
Subject: Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2018

Report to: Public Health and Social Services Committee

Report date: Tuesday, April 16, 2019

Recommendations

That this report **BE RECEIVED** for information.

Key Facts

- The purpose of this report is to update Council on actions completed in 2018 related to *A Home for All*, Niagara's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan.
- Consolidated Municipal Service Managers (CMSM) are required to report to the public and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing by June 30 each year with respect to efforts of the previous year. This report serves to meet the requirement for 2018.
- The 10-Year Plan includes a complete vision for providing *A Home for All* by addressing homelessness and access to affordable housing in response to identified local needs.
- *A Home for All* (2014 – 2023) was approved by Council in November 2013 to fulfil the *Housing Services Act, 2011, section 6*, which requires municipalities to establish and implement a ten-year plan to address housing and homelessness needs in their community.
- In 2018 *A Home for All* continued to shift in focus to activities which increase opportunities and options across the housing continuum, build capacity and improve effectiveness of the housing system.
- 2018 saw significant effort to align the work of Community Services, Niagara Regional Housing, Planning and Development, and Finance to further support a regional affordable housing strategy and ensure the next five years of the plan maximize coordinated efforts, address Niagara's local need and align with provincial priorities and policy direction.

Financial Considerations

The resources required to facilitate the management of the Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP) are provided within the approved annual budget.

Analysis

A Home for All, Niagara's Housing and Homelessness Action Plan was developed in response to the *Housing Services Act 2011, section 6*, which requires municipalities to

establish and implement a ten-year plan to address local housing and homelessness needs. *A Home for All* was developed in consultation with 1,290 community members, approved by Niagara Regional Council, and submitted to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing in 2013. The work of *A Home for All* began in 2014, and the Ministry continues to support its work.

A Home for All has enabled the coordination of responses to address community housing and homelessness needs. *A Home for All* provides a complete vision for addressing local needs related to homelessness and access to affordable housing. All actions within *A Home for All* support achievement of the following four goals:

- Goal 1 – Housing people who do not have a home.
- Goal 2 – Helping people find and retain a home.
- Goal 3 – Increasing opportunities and options across the housing continuum.
- Goal 4 – Building capacity and improving the effectiveness of the housing system.

A Home for All outlines 80 actions to improve the service system and outcomes for individuals, by addressing identified needs that exist within Niagara through prevention, emergency interventions, services and supports, social and market housing, and system improvements. In 2018:

- 3,615 households accessed the Housing Stability Plan.
- 826 households were issued Niagara Emergency Energy Funds (NEEF).
- 1,835 households were supported in Niagara's emergency shelters.
- 136 Housing First program participants were in housing with supports.
- 1,370 households received rent supplements and housing allowances.
- 2,684 households were provided public housing rent-geared-to-income units.
- 3,601 households were provided non-profit and co-operative housing units.
- 40 Home for Good supportive housing participants were in housing.

The systems-level work of *A Home for All* requires engagement of many internal and community partners. The structure to support broad engagement includes the *A Home for All* Taskforce and five working groups developed in 2015 to support ongoing work. Each working group is led by a senior leader from a community partner organization and involves membership from a cross-section of service providers and other partners. Support for the working groups is provided by staff from Community Services, Planning and Development Services, Public Health and Emergency Services, and Niagara Regional Housing (NRH). The working groups and their leaders include:

- Service Hubs (Christine Clark Lafleur, Executive Director, Port Cares)
- 'No Wrong Door' service approach, (Mike Taylor, Executive Director, Youth Resources Niagara),
- Homelessness Prevention, (Michael Lethby, Executive Director, The RAFT),
- Housing First (Elisabeth Zimmermann, Executive Director, YWCA Niagara Region), and

- Affordable Housing Innovation (Lori Beech, Executive Director, Bethlehem Housing and Support Services).

