

Housing Opportunities Toronto: Progress Report 2014



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INTRODUCTION

Toronto City Council adopted *Housing Opportunities Toronto, An Affordable Housing Action Plan 2010-2020 (HOT)* in 2009, following more than a year of community and stakeholder consultations. In 2013, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing advised the Mayor of Toronto that *HOT* meets the requirement under the HSA for all municipal service managers to develop a 10 year housing and homelessness plan. The City of Toronto is pleased to provide this 2014 Annual Progress Report.

HOT is a landmark plan aimed at improving housing affordability and stability for a cross-section of Torontonians with diverse housing needs. The province has recognized Toronto "as a pioneer in developing an integrated housing and homelessness plan" which "influenced the development of the province's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy."

HOT addresses the City's affordable housing priorities, including moving vulnerable people from streets and shelters into stable homes, assisting people to stay in their homes, improving private and public social housing, building 1,000 affordable rental homes annually, and making home ownership more affordable.

During its first five years, the *HOT* Action Plan has been a useful and reliable road map in guiding the City's housing investments, as well as public and private sector activity. This Progress Report reviews housing initiatives and activities undertaken by the City to help achieve *HOT*'s goals. The Report is based on the seven key themes used to organize the 67 recommended actions in the *HOT* Plan:

Themes:

1. Help homeless and vulnerable people find and keep homes
2. Assist families and individuals to afford rents
3. Preserve and repair rental housing
4. Revitalize neighbourhoods
5. Create new affordable rental homes
6. Help people buy and stay in their homes and;
7. Working together

Each section will review activities from 2014 as well as more recent actions.

1. HELP HOMELESS AND VULNERABLE PEOPLE FIND AND KEEP HOMES



Highlights 2014

Community-based housing support services
Streets to Homes
Toronto Shelter Standards
Service Enhancements
George Street Revitalization Project

Actions 2015

Redevelopment of the Red Door Shelter
Housing First pilot for long-term shelter users

Highlights 2014

In 2014, the City began implementing its 2014-2019 Housing Stability Service Planning Framework, which guides the planning, management and delivery of housing and homelessness services over five years. An important tool to help achieve *HOT* goals, the objective is to transform Toronto's housing and homelessness service system from one focused on siloed administration of historical programs and emergency responses to homelessness, into an integrated, client-centred and outcome-focussed system that enables residents to remain in their homes and improve their long-term wellbeing.

Through implementation of the Framework, the City is looking at creative and innovative ways to respond to the spectrum of housing and emergency shelter needs. Activities underway in 2014 included:

i) Community-based housing support services

The City administered funding to more than 115 community agencies to provide services aligned with the City's strategic direction and aimed at improving the housing stability of Torontonians, including Housing Help Centres, drop-ins, eviction prevention services, and housing supports.

ii) Streets to Homes

The Streets to Homes program provides outreach and housing follow-up supports to assist people who are street involved to find and keep permanent housing using a Housing First approach. The program has assisted more than 4,800 people to move into stable housing directly from streets since 2005.

iii) Toronto Shelter Standards

The Toronto Shelter Standards, which establish how emergency shelter services are provided in the 59 shelters throughout the city, are being updated to provide improved service to clients and better reflect current City objectives for the shelter system. Based on the input of 10 working groups held throughout 2014, a draft of the revised standards has been released for further consultation, and a final version will be submitted to City Council for approval in the fall of 2015.

iv) Service Enhancements

A number of service enhancements were approved to provide additional services to client groups who have specific needs that may not currently be addressed by the existing service system, including:

- creation of two 24-hour women's drop-ins
- a new 24-hour extreme cold weather drop-in service available when Extreme Cold Weather Alerts are called

- two new LGBTQ2S youth shelter/transition to housing programs

v) George Street Revitalization Project

The George Street Revitalization project will redevelop Seaton House, the City's largest homeless shelter, into an innovative facility with a dynamic range of services to meet the unique and complex needs of homeless, vulnerable and elderly individuals in our community. The redevelopment will include an emergency shelter, long-term care home, innovative "assisted living" service, affordable housing and a community services hub. In 2014, work continued on a transition plan for the Seaton House shelter and development of a program model for the redeveloped site, which will be presented to Council in the fall of 2015 for approval.

