



Housing Initiatives Across Durham Region

Presentation to Committee of the Whole
September 13, 2023

Elaine Baxter-Trahair, Chief Administrative Officer
Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou, Commissioner, Social Services
Jason Hunt, Regional Solicitor & Director, Legal Services

A Vision for Housing in Durham Region

- Under the [Master Housing Strategy](#), the Region is committed to exploring all opportunities to support the delivery of affordable, suitable and sustainable housing for all people in Durham



Revitalization of the Regionally owned **Durham Regional Local Housing Corporation (DRLHC)** portfolio, including the development of an evidence-based strategy for managing the DRLHC portfolio that addresses maintenance, revitalization, regeneration (redevelopment) and disposal across the portfolio.



Support for the preservation and modernization of **community housing**, including opportunities for more flexible partnerships and support for capital needs.



Review of **public surplus lands** and their potential social and community benefits.



Review and modernization of the homelessness and emergency shelter system to reduce **chronic homelessness to zero**.



New **partnerships and incentives** for the provision of affordable, community, supportive and transitional housing, including the development of a **Regional Community Improvement Plan (CIP)**.

Community Needs



In 2023, 331 individuals are experiencing homelessness, compared to 134 in 2017.

67%

A significant increase in people experiencing unsheltered homelessness over the past year.



More people are experiencing homelessness across Durham Region.

Low-Income

Durham Region has an estimated 45,800 residents (6.6%) living with low income, defined as \$26,570 after tax for an individual and \$53,1403 for a family of four.

Social Assistance

As of January 2023, the number of Ontario Works (OW) recipients in Durham was 12,835. The number of Ontario Disability Support Programs (ODSP) recipients was 19,952.



Since 2018, the current combined maximum amount for basic needs and shelter for a single OW recipient is **\$733/month**.

Average rent in Durham Region for a one-bedroom apartment: **\$1731/month**.

Two-bedroom apartment: **\$2123/month**.

People experiencing homelessness have varied, complex needs and require multifaceted supports including mental and physical health, food security, newcomer supports, child care, employment, social supports etc.



In 2021, 54% of people experiencing homelessness in Durham had high acuity or high needs. This increased to 64% in 2022.

“We don’t get to approve who buys the house across the street from us, and we don’t get to choose our neighbours” Barbara Hall, Ontario Human Rights Commission (OHRC)

- Planning does not include decisions about types of people
- Until 1950s, deed could restrict sale based on race or religion
- Today, planning must be practiced “in a manner that is consistent with the Ontario Human Rights Code and the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms” (Planning Act, Provincial Policy Statement)
- “The device of zoning by reference to the relationship of occupants rather than the use of the building is one which is ultra vires of the municipality” (Supreme Court of Canada)

Ontario Human Rights Code & Housing

- The Code prohibits discrimination in housing
 - race, religion, sexual orientation, family status, disability or receipt of public assistance
- Constitutional - primacy over provincial / municipal powers
- Councillors bound by the Code and can be found in violation

“Opposition to housing projects based on stereotypes or prejudice towards the people who will live in them can be a violation of people’s rights to be free from discrimination in housing – which means it can be against the law.”

Ontario Human Rights Commission

Housing Initiatives in Durham Region

- Over 650 units of affordable housing projects are under development:

Beaverton Supportive Housing

Ritson Road School

- redevelopment of former school site (Oshawa)

Durham Region Local Housing Corporation

- redevelopment of two sites (Oshawa)

At Home Incentive Program (AHIP) sites

- two sites (Oshawa, Whitby)

- new call for applications to be released in fall 2023

Federally and Provincially funded housing projects

- In addition, the Region continues to partner and invest in existing Community Housing stock and in transitional housing opportunities (e.g., 1635 Dundas)
- Engagement on the 2024-2034 At Home in Durham Housing Plan to commence soon



Project update: Beaverton Supportive Housing

Beaverton Supportive Housing

Current status:

- All modules have been assembled on site
- Project completion expected November-December 2023
- Contract with a 24/7 Operator is in progress

Summary of engagement:

- Regular meetings continue with the Beaverton Community Liaison Committee
 - The Committee will meet with the Operator to help identify how the community can support site operations
- Meeting held on August 31, 2023, with Lakeview Manor Resident Family Council to discuss their concerns and how they can help support the project
- Working with the Community Liaison Committee, tours of the building will take place by invitation prior to residents moving in (a virtual tour will be made available)

300 Ritson
Road South
Oshawa



Ritson School Project

Durham.ca/RitsonSchool



Project update: Ritson School



Ritson School

Current status:

- Phase 2 Environmental Site Assessment is in progress
- Preliminary structural assessment is complete
 - Major structural modifications and repairs are required due to the building's age and deterioration
- Feasibility analysis is underway, completion expected late fall 2023-early winter 2024