The 80 actions outlined in *A Home for All* are staged over a number of years with some actions to be completed in the immediate (2014), short-term (2015-2016), mid-term (2017-2019) and long-term (2020-2023). While immediate and short-term actions focused on homelessness services, mid-term actions focus more on increasing available affordable and rental housing and building system capacity.

Mid-term actions increase the connection between activities of Community Services, Planning and Development Services and NRH, as well as provincially funded systems such as the Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN). By the end of December 2018, 24 mid-term actions were 91% complete and can be found in Appendix A.

Highlighted 2018 accomplishments related to the 24 mid-term (four - six year) actions of *A Home for All* include:

Goal 1: Housing people who do not have a home

- Operationalized 40 new community based Home for Good supportive housing units.
- Initiated capital/construction of 23 new apartments for Home for Good participants (scheduled completion of eight units by first quarter of 2020, at the latest and 15 units by second quarter of 2021, at the latest).
- Increased shelter capacity by 45 beds in response to increased system pressures.
- Introduced shelter standards for Regionally funded emergency shelters.
- Over 75 staff at funded agencies and other community partners were trained in harm reduction, motivational interviewing, person-centered service delivery, and human trafficking awareness.

Goal 2: Helping people find and retain a home

- NRH housing allowance program provided a set allowance for 639 applicants on waitlist.
- NRH granted a forgivable loan to help 47 households buy their first home.
- Community Services launched a landlord engagement pilot to recruit landlords for Housing First and Home for Good to serve those struggling with chronic homelessness.
- NRH identified St. Catharines' Manchester community as in need of enhanced community development. In collaboration with Niagara College and the RAFT, NRH hosted a family day, extended summer camps with weekend programming and introduced a social enterprise through two Manchester youth paid as "Community Attendants" to help maintain the grounds. These positive initiatives resulted in a dramatic increase in community engagement and reduction in social issues.

Goal 3: Increasing opportunities and options across the housing continuum

- NRH successfully negotiated rent supplement agreements with six of eight housing providers that reached End of Operating Agreements.
- NRH continued to develop new units, with the 85-unit Carlton Street (St. Catharines) development 92% complete (end of 2018), and eight units at the Roach Avenue (Welland) Intensification project 22% complete. Additionally, NRH purchased two buildings on St. David's Road and Ormond Street in Thorold (adjacent properties) through Social Infrastructure Fund (SIF Year 3) Program, which will add six units to NRH portfolio with potential to create five more units in future.
- Established an **Affordable Housing Working group** with Community Services, Niagara Regional Housing, Planning and Development, and Finance to coordinate and maximize efforts to support the Region's affordable housing efforts
- Recruitment of development industry consultant within Planning and Development Services.
- Further to the efforts of the Affordable Housing Working group staff retained the Canadian Center for Economic Analysis (CANCEA) to develop a Niagara Housing Statement to inform *A Home for All* and the *Official Plan* by identifying housing supply and demand for Niagara Region and all 12 local area municipalities out to 2041. Data will be available in April 2019.
- Further to the collaboration of the Affordable Housing Working group, staff from all areas have come together to meet with numerous interested developers to understand local development interests and describe what incentives and supports are available to local development.
- Functioned as an information resource for local area municipalities as several initiated their own Affordable Housing efforts (Fort Erie, Niagara Falls, and Port Colborne).
- Niagara Regional Housing, Homelessness Services, and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation partnered with the City of St. Catharines to host the 2018 National Housing Day event for 110+ attendees on the topic of "A Local Development Toolkit".

Goal 4: Building capacity and improving the effectiveness of the housing system

- Completed Niagara's second homelessness enumeration in March 2018.
- Enlisted Whitesell & Associates to complete a review of the homelessness services system.
- Launched a Lived Experience Advisory group to engage and receive input in service delivery and system planning from those with experience of homelessness.
- Worked with Niagara Region's Internal Control and Organizational Performance (ICOP) division to develop a draft theory of change and metrics for the work of years six to ten to fulfil provincial guidance for the five-year review of 10-year Plan (2018).
- Worked with Planning and Development to ensure that the strategies identified for the next five years of the HHAP also align with requirements and recommendations of the Official Plan.