2015 Actions

i) Redevelopment of the Red Door Shelter

In May, the City approved the purchase of a purpose-built family shelter as part of an innovative development to ensure that the Red Door Shelter can continue to provide housing and support services to vulnerable people. The shelter will be incorporated into a new development which includes a 7-storey, mixed-use building with 118 condominium units and commercial space.

ii) Housing First pilot for long-term shelter users

On any given night, approximately 1,000 shelter beds are occupied by people who've been in the shelter system for a year or more. A proposed new Housing First pilot program aims to house 200 long-term shelter users over 12 months using a combination of housing allowances and intensive case management supports. The objective is that people will be assisted to move to more appropriate permanent housing, and those shelter beds will then be available for emergency use for people in short-term housing crises.

2. ASSIST FAMILIES AND INDIVIDUALS TO AFFORD RENTS



Highlights 2014

Rent Subsidies

Creation of Housing Allowance Reserve Fund

My Choice Rental Pilot

Highlights 2014

i) Rent Subsidies

The City assisted some 69,000 households with a rent-geared-to income (RGI) subsidy and some 4,000 households with a housing allowance to help with rental affordability.

ii) Creation of Housing Allowance Reserve Fund

The City has created a Housing Allowance Reserve fund which establishes a mechanism to contribute funding to a made-in-Toronto permanent housing allowance program. Previously, all funding was through federal or provincial contributions. Housing allowances provide a fixed monthly amount to help recipients afford rent in the private market and possibly move to a better home.

iii) My Choice Rental pilot

In February, the My Choice Rental project launched a pilot choice-based system for social housing, the first of its kind in Canada. Findings from the pilot, which housed 140 households over 36 weeks, show a decrease in the time needed to fill a vacant rent-geared-to- income (RGI) unit and a substantial increase in the acceptance rate for housing offers. Based on this success, Council has approved implementing a choice- based system for the entire social housing waiting list system.

3. PRESERVE AND REPAIR RENTAL HOUSING



Highlights 2014

Housing Improvement Programs
Funding to repair Toronto Community Housing Homes

Actions 2015

Mayor's Task Force on Toronto Community Housing
Rooming House Review
Repair Funding for Rooming Houses

Highlights 2014

i) Housing Improvement Programs

The City delivered some \$3.1 million in federal/provincial funding for essential repairs and renovations to 379 rental homes. The funds supported private- and non-profit landlords of affordable rental buildings and rooming houses to make health and safety repairs and accessibility modifications for residents.

ii) Funding to repair Toronto Community Housing Homes

The City approved \$102 million to fund the repair of Toronto Community Housing homes. The funds were provided by re-negotiating mortgage interest rates through Infrastructure Ontario and the City.

TCH more than doubled its investment over 2013 with \$128 million in capital repairs to over 500 buildings across the city. This includes 76,000 individual repairs to homes.

2015 Actions

i) Mayor's Task Force on Toronto Community Housing

Mayor Tory initiated an independent Task Force to recommend improvements to governance, organizational and service delivery structures at Toronto Community Housing. An interim report will be released in July and a final report with recommendations in December.

ii) Rooming House Review

In April and May, the City consulted more than 1,500 residents about the regulation and operation of rooming houses. A report with recommendations will be considered in December.

iii) Repair Funding for Rooming Houses

In April, the City released a \$5 million Request for Proposals to make essential health, safety and accessibility repairs to legal rooming houses. Owners are eligible for up to \$24,000 per unit to make repairs that will result in better housing for residents.

