



WATERLOO REGION  
Community  
Foundation

WATERLOO REGION'S

**Vital**Signs®

**2023  
REPORT**

# **AFFORDABLE HOUSING**





# Territorial Acknowledgement

Waterloo Region Community Foundation (WRCF) is situated on the lands within the Haldimand Treaty of 1784, a formally ratified agreement acknowledging six miles on either side of the Grand River as treaty territory belonging to Six Nations of the Grand River. WRCF serves a region that is located within the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Chonnonton and Haudenosaunee peoples. This territory is within the lands protected by the Dish with One Spoon wampum. We acknowledge the enduring presence, knowledges and philosophies of Indigenous Peoples. We acknowledge the continuing accomplishments and contributions Indigenous Peoples make in shaping Waterloo Region. We are committed to understanding the impact of settler colonialism on the Indigenous experience in order to envision and co-create collaborative, respectful paths together in mutuality and reciprocity.



# Thank you

Waterloo Region's Vital Signs® Report would not have been possible without the support of individuals and organizations across the communities that make up Waterloo Region. We are grateful to our sponsors and supporters for their contributions, which allowed us to truly dive deep into the data. This report was derived from numerous organizations and people, including individuals across the region doing incredible work in the Affordable Housing area – many of whom were interviewed and provided essential feedback and advice that you will find throughout this document. We would like to acknowledge each of you for your contributions and hope we have not missed anyone in this list. All opinions and interpretations in this report are the opinions, interpretations, or perspectives of the author and editorial team and do not necessarily reflect the opinions of any organizations or people we acknowledge here.

We thank everyone who provided insight.

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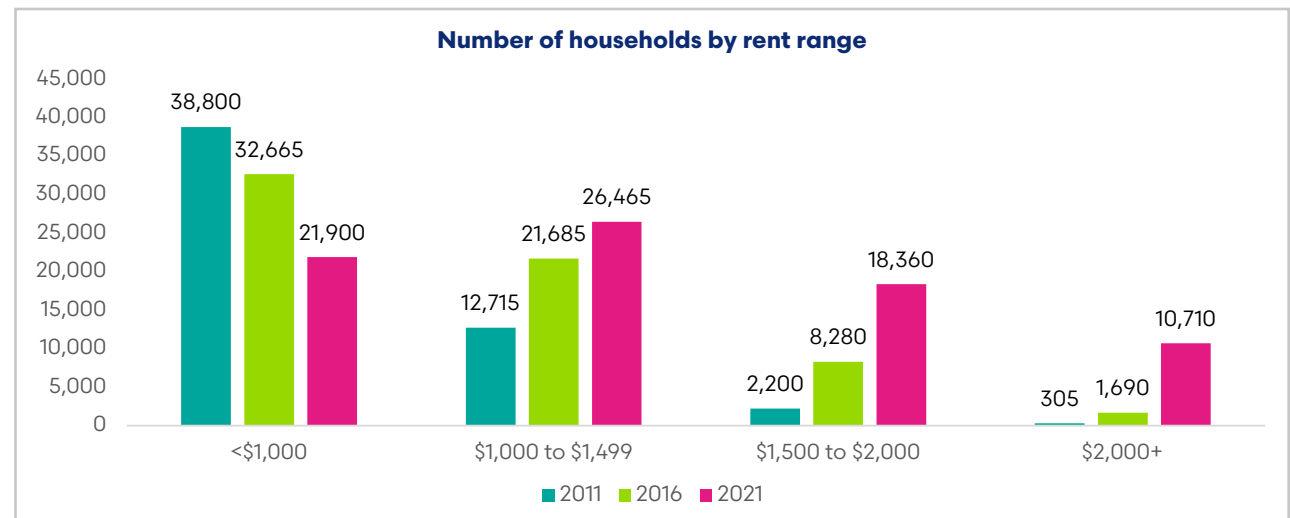
Between 2016 and 2021, Waterloo Region was losing 2,100 units per year, renting for less than \$1,000

## Huge loss of existing affordable housing through market conditions

**Shrinking affordable rentals:** The number of households renting for less than \$1,000 has dropped by almost half between 2011 and 2021. \$1,000 per month is roughly affordable to about the bottom 30% of renters in 2021.<sup>31</sup> These units are affordable to households making less than \$40,000 in household income (22,590 households as of the 2021 Census)

**Affordable units are disappearing far faster than new affordable units are being built:** On average, Waterloo Region lost more than 2,100 affordable units per year between 2016 and 2021 (those renting for less than \$1,000), a rate four times greater than 500 new affordable units being constructed annually by the region (see page 51).

