

REPORT TITLE: Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan – 2020 Annual Update

FROM: Janice Sheehy, Commissioner of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION

That the report from the Commissioner of Human Services, titled “Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan – 2020 Annual Update”, be approved;

And further, that the subject report be forwarded to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as the Region of Peel’s annual and mandatory housing and homelessness plan update.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- On April 5th, 2018 Regional Council approved “*Home for All: Peel’s Housing and Homelessness Plan (PHHP) 2018-2028*”.
 - In February 2019, Council approved 5 actions from the plan for implementation in 2019-2020. Key accomplishments include:
 - Completed the Housing Master Plan and secured \$276 million from the federal government’s National Housing Strategy to complete 16 projects which will add 2,240 new affordable, supportive and emergency units to the housing stock in Peel over the next 8 years.
 - Created a new incentives program to encourage private and non-profit developers to build more affordable housing which will launch in early 2021.
 - Completed the Private Stock strategy and launched a new second units renovation assistance program.
 - Initiated a solutions lab to explore innovative housing options for seniors.
 - Conducted a census of housing and homelessness clients.
 - Began the implementation of the new needs-based service delivery philosophy, processes and tools to transform how subsidy and supports are provided to housing and homelessness clients.
 - Utilizing the new needs-based service delivery approach, 499 homeless individuals and families have become permanently housed between March and August 2020.
 - In addition, and in response to the pandemic, essential housing and homelessness services have been adapted and new isolation and recovery programs launched, which have successfully prevented the spread of COVID-19 amongst the homeless population in Peel.
 - Staff will continue to implement the proposed priorities for 2021-2022, bringing solutions forward to Regional Council that address the community’s most pressing housing needs.
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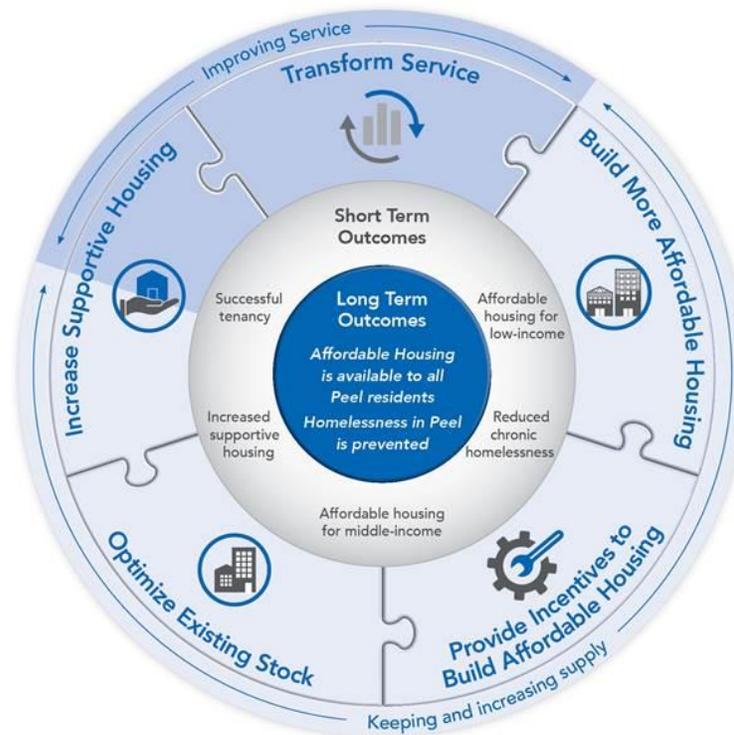
Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan – 2020 Annual Update

DISCUSSION

1. Background

As Service Manager for the Housing and Homeless system, the Region is responsible for working with partners to understand the need for emergency, transitional and affordable housing within the community and implementing a 10-year housing and homelessness plan to address those needs. On April 5th, 2018 Regional Council approved “Home for All: Peel’s Housing and Homelessness Plan (PHHP) 2018-2028 (“the plan”).

The 10-year plan includes five interconnected strategies to make affordable housing available to all Peel residents and to prevent homelessness. The plan aligns with the Region’s strategic plan and vision of “Community for Life” which focuses on creating a community where all can live, thrive and lead.



Implementation of the plan is well underway. This report provides Council with an update on progress to date.

2. Update on 2019-2020 Priority Actions

In February 2019, Council approved five actions from the plan for implementation in 2019-2020. Three of the actions focused on increasing the supply of affordable housing in Peel, while the remaining two set the foundation to transform how services are delivered to housing and homelessness clients.

Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan – 2020 Annual Update

a) Actions to Increase Supply of Affordable Housing

Peel's 10-year plan includes a variety of actions to increase the supply of affordable housing. In 2019-2020 the actions involved creating new programs and plans to build more housing on Region of Peel and Peel Housing Corporation sites, encourage non-profit and private sector developers to build more affordable rental units in Peel and better leverage existing private stock. These actions have secured the necessary funding, programs and plans to add thousands of new emergency, supportive and affordable rental housing units to the housing stock in Peel over the next several years.

i. Housing Master Plan

The Housing Master plan is a long-term infrastructure plan that will guide how the Region of Peel and Peel Housing Corporation assets and lands will be used to increase the supply of affordable rental, supportive and emergency units and beds over the next eight years. If fully funded and implemented, the plan will create 5,650 new affordable rental units including 226 supportive and 60 emergency shelter beds to the housing stock in Peel by 2034. Key accomplishments include:

- Completed the Housing Master Plan.
- Created an in principle \$1 billion dollar financing plan comprised of federal, provincial and Regional funds to build 2,240 units and shelter beds over the next 8 years.
- Secured and announced together with the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development a federal investment of \$276 million through the National Housing Strategy Co-Investment Fund. This represents the biggest single federal funding announcement ever made in Peel.
- Opened the Mayfield Seniors project in Caledon, adding 60 units to the affordable housing supply.
- Partnered with the Daniels Corporation on a project at 360 City Centre Drive with 174 new affordable rental units scheduled for completion and occupancy in Q1 2021.
- Started pre-construction activities for East Avenue and Brightwater sites in Mississauga.
- Acquired a property to relocate the Peel Family Shelter, which will allow further planning for the redevelopment of the Twin Pines site.

More information on the implementation of the Housing Master Plan is being provided in a companion report titled, "Region of Peel's Housing Master Plan – Annual Update 2020".

ii. Incentives Program Pilot

The Incentives Pilot Program is a new program, similar to the Open Door program in Toronto, designed with our local municipal partners, to create a new way for developers to work with the Region and our local partners to build more affordable housing that meets our community's needs. Envisioned to prevent/minimize ad hoc requests for development charge deferrals and designed to stack incentives from local and other levels of government, this program focuses on the creation of new affordable housing units for middle-income households. The pilot program was approved by Council in July 2020 and will launch in early 2021.

Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan – 2020 Annual Update

iii. Private Stock Strategy

Peel's first ever Private Stock strategy includes eight actions to better leverage existing private stock to increase the supply of affordable housing in Peel. This strategy is designed to supplement traditional housing development, providing relatively quicker and more cost-effective solutions. Key accomplishments include:

- Launched the My Home Second Unit Renovation Program in early October 2020.
- Initiated a Solutions Lab with community partner stakeholders to create new and diverse housing options for seniors in both rural and urban communities of the Region.

b) Actions to Transform Service to Housing and Homelessness Clients

In addition to increasing the supply of affordable housing, Peel's 10-year plan includes a strategy to transform how services are accessed and delivered to housing and homelessness clients.

i. Client Census

A census of housing and homelessness clients was completed over 2 months between December 2019 and January 2020. The census was conducted to better understand the demographic and socio-economic characteristics of our clients and the barriers that prevent them from becoming or remaining stably housed. This data is currently being analyzed and will be provided to Council in a future report. Information gathered through the census has been invaluable and will be used to design and implement improved service delivery processes.

ii. New Needs-Based Service Delivery Model

With extensive feedback from clients, staff and community partners, a new service delivery model was designed to improve access to housing subsidies, divert people from shelters, and better match supports to client needs, ultimately helping more vulnerable residents get and keep housing they can afford.

Several reports have been approved by Regional Council since mid-2019 that have enabled incremental changes to our client service delivery philosophy, policies and processes. This work has added shelter beds into the system for vulnerable women and aided 499 homeless individuals and families to become permanently housed between March and August 2020.

Key accomplishments include:

- Enhanced service levels for street outreach – the new service levels include 24/7 trained support staff on the street helpline and 2 mobile vans (instead of 1) providing 12 hours/day street outreach services as well as a new mobile health clinic. These enhanced service levels, originally planned for March 2020, but

Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan – 2020 Annual Update

delayed by the service provider due to staffing challenges experienced during the pandemic, will be in effect before the end of the year.

- Since June 2020, a targeted encampment housing pilot has been initiated where 16 individuals and families have been transitioned off the street into temporary hotel housing. Staff are actively working with these clients to secure permanent housing.
- Opened 8 new shelter beds for single women in Brampton.
- Opened a safe house for survivors of human trafficking.
- Introduced live answer for those requiring urgent housing supports to address immediate needs, divert clients from the wait list and from shelters.
- Secured a vendor for technology solution and commenced development for implementation in 2021 to replace existing failing legacy systems and better automate the delivery of housing services.
- Designed a coordinated access system with our community to improve the services and outcomes for the homeless in Peel. Implementation targeted for the first half of 2021.
- Introduced needs-based approach to some subsidy administration.
- Updated shelter standards and issued a Request for Proposal (RFP) for a new shelter operator contract.
- Implemented several new tools and process improvements to streamline services and remove redundancies, resulting in operational efficiencies. Examples include reallocating 2 staff from administrative work to direct client services, reducing processing application time for priority cases on the waitlist by 1-month, and reducing payment processing time for internal partners by approximately 1 week.