A large portion of the work of *A Home for All* in 2018 was a five-year review of the 10-year Plan. The *Housing Services Act, 2011* mandates that service managers conduct a review and update of their 10-year plan at least every five years. The review provided an opportunity to make required updates to *A Home for All* to align with provincial priorities outlined in the Ministry's 2016 *Policy Statement: Service Manager Housing and Homelessness Plans* and the *Five-Year Review of Housing and Homelessness Plans* guide, released in April 2018.

Specifically, the policy requires CMSM's to develop strategies for years six to ten which support:

- Increased coordination with Indigenous peoples, service and housing providers.
- Strengthening partnerships across sectors to improve client access across service systems, including a move to human services integration.
- A more coordinated approach with Ontario's land use planning framework.
- An active role for the private sector in providing a mix and range of housing including affordable rentals and affordable ownership.

The update will also ensure the Plan remains responsive to recent changes in the community and housing market that impact the local demand for homelessness services and affordable housing over the long-term.

Niagara is well positioned to respond to these requirements. By the end of 2018 the following work which support these goals had been initiated:

- Increased engagement, consultation, and information sharing with Indigenous service and housing providers, non-profit and co-operative housing providers, the local health system, private developers and local municipalities.
- Enlistment of the Canadian Centre for Economic Analysis (CANCEA) to complete a Niagara Housing Statement to describe the current and future demand for a mix of housing options across the region and within each of the 12 local area municipalities.
- Engagement of ICOP to assist in development of required Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) for years six to ten of *A Home for All*.

The annually published Community Update will be distributed to the public through the Region's partner agencies as well as being available on Niagara Region's website.

Alternatives Reviewed

Not applicable. Reporting is required under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* per its regulations as noted above.

Relationship to Council Strategic Priorities

Not applicable.

Other Pertinent Reports

- COM 10-2018 Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2017, Community Action Plan to Help People Find and Keep Housing
- COM 12-2017 Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2016, Community Action Plan to Help People Find and Keep Housing
- COM 17-2016 Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2015, Community Action Plan to Help People Find and Keep Housing
- COM 16–2015 Housing and Homelessness Action Plan Update 2014, Community Action Plan to Help People Find and Keep Housing
- COM 35-2013 Final Version of A Home for All: Niagara’s 10-Year Community Action Plan to Help People Find and Keep Housing.

Prepared by:

Jeffrey Sinclair
Homelessness Action Plan Advisor
Community Services

Recommended by:

Adrienne Jugley, MSW, RSW, CHE
Commissioner
Community Services

Submitted by:

Ron Tripp, P.Eng.
Acting Chief Administrative Officer

This report was prepared in consultation with Chandra Hardeen, Manager Homelessness Services, Wendy Thompson, Community Resource Unit Manager Niagara Regional Housing and Alexandria Tikky, Planner Planning and Development Services, and reviewed by Cathy Cousins, Director Homelessness Services & Community Engagement.

Appendices

Appendix A *A Home for All* Mid-Term Accomplishments

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Appendix A - Housing and Homelessness Action Plan (HHAP) Mid Term Accomplishments

A listing of accomplishments pertaining to the medium term or longer HHAP actions, as of December 31, 2018

