

THE PLAN TO END CHRONIC HOMELESSNESS

Navigating Complexity Together

A Roadmap to Functional Zero

by 2030

Waterloo Region
April 2024

The Plan
to End Chronic
Homelessness

**IN COMMUNITY,
BY COMMUNITY,
FOR COMMUNITY.**
#ThePlanWR

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Reading the PECH

This plan is a compilation of content developed by co-contributors including members of the Lived Expertise Prototyping Working Group, members of the Co-Creator Group, and members of the project team. It is rooted in extensive Community Engagement completed during the summer and fall of 2023 and the ongoing work of the Co-Creator Group and Lived Experts Prototyping Cohort.

Key Report Contributors

Plan to End Chronic Homelessness Co-Creator Group

Made up of system leaders, service staff and representatives from equity-owed groups. This group grew throughout our process as more members of the community found out about our work and as we developed relationships with key interest-holders through our work

Lived Experts Prototyping Cohort

Lived Expertise Prototyping is an ongoing process to integrate the experience and wisdom of lived experts into Waterloo Regional operations. This process has been facilitated by the Social Development Centre through 2023 and will continue to the end of 2024.

Black left margin bar identifies plan content that include Lived Expertise Prototyping Cohort voice.

Report Authors



Region of Waterloo

The Region of Waterloo serves with caring and responsible public service, engages by listening and responding to community needs, and inspires by conducting business with openness to enhance public trust and confidence.



Social Develop Centre Waterloo Region

The Social Development Centre Waterloo Region is a learning organization that supports all voices in creation of community wide solutions ensuring that lived experience is the basis for collective action.



Overlap Associates

Overlap Associates is a local design consultancy that puts people at the centre of our work and your solutions. Overlap works with organizations of all sizes on problems that matter most to them.

Co-Creator Membership and Community Support for the PECH

"If we could go back and do it differently,
emphasize the interlinkages between
organizations and systems" —Engagement Participant

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Introduction

Introduction

The Region of Waterloo’s Vision Statement outlines an aspirational future state—*A compassionate community that cares for all people, stewards the land for future generations and where everyone has the opportunity to live a good life.* The work of bringing about this future state is deeply rooted in our efforts to end chronic homelessness in Waterloo Region.

The intention of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness (The PECH) is to detail our collective journey to this end goal. **And yet, there is urgency and complexity that cannot be fully expressed in this document**—the depth of human suffering in our community; the need for frank public discourse about the harms of criminalization of the unsheltered (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024); the impacts of the mental health and addiction crisis gripping a growing number of our families, friends and neighbours; and the tangible ways our collective values and apathy perpetuate the cycle of dehumanization (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024) of those who need our care. The urgency and complexity of responding to this challenge means that defining what is in scope or out of scope of the PECH is a difficult task.

Here lies a key tension emerging from our work of creating the PECH—the stated ask and desired outcome from Regional Council, an action plan outlining tangible steps to achieve functional zero chronic homelessness, does not align fully with the stated needs from the community. Community and Lived Experts have highlighted that ending chronic homelessness will require:

- A focus on process rather than product/outcome (the “how” is equally as important as the “what”)
- Recognizing and naming failures and harms caused by contributing systems in our society (including colonialism, the financialization of housing, criminalization of homelessness) (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- It is critical to address the current gaps in service provision and intervene at different levels of systems—branches, trunk and roots—for transformative change within the structures and power systems that maintain the problems (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Stated clearly, reaching functional zero chronic homelessness will require significant system transformation beyond simply increasing the same supports that we currently have in place and will require examining systems, incentives, values and mindsets that may seem tangential to the problem of homelessness. The magnitude of the complexities and challenges is beyond the mandate of The Region of Waterloo to solve. The macro forces that have led to the current homelessness crisis must be addressed through collective action. Action that is supported by the

broader local community, Area Municipalities and through increased investments from Provincial and Federal governments.

The resulting Plan to End Chronic Homelessness is a living document infused with the voices of our community and Lived Experts and lays out our proposed approach to achieving functional zero homelessness in Waterloo Region by 2030.

Through our broad community engagement and co-design process it became clear that if we hope to end chronic homelessness we must transform the Housing Stability System to be:

- **Responsive**—allow community voices—including Lived Expertise and Equity-Owed Groups—to drive our decisions (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- **Sustainable**—creating system supports to staffing that addresses capacity, recruitment/retention, training, mental health supports and wellness
- **Integrated**—more efficient and aligned within the sector and with other sectors including but not limited to health, justice, social & disability services, children & youth services and other related service systems
- **Inclusive**—it must be person-centred, ensuring that individuals no matter their circumstance (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024) can access services
- **Adaptive**—expand our current continuum of supports and resources to match the current and future needs of our community. We must take proactive, predictive and preventative action to address the changing demographic of homelessness

Our vision for system transformation is a Housing Stability System that is an integrated, inclusive, adaptive, responsive and sustainable ecosystem. The Plan to End Chronic Homelessness articulates how **working in community, by community, for community** will strengthen relationships and build a shared ownership of solutions.

Methodology and Discussion of Process

Our core intention to co-create The Plan is part of what makes this journey different.

Our aim remains to create a plan that is driven by community identified needs, gaps, and solutions. We will continue to do this by working “in community, by community, for community”.

We are committed to these ways of working:

- Shared solutions and implementation
- Centering the voices of those most impacted
- Transformational relationships and trust building
- Inclusive community engagement

At the outset of this work there were two parallel processes—The SDCWR Lived Expertise Prototyping Cohort and the Overlap-led work to produce The Plan. The

intention of these two processes was the centering of lived expertise and creating time and space for their interpretation and wisdom to influence our process, outcomes and to begin the process of developing meaningful relationships.

This council report is supported by two separate reports/planning documents as for consideration by Regional Council. These reports are separate, but linked, and are intended to highlight the differences in the approach and perspectives between Lived Experts and the more system/politically influenced plan.

Lived Experts have provided input on several key features of our plan including definitions, the analogy and imagery of the Tree as a representation of our problem and solution spaces, Strategic Focus Areas and Actions.

The Plan took shape over the course of monthly Co-Creator Roundtables starting in June of 2023. Co-Creators worked to synthesize engagement data, shape the Strategic Focus Areas and generate Actions. The Actions in this document were summarized from upwards of one hundred projects and initiatives identified by Lived Experts and Co-Creators. These projects and initiatives were summarized for the benefit of the reader as they were highly technical and numerous. The 30 Actions currently living in the document give a tangible overview of the work that will take place to bring about our system vision and reaching our end goal of functional zero homelessness by 2030. The intention is to further explore, prioritize and implement actions based on this original list of projects.

Framing the Lived Experts Prototyping Process and Attached Report

The Social Development Centre Waterloo Region (SDC) is a core partner on the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness. From this partnership, the Prototyping Process was developed to centre the voices of Lived Experts and innovate solutions with Regional Staff and other interest-holders.

