



Housing For All

a blueprint for
a more caring community.

December 2020





Housing For All

A Human Rights Based Strategy to Address Homelessness and Housing

Responding to public concern over homelessness and housing affordability expressed by the public in the Strategic Plan Environics Survey, Council directed an Affordable Housing Strategy be completed by 2020 in collaboration with the Region of Waterloo, community groups and development industry.

Housing For All is the City of Kitchener's comprehensive strategy to realize the right to housing and help make housing affordable using the tools and resources available to a local municipality.

"The present global housing crisis is not like any previous crisis of its kind. It is not caused by a decline in resources or an economic downturn but rather by economic growth, expansion and growing inequality. Housing has become a key driver of growing socioeconomic inequality, increasing wealth for those who own housing and driving those who do not into greater debt and poverty."

Leilani Farha,
United Nations Special
Rapporteur on Housing,
February 2020



Land and Call to Action Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that Kitchener is situated on the traditional territory of the Neutral, Anishinaabeg and Haudenosaunee Peoples. We recognize our responsibility to serve as stewards for the land and honour the original caretakers who came before us. We would also like to acknowledge that our community is enriched by the enduring knowledge and deep-rooted traditions of the diverse First Nations, Métis and Inuit in Kitchener today.

We acknowledge that the City's initial response to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission is a starting point in the City's journey to develop meaningful relationships and work toward reconciliation with the local First Nations, Métis and Inuit communities. We recognize and acknowledge, however, that a more comprehensive approach to reconciliation is required to address systemic inequities, racism and to better support, celebrate and deliver services to Indigenous Peoples in Kitchener.

In order to uphold commitments made to respond to the Calls to Action of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission, a region-wide Reconciliation Action Plan is being launched by area municipalities and the Region. This work will involve comprehensive engagement with local Indigenous communities, including Elders, knowledge keepers and youth, to better understand the range of interests, community needs, opportunities, and associated challenges experienced locally.



Acknowledgments

The preparation of the Housing Strategy is informed by the voices of those with lived experience, generously shared through in-person, virtual and survey connections. We would like to thank Co-Chairs Karen Coviello and Justin Readman and all of the Affordable Housing Strategy Advisory Committee members.

The City of Kitchener Housing Strategy was prepared under the direction of Justin Readman, General Manager of Development Services by a staff working group consisting of: Karen Cooper, Office of the CAO, Tim Donegani, Planning Division, Andrew Ramsaroop, Planning Division, Mike Seiling, Building Division, Brandon Sloan, Planning Division and Nancy Steinfield, Technology Innovation and Services

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Overview

Kitchener is a dynamic city experiencing strong recent growth and development which is expected to continue in the future. Kitchener is part of the fastest growing region in Canada. Over a 25-year period, Kitchener is expected to grow by approximately 80,000 people, which is equivalent to about 35,000 new households. The city is changing with taller buildings, increasing urbanization and a trend to smaller household sizes. This growth brings both benefits and challenges.

Pandemic

Coming out of the first pandemic wave, Kitchener retained a strong resale market for housing and applications to permit new residential development continue to be submitted to the city. Many businesses are struggling due to the pandemic. Home took on greater importance as a place for people to stay safe - if you had a home. Responding to homelessness during the pandemic demonstrated that as a society we could do better. Providing housing and supports resulted in improvements in health and housing outcomes for people who are homeless.

Equity, Diversity, Inclusion

The city is attracting a wide diversity of people eager to live and work in the community. Housing is critical to the City's long-term prosperity, as attracting and retaining residents requires housing options that serve all income levels and household types. As our city becomes more diverse, we must become a more equitable and inclusive community. A city where everyone feels like they belong, are welcome, their needs are met and they can fully share in our city's prosperity.





Housing for All is our strategy to realize the right to housing.

The current housing delivery and support system is not functioning effectively. Housing needs are not being met and the existing silo approach by levels of government, non-profits, institutions and the private sector is not as effective as needed. Filling the housing gaps cannot be met by market forces and the development industry alone. A critical element of Housing Strategy is the recognition that we must all work together. Significant investment from the federal and provincial governments in funding housing that fills the gaps is needed to meet people's needs.

