June 10, 2010

Dear Friends:

On behalf of the City of London and the Council Housing Leadership Committee, we are pleased to share with you the London Community Housing Strategy. As a municipality, one of our key challenges is to help ensure we meet the housing needs of all our citizens, including children and youth, seniors, single persons, couples, families and households with special needs.

To this end, the Affordable Housing Task Force established a vision of 'A City of London where all members of the community have access to housing that is safe, secure and suitable to their needs and ability to pay'. Our London Community Housing Strategy is based on this vision, with an emphasis on the whole continuum of housing - from streets and shelters to homeownership, and everything in between.

We also recognize the need to partner with others to achieve our goals, including the building and development industry, the rental sector, other orders of government, community and support agencies and ratepayers.

The City of London is committed to ensuring our housing investments and partnerships enhance the rental and ownership market, as well as meet the needs of households through community engagement, programs, advocacy, and service innovations.

Thank you for your input on this document. Together, we will create made-in-London solutions, which include high quality, integrated housing options to complement our community's quality of life.

Sincerely,

Anne Marie DeCicco-Best
Mayor

Councillor Susan Eagle, Chair
Council Housing Leadership Committee
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

London Community Housing Strategy Acknowledgements

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London Development Institute Stephen Janes/Jim Kennedy
London Property Management Association Kim Walker
London Homeless Coalition Gordon Russell
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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Overview

The London Community Housing Strategy (LCHS) provides a detailed framework for how the City of London will continue to aspire to its housing vision by December 31, 2015.

During the development of the LCHS, it became very clear that the London community is aligned in its sense of a desired future state. Consultations and interviews with homeless and housing service providers, tenants, people with lived experience, the business community, home builders, developers, and City staff often focused on similar areas of attention. There is a shared interest across London in achieving the vision.

The LCHS continues work that began more than a decade ago with the Affordable Housing Task Force and it builds upon a number of successful, innovative local programs and initiatives such as Hostels to Homes, London CARES, and the No Fixed Address Demonstration Project. These linkages are explained more fully in the complete LCHS report.

The LCHS recognizes the solid track-record in London's affordable housing development with 939 units created from 2006 to 2010 through investments by the municipal, provincial and federal governments, as well as private equity and mortgages.

By targeting 1,000 more affordable housing units over the next 5 years within this strategy, the City is aligning its resources behind an evidence-based and evidence-informed housing strategy with solutions designed to address the needs of the people of London today and in the years to come.

The target of 1,000 housing units is a minimum. It is achievable and supported by the data. The sub-target groups within the 1,000 units reflect the priority needs of those Londoners with very low-income who currently have the most difficulty accessing affordable housing.

By addressing the priority needs of these groups, the entire spectrum of homelessness to home ownership in the community is positively impacted. The strategy supports affordable housing where it is needed most, which then also contributes to the broader community vitality and economic prosperity outcomes for the City.

The LCHS Process

The process of developing the London Community Housing Strategy (LCHS) was both speedy and very thorough. Fifty-one representatives from private and non-profit organizations responded to a comprehensive online survey and over 175 people attended 3-hour community consultations and open houses that were facilitated throughout the City. Over 7,000 pages of data and relevant literature were reviewed. Key informant and stakeholder interviews were conducted with more than 120 people. Informed by the perspectives of a range of Londoners, the Council Housing Leadership Committee, a City Steering Committee and a Community Reference Group, the LCHS process provided multiple opportunities for input, feedback and validation.
The timing is perfect for the strategy and reinforces London's leadership in seizing the opportunity to set out its future direction for affordable housing. As new opportunities emerge from the Provincial Municipal Fiscal Service Delivery Review, the Province’s Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy, the Federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy, and the growing calls for integrated national and provincial housing strategies, there is also increased movement towards more consolidated housing and homeless programs at a local level based on the needs and outcomes of the community. The LCHS assures that London is prepared to respond proactively to any provincial and federal initiatives.

Flexibility is one of the key features of this strategy. Adjustments can be made every 18-24 months to targets, recommendations or specific actions in response to changing circumstances within the City or with the other orders of government. Adjustments will remain linked to the broader objectives of the Strategy throughout the next 5 years.

The Continuum of Housing

The LCHS report reflects three integrated components in the LCHS that address the different ways of looking at housing continuums –

1. Life Cycle (youth to seniors);
2. Needs & Supports (the range of interventions and housing types); and
3. Types of Accommodation (various housing forms).