The Prototyping Process began in March 2023 with an initial cohort of representatives from the Lived Expertise Working Group, the People's Action Group, Regional Staff, SDC staff, and outreach workers. This cohort developed a model of communication and collaboration to make prototyping possible. They also conducted Participatory Action Research with current residents in unsheltered communities. From these conversations, they developed language and models about the problem space such as the Tree metaphor at the centre of the PECH. At the end of this initial phase, five areas of further prototyping were identified.

The Cohort has since expanded to over 30 representatives, including Lived Experts, mutual aid group representatives, advocacy group representatives, agency representatives, and an expanded group of Regional and City staff. The Prototyping

Process currently is slated to continue to the end of 2024 with recommendations on how to embed the principles of lived expertise, collaboration and learning in the ongoing work of the Region.

Members of the cohort met intensively for two months to develop the report calls to action included in the appendix. This report includes key terms, legal context for a human rights approach, and 30 calls to action for consideration. The report has deeply informed the development of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness.

The partnership with Lived Experts and the Social Development Centre Prototyping Process has added tremendous value and insight into the PECH and the process of creating it.

We have worked throughout the process to create meaningful moments of cross-pollination between the two streams of work. We recognize that these efforts have been successful and yet there is a large amount of work to do to continue building relationships and trust between lived experts, grassroots organizations, advocates and ROW staff and leadership.

Our collaboration has also illuminated the existing contrasting opinions about the approach to ending chronic homelessness in the Region. The attached report—created by Lived Experts—is an example of the differing perspectives and a view of the contrast between the groups. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Definitions

Definitions

We have included a definitions section as clear and consistent language is an important part of the process of finding common understanding as a community. And we acknowledge that language is ever evolving, different groups use different definitions and part of the work is to continually evolve these alongside communities.

- **Accessibility**—Specific features incorporated by design with the goal to reduce or remove barriers to participation or enjoyment by all people. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- **Adequate Housing**—Housing that meets the legal standards for security of tenure, affordability, habitability, accessibility, availability of services, location and cultural appropriateness. In the absence of such, the right to housing is not met. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- **Chronic Homelessness**—Refers to individuals who are currently experiencing visible and hidden homelessness AND who meet at least 1 of the following criteria:
 - they have a total of at least 6 months (180 days) of homelessness over the past year
 - they have recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past 3 years, with a cumulative duration of at least 18 months (546 days)

(*Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy Directives*, 2023)
- **Deeply Therapeutic Housing**—is housing designed to provide support for people with the highest levels of acuity. This includes but is not limited to individuals with significant complex substance use, concurrent mental health needs or who are otherwise medically fragile and are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, or who are considered inadequately housed. This type of supportive housing is a gap in our system identified through community engagement and by lived experts and co-creators. The gap is emerging as our current system is not adequately addressing the needs of people who are deeply unwell. ([Supportive Addiction & Mental Health Housing \(SAMH\), n.d.](#))
- **Equity-owed groups**—These are groups that experience systemic oppression, marginalization, and discrimination often due to the legacies of colonization, slavery, and imperialism. These groups include but are not limited to those who are Black (African and Caribbean diaspora), Two-spirit and Indigenous Peoples

(First Nations, Inuit and Métis), and communities racialized as non-white; persons identifying with a disability/disability communities; members of 2SLGBTQIA+ communities; women, trans, and femme-presenting people; and those living in rural areas. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

- **Functional Zero (0)**—A community has reached functional zero (0) of any type of homelessness when the number of people experiencing homelessness is zero, or if not zero, then either 3 or .1% of the total number of individuals experiencing homelessness on a by-name list, whichever is greater, and sustained for 3 consecutive months. (*Built for Zero Canada Functional Zero Homelessness Question and Answer Document, 2021*)



Figure 1. Built for Zero Definition of Functional Zero Chronic Homelessness

- **Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS 4)**—Developed by the Government of Canada, HIFIS is a Homelessness Management Information System (HMIS) that is designed to support the day-to-day operational activities of Canadian homelessness service providers. As a comprehensive data collection and case management system, HIFIS enables participating service providers within the same community to access, collect, and share local real-time homelessness data to ensure individuals and families accessing services are prioritized and referred to appropriate services at the correct time.
- **Homelessness**—Homelessness describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the

immediate prospect, means and ability to acquire it. It is the result of systemic or societal barriers, a lack of affordable and appropriate housing, the individual/household's financial, mental, cognitive, behavioural or physical challenges, and/or racism and discrimination. Most people do not choose to be homeless, and the experience is generally negative, unpleasant, unhealthy, unsafe, stressful and distressing. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

- **Human Rights Approach**—People experiencing homelessness are treated as rights holders, where their agency is respected, and where the Region has a duty of care for their housing needs. Region will be compliant with national and international human rights law and ensure it is appropriately prioritized amidst other legal obligations such as those regarding property rights, privacy and liability. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- **Housing First (HF)** Is based in a human rights framework and has two primary components: **housing and support**. It is not housing only.
 - **Housing:** participants are provided access to housing of choice in the community—facilitated by portable rent supplements—that is no more than 30% of their income.
 - **Support:** access to wrap around addiction/mental health supports, intensive case management and other supports aimed at promoting housing stability, recovery, community integration, and achievement of life goals.
 - Housing First is driven by 3 key principles:
 - consumer choice and self-determination
 - recovery (treatment focused)
 - community integration (physically, psychologically and socially).
 - Housing First is an empowerment approach in which the consumer is viewed as the expert on his/her experiences and aspirations; it is critical to begin by asking consumers where they want to live.
 - Recovery is a treatment orientation that refers to a participant's journey of growth and self-improvement in the direction of achieving life satisfaction.
 - The third principle is community integration. Whereas people with mental illness, who are homeless, often experience segregation, exclusion, and stigma. The goal is to help people become physically, psychologically, and socially integrated in the community.

(Dr. Geoffrey Nelson, Department of Psychology, Wilfrid Laurier University, n.d.)

- **Housing Stability System (HSS)**—The Region of Waterloo is the provincially-designated Service Manager for Housing and Homelessness. In this role, the Region is responsible for program planning, service delivery, distribution of resources, and quality assurance of housing-first services that help people find and maintain permanent housing; this network of services is known as the HSS. The HSS supports individuals and families across Waterloo Region who are experiencing homelessness, at immediate risk of homelessness, and in the recovery stages from homelessness.
- **Indigenous Homelessness**—“Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships” (Thistle, 2017; see also (Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness, 2012). (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- **Prioritized Access to Housing Supports (PATHS)**— A Coordinated Access System (Coordinated Access) is a systems-level approach for addressing homelessness that provides a consistent way to assess, prioritize and connect people experiencing homelessness to Region-funded housing and supports. Locally, this is referred to as the Prioritized Access to Housing Supports (PATHS) Process.
 - PATHS Process Overview
 - The PATHS process includes four main steps:
 - People experiencing homelessness are assessed for eligibility at defined access points across the system, using a common assessment tool.
 - If people are eligible, they join the PATHS List. The next step is to get offer-ready with support from PATHS Partners (Service Providers that help people to move forward with their Housing Plan while they wait) and Service Navigators (on the PATHS Team).
 - Once offer-ready, people are matched with a housing support vacancy and prioritized for an offer.