4. REVITALIZE NEIGHBOURHOODS



Highlights 2014

Regent Park

Actions 2015

Alexandra Park, Lawrence-Allen Neighbourhood and Allenbury Gardens

Highlights 2014

i) Regent Park

Toronto Community Housing began Phase Three of the five-phase plan for the Regent Park revitalization. Upon completion, the new Regent Park will include 2,083 replacement rent-geared-to-income homes, 700 new affordable rental homes and 5,400 market rent units in the neighbourhood and surrounding area.

In addition to the creation of a more vibrant, safer and mixed-income community, there are new businesses and job opportunities for residents as well as a new aquatic centre, park and athletic grounds.

2015 Actions

ii) Alexandra Park, Lawrence-Allen Neighbourhood and Allenbury Gardens

Toronto Community Housing's Alexander Park, Lawrence Heights and Allenbury Gardens neighbourhoods are undergoing revitalization. Upon completion, Alexander Park will contain 333 replacement rent-geared-to-income units, 473 refurbished homes and 1,540 market units, along with new retail space. Lawrence Heights will have 1,208 replacement rent-geared-to-income units and 4,092 market units. Allenbury Gardens will contain 127 replacement townhouses and apartments and 907 market ownership units.

5. CREATE NEW AFFORDABLE RENTAL HOMES



Highlights 2014

589 King St. East
East Bayfront
180 Kenwood Avenue
Housing for Women Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking

Actions 2015

Open Door Initiative
200 Madison Avenue
Weston Cultural/ Community Hub and Live/Work Units

Highlights 2014

The City supported the creation of 256 new affordable rental homes through some \$6.8 million in federal/provincial Investment in Affordable Housing Program funding:

i) 589 King St. East

In August, Toronto Community Housing opened three new affordable rental buildings at 589 King St. East for seniors and families in the heart of a vibrant new neighbourhood in the West Don Lands. The new buildings are now home to 115 low-income families and 128 senior households.

ii) East Bayfront

In June, the City approved 80 new affordable rental homes in the Bayside development, part of the emerging East Bayfront neighbourhood. The project is a unique partnership between the City, developers Hines and Tridel and Toronto Artscape. Homes are expected to open in 2018.

iii) 180 Kenwood Avenue

In September, nine new affordable rental homes for lower-income aboriginal people opened at 180 Kenwood Avenue in partnership with Wigwamen Incorporated. A building was transformed from a four-plex into a three-storey apartment building with three bachelor, three one-bedroom and three two-bedroom units.

iii) Housing for Women Victims of Sexual Exploitation and Human Trafficking

The City approved up to \$850,000 for repairs to a vacant Toronto Community Housing home to provide secure, affordable housing for women fleeing sexual exploitation and human trafficking. Covenant House will operate the home and provide transitional housing for five to seven women with supports including individual case management, counselling, education and job training. Repairs are underway and the home is expected to open in winter 2015.

2015 Actions

i) Open Door Initiative

In April, Mayor Tory and City Housing Advocate Councillor Ana Bailão announced the Open Door initiative to increase affordable rental and ownership housing. Open Door includes measures to:

- Unlock opportunities on private, public and non-profit land
- Fast-track the planning-approval process
- Expand City financial incentives to reduce construction costs
- Challenge provincial and federal governments and private and non-profit developers to scale up their efforts.

A report with recommendations and potential pilots will be considered in November and December.

ii) 200 Madison Avenue

To launch the Open Door initiative, the City released a Request for Proposals to develop the surplus City-owned site at 200 Madison Avenue for new affordable rental housing. Selection of a proponent is expected in September.

iii) Weston Cultural/ Community Hub and Live/Work Units

In March, the City committed funding for the development of 26 affordable rental live/work units for artists in the Weston Cultural/ Community Hub. Part of the broader Weston revitalization, the hub will provide new community space programmed by Artscape for the neighbourhood. This unique partnership will redevelop a Toronto Parking Authority surface lot into a new private rental tower, with the affordable live/work units and the hub in an adjacent building. Construction is expected to begin in the summer of 2016.