Goal 1: House people who do not have a home

Mid-Term Actions (Years 4-6)		Accomplishments to Date
1.3a	Refine homelessness service system mapping based on the results of the homeless system review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlisted Global Information Systems (GIS) interns in 2017 and 2018 to develop and refine map of Niagara's homelessness system, to be completed March 2019. • Niagara's second homelessness enumeration, completed March 2018, gathered information to increase understanding of those experiencing homelessness in Niagara.
1.3b	Provide tools/resources that help support agencies that provide homelessness services in accordance with system review results	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased shelter capacity by 45 beds in response to increased system pressures. • Provided agency staff with training in best practices, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 39 staff received training in human trafficking awareness (November 2018) ○ 22 staff received training in harm reduction (April 2018) ○ 25 staff received training in person-centered service delivery (March 2018) ○ 15 staff received training in motivational Interviewing (February 2018) ○ 25 staff received training in Intensive Case Management (November 2017) ○ 99 staff received training in trauma counselling level 1 (April to May 2017) ○ 55 staff received training in Housing First core principles (March 2017). • Introduced Shelter Standards to Regionally funded emergency shelters. • Engaged landlord relationship specialist as pilot project to increase engagement of private sector landlords and increase market rental units for clients in Niagara's Housing First and Home for Good programs. • Ongoing support for community of practice (launched in 2017) to support knowledge sharing, innovation and adaption of best practices, and improved supports for clients among Niagara's Intensive Case Managers.
1.3c	Advocate for additional funding that is outcome-based in order to promote the Housing First principle of getting people housed more permanently	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Operationalized 40 new community based Home for Good supportive housing units in 2018. • Successful application to Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing attracted \$5.5 million dollars to Niagara for "Home for Good" to transition people out of chronic homelessness by creating 63 incremental units of housing with case management and wrap around supports, including: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Introduction of up to 40 new community-based supportive housing units. ○ Construction of 23 new units of supportive housing.

Goal 2: Help people find and retain their home

Mid-Term Actions (Years 4-6)		Accomplishments to Date
2.3a	Advocate for flexibility in the use of funding from other levels government (e.g. shifting funding between programs etc.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In 2018, NRH's Housing Allowance program provided a set allowance to 639 applicants on waitlist to help with affordability in private market until they can be housed in rent-geared-to-income unit (up from 505 households at the end of 2017). • NRH granted a forgivable loan to help 47 households buy their first home through Welcome Home Niagara in 2018 (up from 33 in 2017). • Changes to provincial (CHPI) and federal (HPS) funding prior to 2017 included a shift to more flexible funding use.
2.6a	Explore opportunities that help address transportation concerns of vulnerable populations by promoting better access to services	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Niagara Region and its local municipal transit partners continued their coordinated pursuit of significant transit service enhancements that would improve access, frequency, and reliability for users. In upcoming years, such enhancements are expected to include a new transit route pilot to west Niagara, strengthened connections with local feeder routes, an expanded bus fleet, and improvements to service frequency on main routes from every hour to every half-hour.

Goal 3: Increase opportunities and options across the housing continuum

Mid-Term Actions (Years 4-6)		Accomplishments to Date
3.3a	Explore off-reserve Aboriginal housing opportunities that can help augment current market options in collaboration with Aboriginal community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ongoing support of Indigenous Homeward Bound programs piloted in Niagara by Aboriginal service providers. • National Housing Day event hosted at Niagara Regional Native Centre in order to support dialogue and collaboration between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal partners.
3.3b	Broaden access to the Niagara Renovates program to expand support for low income households in partnership with local area municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRH provided funding to 56 (2017) and 49 (2018) low to moderate income homeowners to complete much needed repairs.