- In the final step, Housing Liaisons (on the PATHS Team) support people to transition to their new home.



**“Everybody needs and
deserves a safe place,
it's a human right.”**

—ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANT

Framing the Problem

Framing the Problem

The number of people experiencing homelessness in Waterloo Region is unprecedented. Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, homelessness has risen in numbers and visibility. In the 2021 PiT (Point in Time) count, the Region found that more than 1,000 individuals were experiencing homelessness with over 500 of those individuals estimated to be experiencing chronic homelessness or homelessness for longer than six months.

Chronic homelessness in Waterloo Region has been increasing at an average growth rate of 28% year over year since 2020. Since January 2020, chronic homelessness in the region has increased by 129%. The unprecedented growth in homelessness is compounding existing difficulties both for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and for the services within the system.

In September of 2023, in collaboration with our Co-Creator Group and the Social Development Centre (SDC) Prototype cohort, the PECH Core Team produced a [Key Findings Report](#). This report is an in depth exploration of the problem space rooted in community engagement findings, secondary research and analysis of current system data. Please refer to the report for further context.

The High-Level Problems we seek to address

- **The current system is not designed (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024) or adequately resourced to address the increase in numbers of individuals (volume) requiring support or the increased complexity of needs that individuals have**
- **Current system leadership and governance approaches are undermining our community's ability to respond to the issue of homelessness.** The current structure of siloed and hierarchical decision-making is creating a lack of transparency and trust within the Housing Stability System and the broader community
- **Lack of Lived Expertise and Equity focus is creating system responses that do not align with the needs of the community and is actively causing harm**—systems need to sense and see themselves (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024) in order for change to occur.
- The Province and the Federal government's retrenchment of building community housing in the 70's and 80's has led to reliance on the private market which has driven a **hyper-financialized capitalist model of housing. Increased housing**

costs are reducing access to housing for broad groups of our population.
(LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

- The prevalence of **mental health and substance addiction alongside the unprecedented crisis of drug poisonings** playing out in our community are intricately tied to the rise in and deepening complexity of experiences of homelessness
- There has been a long-standing issue of unequal access to services and support for individuals who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness in rural and township areas. To access the necessary support, individuals are often required to leave their rural communities and travel to urban centers, which can result in a loss of important community connections and **an increase in demand for urban-based services**. It is important to leverage the supports and services that exist in the rural areas to develop (co-create) a made-in-rural solution.
- The **face of homelessness is changing** (diversity , intersectionality)—This mix of factors is broadening the percentage of our community that is precariously housed, hidden homelessness, and housed in non-market options. This is giving us a skewed perspective of the causes of homelessness and those experiencing it in our communities. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- **There is an increase in people living in encampments**. This trend highlights the growing rate of homelessness and—among many other factors—points to a shortfall in shelter capacity and accessibility, as well as barriers to securing permanent housing. (*Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)*, 2023) (Turner, 2023)

Key Numbers to Quantify the Problem

Chronic homelessness in Waterloo Region has been increasing at an average growth rate of 28% year over year since 2020. Since January 2020, chronic homelessness in the region has increased by 129%.

- If the 28% annual increase in chronic homelessness continues, the community will have triple the number of residents experiencing chronic homelessness by 2028.
 - As of February 2024, there are 558 individuals on the Prioritized Access to Housing Supports (PATHS) List.
 - The average number of days individuals on the PATHS list have been without permanent and safe housing is 1,403 days (3 years 8 months).

- 12% of all chronically homeless individuals on the PATHS list identify as Indigenous. This is an overrepresentation of Indigenous people experiencing chronic homelessness as they make up 1.7% of the total population of Waterloo Region.
- The supportive housing program across fixed-site and scattered options has a current capacity to support approximately 570 individuals.
- In 2024, approximately \$56 million will be invested into the local homelessness system in various service areas (outreach, prevention, shelter, supportive housing, etc.). Based on current state and future trends, this investment is not keeping pace with the growing need for additional supports to end chronic homelessness.
- Up to 70% of the folks experiencing homelessness or who are precariously housed have screened positive with the HELPs Screener as having an acquired brain injury (ABI) with similar trends in other regions. Often brain injury in the homeless population goes undiagnosed. It is not unusual for addictions and mental health issues to also be factors that impact their ability to maintain housing and also mask brain injury symptoms. Not only do these people require a specialized brain injury worker but additionally, wrap around supports offering all three areas of specialty through an integrated team approach.
- Youth homelessness is on the rise.
 - A recent survey from Children and Youth Planning Table showed 13% of youth respondents were experiencing homelessness (13% of 1867 respondents = 243 youth) in 2023 (*2023 CYPT DATA BRIEF, 2024*)
 - Youth shelters are frequently at capacity and are supporting individuals 12-18 years old. There has been a 20% increase from the previous two years.

Quotes and Stories Behind the Statistics

These statistics fold out into real living stories from valued neighbours in our community. These experiences represent a history of our systems level failures and the frustration and harm unchallenged systems bring. They also act as motivation and a call for change.

“Some guy beat me up on the street. Yeah, I was in the hospital because of it... I died a few times...Meantime my landlord, he got rid of everything in my apartment and I lost my rent geared to income housing and I ended up

discharged from the hospital and driven to the shelter. “ — Project Willow Interview Participant

“ I slept in the parking garage across the street because I wanted to make the statement that I do have nowhere to go. And I’m not going back to a building that I’ve been raped in. “ — Project Willow Interview Participant


“ You do not know how much actual physical, emotional and financial trauma that each one of us have gone through before we’ve even been able to have the strength and the courage to walk through these doors. Okay, because unless you’ve been through it yourself, then you don’t know it. “ — Project Willow Interview Participant

“ Why do we need to wait for someone to be on fire before we give them a hose? “ —PECH Engagement Participant

“ The ability to address the mental health and trauma pieces in which lead women to addictions and homelessness in the first place is something I have always believed to be at the forefront of being a piece of the shelter system. Housing, the safety in which one feels when they don’t have to be wet and unsafe on the street is only the tiniest fraction of being able to offer support to women in this community. A piece of the solution, is addressing the fragility of the client in which accesses services. “ — Project Willow Survey participant

“ There are no real safe places in the community “ — Project Willow Survey Participant

Key Plan Elements



“Homelessness will never disappear without getting to the root causes.”

—ENGAGEMENT PARTICIPANT

Key Plan Elements

End Goal—To reach functional zero chronic homelessness in Waterloo Region by 2030.

Vision for System Transformation—To transform the Housing Stability System to be an responsive, sustainable, integrated, inclusive and adaptive ecosystem.

System Interventions—These are major changes we are proposing to the Housing Stability System to bring about our vision

Strategic Focus Areas—Large categories of work / activity to bring about our system interventions. These describe the broad areas of work within the PECH.

Actions—Clear projects, initiatives or achievements we will work toward that align with one or more Strategic Focus Areas.

Measurable Outcomes and KPIs—Outcomes of our Focus Areas that will show us we are make progress towards implementing our system interventions

Investment Strategy—strategic investments to stabilize the current system and transform the system.

