

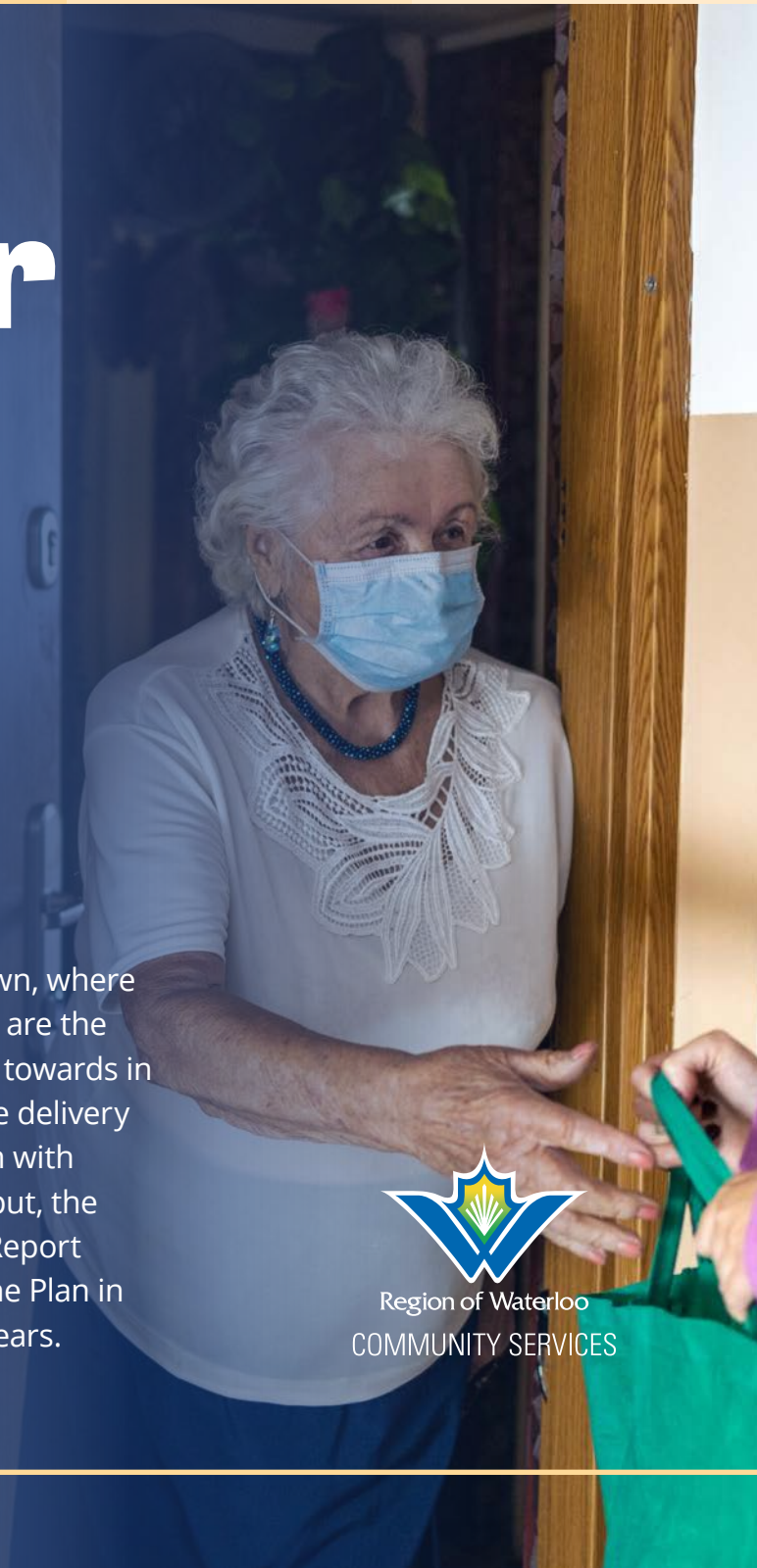
Building a better future for all

10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan 2021 Annual Report

Communities thrive when everyone has a place to call home. A place that is their own, where they feel comfortable, safe and part of the community. Communities where homes are the foundation upon which people can build their best life. This is what we are working towards in Waterloo Region. As designated by the Province of Ontario, the Region manages the delivery of housing and homelessness services for our community, operating as one system with a plan that informs everything we do. Developed and reviewed with community input, the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan is adapted as needs change. This Annual Report shares progress made on achieving the five strategic directions and 33 actions of the Plan in 2021, including a focus on Building Better Futures: 2,500 affordable homes in five years.



