



Homelessness is affected by structural factors—social assistance rates, wages, employment levels—individual factors and systemic factors—the health system, children protection, housing systems. The city's focus is on the last.

The city does not have enough resources to meet the demand, so it needs to be really strategic in how it uses resources, recognizing that every choice to do something means a choice not to do something else.

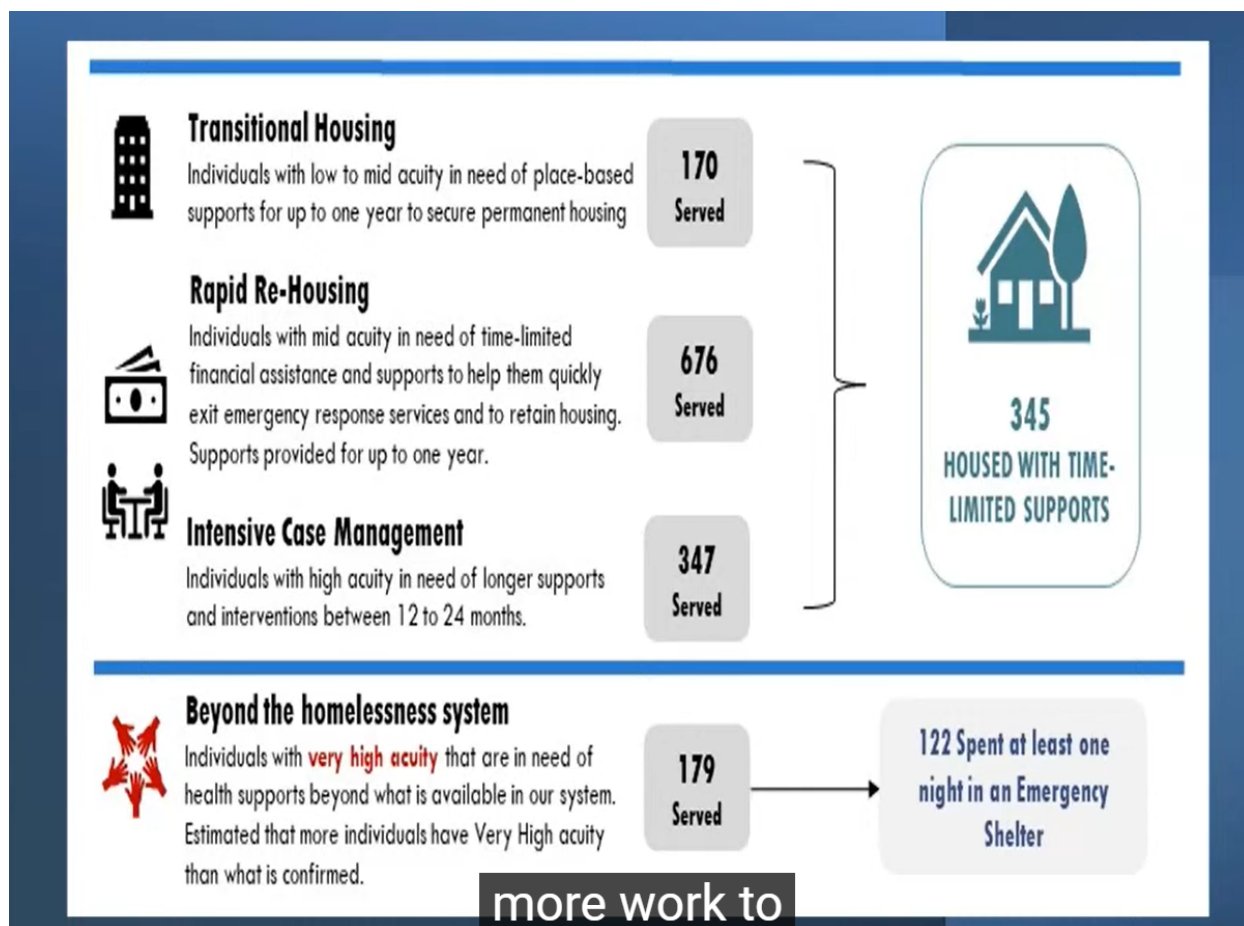
The number of people known to be homeless has gone up. That is partly because more organizations are reporting their data and the data has been improved (since April 2022), which may account for some of the increase. But there is a real increase.

The number of shelter stays is stable but the length of stay has increased. The average stay has grown from 80 to 88. People are getting stuck in shelters that are meant to provide not more than a 30-day stay.

The plan outlined below was developed in part through consultation with 175 people in shelters, 50 people in encampments and two events, at Notre Dame House and Living Rock, with youth.