Change Management Approach—These are principles, tactics and methods we will use to bring about our desired vision for system transformation.

System Overview for Ending Chronic Homelessness

This diagram represents how the PECH will transform the Housing Stability System to End Chronic Homelessness.

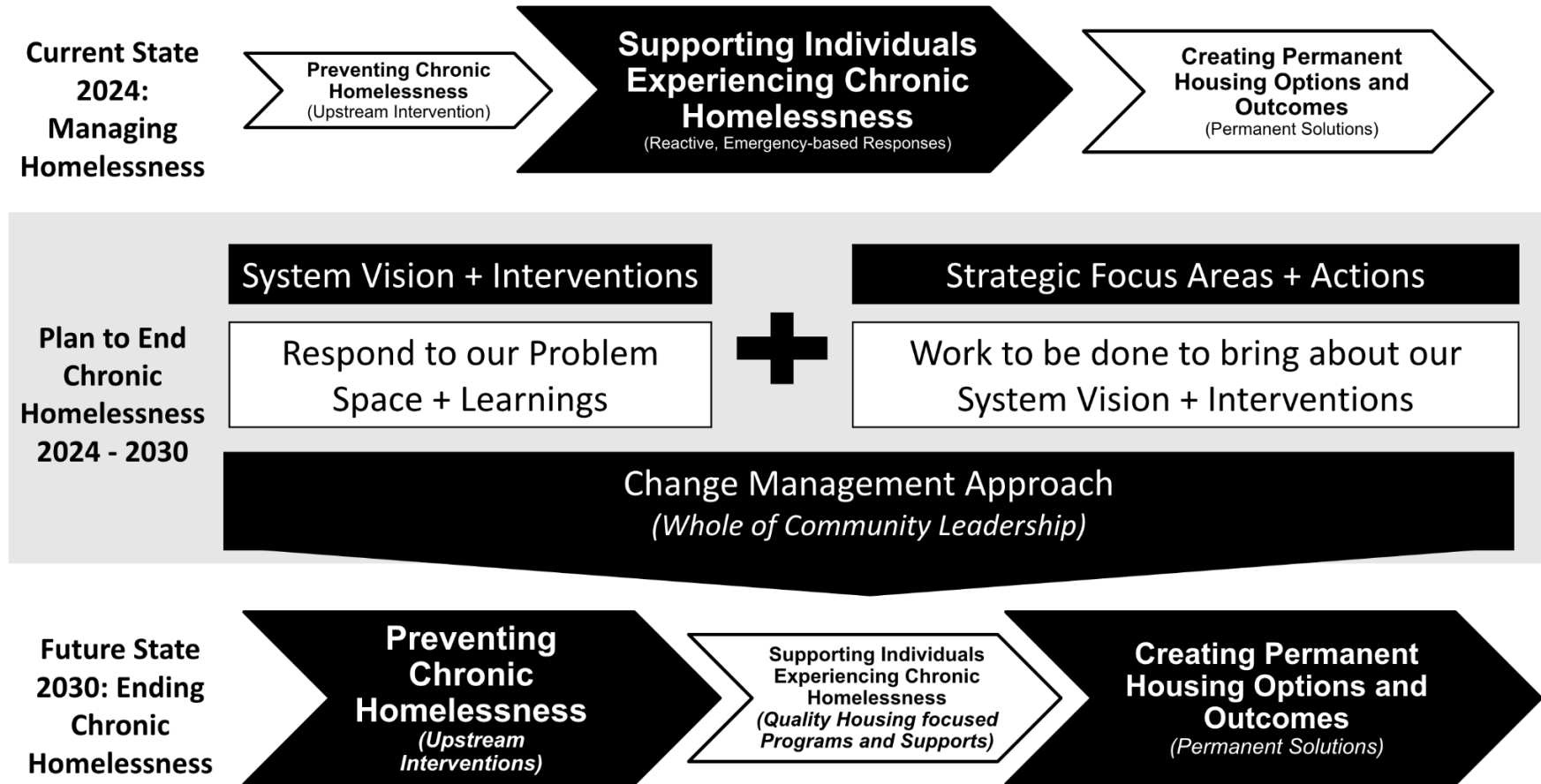


Figure 2. System Overview for Ending Chronic Homelessness

Inside The Plan—PECH High-Level Structure

Vision for System Transformation:

Housing Stability System that is a responsive, sustainable, integrated, inclusive and adaptive ecosystem

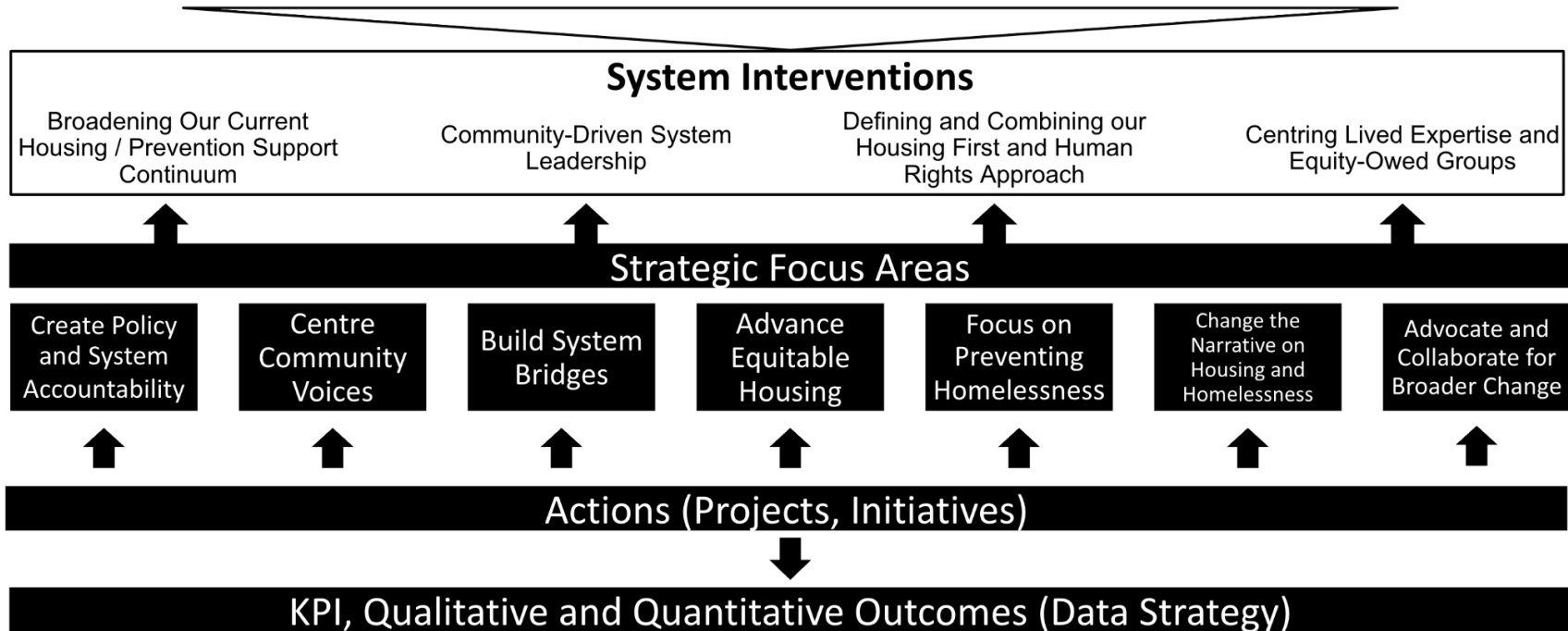



Figure 3. Inside the Plan—PECH High-Level Structure



Our Vision for Housing Stability System Transformation

Our Vision for Housing Stability System Transformation

We will reach functional zero chronic homelessness by 2030 by transforming the Housing Stability System to be a **responsive, sustainable, integrated, inclusive and adaptive ecosystem**.

