occurred with the LEWG about options for lived expertise in city housing related work post pilot. The input gathered from these conversations informed the recommended approach for the LEWG for 2024-2026.
- This report supports **Building a Connected City Together: Focuses on neighbourhoods; housing and ensuring secure, affordable homes; getting around easily, sustainably and safely to the places and spaces that matter.**

BACKGROUND:

This report is one of many housing-related reports considered by Council since Council's endorsement of Kitchener's Housing Pledge in March 2023, as shown in the diagram below.



In December 2020 Kitchener Council approved Kitchener's Housing for All Strategy establishing a five-year strategy to realize the right to housing using the tools available to an area municipality. Priority 2 of the Housing for All Strategy is a commitment to lived experience collaboration with the following actions:

- Recognize and treat those in need of housing or related social benefits as experts in making what is required and able to positively inform the outcome of decision-making processes;
- Ensure knowledge of rights and provide access to relevant information and sufficient time to consult;
- Ensure meaningful participation in the design, implementation and monitoring of housing policies and decisions;
- Work with community organizations to proactively identify and eliminate socio-economic barriers to participation; and,
- Create and implement a 2-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.

A Lived Expertise Working Group (LEWG) was formed in early 2022 for a 2-year pilot. In September 2023, Council authorized the extension of the pilot for year two and resolved *“That staff, together with the facilitator of the Lived Expertise Working Group, report back to Council at the conclusion of the pilot program in 2024 on the outcome of the pilot”*. The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the LEWG pilot and recommendations

on next steps for lived expertise in the continued implementation of Kitchener's Housing for All Strategy.

REPORT:

Kitchener's Housing for All Strategy has positioned the City to be a leader in recognizing lived expertise, the right to housing, and demonstrating the role an area municipality can play in advancing housing opportunities. A lived expertise lens brings a diverse perspective to housing related work that is currently underway at the city. Over the past two years, the Lived Expertise Working Group (LEWG) has helped to shape a proposed rental replacement by-law for Kitchener, collaborated on the City's eviction information and assistance webpage, provided guidance on the City's Eviction Survey, provided input into the early stages of Kitchener's new Official Plan, and continues to work on the implementation of Housing for All.

Over the two-year pilot staff and the LEWG have learned that:

- Building relationships with each other to have honest, open, safe conversations about matters that the city is responsible for – like housing policy -- is important. There is an understanding that this is key in the continued delivery of Kitchener's Housing for All Strategy and other housing related matters that the city is responsible for to ensure that decisions are shaped by the lived experiences of our community members;
- A periodic re-confirmation of the role/mandate of the LEWG and how its work is advancing the implementation of Kitchener's Housing for All Strategy is a good reminder to ensure work remains within scope;
- Consistent staff support through attendance at each meeting and in between is required to ensure a consistent, two-way exchange of information;
- It is important to make space to share about current matters that weigh heavily on LEWG members' minds and impact their daily lives. Often, these matters, while important, are not directly related to the LEWG's mandate nor do they fall within the City's jurisdiction. However, these matters add to their lived expertise and the empathy-based approach to working collaboratively amongst staff and lived experts;
- Being able to advocate for improvements and changes on housing matters is important for LEWG members;
- There was a significant investment in time and energy of the Social Development Center of Waterloo Region (SDCWR) as both an administrator and facilitator of the LEWG and that this was sometimes challenging given their other work and advocacy, and;
- There is a desire to keep working together on various housing related matters that are within the jurisdiction of the city.

Tremendous progress has been made in collaboration with the LEWG over the past two years on many housing related matters with the city. The LEWG has shaped updates to rules for lodging homes and the proposed rental replacement by-law. The LEWG was instrumental in designing an information sharing webpage for tenants on the City's website. The LEWG has also been sharing the stories of their experiences, some through 2-minute plays, some through a photo exhibit, and others through panel discussions at housing conferences across Canada.

Work continues at the City in the space of housing and the continued support of the LEWG will help ensure the success of housing related work. **Staff recommends that the LEWG pilot be extended to June 2026 and be resourced by City staff to allow for the continued implementation of Kitchener's Housing for All Strategy and to allow for a continued lived expert's lens on the Official Plan project.** As part of the pilot extension, in consideration of the learnings outlined above, staff recommend the following refinements:

- That the administration of the LEWG occur by the City;
- A facilitator role continue to ensure ongoing collaboration;
- Remuneration of LEWG members continue;
- Staff resources will be provided within the current staff complement,
- Funding for the administration and remuneration of the LEWG, childcare, and meeting expenses (including meals) be accounted for within the Planning budgets for 2025 and 2026.

The current pilot ends in June 2024. Staff will work on updating the terms of reference over the summer for a September relaunch of the new City-facilitated format. Meetings are proposed to be monthly.

STRATEGIC PLAN ALIGNMENT:

This report supports **Building a Connected City Together: Focuses on neighbourhoods; housing and ensuring secure, affordable homes; getting around easily, sustainably and safely to the places and spaces that matter.**

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:

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

Operating Budget – Administration of the LEWG, including remuneration for members, childcare, and meeting expenses (including food) will occur through existing Affordable Housing operating account. Staff resources will be provided within the current staff complement. The estimated annual cost is \$24,000 based on 12 meetings per year.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT:

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

COLLABORATE – Over the past year, regular conversations occurred with the LEWG about options for lived expertise in city housing related work post pilot. The input gathered from these conversations informed the recommended approach for the LEWG for 2024-2026.

PREVIOUS REPORTS/AUTHORITIES:

- DSD-20-214 - Housing for All – City of Kitchener Housing Strategy
- COR-2022-104 – Housing for All program Update – 2922 Year in Review

- DSD-2023-295 – Housing for All Strategy Lived Expertise Working Group – First Year Review and Rental Housing, Eviction and Displacement Study Update
- DSD-2023-422 – Supplemental Report to DSD-2023-295 Housing for All Strategy Lived Expertise Working Group

APPROVED BY: Justin Readman, General Manager, Development Services