Housing for All is developed on the following principles:

- **Stable, secure, affordable housing** is a human right and needs to be available for everyone
- **Lived-experience focused** – implementation must involve people affected the most
- **Equity, diversity, and inclusion principles** help identify and remove barriers and reinforce best practices
- **Explicitly anti-racist/anti-discriminatory**
- **Focus efforts on achievable actions in realistic timelines** that Kitchener has jurisdiction or resources to do
- **Work collaboratively** with others through partnerships and creative solutions, to make the needed substantive and long-lasting changes to help make housing more affordable.
- In addition to housing, **coordinated support systems and income security must be in place**

Housing Continuum

This is the first time in several decades that Kitchener is examining affordability across the housing continuum - from homelessness to community housing to affordable and market rental and ownership. The 2020 Housing Needs Assessment identified affordability issues throughout the housing continuum and the Housing Strategy needs to address issues throughout the continuum. All levels of government, the private sector and the non-profit sector have roles to play in addressing housing need in a community.

Housing For All includes the important priorities for the City to address to reduce inequality in our city:

Priority 1: Human Rights Based Approach to Housing

Priority 2: Commitment to Lived Experience Collaboration

Priority 3: Help End Homelessness

Priority 4: Help Secure Community, Affordable Rental and Affordable Ownership Housing

Priority 5: Advocacy

Priority 6: Align Policies, Processes and Use of City Land to Facilitate More Affordable Housing

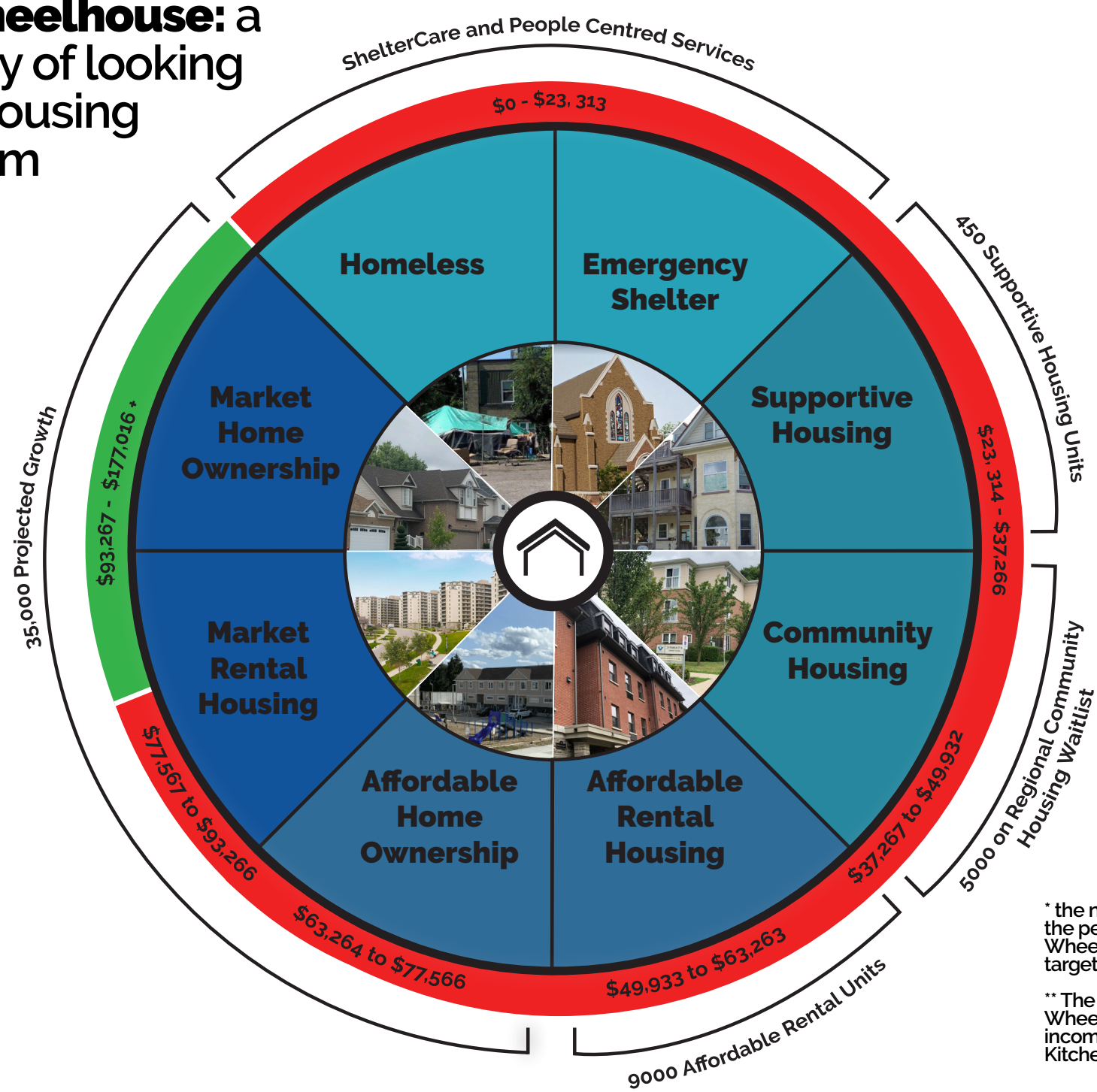
Priority 7: Fill Data Gaps and Establish Effective Monitoring and Accountability Mechanism