To accomplish this transformation and resulting end goal we must intervene at different levels of our systems and communities. We must respond quickly and over the short-term to "branch-level issues" to reduce immediate suffering in our community and we must do our best to address the "root causes of homelessness" to transform the system over time.

To do this Co-Creators and Lived Experts have pointed to key shifts that we hope will transform the system. These "interventions" are proposed in direct response to our learnings from community engagement and environmental scanning.

Mapping the Problem Space to Our Solutions

The Tree Analogy

Early in the process of developing the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, Lived Experts introduced the analogy / imagery of a tree to describe the causes of homelessness in our community. To properly transform our system and end chronic homelessness we must intervene at different levels of our systems and communities—if we do not we will continue to be in a reactionary state, using downstream fixes for upstream issues. For example: focusing exclusively on the branches results in reactive and short-lived actions. While solutions at the branches level are required, they cannot be the only solutions implemented, otherwise we will perpetuate the status quo. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

This tree analogy has since been central throughout the Lived Experts Prototyping and broader plan development process. It now acts as a framework for us to align our Problem Space and Solution Space directly:

Problem Space and System Interventions

Problem Space Our Learnings

The current system is not designed or adequately resourced to address the increase in numbers of individuals (volume) requiring support or the increased complexity of needs that individuals have—specifically, those who are precariously housed or experiencing hidden homelessness and those who require deeply therapeutic and supportive housing.

The current structure of siloed and hierarchical decision-making is creating a lack of transparency and trust within the Housing Stability System and the broader community.

Lack of Lived Expertise and Equity Focus is creating system responses that do not align with the needs of the community and is actively causing harm—systems need to sense and see themselves in order for change to occur.

The Province and the Federal government's retrenchment of building community housing in the 70's and 80's based on the 'rental model' which has driven a hyper-financialized capitalist model of housing. Increased housing costs are reducing access to housing for broad groups of our population.

BRANCHES & FRUIT (CONSEQUENCES)
Access to services, protocols, rules and regulations, risk management process, research, consultations, etc.

TRUNK (ENFORCING STRUCTURES)
Systems such as laws/courts, policing/criminalization, hierarchies, governments, education, health care, etc.

ROOTS (CAUSES)
Colonization, capitalism, land theft and privatization, spiritual disconnect to land, Western rational thought and dogmatic beliefs, etc.

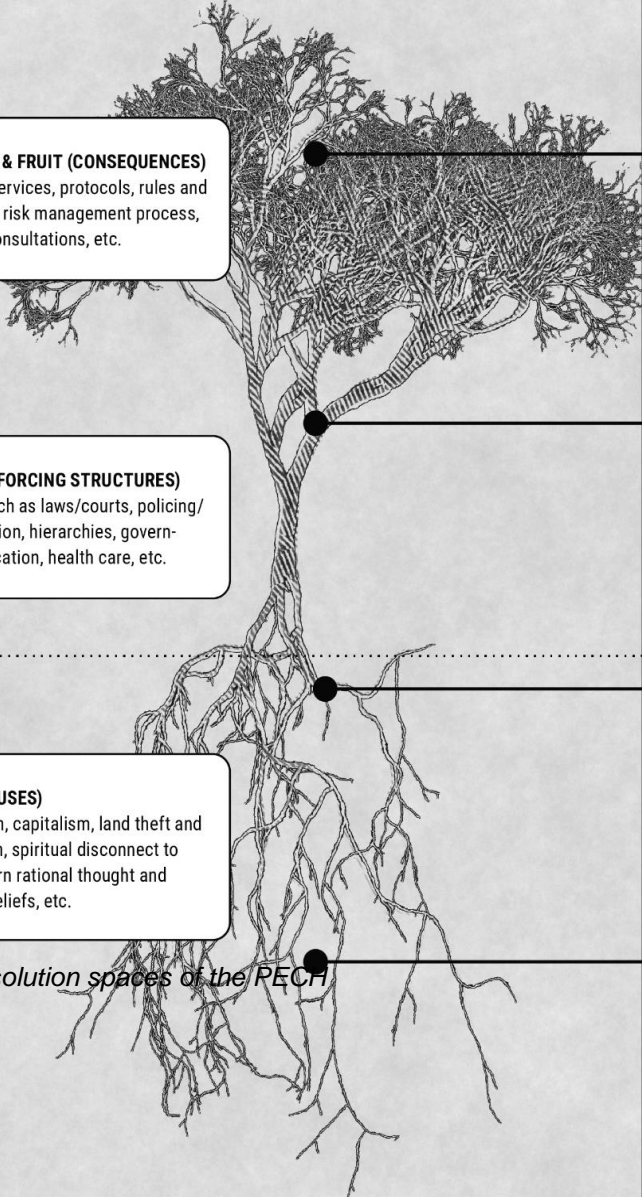


Figure 4: Tree Analogy depicting the problem and solution spaces of the PECH

Solution Space Interventions for Transformation

Broadening Our Current Housing / Prevention Support Continuum
Increased capacity at all levels of current continuum + Broadening the continuum to support deeper level of complexity and to prevent people from falling rapidly into homelessness reducing access to housing for broad groups of our population.

Community-Driven System Leadership
Establishing a Whole of Community Governance Model that will include Lived Experts, Equity Deserving Groups, System Leaders, ROW Staff. Disseminating system decision-making power to increase transparency, accountability and trust.

Centring Lived Expertise and Equity-Owed Groups
Through this the system will better see itself, avoid future mistakes and be better equipped to acknowledge ongoing trauma, loss and death. Striving for Restoration, Reconciliation.

Defining and Combining our Housing First and Human Rights Approaches
Human Rights needs to be a building block of our community approach to housing—alongside Housing First—and should drive our empathy, action and advocacy.

Interventions for System Transformation

Responding directly to our articulation of the Problem(s) Lived Experts and Co-Creators identified four (4) High-level System Interventions.

1. Broadening Our Current Housing / Prevention Support Continuum
2. Community-Driven System Leadership
3. Centring Lived Expertise and Equity-Owed Groups
4. Define and Combine our Housing First and Human-Rights Approaches

(LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

These interventions also interact and support each other in different ways. For example, Intervention 1 is outcome driven (the “what”) and meant to react quickly with resources to address current service gaps in the system. However, this continuum of needed housing and supports will shift over time alongside our population and system environment. Interventions 2, 3 and 4 are process-driven (the “how”) and are the methods we use to continuously update and implement in alignment with changing needs in our community.