Region of Waterloo
COMMUNITY SERVICES



2021 Highlights

Investing in equitable, safe, and inclusive communities

Regional Council approved many investments towards creating equitable, safe, and inclusive communities in 2021, including the following:

An annualized commitment of \$1.55M to addressing inequities in housing access through a new rent assistance program to help make housing more affordable for racialized families. In 2021, 30 families comprised of 100 individuals began receiving rent assistance to reduce their housing costs, with funding to serve 170 more families in 2022.

Investing in the first affordable housing project for those identifying as Indigenous with support from all levels of government in 2021. The project will add 30 new affordable homes for Indigenous community members.

Several investments to support efforts to end homelessness, including:

- **Expanding the Home-Based Support Program to support 50 more people** experiencing chronic homelessness to transition into permanent housing with supports;
- **Doubling the housing-focused street outreach services** across the region to engage with those experiencing homelessness and provide supports;
- **Expanding the service of health focused staff by six two-person teams** to support the over 325 individuals in Housing Support Programs recover from their experience of homelessness; and
- **Extending interim housing for up to 80 people** experiencing unsheltered homelessness and not accessing the emergency shelter system.

These investments facilitate a thriving community for everyone who lives here.



Developing new supportive homes to end chronic homelessness

As a social determinant of health, housing is foundational to promoting a healthy community for all. An unprecedented investment in ending chronic homelessness by all levels of government facilitated the approval of six new supportive housing projects in 2021. These 179 new supportive homes will increase the number of fixed-site supportive homes funded through the Region of Waterloo from 217 to 396, an 82 per cent increase. The experience of chronic homelessness will end for 85 households in 2022 as two of these projects are ready for occupancy, with another 94 households moving into new supportive homes in 2023.

Together, we will end homelessness in Waterloo Region.

Strengthening collaboration and partnerships for maximum impact

The year 2021 was marked by an enhanced focus on collaboration and partnerships in recognition of the crucial role our partners had in creating and delivering safe, affordable and supportive housing in our community. In 2021, the Region and Area Municipalities strengthened communications, data sharing and collaboration overall, working closely with the philanthropic, business and not for profit sectors in the collective work of addressing housing and homelessness issues in Waterloo Region. The Municipal Leads Housing and Homelessness Committee, the Housing Innovation Round Table, and the Housing and Homelessness Steering Committee are a few of many tables working intently to address these issues. Through strategic alignment and partnerships, we will build homes, we will build communities, and we will do it faster, together.

From innovative pilot project to home

Innovative housing solutions, including built forms that are energy-efficient, cost effective, and able to be developed more quickly than traditional construction, have become an effective response to the growing need for affordable housing in Waterloo Region. In 2021, three projects involving modular built forms began the development process, including:

- **Six modular affordable homes for people waiting for affordable housing** at the Waterloo Region Housing Bechtel site in Cambridge;
- **41 modular supportive homes for women experiencing homelessness** on the City of Kitchener owned site on Blockline Road through the YW Kitchener-Waterloo; and
- **45 modular supportive homes for youth experiencing homelessness** through oneROOF Youth Services on Sheldon Avenue in Kitchener.

The construction phase of these 92 new affordable and supportive modular homes has been much shorter than is possible with traditional construction methods, accelerating efforts to ensure everyone has a place to call home in Waterloo Region while adding a new type of housing to the continuum.

Our work at a glance: 2021

Every year we work collectively with our partners and funders to make progress in different areas of the housing path.

10-year housing and homelessness plan priorities:

Create
more
affordable
and community
housing

Offer a **broadier range**
of housing options to meet diverse needs

Expand supports
for people to find and secure housing

Retain and
maintain
existing affordable and
community housing

Improve **access to**
programs
that support people into
stable housing

**33 total
actions**

- 11 complete
- 20 in progress
- 2 not started

Strategic Direction 1:

Create more affordable and community housing

The Region is building a better future through progress on four main objectives:

Accelerate the development of affordable housing

Create 2,500 new affordable homes in the next five years

At the end of 2021, there were:

- **61 new affordable homes occupied.**
- **589 new affordable homes in development**, including:
 - **217 affordable homes** on four properties through the Waterloo Region Housing Master Plan; and
 - **372 affordable homes** on 13 properties through housing provider partners.

Create healthy, safe and equitable communities

Facilitate equitable communities through planning, zoning and other tools

- **30 Racialized families made up of 100 individuals** accepted portable rent assistance in 2021, with 170 additional families to be served in 2022.
- **Funding was approved** for the first Indigenous led affordable housing project in Waterloo Region.
- **Minimizing the potential impacts of climate change** on people with low incomes by prioritizing carbon neutral designs in new affordable homes where possible.

Ensure a mix of rural and urban housing options

Create communities in the cities and townships

- **Began work on an assessment of the housing needs and gaps** in the four townships within Waterloo Region with the goal of developing responses to identified needs.
- **Provided funding for 28 new affordable homes** in Woolwich Township.
- **Continued to explore opportunities** to leverage municipal surplus lands for affordable housing.