These are the lenses through which the LCHS should be viewed relative to the continuum. Doing so provides a three dimensional and very human picture for the City. The lenses also help guide the resources needed to bring the strategy to life.

This continuum approach to the LCHS is one that supports and promotes a diverse range of services and types of housing that respects the changing needs of individuals and families throughout changing life circumstances and needs.

By recognizing needs and solutions along these multiple continuums, the LCHS is able to address the needs of individuals while achieving multiple outcomes.

As an example, an affordable housing solution that provides safe accommodation to a young female victim of violence with transitional supports will address needs along all three continuums within one appropriately targeted initiative.
The Strategy

The London Community Housing Strategy is a comprehensive continuum of housing solutions based on 5 key areas of focus:

1. Strong System Design;
2. Evidence Based and Integrated Programs and Services;
3. Political Will and Commitment;
4. Focused, Measurable, and Targeted Deliverables; and
5. Strong and Responsive Administration.

Together, these areas of focus harness the accumulated input into the strategy, including literature reviews, data analysis, local program and services reviews, and the direct participation from stakeholders, service users, and the London community at large.

Each of the areas of focus in the strategy is also guided by a goal statement, a strategic approach, and clear recommendations which align together to create an integrated 5 year work plan with measurable outcomes.

Targets

One key set of measurable outcomes is the revised affordable housing target for the next 5 years of the LCHS plan. In total, the LCHS recommends the development of 1,000 new housing units over the 5 year term. As previously noted, these units are broken down into sub-targets which reflect the more specific needs and current gaps.

Considerable focus of the strategy will be placed on housing targets over the next 5 years. Although not all municipalities establish a target based approach to new affordable housing developments, London has a track record of setting challenging but achievable targets and working toward their development.

It is important to note that the strategy is more complex and aggressive than the development of these 1,000 housing units. There are a number of interdependent initiatives that require attention and that guide the work toward this target.

London’s targets are more ambitious than those in many other large communities, but more notably, the targets coexist within a strategy aimed at creating a service environment that addresses gaps, recognizes local strengths, and is flexible during the course of implementation.

As an example, the appropriate access to the new targets relies on actions such as reviewing and making improvements to the social housing waiting list in order to better capture and understand the number and service needs of persons who are homeless in London.

The LCHS is a "Made in London" strategy. London’s target of 1,000 units by December 31, 2015 is strong, realistic and achievable relative to the size of the City population. It takes into account local conditions across key indicators. It reflects the most urgent and pressing needs within the community and the needs for the community to be directly and indirectly involved in solutions.
London's development of an evidence-based strategy that considers the City's unique circumstances as well as best practices keeps the City on the path to the Vision and achieving the 5-year targets.

**Breaking Down the 1,000 Unit Target**

The LCHS aims to serve an inclusive range of groups identified within the strategy with housing, funding allocations, and service considerations for each group.

These sub-targets are another unique feature of the LCHS that recognize that there are clear sub-populations of individuals and families with specific needs that cannot be overlooked.

While it is possible to meet multiple, co-occurring objectives within any new development—for example, housing prioritized for youth who are lone-parent families with rents less than $550 per month—the sub-targets frame the conversation of need and response.

One of the unique sub-targets pertains to better meeting the housing needs of victims of domestic violence. Responding to concerns of saturation within existing social housing and safety concerns for victims, this novel approach will allow victims to better integrate elsewhere within the community. While this will require changes on the part of the Province, it is important advocacy for the City with the intent of affecting change.

Another objective within the sub-targets is creating opportunity for households that have succeeded in affordable rental housing to be in a position to consider home ownership opportunities. This “flow” will release a rental unit for another household seeking accommodation.

**Facts Influencing the Targets & Sub-Targets**

The overall target of 1,000 represents an increase of 61 units compared to what was achieved between 2006 and 2010. Achieving the 939 units from 2006 to 2010 exhausted the City’s financial allocation from the provincial and federal governments.

While the target of 1,000 is less than the target of 1,200 set out in the 2005 Affordable Housing Strategy, it is not a reflection on less need but rather a reflection on changed need. Urgent focus needs to be placed on those people who have been chronically underserved by the housing market and with exceptionally acute financial issues. These current service gaps contribute to the escalating costs of emergency services associated with health, justice, shelter, and other homeless programs.

