

Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee (HHAC)

Annual 2021 Report to City Council

HHAC Mandate:

“To serve as an advisory body to City Council on issues relating to the supply, demand, and need for affordable housing and homelessness supports in Windsor and Essex County. Act as a medium for informational exchange with sector representatives on housing and homelessness program initiatives and community issues. Act as a resource and advocate on behalf of all stakeholders to educate and advance the awareness of Council representatives on matters pertaining to housing and homelessness. Responsible for championing the implementation of the 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Master Plan and for evaluating and monitoring progress towards meeting the goals and strategies of the Plan.”

Highlights from 2021----HHAC meetings continued to be Virtual throughout 2021

It became evident that the measures we had taken to reduce the spread of COVID in 2020 would continue well into 2021. From April 2021 to March 2022, the City of Windsor received approximately \$9.9 million in additional operating funding from the provincial and federal levels of government to assist in the delivery of COVID-specific services and supports. This included some members of HHAC, whose agencies helped support and provided measures to prevent further outbreaks, in collaboration with the City to operate a Temporary Emergency Shelter at the International Aquatic and Training Centre. These services supported a number of persons experiencing Homelessness.

Our County representatives brought to our attention the increasing need for Emergency Shelter and Affordable Housing within the County of Essex especially in Leamington and the need was growing within their youth population. The Homelessness & Housing Help Hub (H4) has continued operations throughout 2021. Service Providers onsite include Housing Information Services, Family Services Windsor-Essex, Windsor Essex Community Health Centre (weCHC), Can Am Indian Friendship Centre, City of Windsor - Ontario Works, Canadian Mental Health Association Windsor-Essex Branch, and New Beginnings. As of December 31 2021, 1793 unique people have accessed supports and services at the H4. HHAC applauds these efforts by the City and its many partners but was glad to hear that the City is looking for a new larger site for H4 that will be able to service a wider population and still remain within the city core close to social services and bus routes.

HHAC also applauds both City and County councils for their successful efforts in attracting private developers to build housing units, which may not be affordable for many, however it will see those units become available to middle- and lower-income families, singles and youth.

HHAC also witnessed a rise in other forms of housing spring up in both the city and county such as tiny houses, modular units and the partnership between the University of Windsor and Habitat for Humanity to build 3D Printer units in Leamington.

Again, HHAC sees many of the Objectives and Goals from the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Master Plan coming to fruition especially as we are all working for the same goal - to increase the supply of housing and reduce homelessness within our community.

Jude Mallott from the Building department presented to HHAC a Residential Licensing Pilot project to be considered in Wards 1 & 2. HHAC had some serious questions and remarks regarding the fear that any costs for the License to Landlords would be transferred to tenants and may cause them to leave their unit and thus end up on the street. After some discussion and clarification, HHAC did forward to Council its endorsement and support as long as an evaluation would be conducted after the Pilot to ensure costs were not passed on to tenants. At the end of the day, all of HHAC made it clear that rental units must be safe and secure.

Although, we are still experiencing a large social housing waiting list and numerous homeless people waiting for permanent housing, HHAC's members feel positive especially given the past two years of isolation, fear and insecurity, we have been able to house between 50-70 people per month and place them in some form of permanent housing. At the end of the day, ***the housing crisis can only be solved by either building or converting spaces into affordable units accompanied by necessary supports to maintain tenancy within the City and County.***

I am adding as an ***attachment*** a number of areas that our Housing Resource staff worked on and were successful in achieving throughout 2021. ***These six Initiatives are on top of staff's regular work plan.*** I also want to give praise and sincere thanks to Debbie Cercone as the Executive Director of Housing and Children's Services. She has worked diligently over so many years to acquire grants and funds which enabled HHAC to accomplish many goals within the 10-year plan. We wish her every success and now we welcome Kirk Whittal who became the new E.D. as of January 2022.

It goes without saying that the members of HHAC are dedicated individuals from various agencies, groups, business and advocates within the city and council and I am privileged to work and call them my colleagues.

Marina Clemens,
HHAC Chair