"The City of Kitchener has the opportunity to be a leader in Waterloo Region. We need bold actions to make a significant impact on this issue. We can't tweak our way to a solution. We need thousands of new affordable units and bold, decisive actions are the only thing that will get us ahead of the curve."



Survey Respondent
Engage Kitchener
August 2020

The Wheelhouse: a new way of looking at the housing continuum



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Roles

Everyone has a role to play in addressing homelessness and housing issues. Public opinion from Kitchener residents on how the various sectors can contribute to addressing housing and homelessness issues is summarized below*.

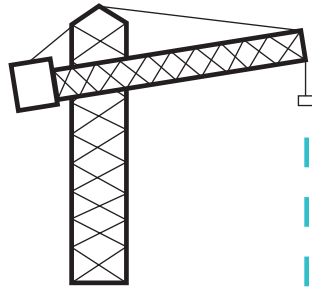


Government

Theme 1: 26% answered: Government should provide development incentives.

Theme 2: 8% answered: Coordinate efforts between levels of government.

Theme 3: 6% answered: Government should establish guidelines and regulations to build affordable housing.



Private Sector

Theme 1: 15% answered: The need for the private sector/developers to collaborate with government and non-profits.

Theme 2: 15% of answered: Private Sector should have an awareness of the need in the community.

Theme 3: 14% of answered: Private sector should have a social responsibility to the community,



Non-Profit Sector

Theme 1: 20% answered: Non-profit housing providers should provide good housing, diverse options and appropriate supports.

Theme 2: 15% answered: Non-profit housing providers should continue to listen and advocate.

Theme 3: 15% answered: Non-profit housing providers need more support, funding and resources.

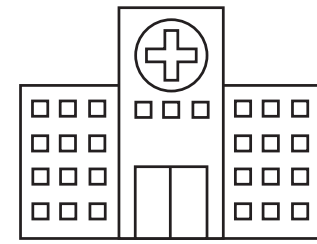


Post- Secondary Education

Theme 1: 19% answered: Post-secondary institutions should be responsible for providing adequate and affordable housing for students.

Theme 2: 13% answered: Post-secondary institutions are responsible for educating and removing stigma.

Theme 3: 12% answered: Post-secondary institutions should provide more socially aware and inclusive educations in planning, health and economics.



Healthcare

Theme 1: 28% answered: Healthcare system and housing system need to be interconnected.

Theme 2: 26% answered: Equitable access to healthcare for the most vulnerable populations.

Theme 3: 13% answered: Healthcare on location including mobile clinics.

What the City Can Do

Under provincial housing services legislation, the Region of Waterloo is identified as the Service System Manager responsible to address housing and homelessness issues from a public sector perspective. We support the Region in delivering its mandate. Effort has been made for the city actions to be complementary and supportive of Region of Waterloo mandate, roles, responsibilities and their 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Staff and the Advisory Committee have focused their efforts on identifying roles and responses that are unique to the City and where Kitchener has jurisdiction or resources.

Housing For All uses all of these tools, except direct provision of housing. The City leaves direct provision to experienced housing builders and operators, including Kitchener Housing Inc., a not for profit housing corporation originally established by the City but now operates at arms-length from the municipality and receives funding from the Region of Waterloo, other non-profit and private sector housing builders and operators.