As an example, increased funding allocation to affordable new housing development upfront will result in lower mortgage and operating costs, allowing for rental rates that are more affordable to those individuals and families living below even the current affordable housing rates.
Other groups are also the focus of sub-targets as a result of changed needs. For example, the increase in lone-parent families with affordability problems requires attention. The increase of Aboriginal people coming to the City requires an appropriate affordable housing response that continues to engage First Nations service providers, other orders of government, service users, and others in solutions.

By examining a range of indicators and measures while taking into account the top priorities that will yield greatest impact on the overall opportunities across the continuum, the 1,000 target and sub-targets allows the City – in its stewardship of provincial and federal funds, as well as the City’s annual $2 M contribution, to invest in change and spend on impact. This is a targeted, strategic approach to investment. It appreciates the fact that not all needs are equal.

The Investment & Financial Implications

The positive impact of the municipal investment in London cannot be underestimated as a large volume of the impressive achievements over the past 10 years were leveraged through municipal funding. Furthermore, it is the municipal investment that assists in raising London’s profile and making it possible to reframe the dialogue with other orders of government.

The strategic alignment of funding across all orders of government as well as private equity and mortgages has made development possible. On a go-forward basis that same sort of synergy is going to be necessary. It is through building on that momentum that the results envisioned in the LCHS will be possible.

The LCHS is designed to allow for flexibility for 250 units in how they will be realized – rent supplements/subsidies, rental housing construction or acquisition, home ownership dwellings or more supportive housing. This positions the City to seize opportunities through other programs and funding as it emerges, while balancing with new stock creation and acquisition.

As a result of that flexibility, the Strategy can outline orders of magnitude of investment, but the Strategy is limited in its ability to provide a precise measure. In addition, there are many variables that need to be factored into each and every development—the investment will not be the same time over time, i.e., size of units, whether land is purchased, and choice of building materials all influence costs.

When examining the orders of magnitude in the examples used in the presentations to Council (See Appendix E), it is important not to consider the numbers as absolutes. For example, the rate of purchase price and down-payment on home ownership impacts affordability. In rental acquisition or construction, the investment per unit is not going to be $165,000 in all opportunities, but certainly investments of greater than $140,000 per unit will increase affordability and investments in the range of $165,000 to $185,000 per unit are more likely going to result in the needs of London’s most disadvantaged residents being met.

40% (280) - of the rental units created or acquired, receiving rent supplements/subsidies or affordable homeownership swellings will be prioritized for households at the 30th percentile of incomes or lower within London

300 - units will be supportive or alternative housing and funded by the Province

70 - units, two or more bedrooms, with at least 23 of these $550 or less

305 - units, bachelor or one-bedroom, with at least 102 of these $400 or less

5% (35) - of the rental units created or acquired will be interim or transitional housing for people who are homeless, or people who were homeless and moved into housing but need to be re-housed

5% (35) - will be prioritized for new comers, immigrants or refugees

10% (70) - will be prioritized for Aboriginal specific housing
A Decade in Review

Over the past decade, London has experienced a “coming of age” related to homelessness and housing services as well as a number of other unique social policy initiatives. The post-devolution reality meant that the City has had to create appropriate policies, programs, and innovations to address the new reality.

These initiatives have flourished since devolution and the City has demonstrated its ability to draw upon its own strength-based approaches to better meet the housing needs of Londoners.

Decade + in Review

The impact and value of the Affordable Housing Task force from the late 90s cannot be underestimated. It set forth a vision and direction that holds true today. It is the momentum generated since then that places the target of 1,000 affordable housing units into the appropriate context.
Service Integration and Alignment

Many recent initiatives in London, especially those which champion shared interests across housing, social, health, and justice sectors, have demonstrated the City’s leadership, the community’s readiness, and the person focused approach to local solutions.

Within the City, much work has been done by housing and social program areas; however, these areas recognize that more is still required in order to functionally align services with an outcome-based focus. Programs and services must be community focused, evidence-based, and integrated in order to deliver sustainable housing outcomes.

The LCHS calls on the City to continue efforts to coordinate services and outcomes – especially those supporting persons with the deepest needs. This will both require and result in stronger integration across policy and program objectives.

