

Housing Solutions Now!

May 6th, 2024

Event report-back



HAMILTON COMMUNITY
BENEFITS NETWORK
building capacity through building communities



The First Unitarian Church of Hamilton
nurture. engage. inspire.



Housing Solutions Now!

Explore opportunities for real change in Hamilton

**Community
report-back and
workshop**



Monday May 6th
6:30 PM - 9:00PM



First Unitarian Church
170 Dundurn St South

Sign up online @ [TicketTailor](#) | [Link in Bio](#)

Presented by:



HAMILTON COMMUNITY
BENEFITS NETWORK

building capacity through building communities

Summary:

On May 6th, 2024, HCBN collaborated with the First Unitarian Church of Hamilton and the Hamilton is Home coalition to hold a community engagement event to discuss the housing crisis in the city of Hamilton. The event featured a number of speakers, including Bill Johnson from the First Unitarian Church of Canada, Karl Andrus and Mohammed Shalalfeh from the HCBN, Medora Uppal from YWCA, and Graham Cubitt from Indwell.

The event kicked off with Bill Johnson speaking about the recent advocacy wins made at city council, as well as the notable progress that the city has made to address the housing crisis. Karl Andrus, the executive director of HCBN, spoke about the issues underlying the housing crisis in Hamilton, as well as the policy changes and capital investments needed to overcome the complex challenges the city is facing.

The event proceeded with Mohammed Shalalfeh speaking about the HCBN's efforts to advocate for community benefits as part of the Hamilton LRT, specifically as it relates to affordable housing along the LRT corridor. Medora Uppal discussed the ways in which the housing crisis interacts with other issues such as gendered violence and substance abuse in the city. The final speaker was Graham Cubitt, who spoke about the opportunities presented by non-for-profit organizations such as Indwell delivering affordable housing.



To close off the event, organizers instructed attendees to engage in breakout groups to facilitate discussions on the topics discussed. This report will summarize the main points covered by the speakers, as well as the input shared by attendees during the breakout groups.

The Hamilton Community Benefits Network envisions Hamilton as an inclusive, thriving city in which all residents have equitable opportunities to contribute to building healthy communities and a justice prospering economy. Community Benefit Agreements (CBAs) are a proven approach to achieve this vision.

City's progress on addressing the housing crisis:

The City of Hamilton has undergone significant changes in housing policy in recent years, driven largely by persistent advocacy from tenant groups and community organizations. These efforts have resulted in landmark decisions such as landlord licensing and anti-renoviction bylaws, which aim to protect tenants from unfair evictions and substandard living conditions.

Tenant groups like ACORN played a crucial role in highlighting issues such as poor apartment conditions and unjust evictions due to renovations. Their campaigns included rallies, webinars, and consistent pressure on [City Council](#), ultimately leading to the adoption of these protective measures despite opposition from groups like the Hamilton District Apartment Association.

Thanks to the advocacy of ACORN, Hamilton is Home, and the Just Recovery Coalition, the city is beginning to acknowledge the financial and moral wisdom of working to ensure people are able to stay housed, rather than dealing with the plethora of issues that accompany homelessness.

Financial investments:

- The city has created the Affordable Housing Funding Program, with an annual \$4 million starting in 2023, and has funded the first share of the three-year \$31 M Multi-Year Housing Reserve Fund
- The city expanded the Tenant Defence Fund in 2022.
- Last year, City Council approved the annual spending of \$3.6 million to help operate the 73 units at the Dorothy Day Center supportive housing for women, 2-spirit, trans, non-binary and gender-diverse people.
- Again, last year, the city approved \$2.6 million in annual operating funding for the YWCA transitional housing program at Carole Anne's Place.
- Using federal Housing Accelerator Fund money, the city is providing forgivable loans of up to \$25,000 per unit for secondary dwelling units that rent for average market rent or less for 15 years. As well as grants of up to \$2,000 per building permit.
- In the coming months, the City of Hamilton will be providing additional funding to the Hamilton Community Legal Clinic to provide staff capacity to assist tenants facing N12, N13, N6 orders and above-guideline rent increases. This additional legal help will strengthen tenants' ability to fight for their rights at the Landlord and Tenant Board, keeping tenants in their homes.

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City of Hamilton considers fund for non-profit housing projects

City politicians to consider proposed \$4-million-a-year fund to help launch non-profit projects

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Policy changes:

- The city has created a Housing Secretariat to streamline the processing of affordable housing projects. The Secretariat has opened an online application platform to pre-approve projects so the city is ready when senior-level funding opportunities emerge.
- The Hamilton Alliance for Tiny Shelters was approved by Council in August 2023, and is expected to be in operation in 2024.
- The city has also approved zoning changes across all 85,000 residential lots in Hamilton to make it easier to expand into secondary and multiple-use units and provide additional ways of expanding the housing supply without sprawl.

Additionally, the Housing Sustainability and Investment Roadmap approved in 2023 is to guide city council and the secretariat's work and must be turned into annual operating plans each November. It focuses on:

- Preserving existing affordable housing,
- The purchase by non-profits of affordable private-market buildings,
- Building new housing,
- Providing health and social support that many people need to stay housed.