**Approval
Process**

**Planning
Strategies**

Advocacy

Research

Education

**Financial
and Land**

Partnerships

**Information
Sharing**

**Direct
Provision**



Priority 1: Human Rights Based Approach to Housing

The Government of Canada committed to the United Nations that we would “recognize the right of everyone to an adequate standard of living... including adequate food, clothing and housing.” In 2019 Canadian law recognized that the right to adequate housing is a fundamental human right by passing the National Housing Strategy Act.

The right to adequate housing means all levels of governments must ensure that everyone – especially the disadvantaged – has access to adequate housing.

Housing is only adequate if:

- it is affordable,
- it has potable water, sanitation facilities, electricity and other basic services, and
- it is accessible to schools, health services and employment opportunities.

The right to housing is interdependent with other human rights:

- Rights to health, education, and employment,
- Rights to non-discrimination, equality, inclusion,
- Right to life, security and sustainability.

Actions:

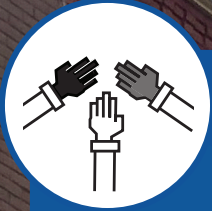
- **Address** Nimbyism
- **Develop and promote** fact-based research
- **Ensure** that the right to housing informs and is responsive to climate change
- **Provide** sufficient resources to realize the right to housing
- **Collaborate** with the Shift on a two-year pilot project to localize implementation of housing as a human right

THE
ROCKWAY
GARDENS
VILLAGE
1420

“I like the commitment to more affordable housing, elimination of NIMBYism, a proactive approach to homelessness (give people homes!!), and an explicit commitment to anti-racism and anti-discrimination”



Survey Respondent
Engage Kitchener
August 2020



Priority 2: Commitment to Lived Experience Collaboration

Kitchener is attracting a wide diversity of people eager to live and work in the community. Housing is critical to the City's long-term prosperity, as attracting and retaining residents requires housing options that serve all income levels and household types. As our city becomes more diverse, we must become a more equitable and inclusive community. A city where everyone feels like they belong, are welcome, their needs are met and they can fully share in our city's prosperity. To ensure equitable, diverse inclusive communities, housing must serve as a safety net, a platform and as a building block for inclusion.

The Needs Assessment and the responses to the engagement survey indicate that more than half of residents in Kitchener have affordability issues. This is a relatively new phenomenon within the city that has been increasing since 2016. We need to develop strategies to address affordability issues

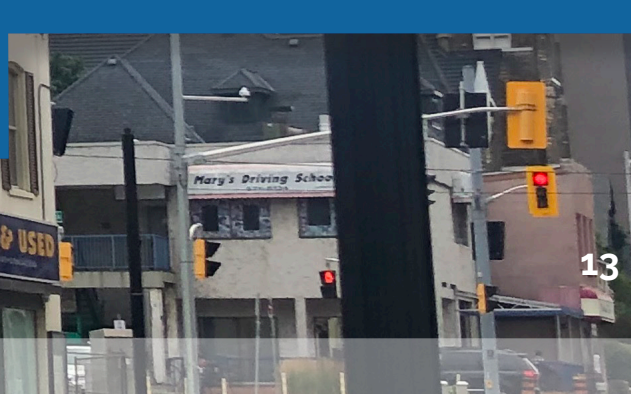
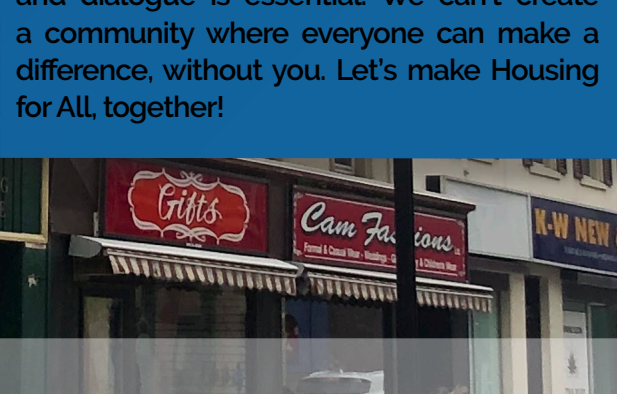
across the housing continuum. We need to be people focused – to listen and learn from the people most affected.