6. HELP PEOPLE BUY AND STAY IN THEIR HOMES



Highlights 2014

Housing Improvement Programs
Home Ownership Assistance Program

Actions 2015

Toronto Community Housing Foundation Program
Official Plan Review

Highlights 2014

i) Housing Improvement Programs

Under the Toronto Renovates program the City delivered some \$3.1 million in federal/provincial funding for senior homeowners and people with disabilities. Some 380 lower-income households were assisted with repair and renovation funding, allowing them to stay in their homes and neighbourhoods. The funds enabled homeowners to make essential health and safety upgrades and accessibility modifications to their homes.

ii) Home Ownership Assistance Program

The City delivered almost 100 homeownership loans worth \$1.4 million through its Home Ownership Assistance Program (HOAP) – a dedicated revolving fund for affordable home ownership. The loans were provided to low- and moderate-income residents in partnership with Habitat for Humanity, Home Ownership Alternatives and Artscape.

In May, the City increased the average HOAP loan to \$25,000 from \$15,000 to better reflect the cost of City planning fees and development charges for non-profit groups providing affordable home ownership.

2015 Actions

i) Toronto Community Housing Foundation Program

Based on its success in Regent Park providing home ownership loans to residents, Toronto Community Housing will begin delivering its Foundation Program in other revitalization communities. Some \$1.5 million will be provided by the City from federal/provincial funds to help residents in redeveloping TCH communities make the move into home ownership.

ii) Official Plan Review

The City will update its Official Plan with a new definition of affordable ownership housing. The result of extensive public and stakeholder consultations, the new definition will enable an increase in affordable ownership units secured through the planning approvals process.

7. WORKING TOGETHER



Highlights 2014

Close the Housing Gap Campaign

Actions 2015

Queen's Park Lobby Day

Close the Housing Gap Rally

Close the Housing Gap Summit

Highlights 2014

i) Close the Housing Gap Campaign

The City, in partnership with Toronto Community Housing and other organizations, continued the *Close the Housing Gap*. It calls on the federal and provincial governments to match Toronto's investment of \$864 million in TCH capital repairs over 10 years and for:

- the federal government to stop withdrawing money for social housing and instead reinvest that money back into social housing capital repairs;
- the provincial government to treat social housing providers fairly when paying social assistance rent rates, and
- the federal and provincial governments to provide fully-funded, long-term housing strategies.

2015 Actions

i) Queen's Park Lobby Day

In March, the City, TCH and the Co-operative Housing Associations of Toronto and Canada - Ontario Region organized a *Close the Housing Gap* advocacy day at Queen's Park. More than 100 people attended Question Period and met with MPPs, while some 34 MPPs, including the finance and housing ministers, attended an evening reception.

ii) Close the Housing Gap Rally

Some 400 people packed the Council Chambers and a committee room at City Hall on April 28 for a *Close the Housing Gap* rally. Speakers shared their experiences, stories and suggestions for future campaign actions. The event was a partnership between the City, Toronto Community Housing and the Toronto and Canada Co-op Housing Federations.

iii) Close the Housing Gap Summit

More than 50 people came together April 29 to discuss next steps for the campaign and what needed to be done to help build and maintain affordable, social and co-op housing. Their comments and suggestions will assist in shaping the campaign in the months ahead.

CONCLUSION

Since 2010, Housing Opportunities Toronto has reliably guided the City's housing investments. This report shows that Toronto is working hard to solve homelessness, improve housing stability and address affordability needs across the housing spectrum.

In the fall of 2015, the City will hold consultations on a 5-Year Strategic Update of HOT. The update will refresh the HOT Plan with adjustments to existing actions and, potentially, new actions to help guide the City through the Plan's remaining five years.

Significant progress has been made but Toronto's financial resources are limited. The City has reached the mid-point of its 10-year housing plan and has fallen behind on its targets and objectives. To adequately address the housing needs of residents, the City needs increased and sustained federal and provincial funding, surplus land and tax incentives as well as new partnerships and commitments from public and private developers.

The City will report annually on progress under HOT and will continue to advocate to the federal and provincial governments to increase their support in meeting the housing needs of Torontonians.