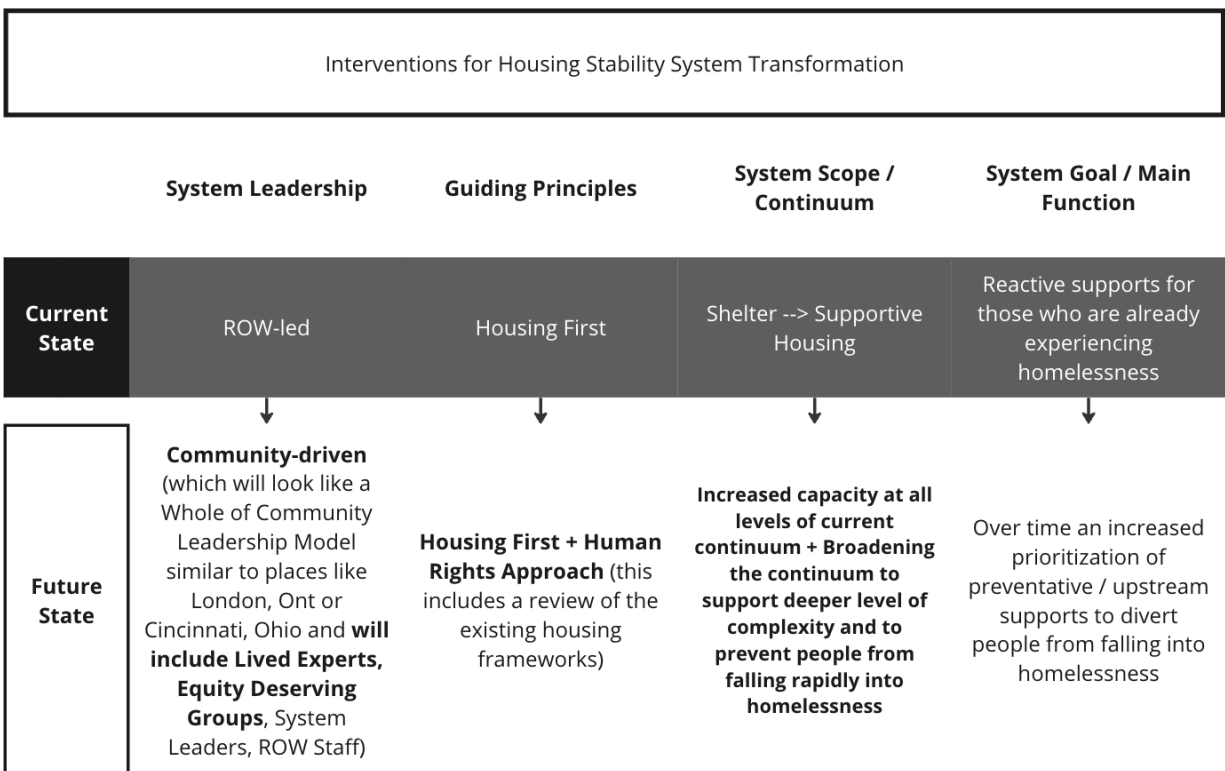


Figure 5. Current State and Future State of Interventions for Housing Stability System Transformation

Intervention 1: Broadening Our Current Housing / Prevention Support Continuum

We will increase capacity at all levels of current housing continuum and we will broaden the continuum to support deeper levels of complexity and to prevent people from falling rapidly into homelessness.

Housing Continuum

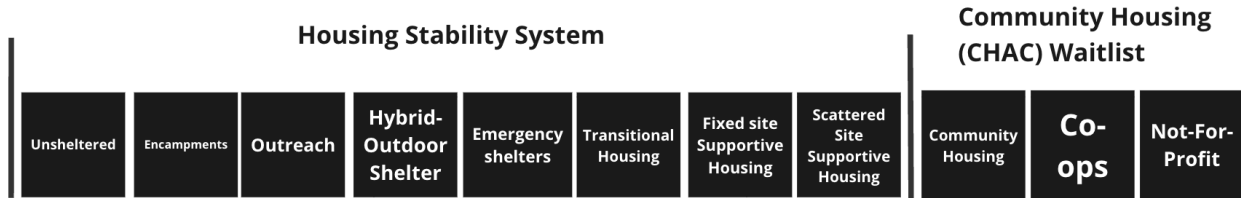


Figure 6. Housing Continuum

Prevention and Supports Continuum

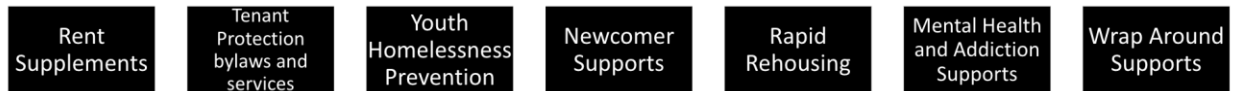


Figure 7. Prevention and Supports Continuum

“If we can’t fix whatever led them to homelessness, we aren’t going to solve it” –

Engagement Participant

Intervention 2: Community-Driven System Leadership

We will establish a Whole of Community Leadership Model that includes Lived Experts, Equity-Owed groups, service providers, system leaders, area municipalities and ROW Staff. The goal of establishing community-driven system leadership is to disseminate system decision-making power to increase transparency and trust and responsibility to ensure that the system is built to be accountable to the needs of those experiencing homelessness. We will follow and learn from examples of other communities who have taken a similar approach including London (Ontario), Edmonton (Alberta), and Cincinnati (USA).

We envision this Whole of Community Leadership Model to be built around key governance tables. This new structure would have decision-making power over the implementation of the PECH. The Model will also work toward an integrated systems planning approach. The role of the Region as the Service System Manager remains, but would move from singularly driving these decisions to collaborating and supporting—working alongside the new leadership tables to guide PECH implementation. As diagrammed below, PECH Implementation will be centred on the work of System Interventions and Strategic Focus Area Recommendations. *Also see page 44 - 62 for more details.*



Figure 8. Community-Driven System Leadership Diagram

We are recommending that from April to December of 2024 PECH Co-Creators along with the SDC Prototyping Cohort work to design and implement this Model (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024). This will include activities such as creating a member Terms of Reference, developing policy and procedure for model operation, etc.

Situating the PECH

The creation of the Whole of Community Leadership Table will allow us to better intersect and coordinate with other sectors and the system planning table. It will be important to have representation from the following groups to ensure we are creating opportunities for enhanced system integration.