Rights-based participation supported by government transforms residents into active citizens and engaged community members, making housing programs more affordable and effective and creating vibrant, more sustainable communities.

Historically, people who engage with the city are older, well educated, employed, well off and well housed. We understand that some voices feel unheard, undervalued or unseen in our community and don't feel represented in decision-making. We know that this must change. We still have so much more to learn and hear from our residents. The journey ahead still needs your vision, your input, your energy, your investment and your talent to bring the strategy to life. To ensure a collective direction, ongoing collaboration and dialogue is essential. We can't create a community where everyone can make a difference, without you. Let's make Housing for All, together!

Actions:

- Recognize and treat those in need of housing or related social benefits as experts in 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
- 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.





Priority 3: Help End Homelessness

Meeting the needs of our most vulnerable citizens requires creative solutions and flexibility. The City is committed to work with the Region and community partners to create sustainable solutions to address the needs of people who are homeless in our city.

Targets:

Facilitate the creation of 450 units of new supportive housing.

This includes approximately:

- 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 addiction challenges
- 100 units for people with cognitive challenges

Actions:

Eliminate homelessness in the shortest possible time:

- **Provide** leadership in providing 2 city sites to match 2 regional sites in Kitchener for supportive housing
- **Advocate** for the Region and local municipalities to provide sites for diverse types of supportive housing across the region and for appropriate supports from Ontario Health Teams
- **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
- **Support** the Region and Service Providers to improve and enhance the quality of people centered information and Coordinated Access System to gain further insight into the diverse types of supportive housing needed

"there are many marginalized groups in the city that face unique barriers in accessing housing. The city should have an understanding of how these barriers can intersect to bar people from accessing adequate, affordable housing"

“ ”

Survey Respondent
Engage Kitchener
August 2020





Priority 4: Help Secure Community, Affordable Rental and Affordable Ownership Housing

- **6,000 households** across the Region are currently on the waiting list for Community Housing vs 4,850 households in 2019. Community housing includes: Waterloo Region Housing, Non-profit Housing, Co-operative Housing (co-op), Rent Supplement and Below Market Rent Housing. 5,000 of the households want to live in Kitchener.
- **9,300 new affordable rental housing units** at monthly rents under \$1,300 for people with household incomes under \$63,000 are needed. Nearly 4,000 are for people paying more than 50% of their income on rent.
- **Home Ownership is out of reach** for many households.

People can't make a difference in our community if they can't afford to live in our community. We need to ensure a full range of affordable housing options. We need to think differently. We also need to think beyond housing to ensure all aspects of our community enable an affordable lifestyle.

Targets:

Facilitate creation of new community housing, new affordable rental and new affordable home ownership housing, with a priority to focus on housing for households with low incomes.

Actions:

- **Facilitate** development of Kitchener's share of options for households on the Community Housing Waiting List
- **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
- **Help connect** Kitchener's experienced non-profit housing sector with developers, through partnerships and creative solutions, to make the needed substantive and long-lasting changes to help make housing more affordable





Priority 5: Advocacy

Advocacy can bring about change to political priorities, funding levels, legislation, and policies. How issues of affordable housing and homelessness are framed with clear proposals to address the issues and enlisting other partners to augment federal and provincial funding are keys to success.

Actions:

- **Jointly develop** a Region/City Charter to ensure collaboration and opportunities to identify and address housing challenges in Kitchener.
- **Request** the Region of Waterloo, in collaboration with local municipalities, non-profit housing, support, and philanthropic organizations and the private sectors, to develop a funding strategy to end homelessness through a reimagined shelter, supportive and community housing plan.
- **Request** the Region to revise its Housing and Homelessness Plan to further incorporate local municipal input based on local needs identified through the City's Needs Assessment and continue to develop future plans in collaboration with local municipalities, non-profit housing and service providers, philanthropic organizations and the private sector.
- **Request** (through AMO) that the Government of Ontario develop and adopt a provincial housing strategy including measurable targets and sufficient funds for ending homelessness and ensuring access of all Ontarians, including those of limited income, to housing of an adequate standard without discrimination. It should also take into consideration the needs of Indigenous people, LGBTQ people, people with disabilities including mental illness, women experiencing domestic violence, lone parents, immigrants and newcomers and other people living in poverty or with low incomes.

