



At Home in Durham

Durham Region Housing Plan 2014 - 2024



2015 Annual Report

June 2015



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Introduction

In June 2014, the Region of Durham approved *At Home in Durham*, the Durham Housing Plan 2014-2024. Developed after extensive consultation with our communities, the plan sets out the Region's vision for housing over the next 10 years. It addresses the challenges and opportunities in providing suitable and affordable housing options that meet the needs of all people who choose to call Durham their home.

A strong housing sector—one that offers choices that are affordable, accessible and suitable for everyone—is essential to eliminating homelessness and building healthy communities with strong and vibrant neighbourhoods. Indeed, it sets the foundation for the quality of life of all people in Durham at every stage in their lives.

At Home in Durham focuses on four key goals related to housing and homelessness in our communities:

- End Homelessness in Durham
- Affordable Rent for Everyone
- Greater Housing Choice
- Strong and Vibrant Neighbourhoods

Already, the Region of Durham is making meaningful progress toward the achievement of these goals. In 2014, Durham leveraged an additional \$28.2 million in funding under the Canada-Ontario Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH)—2014 Extension over the next six years to expand the number of affordable rental units, support additional affordable home ownership opportunities and provide much-needed rental assistance for nearly 10% of the applicants on the current social housing waiting list.

The Region is also starting to see a reduction in the use of emergency shelters as people leverage support services to secure and retain housing. Supply and affordability



issues, the dominant reasons why 6,000 households needed support from Durham's homelessness programs in 2014, are slowly being mitigated by partnerships with the development sector and landlords, including non-profit housing providers. Additionally, Regional and community services are shifting focus to homelessness prevention, emphasizing activities to help people remain in their homes whenever possible.

The Region is in the early stages of this 10-year plan, and there is still much to be done. As the plan progresses, the Region is committed to working in collaboration with area municipalities and the non-profit and private sectors to evaluate the housing and homelessness initiatives that have been undertaken in order to support the continued improvement of the plan. The identification of these metrics will give rise to more global, long-term outcome measures to track the progress that is being made toward each of the goals of *At Home in Durham*.

As a first step, this report outlines current initiatives that support the goals of *At Home in Durham* and highlights future opportunities to build on what is being done now.

At Home in Durham has provided a wonderful beacon to guide our community efforts towards elimination of homelessness. This aspirational plan has already demonstrated tangible progress in meeting these goals!

Ed Goerz, Executive Director
Cornerstone Community Association Durham Inc.





Goal 1: End Homelessness in Durham

Homelessness has many faces. It can range from the truly unsheltered (those who are living outside or in places not meant for human habitation) to people who are at risk of homelessness due to precarious housing or economic circumstances. In Durham, people who are homeless are generally accommodated in emergency shelters, or they may be provisionally housed, meaning that their accommodation is temporary or lacks security of tenure (e.g. “couch-surfing” with family or friends). Many low-income people in Durham are at risk of homelessness.

The goals of *At Home in Durham* are clear: to support vibrant, healthy communities that offer an array of housing choices to all residents, ensuring that affordable rental options are available to support people who find themselves at risk of becoming homeless or people who are provisionally sheltered.

At Home in Durham commits to the development of long-term innovative approaches to improve the ability of households to access and retain housing—approaches that are tailored to the unique face of homelessness in Durham.

What is Being Done Now

- Contributed **\$5.4 million** in provincial funding and **\$812,000 in Regional funding** in 2014 to **Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)** services that assisted about **6,000 households** experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness in Durham.





*6% to administration costs

- 40% to the Homelessness Prevention / Housing Stability Program.
- 25% to Emergency Shelters and related services.
- 22% to Services and Supports for outreach and referral, case management and eviction prevention.
- 7% to Housing and Related Supports (domiciliary and transitional housing).