The city passed a new rental licensing bylaw, which will come into effect in 2026 and inspect all of Hamilton's rental apartment buildings with more than five units annually. Landlords will be required to keep those buildings in good repair, which will increase the quality of rental stock in the City and help prevent renovictions.

This rental licensing is being complemented with two other vital programs:

- A first-in-Ontario Renoviction Licencing bylaw that would require landlords to inform tenants of when a unit will be finished so that tenant can undertake their first right of refusal and return at the previous rent
- A bylaw requiring landlords to provide alternative accommodations while the unit is being renovated at the same rent.



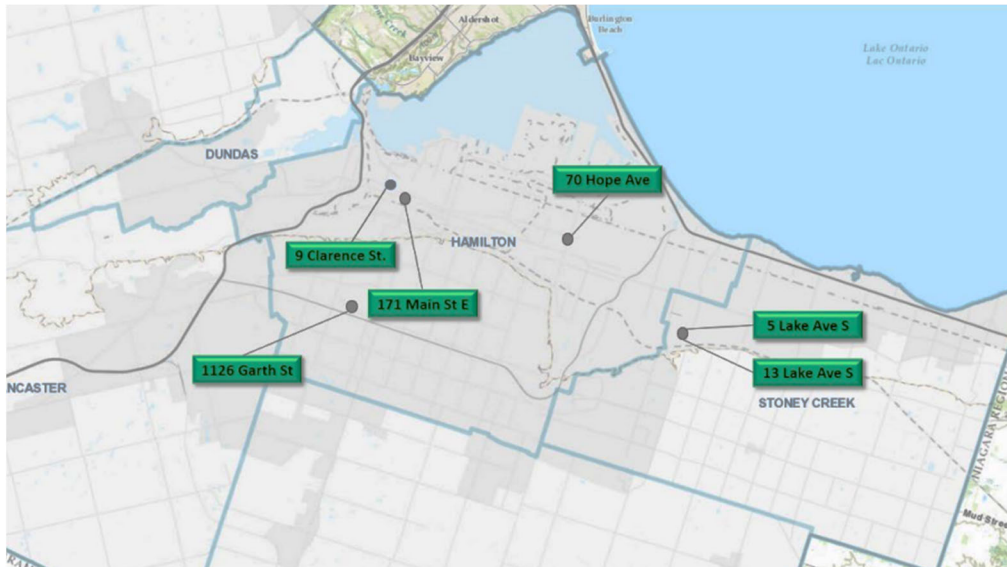
MEDIA RELEASE

CITY PASSES HISTORIC BY-LAW IN SUPPORT OF TENANTS' RIGHTS

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Public land for affordable housing:

Last year, the city identified four city-owned sites that it will lease to non-profit housing providers to allow them to build more non-profit housing units. Three of those sites might accommodate 155 units in three or five storey apartment buildings. Taking land costs out of the costs of new projects makes it easier to reach low break-even rents.



9 Clarence	0.44 acres	Re-zoning needed	Five stories. Number of units not yet known
70 Hope Ave.	0.7 acres	Re-zoning needed	Three storeys 54 one-bedroom units
1126 Garth	0.55 acres	Re-zoning needed	Three storeys 34 one-bedroom units
5 and 13 Lake South	1.07 acres	Zoning is in place	3 and 5 storey, 24 studio units and 43 -one-bedroom units



CITY OF HAMILTON
PLANNING AND ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT DEPARTMENT
Economic Development Division
and
HEALTHY AND SAFE COMMUNITIES DEPARTMENT
Housing Secretariat Division

TO:	Mayor and Members General Issues Committee
COMMITTEE DATE:	December 6, 2023
SUBJECT/REPORT NO:	Housing Sustainability and Investment Roadmap Work Program: City Property Review and Property Disposition Strategies (PED23099(a)/HSC23028(a)) (City Wide)

<https://pub-hamilton.escribemeetings.com/filestream.ashx?DocumentId=388539>

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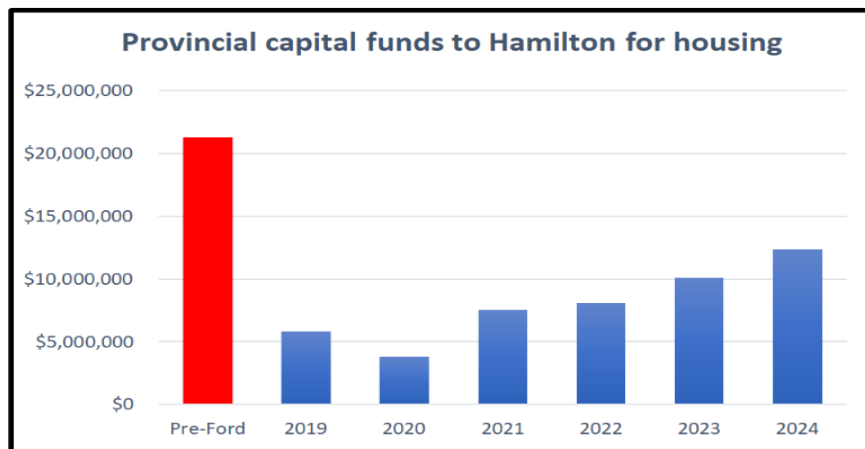
Province's progress on addressing the housing crisis:

- The March 2024 provincial budget provided \$152 million, over three years, in new funding for the supports needed for supportive housing, with specific mention of Indwell.
- It provided \$1.8 billion in new funding, over three years, for housing-related infrastructure
- Municipalities now have permission to introduce vacant home taxes, and to lower property tax rates on multi-unit rental properties.