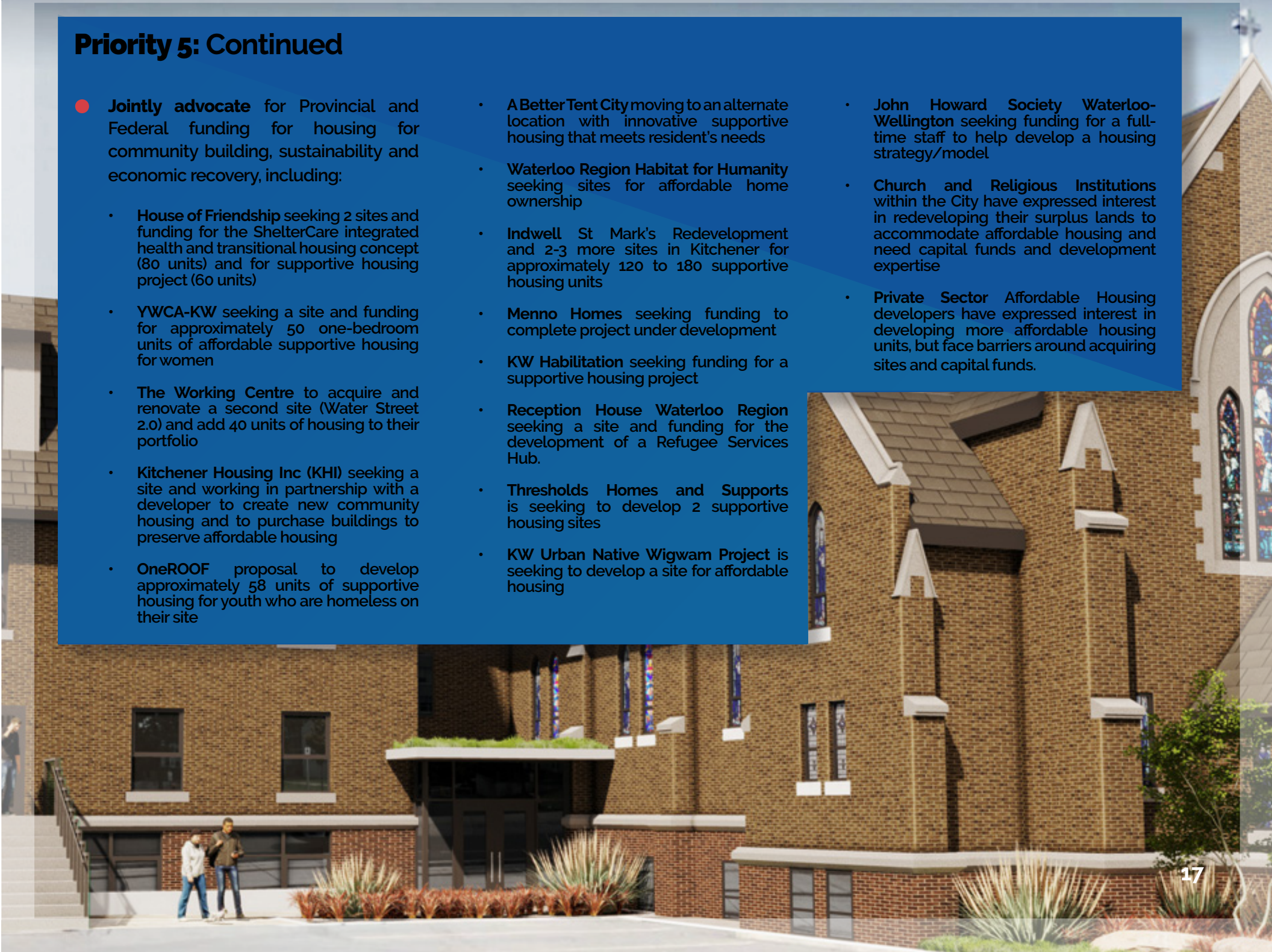
"Whether you are on OW, Ontario disability, a senior working [or] make a low income there is a need for affordable housing. Affordable housing that is in good repair, safe, that you can call home [...]. If I lost my affordable housing I would end up in a shelter or the street"

Survey Respondent
Engage Kitchener
August 2020



Priority 5: Continued

- **Jointly advocate** for Provincial and Federal funding for housing for community building, sustainability and economic recovery, including:
 - **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 full-time 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.





