London Community Housing Strategy (LCHS)
Questions and Answers

**What is London’s Community Housing Strategy?**
London’s Community Housing Strategy provides direction about how the City can meet the range of housing needs for different populations and their unique needs. It examines everything from emergency shelters to home ownership – and everything in between.

The two cornerstones of the Strategy are an updated Affordable Housing Strategy and an updated Community Plan on Homelessness.

The strategy examines successes and gaps in current housing and service delivery and builds upon community strengths. It used a consultative approach to get community input into the Strategy, and relied on evidence-based and evidence-informed practices from other jurisdictions that are applicable to the London context.

**What are all of the elements of a Community Housing Strategy?**
There are eight elements to London’s Community Housing Strategy:

1. Homelessness to Housing Strategy Statement
2. Inventory of Local Initiatives and Services
3. Literature and Data Analysis Review
4. Updated Affordable Housing Strategy
5. Initial Housing Continuum Report Card
6. Prioritized List of Next Steps and Related Component Policies and Plans
7. Revised Community Plan on Homelessness
8. Updated Strategy, Report Card and Sustainability

**What will be the outcomes of the Community Housing Strategy?**
The Strategy will:

- Identify community needs;
- Help establish roles and responsibilities for taking action on the strategy;
- Set targets;
- Identify potential further sources of funding to assist with affordable housing development;
- Articulate outcomes and strategies that will assist the City and service partners in managing and advancing community and
What is affordable housing?
Housing affordability is relative to the amount of income that a household has. It is generally recognized that renters who spend 30% or more of their gross household income on rent have affordability issues, and those that are spending 50% or more of their gross household income on housing are at risk of homelessness.

What is a Community Plan on Homelessness?
A Community Plan on Homelessness steers the policy and program direction, as well as investment from all orders of government on homeless programs and services. A Community Plan on Homelessness also positions the City to maximize available homelessness program funding from the Federal government.

Why did London commission this study?
The City acknowledges that barriers remain for some residents of the City to participate in two of City Council’s priorities:
1) Community Vitality, and 2) Economic Prosperity. As noted earlier, this study will:

- Identify community needs;
- Help establish roles and responsibilities for taking action on the strategy;
- Set targets;
- Identify potential further sources of funding to assist with affordable housing development;
- Articulate outcomes and strategies that will assist the City and service partners in managing and advancing community and program expectations; and,
- Form the basis for City programs and investments for the next five years, in partnership with other orders of government.

What happened with the City of London’s 2005 Affordable Housing Strategy?
The 2005 Affordable Housing Strategy was helpful for advancing various policy and funding investments related to housing. The time is right to update that strategy for the next five years—or more.

Is London committed to affordable housing?
London’s commitment to affordable housing has been clearly evident through the following: The Mayor’s Anti-Poverty Action Group, Municipal Council’s 2006 Social Policy Framework, the City of London’s Affordable Housing Task Force, the City’s Community Plan on Homelessness, the 2005 Affordable Housing Strategy and a number of programs and initiatives related to housing security and supportive vulnerable populations.

Since 2004, the City of London has committed funding for 1,124 new affordable housing units.

The City’s Affordable Housing Task Force set 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”. The Social Policy Framework recognized the vital link between a safety net of services to healthy community engagement and the vitality and economic prosperity of the City. In addition, an Official Plan amendment also placed a stronger focus on affordable housing, especially for those households at the 30th percentile of household incomes of the City of London.

**What does it mean that the strategy is “evidence-based” and “evidence-informed”?**
It means that the Strategy relied heavily on practices and approaches that are proven to work. It does not rely on anecdotes or opinions that are not based in fact.

**How many people are homeless in London?**
London currently operates approximately 400 shelter beds for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.

In addition, many people who are homeless live with others, move frequently, or are otherwise not known to the community.

This is only part of the picture of homelessness. Outreach efforts such as London CAReS serve people living with addictions and mental health issues on core area streets.

**How does this Strategy assist the local development community and builders?**
New housing development helps drive the local economy and creates and sustains jobs. Housing development has been proven to help stimulate an economy, especially during periods of economic uncertainty and recovery. The Strategy identifies development targets for the next five years.

**What does the Strategy mean to those who are property managers?**
Rental housing is critical to London, where 41% of the population rents. Rental housing is a necessity in the housing continuum for many different populations, including: working poor; low-income seniors; young couples starting out, etc. Opportunities to articulate the benefits of rental housing and the important roles of property managers have been considered in the Strategy.

**How will having a Strategy impact the local economy?**
The development of more housing will create and sustain jobs, and help drive the local economy. In addition, minimum and low-wage earners, critical to various aspects of our local economy from the hospitality industry to food industry to retail industry will have increased access to affordable housing. Affordable and adequate housing is a necessary ingredient for a healthy local economy.

**What has London been doing about homelessness?**
London is a compassionate City and has worked closely with the London Homeless Coalition to address the needs of its homeless residents. The City has embarked on two innovative programs in recent years:

1. London CAReS: works with a street involved population to help them access housing and other resources so that they do not need to be street involved; and,
2. Hostels to Homes: a provincial pilot project that rapidly assists homeless people access a home and have supports to stay housed.

**Are rents affordable in London?**
According to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation 2009 Rental Market Report, the average cost of a one bedroom apartment in London is $708. To make this affordable, a household must be making more than $28,325 per year. More than 30,000 households—48% of all rental households in London—cannot afford average market rent.

**What is the municipal role in housing and homeless services?**
London is a Consolidated Municipal Service Manager, which means that issues of housing and homelessness were “devolved” to the City from other orders of government. As such, the City works with community stakeholders to develop housing and homelessness policies and programs and the City has the responsibility to monitor those programs and investments.

**Have any other cities developed these kinds of housing strategies?**
Yes. Various cities in North America and specifically, Ontario, have developed these kinds of strategies. In recent years, more and more Ontario communities are engaging in the preparation of these types of strategic plans. Recent examples include Toronto, Hamilton, Halton and Ottawa.

**Is London’s Community Housing Strategy linked to any other City Council priorities?**
Yes. The Strategy is linked to Community Vitality and Economic Prosperity—two of City Council’s priorities. This strategy will help create opportunities of inclusion for some of London’s most vulnerable residents by addressing barriers to accessing safe, secure, affordable and appropriate housing.

**Who is on the Community Reference Group?**
The Community Reference Group is comprised of the London Homeless Coalition, the London Development Institute, the Urban League and the London Property Management Association.

**Who else was consulted?**
Over 40 groups representing resident associations, business associations, professional interests, various city departments and a multitude of community service groups are being invited to participate in the consultations.

**Which consulting firm was retained to help develop the Strategy?**
OrgCode Consulting Inc. was the successful proponent through a competitive Requests for Proposal process in securing the contract to help develop the Community Housing Strategy.

**What is the process was used to create the Community Housing Strategy?**
This important project is being managed by staff from the City of London with the support and involvement of organizations involved in housing and homelessness. The process includes a City Staff Steering Committee, a Community Reference Group and a series of
consultation sessions with over 40 London community groups and businesses. Open Houses for members of the general public were conducted and a survey of service providers released in mid-March. The process is supported by extensive research using data and information from London and other jurisdictions. The Council Housing Leadership Committee is also involved. The committee reports back through City Council.