- Increased CHPI funding to three emergency shelters to provide support to clients experiencing **mental health issues**.
- Extended CHPI funding to **Denise House** to support the creation of a dedicated full-time housing worker to assist women fleeing **family violence**.
- Conducted a **comprehensive review of all homelessness programs and services** operated in partnership with community agencies, to ensure better co-ordination of services and more effective disbursement of funding.
- Started work with **Durham Mental Health Services (DMHS)** and its Central East Local Health Integration (LHIN)-funded Regional Housing Co-ordinators to develop an **inventory of supportive housing** options for people with mental health and addictions issues.
- Refocused the structure of the Durham Advisory Committee on Homelessness to support strategic decision-making around homelessness resources funded through the Region of Durham.
- Presented to the Provincial Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness on strategies for assessing homelessness in urban/rural communities.



Looking to the Future

- Pilot a new **vacancy driven rent-gear-to-income (RGI) waiting list**/selection system in late 2015 for family vacancies in the Durham Regional Local Housing Corporation (DRLHC) to give people greater choice in deciding where they want to live. Potential roll out for other social housing properties in 2016.
- Develop and pilot a comprehensive **eviction prevention policy for the Durham Regional Local Housing Corporation (DRLHC)** to assist people in maintaining their tenancies.





Goal 2: Affordable Rent for Everyone

At Home in Durham recognizes that affordable housing is vital to strong and vibrant communities and is a right of all people in our communities. Yet people with low to moderate income in Durham face increasing challenges to find affordable rental housing. Although the Region's social housing portfolio ensures a level of affordability for some of the most vulnerable residents in our community, including seniors, people with disabilities and families in crisis, it is only one option. People in Durham need a range of affordable rental housing options that are easy to access and flexible in meeting their diverse needs.

Working in partnership with both the non-profit and private housing sectors—and with a sustained long-term funding commitment from the federal and provincial governments—*At Home in Durham* commits to increasing the government-funded, affordable rental housing supply, the privately funded affordable rental housing supply and the provision of rental assistance for low-income households.

What is Being Done Now

- Contribute about **\$32 million** annually in Regional funding to support the operations of **45 social housing providers** who own about 6,400 rental units across the region. This includes the provision of **rent-geared-to-income (RGI) subsidies for 4,481 households**, primarily with these social housing providers and a number of private landlords.
- Operate directly **1,293 units** in the **Durham Regional Local Housing Corporation (DRLHC)**.



- Committed more than **\$8.5 million** in federal and provincial funding over the next six years to provide the **Durham Housing Benefit** (DHB) to supplement the rents of more low-income households until 2024. There are **363 households** currently receiving the DHB, which will increase to about **720 households** by 2020.
 - The Durham Housing Benefit is delivered directly and in partnership with five service agencies that provide **emergency, supportive and/or transitional housing** to tenants with specific support needs. It is being expanded to other agencies in 2015.
- Committed **\$4.2 million** in federal and provincial funding to provide **housing allowances** through a shared delivery agreement with the Ministry of Finance to **233 eligible low-income households** in Durham.
- Committed a total of **\$506,000** in federal and provincial funding to assist **24 low-income families** with down payment assistance in partnership with **Habitat for Humanity Durham** (HHD). Deferred Regional fees and charges associated with the HHD site until each unit is ready for occupancy.

Eleanor* was injured in a workplace accident and has been living on a fixed income for many years. She assumed custody of her 8-year old grandson, after the sudden death of his father.

Eleanor likes where she lives. It's a good place to raise her grandson. But she has had to rely regularly on food banks and other charities in order to be able to pay her rent.

Eleanor now receives a **Durham Housing Benefit** of \$400 per month to help with her rent. She was able to stay in her own community and can now provide for herself and her grandson.

“Having a handicap, caring for a young boy, and always paying my rent on time, with next to nothing left has been a real hardship. Everything has been such a struggle.

This help with rent has been a true gift.”