The approach to alignment of research, programs, services, and innovations is one that builds upon evidence-based outcomes that can be replicated and enhanced. Building upon that which is working enhances the City’s ability to meet its strategic priorities of community vitality and economic prosperity.

Some Unique Elements of the Strategy

There have been valuable discussions throughout the consultation and validation process that reflect a need to summarize some recommendations within the LCHS report.

Each recommendation must first be understood in its connection to the broad theme. The following three examples reflect the integrated nature of the recommendations:

**Example #1: Provide Clearer Policy direction on Planning Matters**

Many recommendations, such as those associated with inclusionary zoning, are related to existing political initiatives and advocacy.

In the example of inclusionary zoning, it is also important to note that the recommendations may be based on existing local positions and are almost always intended to be understood within a continuum of strategies.

As such, the LCHS does not rely on inclusionary zoning as a mechanism for achieving affordability targets but rather recognizes that, as of June 2010, the City has a position of support in principle regarding inclusionary zoning noting that the Provincial Bill 198 is not yet legislation. That is, it is still without any details of future tools and instruments of implementation that municipalities will require.

The LCHS acknowledges that London is a ready and capable community that must continue to participate proactively in the ongoing discussion of proposed legislative changes, such as inclusionary zoning, to ensure they meet the continued unique interests of healthy mixed income/mixed housing neighbourhoods.
Example #2: Strengthen the Capacity of Housing Providers (Recommendation 3.3)

Landlords are valued and critical partners who will help the City achieve the targets and this is noted several times in this Strategy.

During the process of information gathering for the Strategy, there were several tenants who reported that they had dysfunctional relationships with their landlords and vice versa. There were also landlords who were recognized for their compassion and role in making housing safe and affordable.

It is important to recognize the fact that multi-unit residential living is the locus of community for many Londoners and that the early resolution to landlord and tenant issues in a mutually satisfactory manner is essential to creating stable housing for persons living in vulnerable conditions. These skills of negotiated resolution and tenant management contribute to housing security and the vitality of the community.

As in the first example, these matters would require Provincial advocacy and coordinated community based discussion.

Example #3: Review Shelter System (Recommendation 2.3 and 2.4)

The LCHS report echoes comments made within the emergency shelter community for changes and services that reduce reliance on their services.

The recommended plan to reduce shelter beds in London by 15% over the next 5 years will require ongoing work that will be started within the revised community plan on homelessness.

The intent of the LCHS is not to reduce shelter beds and manage impact but rather engage all orders of government and service providers in a comprehensive plan to create appropriate permanent housing solutions for homeless Londoners who chronically rely on the shelter system. Building on the great work of Hostels to Homes and the No Fixed Address pilots, London must continue to advocate with the other orders of government for supportive housing options for those with complex health issues and new funding solutions to support the transformation of emergency shelters back into a strong and short term safety net for those requiring their services.

The reduction in shelter beds must be a consequence of success in these other areas of the strategy. Ending homelessness remains important work and a strong goal. A national homelessness and housing strategy remains an essential and still outstanding element in this work across Canada.

Together, these examples highlight the manner in which recommendations must be understood within the context of the associated theme and carefully implemented together with stakeholders.
**Ongoing Strategy Reviews and Adjustments**

Since the needs of the community can shift and new funding and/or program opportunities can be unveiled by the Province within the next 5 years, the LCHS includes a mechanism for reviewing the targets and priorities every 18-24 months while maintaining the overall integrity of the strategy. It is the City’s intent—whenever possible—to take advantage of every opportunity during the next 5 years to exceed the target.

The final strategy consists of prioritized objectives to achieve pre-determined results based upon the best available data and evidence as of June 2010. It is a strength-based, community informed, rigorously researched and comprehensive plan with woven interdependencies throughout the overall approach.

Given the challenges of undertaking such an important plan, it is natural that some elements of the strategy and its recommendations may change over the course of its 5 year term.

The approved LCHS will introduce a Report Card that will reflect the objectives and focus of attention of the strategy. The progress relative to the overall strategy will be measured and reported out at regular intervals.

**Next Steps**

The next 5 years will bring greater alignment and responsiveness by the City administration. Changes will be made to system design as well as to programs and services to better meet the needs of Londoners across the entire housing continuum.

The City will assert its position as a mature and responsible order of government and continue to demonstrate its political will by working with other orders of government, municipalities within the Region, and with cities of similar size in Ontario to bolster its position as a leader—not just another stakeholder.

