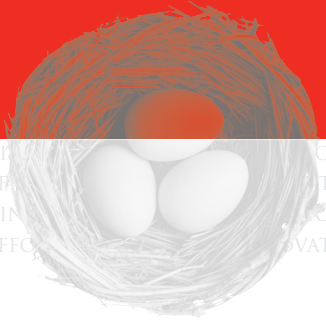


AFFORDABLE HOUSING INNOVATIONS



CITY OF OTTAWA ADOPTS COMMUNITY ACTION PLAN TO CREATE 330 AFFORDABLE HOUSING UNITS

According to a Statistics Canada report issued in July 2002, households in Ottawa, Ontario, enjoy the highest median income levels in Canada. And yet the City's waiting list for affordable housing contains 13,000 names, and every night 1,000 people—including many families with children—sleep in Ottawa shelters.

"We're facing an immense affordable-housing crisis," says Alex Munter, Chair of the City's Health, Recreation and Social Services Committee. "Finding an affordable place to live in Ottawa is extremely difficult for people with low or even moderate incomes."

Facing this reality, the City of Ottawa Council approved a community action plan that presented long-term solutions to homelessness. Geared to help low-income people on social housing waiting lists and people living in shelters or substandard housing, the plan involves a number of approaches to spur development:

- provide capital grants to encourage non-profit and private developers to build new affordable housing;
- sell or lease surplus municipal properties for one dollar on which to build affordable housing;
- waive building fees and development charges for affordable housing developments; and
- provide funding of \$20,000 to organizations to help them plan projects, a critical success factor.

The strategy is working. With help from the City of Ottawa and many others, 330 new affordable housing units have appeared throughout the city in the past three years. Contributions of \$5.5 million from the City have resulted in new affordable housing with capital costs of \$31.5 million.

For instance, Ottawa Salus capitalized on Ottawa's initiatives to build a 19-unit apartment building on Gladstone Avenue for people who are mentally ill and homeless. Ottawa sold the land to Salus for \$1.00, waived development fees, and provided a capital grant of \$671,000—close to half the building's cost.

McPhail House, a recently renovated church manse on Bronson Avenue, serves as another tribute to Ottawa's community action plan. Cornerstone, an organization that provides high-quality housing for women, took advantage of a capital grant from the City of Ottawa to renovate the manse and turn it into six units of supportive housing.

"They did a fabulous job with the renovation," says Mr. Munter. "Six women were living in shelters before, and now they've got a wonderful, permanent home. It's very rewarding to see."

With help from the City of Ottawa and many others, similar projects are providing homeless people with permanent and affordable housing. The Mission, which operates a men's shelter, built an eight-bed palliative care facility as well as 19 units of supportive housing. The Stirling Tavern, a derelict, vacant bar, was renovated into 10 affordable bachelor and one-bedroom apartments, four of which are allocated to people with AIDS or mental health problems. And an apartment building, now known as Madawan Lodge, was purchased and renovated, providing permanent accommodation for senior Aboriginal persons.

"We're making progress," says Joyce Potter, Director of Housing with the City of Ottawa. "Having the full support of the Mayor and City Councillors has been critical to our success."

The City of Ottawa is a finalist in the Planning and Regulation category of the 2002 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Housing Awards Program, **Affordable Housing Innovations**. The Housing Awards recognize individuals, companies and organizations that have made significant contributions to improving housing affordability in Canada.

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