**Name has been changed*



- Committed **\$13.8 million** in federal and provincial funding over the next five years to support the development of between **90 to 122 new affordable rental housing units**. Developers will be encouraged to enter into partnerships with support services agencies to target units to qualified applicants.
- Contributing to the provincial review of the **Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS)** with sector partners, including the **Regional Planning Commissioners of Ontario (RPCO)** Municipal Planning Group on Affordable Housing and the **Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA)** LTAHS Renewal Task Group. Both groups advocate for **long-term sustainable financial investments by senior governments**, and other tools to support affordable housing development and planning at the local level.
- Prepared feedback to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing on Bill 51 (2006) and Bill 53 (2008) on **affordable rental housing and conditional zoning**, and reviewed Bill 3 on **inclusionary housing** for comment.
- Continued dialogue with the development sector through annual **Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD)** liaison meetings, and through existing communication protocols and pre-bid meetings (in relation to Investment in Affordable Housing proposals), to provide opportunities to discuss **innovative building techniques and financial arrangements** that support the goals of *At Home in Durham*.

Looking to the Future

- Develop a **long-term strategy** to sustain the Durham Regional Council approved target of 4,481 RGI units within Durham.
- Develop an ongoing process to **monitor Official Plan policies** and track progress of **area municipalities** in meeting affordable housing targets.



- Identify any **real property owned by the Region deemed to be surplus** that could be used to promote, facilitate and support the development of new affordable rental housing.
- Explore the feasibility of **redeveloping existing social housing sites** consistent with Regional intensification strategies.





Goal 3: Greater Housing Choice

At Home in Durham recognizes that a range of affordable housing options is needed in order to provide a solid foundation for the development and sustainability of vibrant, healthy and complete communities. People in Durham want more choice and more affordable housing options that will enable them to stay in their community of choice, whatever their stage in life or financial circumstances.

Planning efforts need to continue to focus heavily on diverse, integrated communities, with a mix of housing densities and higher density housing within central areas and adjacent to key transportation corridors. Additionally, support services need to be readily available to meet the needs of the people in these diverse communities, particularly seniors, at-risk youth and people with disabilities.

At Home in Durham is committed to actions to diversify housing options by type, size and tenure, and to improve access to safe and secure housing that supports the needs of a diverse community.

What is Being Done Now

- Continued the **Regional Revitalization Program**, which encourages both residential and employment growth in the Region's key urban locations, including regional centres, regional corridors, and brownfield sites throughout the region, as an opportunity to stimulate the development of affordable housing in these areas.



- Implemented an **Intensification Servicing Policy** as part of the 2013 Development Charge By-law that creates an intensification allowance within the sanitary sewage development charge quantum calculation, provided the proposal meets certain conditions, including the commitment to the development of new housing for at least 1,000 people.
- Developed a **new protocol on site contamination** in brownfield developments that will potentially reduce red-tape for the development sector.
- Preparing a submission in relation to the **co-ordinated provincial plans review** (for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Greenbelt Plan) which in part addresses how the plans can better support a mix of housing, including affordable housing, and opportunities to align the plans with other provincial initiatives related to housing.
- Continued to meet annually with **Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD)** at liaison meetings, affording opportunities to discuss and **encourage the development of new rental housing** in line with the goals of *At Home in Durham*.
- Continued to provide office space for **Community Care Durham (CCD)** at three Durham Regional Local Housing Corporation (DRLHC) seniors buildings, in exchange for on-site services for eligible tenants through the **Assisted Living Supports for High Risk Seniors (ALS)** program delivered by CCD.

Kaye is an 86-year-old DRLHC tenant with chronic health problems, including depression.

Three years ago, Kaye was isolated to her apartment, which was unkempt and potentially dangerous. Bills were not being paid, medications were being missed, and her tenancy was at risk.

Kaye has been working regularly with the personal support workers (PSWs) of the Assisted Living for High-Risk Seniors (ALS) program that operates out of her building. She is now thriving and engaged socially with other tenants in the building.

“Certainly, part of the success of ALS is due to the close proximity. Being in the same building as their clients, allows for additional support to the tenant when needed and the ability of clients to access PSWs when needed. This is truly a success story.”