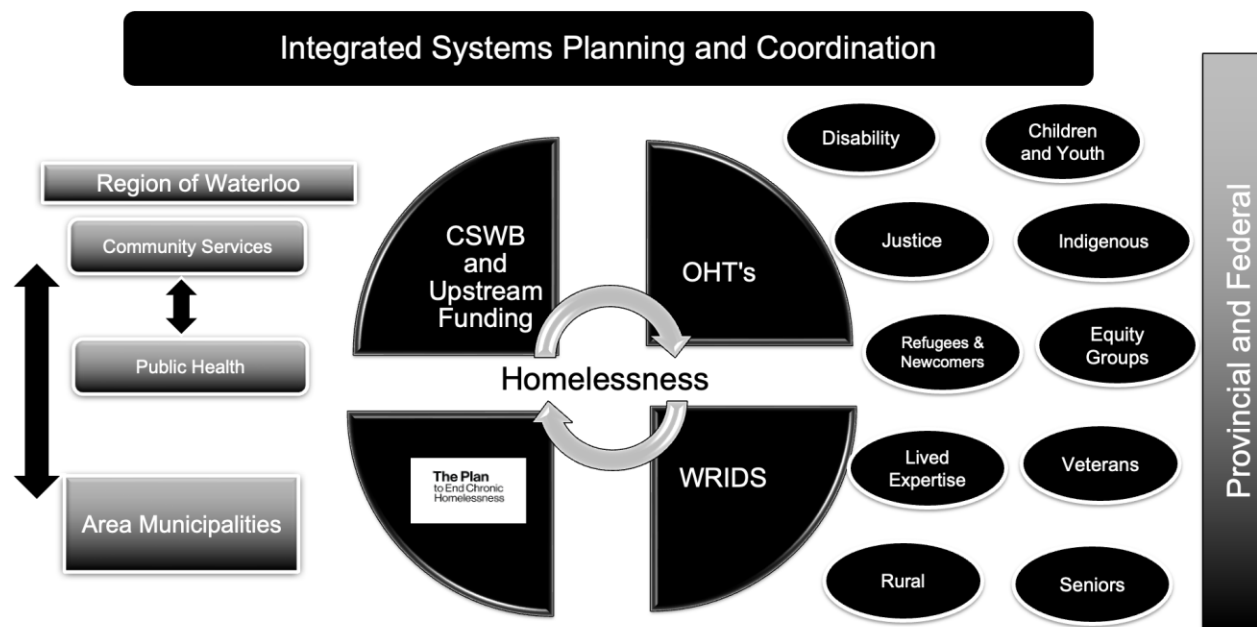


Figure 9. Whole of Systems Coordination Diagram

“Last time implementation was driven by the Region, power dynamics became an issue.” —

Engagement Participant

Intervention 3: Centring Lived Expertise and Equity-Owed Groups

Through this intervention, “the system will better see itself”, avoid future mistakes and be better equipped to acknowledge ongoing trauma, loss and death (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024). There is deep work to do to restore trust with those who have been marginalized. As well, there is acknowledgement that the system must do better with community members of Indigenous, racialized and intersectional groups where reconciliation and equity is owing in order to have systems of support and resources that go further to move towards an equitable and inclusive whole of community. We will do these through a variety of methods including:



Figure 10. Ways we will centre Lived Expertise and Equity-Owed Groups

“Listen to lived experience.” —Engagement Participant

Intervention 4: Defining and Combining our Housing First and Human Rights approaches

Human Rights needs to be a building block of our community approach to housing (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)—alongside Housing First—and should drive our empathy, action and advocacy. **It is important to note that we are not moving away from a Housing First approach, but updating it to match our current context.**

The SDC Lived Experts Prototyping Cohort has defined our Human Rights approach as:

People experiencing homelessness are treated as rights holders, where their agency is respected, and where the Region has a duty of care for their housing needs. Region will be compliant with national and international human rights law and ensure it is appropriately prioritized amidst other legal obligations such as those regarding property rights, privacy and liability. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

There is work to be done as the PECH is implemented and as the Whole of Community Governance Leadership Model is established to validate this and integrate it with our existing Housing First principles.

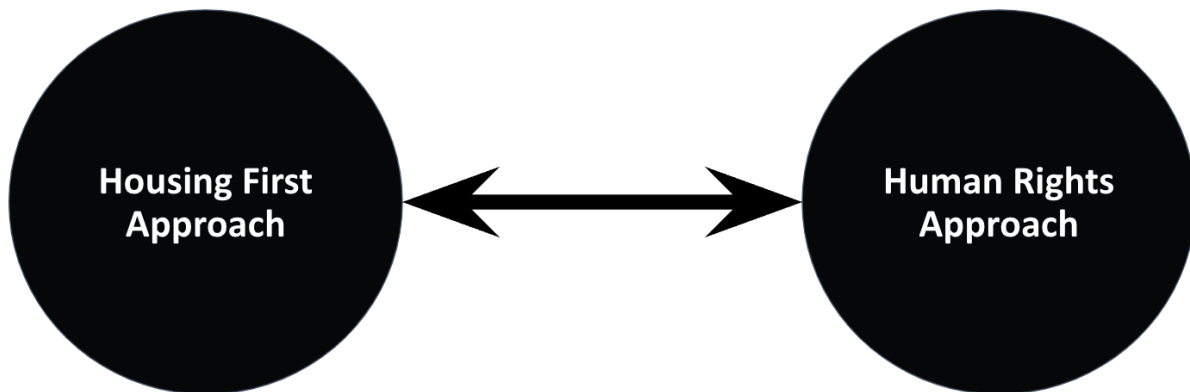


Figure 11. Housing First Approach Integration with Human Rights Approach Diagram

“To say we’re a Housing First community is ringing less-and-less true given the lack of wrap-around health supports that are inherent to the model and critical to its

success.” —Engagement Participant

Strategic Focus Areas

Strategic Focus Areas

The below high-level PECH Focus Areas are in *draft form*. They emerged from our collaborative sense-making activities (of our Community Engagement and Needs Analysis) with the Co-Creator Group in August of 2023 and have been refined several times since. These Focus Areas were used as categories to ideate PECH Actions—tangible initiatives that the PECH will outline.

- Create Policy and System Accountability
- Centre Community Voices
- Build System Bridges
- Advance Equitable Housing
- Focus on Preventing Homelessness
- Change the Narrative on Housing and Homelessness
- Advocate and Collaborate for Broader Change

How our Strategic Focus Areas Support our System Interventions

The PECH Strategic Focus Areas, underlying Actions provide tangible descriptions of the work of implementing our High-Level System Interventions. The chart below illustrates how the work of the Strategic Focus Areas advance each for the System Interventions. Black dots indicate where the work of each Focus Area contributes to bringing about each of the System Interventions.