But the provincial focus remains on growing private sector housing supply, and has no affordability targets. The province is also mainly focused on homes for ownership, despite more than a third of Ontarians renting their homes.



Provincial capital funding for new construction of affordable housing in Hamilton has averaged only a bit more than a third of what was provided by the previous government. This chart shows the average capital funding before 2018 (before Ford's election) in red and the actual annual amounts in blue (after Ford took office).



Source: City of Hamilton documents

City of Hamilton Policy recommendations:

- Provide funds to establish a building and land acquisition fund.
- Pass an inclusionary zoning bylaw.
- Finish the work that started last term of the council on reimagining the Hamilton Future Fund.
- The City of Hamilton should consider a large Municipal Housing Bond.

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Federal government's progress on addressing the housing crisis:

While their contributions are limited, the federal government deserves some credit for restoring a federal role in affordable housing and for providing some funding for non-profit housing.

The April federal budget had many housing initiatives, including:

- The Canada Rental Protection Fund, to help nonprofits buy and preserve existing market rental buildings that are still affordable, to keep them affordable forever.
- And low-interest loans of up to \$40,000 to help homeowners build secondary suites.
- New funding for homelessness programs.
- More federal land is to be made available for housing, specifically mentioning a Binbrook post office site.
- A permanent Rapid Housing Initiative, but only \$976 million over five years, compared to \$1 billion and \$1.5 billion a year in previous rounds.
- Additional funding for asylum seekers, which overburdened local homeless shelters
- Funding for housing-related infrastructure.



Overall, the federal and provincial funding for housing that comes to the city of Hamilton is declining and will continue to do so. The city has increased its funding of housing programs and investments by \$16 million in 2023 and by another \$23 million in 2024, to some extent just offsetting the declining federal and provincial declines.

Hamilton LRT:

The Metrolinx-Hamilton Light Rail Transit Project will be cutting through the most densely populated areas in the city. It promises to bring new opportunities, but also has the potential to bring negative outcomes to housing along the LRT corridor.

- 48% the residents living in the LRT Corridor area are low-income - almost a two-fold difference
- Low-income Indigenous (93%), Southeast Asian (86%), West Asian (72%), Black (68%), Chinese (67%) populations have the most over-representation in the LRT Corridor.

The LRT will impact the most vulnerable among us, which is why HCBN has been working to advocate for community benefits to be included as part of the LRT project, most notably in the area of affordable housing. Through our community engagement and consultation sessions, HCBN has gathered input to produce the following advocacy asks:

- No sale for the private use of any city-owned land on or around the LRT corridor.
- Surplus land to be designated for affordable housing development.

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- Require all new developments within a certain distance from the LRT to have a minimum percentage of affordable housing units (Inclusionary Zoning).
- Increase social housing (City Housing Hamilton) investment to build more affordable units along the Corridor.
- Build more supportive and transitional housing.
- Surplus land to be donated to the city and local non-profits for the purpose of building deeply affordable housing units.
- Build affordable Housing above station stops.

Breakout group notes:

In order to facilitate discussions on this important topic, the event organizers instructed attendees to engage in breakout groups. The following are some notes collected from several breakout groups, which will be utilized to inform our advocacy efforts:

- New model for Co-op homes, wherein the city purchases individual units gradually and
- People's NIMBY attitudes, while problematic, must be addressed in a way that alleviates their safety concerns.
- Mixed income housing instead of just affordable housing buildings.
- Mixed use buildings to prevent sprawl and environmental degradation
- The common perception is that nothing is being done to address the housing crisis, when that is not the case. The city must promote its progress and change this perception
- Doing a better job connecting residential areas to businesses and green spaces.
- Amenities, community spaces and social services should be accessible to new and existing affordable housing units.
- Use the vacant land by Bay Front Park and the Sir John A. Macdonald site for housing
- Reuse vacant office buildings—they are often in locations with access to transit
- Ontario Works has not increased since 2018, and ODSP has only increased slightly. Both are way too low for anyone receiving it to afford housing.
- Need a clear definition of “affordable” that includes quantitative information (“real numbers”) rather than a qualitative word like affordable.
- 30% of public money for affordable housing to address homelessness issue
- Student housing: RFPs should include the first right to non-profit developers. Universities and colleges should be required to include 30% RFP, the first right to non-profit providers.
- Require green space, recreational outdoor space for children and seniors

Thank you for reading this report! There will undoubtedly be more events like this in the near future, please stay tuned by signing up to our mailing list at <https://hcbn.ca/contact-us>

You can watch the full recording of the event at <https://youtu.be/qDVJ6L5e2dM>

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