– Property Manager

**Name has been changed*



- Developed a **Local Health Integration Network (LHIN)-Municipal Service Manager Housing and Homelessness Framework** intended to promote collaborative strategic planning, improve co-ordination of service level planning, and align and maximize investment/funding opportunities between the sectors.
- Encouraged partnerships between LHIN-funded agencies and social housing providers to maximize support services to vulnerable tenants.
- Contributing to a joint Social Services Department/University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) research project to explore **pathways in and out of poverty and homelessness** for single non-seniors in the region. Research is anticipated to identify opportunities to better align programs and services for this vulnerable group.
- Monitored compliance of development sector partners to ensure that all new affordable housing developed in Durham incorporates **barrier-free, universal and/or flex design** features in both common areas and living units.
- Set property taxes equivalent to the single residential rate for 20 years, in order to support the development of new affordable housing units, including units developed through the Off-Reserve Aboriginal Housing Component of the Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH)–2014 Extension Program.

Looking to the Future

- Develop an ongoing process and program to **monitor Official Plan policies** and encourage regular reporting by area municipalities in relation to **affordable home ownership**.
- Create opportunities to **review policies and activities** in support of *At Home in Durham* (e.g. **second suites and higher density development**) on an annual basis. Currently reviews and conformity exercises are conducted as-needed.
- Explore opportunities to support a current initiative in which **Joanne’s House** has purchased a new building to create **transitional housing for at-risk youth**.





Goal 4: Strong and Vibrant Neighbourhoods

At Home in Durham seeks to create strong and vibrant neighbourhoods in all parts of the region. People in Durham want safe communities that promote good health. They want access to green space and an appropriate mix of housing, schools, shopping and transit. And they recognize that energy efficiency helps with long-term financial viability of housing affordability.

The desire to live in a strong and vibrant neighbourhood exists regardless of economic status or the need for more affordable rental housing. *At Home in Durham* seeks to ensure such communities for low and moderate income households by preserving the private rental housing stock, strengthening the social housing sector, and supporting an energy efficient, environmentally sustainable rental housing stock.

What is Being Done Now

- Conducted **Building Condition Assessments** (BCAs) for buildings within the Region's social housing portfolio (66 projects) to determine the adequate level of capital investment required to complete high-priority and critical repairs over the next 25 years. BCAs for the DRLHC properties will be initiated in 2015.
- Continued to conduct biennial **operational reviews**, annual **rent-geared-to-income (RGI) reviews** and semi-annual **RGI training** for all social housing providers, in support of good governance and effective administration of operations.
- Developed **housing standards** for social housing providers pertaining to conflict of interest, leases, property management, remuneration of board members and the minimum number of board meetings.



- Approved and implemented various **renewable and alternative energy generating improvements and energy conservation measures** in the DRLHC, including the installation and operation of rooftop photovoltaic (PV) applications at four locations, lighting retrofits and the replacement of two make-up air units.
 - Committed **\$567,700** for lighting retrofits and the replacement of make-up air units in six additional DRLHC projects in 2015.
- Replaced/installed the insulation of one attic, and almost 4,800 energy efficient light bulbs and 165 new energy efficient appliances across all DRLHC low-to-mid-rise buildings and family units under the **Home Assistance Program**.

Looking to the Future

- Develop a policy to **sustain the social housing supply** beyond the expiration of operating agreements and mortgage maturity. The Region continues to work with the Service Manager Housing Network (SMHN) and the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) to make recommendations to the province to help sustain the sector.
- Develop a **long-term, asset management and financial strategy** to sustain and support the **Durham Regional Local Housing Corporation (DRLHC)** portfolio.





At Home in Durham

Durham Region Housing Plan 2014 - 2024



Goal 1: End Homelessness in Durham



\$5.4 million in provincial funding and **\$812,000** in Regional funding for **Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)**



6,000 households received CHPI support in 2014
About 40% of all funding goes to homelessness prevention