Mid-Term Actions (Years 4-6)		Accomplishments to Date
3.3c	Undertake financial sustainability analysis to help plan for and mitigate future step down of federal funding for social housing and impact of funding horizons under the Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRH commissioned Building Condition Assessments (BCAs) for all non-profit housing providers and engaged a consultant to analyze the results to determine future capital funding needs. Currently, the consultant is assisting in the development of a loan program for housing providers. • NRH formed new relationships to preserve rent-geared-to-income units by negotiating rent supplement agreements with six of eight housing providers that reached End of Operating Agreements. • In 2017 NRH participated in Social Housing Infrastructure Fund and Investment in Affordable Housing Extension (IAHE) programs launched by the province to address step down of IAH.
3.3d	<p>In concert with other Ontario municipalities, continue advocating for:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • On-going, predictable funding for new housing initiatives • Sustained federal funding to maintain affordability in existing social housing post end of operation agreement (i.e. after mortgage/debt maturity) • Funding to repair, renovate and renew aging social housing stock 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supported St. Catharines in its successful application for provincial funding for development charge waivers. (Note - this program was subsequently cancelled by the province.) • In 2017, five housing provider agreements expired, representing a total of 142 units. NRH was successful in renegotiating rent supply agreements with four providers, with remaining provider offering rental assistance to their tenants using their own revenue. As a result, there was no impact on renters at these five housing providers. • NRH continued to develop new units, with the 85-unit Carlton Street (St. Catharines) development 92% complete (end of 2018), and eight units at the Roach Avenue (Welland) Intensification project 22% complete. Additionally, NRH purchased two buildings on St. David's Road and Ormond Street in Thorold (adjacent properties) through Social Infrastructure Fund (SIF Year 3) Program, which will add six units to NRH portfolio with potential to create five more units in future.
3.5a	Continue to implement Regional Policy Plan policies at the local level which promote a range of ownership housing options by sustaining existing stock through renovation, pursuing alternative development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Enlisted Canadian Center for Economic Analysis (CANCEA) to develop Niagara Housing Statement to inform <i>A Home for All</i> and the <i>Official Plan</i> by identifying housing supply and demand for Niagara Region and all 12 local area municipalities out to 2041. Data to be available April 2019. • In 2017 staff from Community Services, Planning and Development Services, Enterprise Resource Management Services (Finance) and Niagara Regional Housing launched an inter-departmental initiative to develop an Affordable Housing Strategy which coordinates efforts to comprehensively address housing affordability and availability within Niagara Region.

Mid-Term Actions (Years 4-6)		Accomplishments to Date
	standards, promoting small lot singles, piloting innovative seniors housing options and establishing affordability targets	
3.5b	Expand and provide assistance to local municipalities on the use of development tools such as community improvement plans, brownfield incentives, targeted tax relief, and other forms of municipal capital facility bylaws	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged with local area municipalities to provide provided feedback and direction regarding municipal studies, policy amendments, and other initiatives to address housing affordability. • Inter-departmental affordable housing strategy launched (See 3.5a above).
3.5c	Promote incentives that encourage private market investment in new affordable housing, and reinvesting and retention of existing affordable housing through community improvement plans and the Smarter Niagara initiative	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ICOP completed a value for money review of various grants and incentive programs. The review evaluated existing performance measures, reviewed the working relationship between the Region and Local Area Municipalities (LAMs) and benchmarked program administration against similar municipalities, cities and regions. Continued work on the recommendations of the incentive review is being completed by a working group consisting of representatives from Planning and Development, Economic Development, Finance, and ICOP. The working group will make recommendations to the leadership team in Q2/Q3 of 2019. • Inter-departmental affordable housing strategy launched (See 3.5a above).
3.5d	Advocate to senior governments for incentives to assist private and affordable housing landlords to make improvements to existing rental housing stock aimed at enhancing energy efficiency and reducing utility costs for tenants	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRH hosted information sessions in collaboration with Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC) and the Housing Services Corporation (HSC) for housing providers to learn about the newly announced Federal Co-Investment Fund and the new Social Housing Sector Bank financing tool. NRH actively fostered and encouraged housing providers to participate in expanding the affordable housing supply and assists in applying for funds, building a business case and planning for new development. • In 2017, nearly \$6 million was issued through NRH to address capital repairs at non-profit housing providers through Social Housing Infrastructure Program (SHIP), while \$268,843 was provided through Social Housing Electrical Efficiency Program (SHEEP).