A Hamilton Where Everyone Has a Home





The city faces some significant gaps between needs and resources

- A shortfall of an estimated 8,000 units of deeply affordable housing. Only 12 per cent of the housing stock is affordable to people making less than \$45,000 a year.
- In 2022, approximately 28 per cent of people accessing the homeless serving system presented with a high or very high complexity of need—1,119 people. There is limited availability of health resources.
- Low wages, high turnover, burnout, need for deeper integration and agency stability

This diagram captures the essence of the city's strategy. The intention is to move away from an emphasis on emergency responses (such as shelter, warming centres and outreach), and toward preventing people from becoming homelessness and providing housing, with supports, for the chronically homeless.



On prevention, there needs to be an enhanced housing stability benefit, with a higher cap; enhancements to the youth homelessness program, a pilot program for family case management with mobile supports to families staying in homeless, and a tax filing pilot, to help people get tax refunds they are entitled to and thus increase their income.

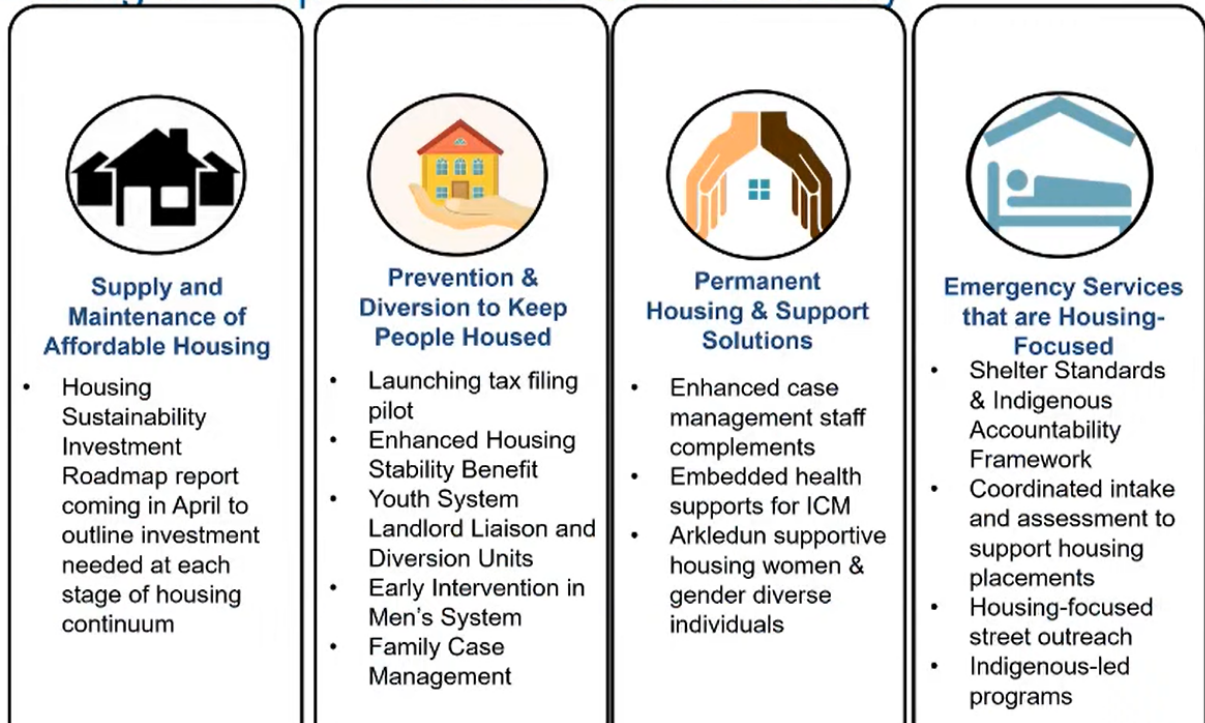
The city is piloting a program with Good Shepherd with enhanced health supports, to immediately get women mental and physical health care and harm reduction. Good Shepherd will soon open 73 supportive housing units on Arkeldun Avenue.

The city is more successful diverting people from homelessness to housing in the youth and family systems than they do in the men's and women's systems, which have only \$30,000 each for diversion. They want to get to the point where every shelter has a dedicated staff person helping people get housed.

The city got an extra \$3 million through the federal Reaching Home program last year to strengthen programs and that funding continues until the current Reaching Home cycle ends in 2024. The city is expecting notice soon on what happens beyond 2024—what funding will be available and what the criteria will be.