3. Impact of COVID-19

In addition to the above noted actions, the COVID-19 pandemic required staff to work quickly and collaboratively with our local municipal and community partners to adapt existing services while also designing and launching new services to protect and care for the homeless and other vulnerable populations.

The Region initiated a system response to protect the community's most vulnerable population by implementing a range of programs and protocols aimed at preventing and managing the spread of COVID-19 in Peel's homeless shelters, transitional housing and street outreach program. The Region's COVID-19 Homeless Response Program addresses a gap in pandemic planning for the homeless that includes: screening and testing, education on the streets, personal protective equipment, primary care supports, enhanced cleaning of facilities, physical distancing measures in shelters, dedicated transportation for symptomatic individuals, and the use of hotels to reduce shelter occupancy and ensure appropriate physical distancing.

Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan – 2020 Annual Update

With the support of our community partners and emergency funds provided by the federal and provincial governments, shelter occupancy within Regional shelters was reduced to approximately 50 per cent at each site to allow for physical distancing through the use of hotels. Enhanced programs and supports were put in place to provide critical services throughout the pandemic. Additional drop-in centres for street homeless clients were opened, portable washrooms and showers were procured, expanded outreach services were initiated, cleaning, linen and food services were funded for our non-Regional housing partners, and isolation and recovery programs were put in place for the homeless who needed to self-isolate or receive care after a positive COVID-19 test result.

As a result of these efforts, the spread of COVID-19 virus throughout the homeless population Peel has been mitigated and only 18 clients have tested positive and required the medical services provided through the recovery program.

4. Proposed Priorities 2021 – 2022

In order to continue or complete work that began in 2019-2020, while also adapting and responding to emerging needs, staff will implement the following priorities in 2021-2022.

a) Work Already Underway

- Open 360 City Centre Drive, Mississauga (174 units);
- Relocate the Peel Family Shelter to the new site;
- Open the transitional house for survivors of human trafficking;
- Continue to implement these projects within the Housing Master Plan:
 - East Avenue, Mississauga (156 units)
 - Brightwater project, Mississauga (150 units)
 - Chelsea Gardens, Brampton (200 units)
 - Relocation of the Youth Shelter to a Permanent site, Brampton (40 beds)
- Launch the Incentives Pilot Program;
- Complete the Solutions Lab project to identify new affordable housing options for seniors;
- Continue to work with community partners to improve and coordinate how housing subsidies and supports are accessed and delivered to clients;
- Automate key service delivery and management processes; and,
- Continue to advocate to the federal and provincial governments to secure long-term funding to support the initial as well as the full implementation of the Housing Master Plan
- Improve public education and outreach.

b) New Initiatives

- Launch a new Private Landlord Engagement Program;
- Create a Supportive Housing Strategy for Peel;
- Partner with health services to create a proposal and secure funding for improved crisis and longer-term mental health and addictions supports for the homeless and the precariously housed;
- Work with the province and community housing providers to retain units in the system at end of mortgage;

Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan – 2020 Annual Update

- Formalize policy and procedures and initiate other options regarding homeless encampments, and;
- Explore the need for ‘wet’ shelters, safe injection sites, improved harm reduction options for the homeless.

RISK CONSIDERATIONS

The implementation of Peel’s 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan is well underway. New policies and programs have been created and funding secured to enable improved housing outcomes over the long-term.

At the same time, demand for housing and homelessness services continues to increase, and the current gaps in the system have become exacerbated as a result of the pandemic. Addressing our community’s housing needs requires increased and ongoing funding from both the federal and provincial governments, as well as the ongoing support and collaboration with our local municipal and community partners.

Advocacy will continue to be essential for success.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

This report has no financial implications. Staff will bring reports forward throughout 2021-2022 as the priority actions are completed. The financial implications of implementing these actions will be addressed in these reports and incorporated into future budget requests as required. Staff anticipate submitting a capital request through the 2021 budget process to enable the continued implementation of new technology.

CONCLUSION

Peel’s 10-year Housing and Homelessness plan is the community’s strategic roadmap to help more Peel residents get and keep housing they can afford. This report provides Council with an update on the progress made since the plan was approved by Council in April 2018. The report also seeks Council approval for proposed priorities for 2021-2022.

While significant progress has been made to date, service gaps remain which have only been exacerbated as a result of the pandemic. Adequately addressing the housing needs of Peel’s residents requires increased and ongoing funding from both the federal and provincial governments. As such, advocacy will continue to be important to Peel’s success.

Staff will continue to bring solutions forward to Regional Council that address the community’s most pressing housing needs, optimizing the return on the Region’s investment in affordable housing.

For further information regarding this report, please contact Aileen Baird, Director, Housing Services, ext. 1898, aileen.baird@peelregion.ca.

Authored By: Laura Tribble, Advisor, Housing Services

Peel Housing and Homelessness Plan – 2020 Annual Update

Reviewed and/or approved in workflow by:

Department Commissioner and Division Director.

Final approval is by the Chief Administrative Officer.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nancy Polsinelli". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'N' and a distinct 'P'.

N. Polsinelli, Interim Chief Administrative Officer