

Five-Year Review of Niagara's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Action Plan

Jeffrey Sinclair

Homelessness Action Plan Advisor, Niagara Region

Lori Beech

Executive Director, Bethlehem Housing and Support Services



The 10-Year Action Plan (2014-2023)

- Requirement of the *Housing Services Act, 2011*
- Provides a framework for integrated local planning to address:
 - market housing affordability
 - community housing
 - coordination of homelessness and related support services
 - homelessness prevention
- Accomplishments are reported annually



Community Leadership and Engagement

- “A Home for All” Working Groups



- 22 Funded Homeless Services Providers
- 62 Non-Profit and Co-operative Housing Providers
- Lived Experience Advisory
- Diverse Partners (Government, Non-Profit, Private Sector)
- Linked to other networks and committees

The Five-Year Review

- Requirement of the *Housing Services Act, 2011*
- Completed in 2018 and first half of 2019



What We Heard

A Changing Environment

- Housing Market
- Emergency Shelter
- Community Housing
- Funding and Policy
- Client Needs
- Focus on Best Practices

Recommendations

- Align affordable housing strategy with 10-Year Action Plan and new Official Plan
- Include meaningful objectives, measures and targets
- Collaborate with Indigenous system and organizations
- Address needs of equity-seeking groups

The Updated 10-Year Plan



House People Who Don't Have a Home

Goal #1

Outcomes

1. Improve access to shelter and housing for those experiencing unsheltered homelessness.
2. Reduce the time spent in emergency shelter before successful exit.
3. Improve the housing situation for those exiting emergency shelter.

How Council Could Support these Outcomes

- Advocate for provincial and federal funding for local homelessness services and community housing
- Focus investment in local housing and homelessness services that are aligned with Canadian best practices
- Back Housing First and other forms of supportive housing that help people rapidly exit street or emergency sheltered homelessness to being housed

Help People to Retain a Home

Goal #2

Outcomes

4. Reduce the time it takes for those who are at risk of homelessness to access prevention services.
5. Improve long-term housing stability for households at risk of homelessness.
6. Improve long-term housing stability for households that have graduated from housing with support programs.

How Council Could Support these Outcomes

- Support incentives and other initiatives that create new community housing and market housing that is affordable for households who are in core housing need
- Advocate for provincial and federal funding for additional rental supports for low-income households

Increase Housing Options and Opportunities for Low- and Medium-Income households

Goal #3

Outcomes

7. Increase the supply of higher-density housing forms, including townhouse and apartments.
8. Increase the number of new community housing units developed, and the proportion of new community housing units that are bachelor/1-bedroom units or four or more bedroom units.
9. Prevent the loss of current community housing stock.