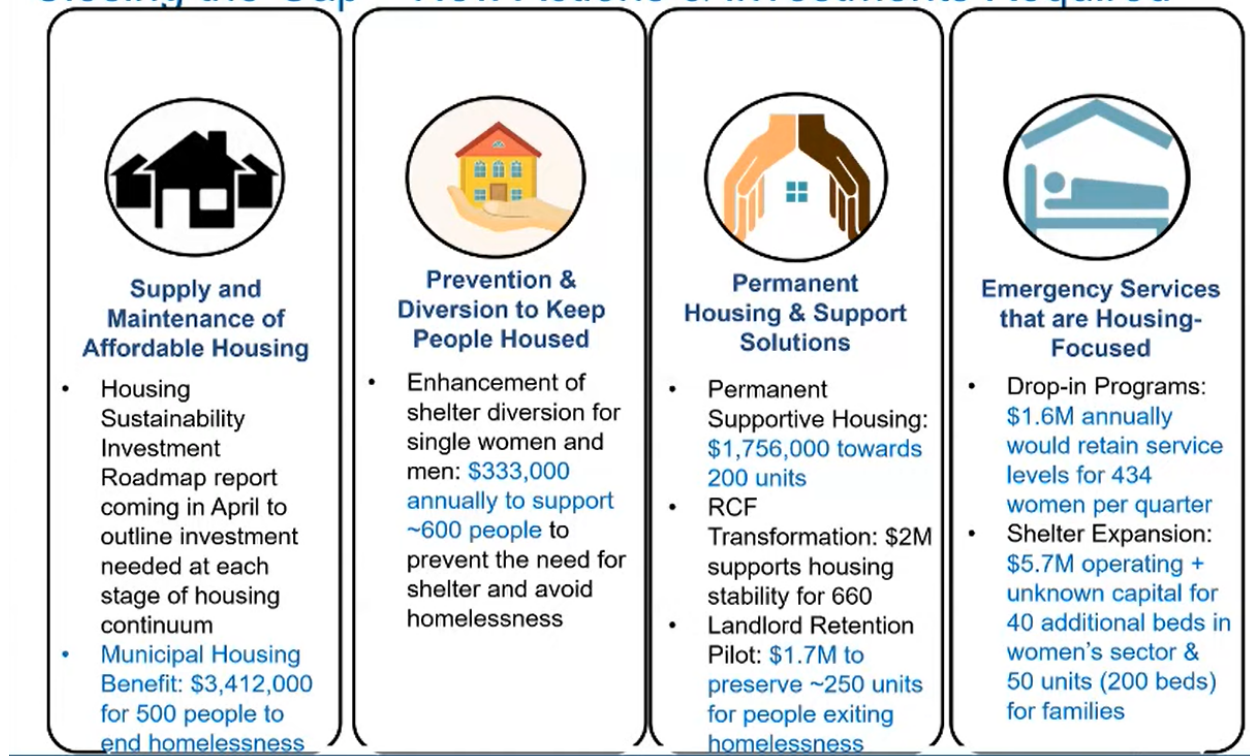
The changes underway are captured in the chart below.

Closing the Gap – Enhancements Underway



The additional changes the city has identified—and for which it does not have funding—are outlined in the chart on the next page. Those new investments would support about 1,400 people to meet their needs and stabilize their lives with permanent housing.

Closing the Gap – New Actions & Investments Required



If you add up the boxes, the total is an additional \$14.5 million a year.

- Box 1: A municipal housing benefit equivalent to rent-geared-to-income to end homelessness for 500 people. This would be mainly for people with lower incomes, to fill the gap between 30 per cent of their incomes and their rent in private rentals, plus case management.
- Box 2: Diversion staff added to men's and women's shelters (mentioned earlier) to support 600 people to avoid homelessness.
- Box 3:
 - Permanent supportive housing. Most of the supports should be funded by the provincial Ministry of Health.
 - For the 660 people in Residential Care Facilities, improved standards and better connection to the wider housing and homelessness system and more funding to offer supports
 - A pilot project to work with landlords to overcome their reluctance to take on low-income or people experiencing homelessness as tenants. It would include a damage fund and a payment for having a vacant unit for a while if a tenant wasn't successful.
- Box 4:
 - Continue drop-ins, aimed at women
 - Expand the shelter system with 40 additional beds for women and 50 units (200 beds) for families.

The city doesn't have the money to keep funding an emergency response, so it needs to focus its investments. Investments in prevention, health supports and permanent housing will contribute to ending homelessness.

There was a question about where people will go for washrooms and showers when the Wesley drop-in, the largest drop-in, closes at the end of March. The answer was that as part of the city's review of shelter standards, they are looking at not requiring people to leave shelters so they no longer have to go somewhere else to shower.

There are empty units in CityHousing Hamilton and efforts will be made to repair them and get them back in use.