Engagement plan:

- Workshops with Regional staff, community members and business owners took place over June-August 2023
- Community Needs Assessment survey open June 14-August 15, 2023
- Opportunities for additional feedback, including Regionally-hosted informal community conversations in fall 2023-winter 2024



Ritson School

Next steps:

- Short videos highlighting community needs to be released in fall 2023
- On-site programming to be determined
- Conceptual site master plan options to be developed
- Report to Regional Council expected in spring 2024



Malaga Road
Redevelopment
Area

Valencia Rd

Oxford St

Cordova
Park

Cordova Rd

Cordova
Valley
Park

Malaga Rd

Oshawa
Creek



Project update: Durham Region Local Housing Corporation (DRLHC) Sites

Valley
Community
Centre



DRLHC Sites

Current status:

- Two DRLHC properties identified for redevelopment: Malaga Road and Christine Crescent, Oshawa

Engagement plan:

- Project team and vision introduced to residents and to the surrounding community on August 28, 2023
- [Project website](#) and e-mail is active and has received inquiries
- Postcards sharing information about the redevelopment have been mailed to the neighbouring community

Next steps:

- Further develop a community engagement plan
- Begin formal design and development process with the community



Project update: 1635 Dundas

1635 Dundas

Council direction:

- The priority is to ensure the facility is ready to provide low-barrier shelter services to approximately 45 individuals to transition indoors this fall, while the community consultation and engagement process is underway
- The first steps include deep cleaning and disinfection of equipment and fixtures, painting rooms and other spaces, completing floor repairs, installing fencing and implementing community planning measures
- Ongoing community engagement and consultation will help shape a longer-term vision for the facility which will lead to a comprehensive renovation/retrofit plan

Current status:

- Repair work and building code upgrades are ongoing
 - Community and partner feedback will inform the overall plan for the building

Engagement Plan

Phase	Period	Activities
1	August-September 2023	a) Use a variety of communications to share project information with the community, including: news releases, project website, social media, newspaper ads, posters and in-person postcards b) Host an in-person engagement session (August 30) to seek input on future use c) Launch a digital survey (August 30-September 27) on <u>the project website</u> to seek input on future use
2	October-November 2023	a) Use a variety of communications to share project information with the community, including: news releases, project website, newspaper ads and social media b) Host a Town Hall (October 3) to present a summary of community feedback to community members c) Share summary of community feedback on <u>the project website</u> d) Establish a Community Advisory Committee: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Interested parties will receive Terms of Reference and other engagement opportunities during the week of October 2; first meeting to be held in October
3	January 2024	a) Present longer-term vision to Regional Council in conjunction with annual budget process
4	2024-2026	a) Create opportunities for ongoing dialogue with community



Communications

Date	Activity
August 3	Launched project website: yourdurham.ca/helpaddresshomelessness
August 4-6	Staff canvassed neighbourhood – postcards distributed
August 10-16	Social media posts
August 23-29	Metroland ads (Whitby this Week)
August 24	Staff canvassed neighbourhood – postcards distributed Signs next to community flyers
August 25	Reminder email to Council
August 28-29	Metroland digital takeover (Whitby this week)
August 29-30	Social media posts
September 1-27	Digital and print communications promoting digital survey
September 12- October 3	Digital and print communications promoting engagement session

In-Person Engagement Session

Summary:

- August 30, 5:00 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. at the Centennial Building, Whitby
- Venue reached capacity, resulting in a line outside the building
 - Future sessions will be held at facilities with additional capacity
- Strong opinions were voiced at the engagement session
- Some residents' behaviour was inappropriate
 - De-escalation led to many productive conversations
- Drop-in format resulted in hundreds of individual pieces of feedback
 - Format will be adjusted according to the objectives of the engagement

Next steps

- Ongoing opportunities for engagement through the virtual survey open on [the project website](#)
- Town Hall to be hosted by the Region on October 3, 2023
- Community Advisory Committee to be announced in early October and a meeting scheduled for mid-to-late October

Key System Needs

- Lack of a daytime program for the homeless population and individuals at risk of homelessness
- Members of the 2SLGBTQI+ community, particularly those who are victims of human trafficking, encounter limited viable options when they face the challenge of homelessness
- Homeless individuals are being discharged from hospitals without adequate post-hospital care due to the limited availability of shelter beds
- Seniors who have specific needs and have self-identified as homeless are unable to find suitable shelter beds due to a lack of availability
- Victims of human trafficking, refugees and asylum seekers are currently being supported in hotels/motels rather than shelters, as there is a shortage of shelter beds



[durham.ca](https://www.durham.ca)

@RegionofDurham