Increased CHPI funding to 3 shelters for **mental health supports**



Goal 2: Affordable Rent for Everyone



Social Housing

\$32 million in annual Regional funding
6,400 units
4,481 rent-geared-to-income



Durham Housing Benefit
363 households
increasing to **720** by 2020

\$13.8 million over 5 years for **90 to 122 new affordable rental units**



Goal 3: Greater Housing Choice



3 DRLHC sites

On-site Assisted Living for At-Risk Seniors (ALS) at



Regional Revitalization Program Intensification Servicing Policy



LHIN-Municipal Service Manager



Housing and Homelessness Framework Partner



Goal 4: Strong and Vibrant Neighbourhoods



Building Condition Assessments for **66 social housing projects**

DRLHC renewable and alternative energy generating improvements

\$567,700 energy retrofits for 2015



Social Housing Standards

Outcome Measures

The Region is committed to working in collaboration with area municipalities and the non-profit and private sectors to evaluate housing and homelessness initiatives that have been undertaken in order to support the continued improvement of the plan. The identification of these metrics will give rise to targets and long-term outcome measures. This will enable the Region to monitor its progress toward the achievement of each of the four goals of *At Home in Durham* to ensure that we are on the right track.

Measuring outcomes will build on the natural connections between each of the goals of the plan. Evaluation of a strong housing rental sector built on Affordable Rent for Everyone (Goal 2) and Greater Housing Choice (Goal 3) should lead to Strong and Vibrant Neighbourhoods (Goal 4) and result in a marked reduction in the need for homelessness programs and services, which is an indication of an End to Homelessness in Durham (Goal 1).

There are a number of challenges in Durham with respect to the collection of data across programs and services in that there is no central repository for the collection of data across housing and homelessness programs. Additionally, some of our local partners may require some assistance in building capacity to effectively track new metrics as they are developed. Notwithstanding these challenges, the Region will work with its partners over the next year to refine existing metrics, identify new and innovative data strategies, as well as leverage existing processes to inform the development of the long-term outcome measures for *At Home in Durham*.

Current and planned activities that may inform the development of long-term outcome measures include:

- A survey/census of waiting list applicants to be conducted in 2015 to collect detailed information about the housing needs and current state of housing for 5,500 low- and-moderate-income households across the region. Ongoing collection of this data will continue through the application/update process.



- Development of housing indicators in the *Health Neighbourhoods in Durham* project of the Health Department.
- The joint Social Services Department/University of Ontario Institute of Technology (UOIT) research project to explore pathways in and out of poverty and homelessness for single non-seniors in the region.
- Other measures, such as the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) Quality of Life Indicators and the Municipal Property Assessment Corporation (MPAC) data, may also inform the development of these outcome measures as we move forward.
- The provincial Tenant Satisfaction Survey, which is still pending.

The Region continues to work with sector organizations and other municipalities to provide input into provincial planning exercises, including recommendations for the development of meaningful outcome measures that reflect the local work being done in accordance with municipal housing and homelessness plans and strategies like *At Home in Durham*. Notably, the Region has or will be providing input into the:

- Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness that is tasked to define, measure and set targets for homelessness in Ontario.
- Ontario Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS) renewal that seeks to provide a sustainable supply of affordable housing, a fair system of housing assistance, co-ordinated, accessible support services, and a system based on evidence and best practices.
- Co-ordinated provincial plans review (for the Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe, the Niagara Escarpment Plan, the Oak Ridges Moraine Conservation Plan and the Greenbelt Plan) which in part addresses how the plans can better support a mix of housing, including affordable housing, and opportunities to align the plans with other provincial initiatives related to housing.



Conclusion

At Home in Durham is already making meaningful progress toward the achievement of its goals:

- End Homelessness in Durham
- Affordable Rent for Everyone
- Greater Housing Choice
- Strong and Vibrant Neighbourhoods

The Region has significantly leveraged available funding under the Canada-Ontario Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH)–2014 Extension over the next six years to expand the number of affordable rental units, support additional affordable home ownership opportunities and provide rental assistance. This, in combination with increased support services to assist people to remain in their homes, has already seen a reduction in the use of more costly emergency shelter supports—effectively a reduction in the incidence of homelessness in Durham.

As we look to the future, we will work with area municipalities and our partners in the non-profit and private sectors to develop long-term outcome measures and to identify emerging opportunities to support the goals of *At Home in Durham*.

With a commitment of sustained, long-term funding from the federal and provincial governments, *At Home in Durham* offers a foundation for more locally responsive, integrated and accountable services with respect to housing and homelessness in the region.





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