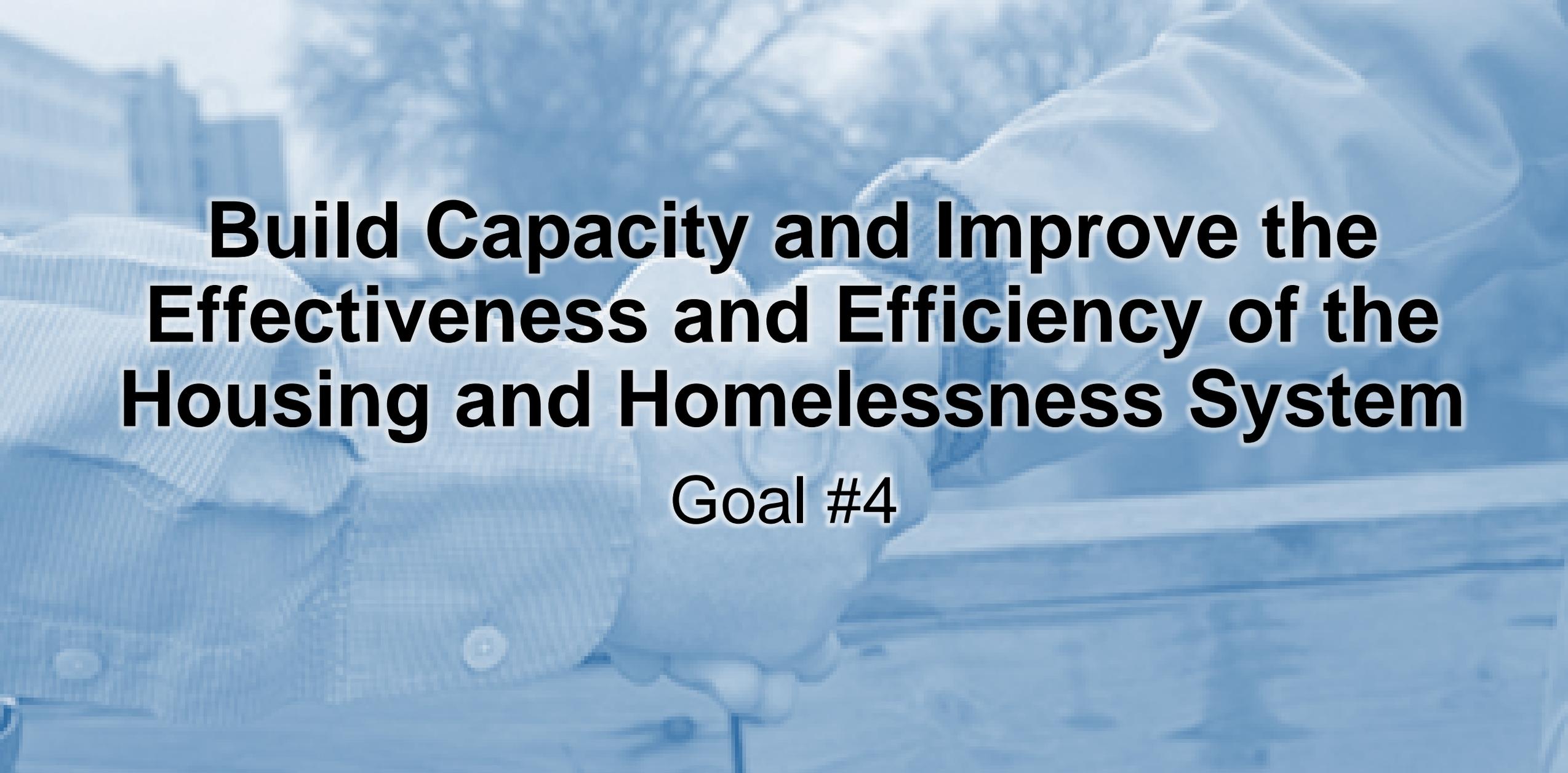
How Council Could Support these Outcomes

- Encourage the development of medium and high-density housing, including purpose-built rental housing
- Support staff efforts to streamline applications and approvals for affordable and community housing developments
- Support a reallocation of Regional funds to Regional incentives and investment tools that support Council priorities, including affordable housing
- Encourage the use of appropriate surplus Regional or local municipal lands for affordable or community housing development

How Council Could Support these Outcomes

(continued)

- Encourage financial investment by all levels of government in:
 - New local community housing
 - Existing community housing (to prevent loss of current units)
- Resist “NIMBY” (Not In My Backyard) type protests or appeals to new affordable housing development



Build Capacity and Improve the Effectiveness and Efficiency of the Housing and Homelessness System

Goal #4

Outcomes

10. Increase the use of best practices in all funded homeless services programs.
11. Increase the number of new initiatives created in partnership with Indigenous, health, corrections, or child welfare systems.
12. Increase the number of policies and services revised to better serve Indigenous people, older adults, youth, women, persons with a disability, Franco-Canadians, and newcomers and refugees.

How Council Could Support these Outcomes

- Consider the voices of equity-seeking groups that are overrepresented in the homeless system when making decisions that affect them
- Advocate for better client access to mental health and addictions supports
- Support new partnerships and initiatives with Indigenous, health, corrections, and child welfare systems

Financial Investments to Support the Action Plan

2020

Capital

2020 budget requests

- 61 net new units of community housing
 - Hawkins development \$20.1 million project leveraging \$14 million in DC, \$3 million in Federal/Provincial funding, and \$3.1 million from reserves

Ongoing commitments

- Region partnership with Niagara Falls for new affordable and community housing development. No capital investment by the Region. Number of new units to be determined in 2020 by RFP.
- Partnership with private developer for subsidized units. \$1.7 million leveraging \$1.6 million in DC. Number of new units to be determined in 2020 by RFP.
- Existing projects in Thorold and Welland to make 12-13 new units available in 2020. Capital approved in 2019.

Operating

2020 Budget requests

- Transition of existing grant incentive dollars to housing incentives (per Council direction). No net new requests for 2020 budget.

Ongoing commitments

- Church Street, St. Catharines partnership. \$75,000/year for 20 tenants from the housing waitlist
- Region partnership with Niagara Falls for new affordable and community housing development. Up to \$240,000/year for rent subsidies for 50 RGI Units. DC grants in 2020 and foregone taxes due to exemption after completion to be determined through RFP.
- \$0.8 million to provide assistance for accessibility and emergency repairs and down payment assistance to 50 households and \$1.5 million in housing allowances for continued support to 740 households.

Thank You

Questions?