Priority 6: Align Policies, Processes and Use of City Land to Facilitate More Affordable Housing

Actions:

Local municipalities have an important role to play in establishing policies that help make housing more affordable for residents. Reducing time and costs in the development review process can contribute to more affordable housing being built. Strategically using City land for affordable housing generates a broad range of jobs and could have a major impact on the pandemic recovery for the city. The primary benefit achieved through affordable housing is the improved fiscal health of households, stability and wellbeing.

- **Report to Council** on the feasibility and implications of the following potential policies:
 - **Inclusionary Housing Policy** and implementing Zoning Bylaw
 - **Lodging House Policy** and implementing Zoning Bylaw
 - **Tenant Assistance Policy** and implementing Bylaw to mitigate impacts from redevelopment of rental apartments on current tenants, including consideration of developers providing advanced notice and assistance to residents including relocation plans
- **Parking Waiver Policy** and implementing Zoning Bylaw for affordable housing developments
- **Parkland Dedication Waiver Policy** for affordable housing developments
- **Community Improvement Plan** for affordable housing
- **Continue improving** the development approval process with input from the development industry and the community



APPLICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN YOUR NEIGHBOURHOOD

PROPOSED ZONE CHANGE AND OFFICIAL PLAN AMENDMENT



Concept Drawing



239 Eden Oak Trail



Priority 6: Continued

- **Consider fast tracking** non-profit and affordable housing developments through city processes
- **Continue** the Fee Waiver Policy for non-profit organizations and consider expanding its application to affordable housing units provided in private sector development applications.
- **Consider establishment** of an Affordable Housing Reserve Fund to support affordable housing initiatives
- **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.
- **Assess** feasibility of including affordable housing in the development of new or redeveloped City facilities, eg. community centers
- **Request** the Region to prioritize collaborative determination and designation of Major Transit Station Areas in the Regional Official Plan
- **Request** the Region and School Boards to consider reviewing with the City the feasibility and implications of reducing the Regional and School Board shares of development charges for affordable housing development
- **Request** the Region to consider feasibility and implications for funding for growth related (future) affordable housing developments in creating development charge policies



Priority 7: Fill Data Gaps and Establish Effective Monitoring and Accountability Mechanisms

Council members requested that the 2020 Housing Needs Assessment be kept up to date, that data gaps be filled and that progress in implementing Housing for All be monitored and reported regularly back to Council.

Actions:

- **Provide** regular updates to Council, the public and staff on housing needs assessments
- **Provide** regular public reports on success and challenges in implementing Housing for All
- **Undertake additional work** to assess housing needs for:
 - Indigenous people
 - LBGTQ+ community
 - People earning the minimum wage
 - People who are homeless – especially for people with mental health and addiction challenges
 - People with disabilities with low to moderate incomes
 - Recent immigrants
- Seniors, especially those in rental housing or requiring care. (The population aged 65 years and older increased by 35% from 2006 to 2016 and is expected to almost double (increase by 94%) by 2041.
- Single parents
- Students and youth
- **Track and monitor** renovations, where tenants are displaced from their homes to allow major renovations or redevelopment to proceed and housing held for investment in Kitchener.
- **Use** the City's Social Media Platforms to engage and inform the public on addressing housing issues in the city.
- **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

"Many adults with developmental disabilities live with their aging parents. They are not even counted as needing housing, and yet they're only one family health issue away from potentially being homeless or falling into patterns of addiction and mental health challenges [...]"

Family with a Child with a Disability
December 2020





Left: "Between a Rock and a Hard Place" KW Homeless Memorial, Bronze Sculpture by Ernest Daetwyler in Vogelsang Green, Kitchener.

Top right: MennoHomes Bridgeport Affordable Housing Project "A Place to Call Home"

Bottom right: The Working Centre's "Water Street House"





Housing For All

December 2020



**WE'RE BUILDING
A PLACE TO
CALL HOME**

An affordable housing initiative by
 **MennoHomes**

You can help! DONATE NOW
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