**Escalating rate of loss:** Disturbingly, the rate at which we are losing affordable units (units renting for less than \$1,000) doubled from 2016 to 2021 compared to the previous five years, and accelerating rent growth suggests this will continue.



Kitchener-Cambridge-Waterloo CMA. **Note:** The boundaries of the CMA expanded in 2016, so comparisons should be interpreted with significant caution. These values are not inflation-adjusted. **Source:** Statistics Canada, 2021 and 2016 Census of Population and 2011 National Household Survey.<sup>32</sup>

We're seeing more and more people getting notices for no-fault evictions for renovations. Tenants have the right of first refusal to return to the unit after the renovations, but no one is monitoring to ensure it happens.

Michelle Knight,  
Peer Support and Project  
Coordinator, Eviction  
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## The extent of the role eviction is playing in rising rent is unclear

**Incomplete eviction data:** Comprehensive local eviction data is currently lacking, but evictions play a critical role in the rental market dynamics. For example, in 2018, in Toronto there was one formal eviction application for every 20 renter households city-wide, and this reached one eviction application for every five renter households in some neighbourhoods.<sup>33</sup> The Canadian Housing Survey found that 10% of Canada-wide renters who moved into their current rental units within the past two years indicated they left their previous residence due to an issue with the landlord (leaving the vast majority who moved for other reasons).<sup>34</sup>

**Rental market pressures:** Rent in Waterloo Region is escalating faster than the inflation rate. Because of a lack of data, it is unclear how substantially evictions and issues with landlords play a role. While units first occupied before November 15, 2018 are rent-controlled, units first occupied since then do not have the same protections. The construction of new rental units, often rented at higher rates, pushes the average rent upward. It would not be uncommon for someone living in a rent-controlled unit for many years to have to pay \$700 to \$1,000 more for a new market apartment if they moved out, which gives landlords plenty of incentive to try to get tenants to leave.

**Rising evictions for own use and renovations:** Across Ontario (excluding Toronto), the number of eviction applications for the landlord's own use has increased by 59% from 2019 to 2022, and in total 5,508 of such applications were made.<sup>35</sup> The Landlord and Tenant Board also received nearly 1,100 eviction applications in 2022 for either "demolition, renovation or conversion of a unit," which was almost double the number received in 2019. That said, landlord-related issues beyond formal evictions are common, contributing significantly to tenant instability.

**Need for better and more timely data:** This underlines a clear need for more data, as the Landlord and Tenant Board reports the number of eviction applications, but the number of actual evictions across Ontario is not tracked. It is also difficult to access this data.

**Safe apartment buildings bylaw to improve conditions and avoid renovation:** CBC Hamilton reported in August 2023 that Hamilton is considering a new bylaw that would require regular inspections and stricter enforcement of property standards and strengthen protections for tenants facing renovations.<sup>36</sup> The goal is to preserve existing affordable housing and ensure that landlords don't allow buildings to go into disrepair to justify renovations. The inspection aspect of the bylaw is modelled after Toronto's RentSafe program, which has been grading rental buildings since 2017.

**Eviction prevention programs can be extremely cost-effective:** An evaluation of Toronto's Eviction Prevention Program noted that it cost an average \$4,182 to help an individual at risk of eviction to pay off their arrears and stabilize their housing,<sup>37</sup> comparing the cost extremely favourably to the cost of emergency shelter (\$9,000 per person for the time typically spent in shelter). In Waterloo Region, where the average rent for a unit is \$472 higher than the average rent for all units (see page 14), preventing someone from being evicted from an average older unit and having to rent a new unit could contribute to \$5,664 in rent savings per year in rent for that tenant.