Upon Municipal Council approval, the City in conjunction with the housing consultants will begin a comprehensive exercise in developing a report card format, creating implementation plans, and beginning work with the community on a revised Community Plan on Homelessness.

The LCHS will deliver—over the next 5 years to meet the needs of the young and the old, lone-parents, two-parents, singles, and families.

The LCHS promotes a blend of supportive housing, affordable rental through new construction and acquisition, home ownership dwellings, and the flexibility for the City to seize opportunities related to available rent supplement programs in order to achieve the affordable housing targets.

The London Community Housing Strategy positions the City in its leadership role as a caring compassionate place to live and work.
THEME 1

**STRONG SYSTEM DESIGN**

**Goal:** A London based approach to integrating homelessness and housing initiatives with stronger central administration

**Approach:** ORGANIZATIONAL CHANGE FOR EFFECTIVE STRATEGIC IMPLEMENTATION

**Strategic Objectives:**
1.1 Focus on housing and homelessness together.
1.2 Central administration within the City for housing and homelessness change initiatives.
1.3 Decentralize Ontario Works office.
1.4 Regional identity.

THEME 2

**EVIDENCE BASED & INTEGRATED PROGRAMS & SERVICES**

**Goal:** Alignment and development of outcome based permanent solutions to homelessness

**Approach:** FOCUS ON PERMANENT SOLUTIONS TO HOMELESSNESS

**Strategic Objectives:**
2.1 Review London CAReS
2.2 Target H2H style program
2.3 Reduce shelter use and beds
2.4 Review shelter system and services
2.5 Supports to people once housed
2.6 Invest in prevention strategies
2.7 Align funding to priorities and needs
2.8 Consider Supported Employment
2.9 Shared Client Information System
2.10 Outcome based funding
2.11 Determine homeless numbers/needs
2.12 Community Plan on Homelessness
THEME 3 POLITICAL WILL AND COMMITMENT

Goal: Establish London as an equal partner with other orders of government

Approach: WORKING WITH OTHER ORDERS OF GOVERNMENT

Strategic Objectives:
3.1 Increase London Profile
3.2 Increase income supports
3.3 Strengthen capacity of housing providers
3.4 Improve discharge planning/shelter diversion
3.5 Increase investment in services to newcomers
3.6 Expand responses for Aboriginal people
3.7 Adjust shelter allowance and rent/utility scales
3.8 Continue Federal investment in social housing
3.9 Permit social housing to borrow against equity
3.10 Provide new grants to maintain stock
3.11 Continue Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program
3.12 Provide additional rent subsidies and supplements
3.13 Clearer policy direction on related Planning matters
3.14 Cost recovery from programs to new housing options
3.15 Amend Special Priority Policy and local priority rules
3.16 Acquire property from all orders of government
THEME 4  FOCUSED, MEASURABLE, & TARGETED DELIVERABLES

Goal: 1000 new affordable housing units throughout London (a mix of supplements, existing, built form, new units, and specialized units) to begin filling priority gaps within the housing continuum

Approach: FUTURE DEVELOPMENT TARGETS & CONSIDERATIONS FOR EXISTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING STOCK

Strategic Objectives:

4.1 Continue to redefine and clarify civic administration roles
4.2 Build capacity amongst property managers
4.3 Target for the City of London (700 Units)
4.4 Supportive housing for other orders of government (300)
4.5 Create mix within larger scale redevelopments
4.6 Mix throughout the City
4.7 Embrace environmental stewardship
4.8 Maintain existing stock (public and private)
4.9 Examine arterial economic development opportunities
4.10 Improve the waiting list for subsidized housing
4.11 Mayor’s Update on LCHS every 18 to 24 months
THEME 5  STRONG & RESPONSIVE ADMINISTRATION

Goal: Aligning research, community engagement, programs, and service innovations to create a housing continuum that builds Community Vitality and Economic Prosperity in London

Approach: CONTINUATION OF POLICIES AND PROGRAMS THAT HOLD PROMISE

Strategic Objectives:

5.1 Ensure quality housing that meets tenant needs
5.2 Responsive and innovative special Ontario Works teams
5.3 Maintain annual City investment in affordable housing
5.4 Continue building the City’s National and Provincial profile
5.5 Housing and Social and Community Support Services Divisions working to achieve mutual objectives