Respect the global climate and environment

Support green energy and active transportation

- **Waterloo Region Housing developments** through the Master Plan are designed as **Zero Carbon or Net-Zero Carbon** as part of the Region's greenhouse gas emission reduction target of 80 per cent (based on 2010 levels) by 2050.
- **Exploring strategic land acquisition** along the preferred Stage 2 ION Route to facilitate proximity to active transportation.

Strategic Direction 2:

Retain and maintain existing affordable and community housing

To ensure community housing assets remain in a state of good repair, the following investments in capital repairs were made in 2021:

- **46 capital repair projects** completed or in progress with housing providers **totalling \$1.71M.**
- **65 capital repair projects** completed or in progress with Waterloo Region Housing **totalling \$6.13M.**

The Region is also focused on protecting a stable, responsive and growing community housing system for the future by proactively collaborating with community housing providers in planning for the end of mortgage. This is an area for further focus in 2022.

A Security Master Plan was completed in partnership with Facilities Management for Waterloo Region Housing in October 2021. The Plan provides a roadmap to resolve security issues, making recommendations on security systems technology, physical property features and construction, and operations and programming.



Strategic Direction 3:

Offer a broader range of housing options to meet diverse needs

To meet the unique needs of community members, a continuum of diverse housing options is important. In 2021, several initiatives furthered the progress in this area:

- **92 new affordable and supportive modular homes** began the development process in 2021 and will be occupied in 2022. Various design and construction methods were used in the development of these modular homes, including container housing and the use of mass timber and panel construction.
- Approving a new project to deliver **10 additional modular supportive homes** to be ready for occupancy in 2022.
- The Region is continuing to provide coordinated support to Area Municipalities in **implementing inclusionary zoning**.

Strategic Direction 4:

Expand supports for people to find and secure housing

The following shares progress in expanding supports for people to find and secure housing in 2021:

- **190 households supported to stay in their homes** with rent arrears funding through the rent bank.
- **358 households supported to secure new homes** with rent assistance funding through the rent bank.
- **90 per cent of people living in supportive housing retained their housing.**
- **2,262 households were supported to access housing options** to avoid a shelter stay through prevention and diversion. On average, **58 per cent of households seeking emergency shelter were able to avoid a shelter stay** through support to access housing options.
- **Maintained an end to chronic family homelessness** by focusing efforts to ensure experiences of homelessness for families are rare, brief, and non-reoccurring.



Strategic Direction 5:

Improve access to programs that support people into stable housing

Through the following progress, the Region and community partners are improving access to programs that support people into stable housing:

- Through Ontario Renovates, 23 households were provided with funding for home repairs and accessibility modifications, and one household was provided with funding for a secondary suite.
- **11 households bought a new home** through the affordable homeownership program.
- **508 people experiencing homelessness transitioned into permanent housing** with the support of housing stability programs. 168 of these households moved into housing with support through a priority wait list (PATHS). These households all had long experiences of homelessness (6+ months in the last year).
- **Administered and summarized the results from the first ever Waterloo Region Housing tenant satisfaction survey** to hear from tenants on areas of satisfaction, and to identify areas of focus to prioritize for improvement in 2022.



Building a better future for all in Waterloo Region: our focus for 2022

Strategically using surplus Regional lands for affordable homes

The Region owns properties with high land values to leverage for the development of affordable housing. Through the Beechwood affordable housing pilot project initiated in 2020, the leveraging of Regional surplus lands is resulting in the creation of a mixed-income community, bringing 46 new affordable homes to the City of Waterloo. Taking the learnings from the Beechwood pilot project, the Region will increase the focus on leveraging the value of surplus Regional lands for the development of new affordable and supportive homes across Waterloo Region in 2022.

Working together with Area Municipalities on incentives to accelerate affordable housing development

The Region has established an inter-municipal working group to collaborate on opportunities for incentives which support affordable housing development. Through this collaboration, all municipalities are gaining a more cohesive understanding of successes and challenges to the new construction of affordable units. These learnings will be applied to an Incentives Toolkit that considers process improvements, financial incentives, and policy direction to help accelerate affordable housing construction.

Ensuring sustainability and growth in the community housing system

The community housing sector is changing as the mortgages of housing providers become fully paid and the funding connected to these mortgages ends. In response, the Region developed a proactive strategy that aims to retain as many community housing units as possible to protect and stabilize the sector. Through the Community Housing Succession Strategy, the Region will provide support and guidance to housing providers with planning to ensure long-term financial sustainability, protection, upkeep and growth of housing assets, and building staff and board member capacity.

As the community housing sector evolves in response to the end of mortgage, the Region is committed to continuing to work with housing providers in partnership and recognition of the crucial role they play in ensuring everyone in Waterloo Region has a place to call home.

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