Goal 4: Build capacity and improve the effectiveness of the housing system

Mid-Term Actions (Years 4-6)		Accomplishments to Date
4.3a	Work with community to create and build innovative affordable housing solutions in order to take advantage of future funding opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • NRH, Homelessness Services, and CMHC continue to annually partner to offer National Housing Day forums each November to broaden local discussion of key topics related to development of local affordable housing solutions. Events engage local planners, private developers, non-profits, Faith groups and other partners. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ 2018 - partnered with City of St. Catharines to host event for 110+ attendees on topic of “A Local Development Toolkit”. ○ 2017 - partnered with Niagara Regional Native Friendship Center to host event for 70+ attendees on topic of “Streamlining the Development Process for Affordable Housing”. ○ 2016 - developed partnership and inaugural forum using new format to host event for 50+ attendees.
4.3b	Strengthen relationships with the private development sector and economic development sector in order to continue to build support for the housing agenda	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recruitment of Development Industry Consultant. • Inter-departmental affordable housing strategy launched (See 3.5a above).
4.6a	Using the HHAP as an aligning vehicle for future housing initiatives, both regionally and in local area municipalities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged local area municipalities (See 3.5b above). • Inter-departmental affordable housing strategy launched (See 3.5a above). • Developed project charter in 2017 for mid-term work of HHAP which supports alignment of housing and other initiatives and development of metrics and targets for actions related to HHAP.
4.6b	Continue to work in conjunction with Niagara Homelessness Advisory Committee and Community Advisory Board (CAB) to align federally funded homelessness initiatives with priorities as expressed in the Homelessness Service	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Restructured group membership to improve connectivity between CAB and the <i>A Home for All</i> Task Force.

Mid-Term Actions (Years 4-6)		Accomplishments to Date
	Community Plan and the HHAP	
4.6c	Continue to collaborate and align support initiatives with the LHIN as an important service manager and funder, and with community health centres as an important service provider	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Collaborated with Niagara North Family Health Teams to introduce Primary Care in homeless shelters. • Community Services representation on Local Health Integrated Network (LHIN) Niagara Sub-region Anchor table to explore opportunities for human services integration between health services and homelessness services. • Niagara's Home for Good incorporates mental health and addiction supports in the comprehensive support program for clients • Launched a mental health social worker assessment and referral pilot in the shelter system for longer stay clients
4.6d	Explore opportunities for community-oriented funding incentives such as an endowment fund for donation matching, donor-matched government funding and no/low cost community group loans to support improvements in housing supply and related initiatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Engaged with Faith community and service clubs interested in supporting development of new affordable housing.
4.6e	Investigate approaches to reduce administrative burden and enhance capacity of non-profit agencies to deliver services in partnership with funders and non-profit organizations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Roll out and training of a new data reporting tool, Homelessness Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS).
4.9a	Develop and publish an annual community report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Worked with ICOP to develop draft theory of change and metrics for work of years 6-10 to fulfil provincial guidance for the five-year review of 10-year plan (2018).

Mid-Term Actions (Years 4-6)		Accomplishments to Date
	card on HHAP priorities and progress	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Completed review of report cards from other Ontario municipalities to identify metrics that best describe experience of homelessness in Niagara (2016). • Initiated discussions with community partners regarding appropriate content for community report card (2016).
4.9b	Link/expand neighbourhood mapping (e.g. Niagara Prosperity Initiative) to further support housing reports, information and messaging	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design of homelessness system map enables reference to neighbourhood mapping and indicators in Niagara Prosperity Initiative map. (See 3.1a above).
4.9c	Undertake a formal review of the HHAP by the five year mark to determine plan effectiveness and to adjust strategic directions for the next five years where necessary	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Review underway with planned consultations for Age Friendly Niagara, Housing Providers, and Indigenous providers planned for early 2019 (See also 4.9a above). • Worked with community partners in 2016 to identify a need to increase priority of local Indigenous population as well as LGBTQ2S population within core work of HHAP. Planned in 2017 for five-year HHAP review to be completed by late 2018 or early 2019.
4.9d	Partner with academic community to advance research and analyze data to support planning, attract funders and generate interest in ongoing housing and homelessness research	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased ability to engage academic research to support work of the HHAP by creating a pipeline to Brock University for course based projects, including projects related to shelter and system change completed in 2017.