High-Level System Interventions	Strategic Focus Areas						
	Large categories of work / activity within the Plan						
	Create Policy and System Accountability	CENTRE COMMUNITY VOICES	BUILD SYSTEM BRIDGES	ADVANCE EQUITABLE HOUSING	FOCUS ON PREVENTING HOMELESSNES	CHANGE THE NARRATIVE ON HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS	Advocate and Collaborate for Broader Change
Strengthen Policy and System Accountability within the HSS and with Adjacent Sectors	Centre Lived Expertise, Racial Justice, Social Justice and shift power relationships	Increase and Broaden Collaboration Within the Homelessness System and with Adjacent Sectors	Create a Variety of Housing to Meet Diverse Needs	Address Both Economic and Social-Economic Causes of Chronic Homelessness	Foster a Shared Community Response	Coordinate our advocacy efforts to bring about broader changes	
Broadening Our Current Housing/Support Continuum	●		●	●	●		●
Community-Driven System Leadership	●	●	●		●	●	●
Applying an Intersectional Human Rights Lens to all system attributes	●	●		●	●	●	
Centring Lived Expertise and Equity-Deserving Groups	●	●	●		●	●	●

Figure 12. How each PECH Focus Area contributes to the System Interventions

Focus Area #1: Create Policy and System Accountability

Strengthen Policy and System Accountability within the HSS and with Adjacent Sectors

We will review and update current HSS programs, policies and frameworks. This work will be facilitated by the Service System Manager in collaboration with the Whole of Community Leadership structure and will be ongoing as the PECH is implemented. This work will include ensuring policies and frameworks are integrated with our Housing First and Human Rights approach, applying a gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) lens to homelessness prevention policy, establishing Reconciliation, Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (REDI) specific strategies and Indigenous-focused reconciliation strategies. There will also be a focus on creating frameworks and MOUs with other systems (i.e. health, justice, etc).

Summary:

- Revise Homelessness & Supportive Housing Frameworks to align with Housing First and Housing as a Human Right principles, emphasizing cultural competency, anti-oppression, and GBA+ lenses.
- Implement a housing-focused Street Outreach Framework and Human Rights Based Approach encampment response protocol to aid those experiencing unsheltered homelessness (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024).
- Apply an intersectional GBA+ lens to homelessness prevention policies, targeting equitable housing outcomes for women and gender-diverse individuals.
- Expand the Coordinated Access System (PATHS) to improve integration between critical system partnerships, enhancing service pathways, connections, and permanent housing outcomes. Launch a Housing Stability System Data Strategy to monitor progress and establish data-informed decision-making processes.

Focus Area #2: Centre Community Voices

Centre Lived Expertise, Racial Justice, Social Justice and shift power relationships

We will centre community voices by shifting roles, ownership, and accountability in the HSS. This is more than an “amplification” of voices as that suggests we are maintaining systems of oppression—we need to completely redesign how we include interest-holders in this work. Advancing a Whole of Community approach, where lived/living expertise of chronic homelessness, racial equity, and social justice are central in decision-making, funding choices, and policy creation, will ensure the homelessness system will be culturally competent, inclusive, and proactive in addressing systemic harm. For this to succeed, traditional power holders also need to let power transfer to others. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Summary:

- Establish All of Community Leadership Table to oversee chronic homelessness plan implementation.
- Develop Lived Expertise process with regional representation for policy review. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Create partnerships, strategies, and funding streams specific to REDI to enhance equitable homelessness response supports and initiatives.
- Expand partnerships and networks to include Black, Indigenous, and Racialized groups, as well as other marginalized communities with intersecting systemic challenges.
- Implement annual funding for community organizations addressing homelessness. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Focus Area #3: Build System Bridges

Increase and Broaden Collaboration Within the Homelessness System and with Adjacent Sectors

We will establish greater system collaboration and integration—within and with other sectors including healthcare, justice, rural, income support and other social determinants of health serving systems. Silos are barriers to access—by welcoming and encouraging more collaboration, we can explore and reduce the duplicity of work and barriers to access to enhance system navigability. This means resourcing and advocating for partnerships in the implementation of the PECH to implement trauma-informed and harm-reduction (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024) solutions that respond to the intersections between the drug and housing crises.

Summary:

- Identify surplus/underutilized land for housing, and partner with municipalities, nonprofits, faith-based groups, and postsecondary institutions to create more housing options and address homelessness. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Integrate health and homelessness services to coordinate efforts with local health system partners to enhance care integration, involving Ontario Health Teams, Public Health, hospitals, mental health providers, and community health programs.
- Support newcomers experiencing homelessness by aligning initiatives with resettlement organizations to provide support for newcomers facing homelessness across the region. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Focus Area #4: Advance Equitable Housing

Create a Variety of Housing to Meet Diverse Needs

We will create more variety and quantity of housing offerings that respond to a spectrum of needs—developing an HSS that is accessible and responsive to all including Indigenous led and equity-owed groups. This includes increasing the quantity of our current shelter, transitional housing and supportive housing stock. This is about getting creative with how we create quality housing options for our community—such as repurposing and re-habiting municipal or local structures, developing social enterprises, and establishing community land trusts.

Summary:

- Develop Seniors Strategy within PECH, and collaborate on Rural Homelessness and Veteran homelessness initiatives.
- Increasing supportive housing to address the highest complexity of substance use and concurrent mental health needs. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Building capacity for Indigenous and equity-owed groups to respond to the needs of their communities in a culturally appropriate approach. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Focus Area #5: Focus on Preventing Homelessness

Address Both Economic and Social-Economic Causes of Chronic Homelessness

We will address the root causes of homelessness by being preventative and viewing those experiencing homelessness as a whole person (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024). By focusing on upstream action with key populations such as youth, seniors, veterans, newcomers, students, Indigenous people, those who are gender-diverse and those who identify with a disability we aim to prevent experiences of homelessness. Our goal is to shift the main focus of the HSS from reactive with emergency supports to providing preventative and proactive services and programs.

Summary:

- Partner with municipalities for policies and programs to preserve affordable housing and promote development, reducing chronic homelessness inflow.
- Strengthen eviction prevention via enhanced rent bank and rapid rehousing, aiming for significant inflow reduction.
- Establish a Youth Strategy to address homeless youth needs and prevent future generations' homelessness. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Expand multi-service housing hubs for universal access to support and public space availability for people experiencing homelessness. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Focus Area #6: Change the Narrative on Housing and Homelessness

Foster a Shared Community Response

We will change the narrative and increase community empathy and spirit regarding homelessness inequities. This includes a narrative of shared responsibility and action, and a recognition of the many community members of our community currently supporting this shift in narrative and contributing to solutions. Deepening public understanding and providing ways for individuals to see themselves as part of a community approach to ending chronic homelessness in Waterloo Region will create trust, transparency, accountability, and dispel myths and misconceptions about poverty and experiences of chronic homelessness (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)—this about is the social change required to support our goal of systemic transformation.

Summary:

- Launch comprehensive public engagement and education initiative targeting partners, government, businesses, and residents to raise awareness of homelessness challenges and responses. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Implement robust Housing Stability System Data Strategy to track progress on ending chronic homelessness, inform decision-making, and support advocacy efforts. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Focus Area #7: Advocate and Collaborate for Broader Change

Coordinate our advocacy efforts to influence broader changes

We will combine our advocacy efforts within our community to secure resources and policy changes needed to achieve our goal. To do this we must present a united and coordinated advocacy strategy (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024), which includes working more closely with Area Municipalities, agencies, faith-based organizations and grassroots advocates. Homelessness is a problem that requires alignment with and support from other levels of government—advocating and collaborating strategically will allow us to affect broader change.

Summary:

- Forge partnerships with schools, universities, and colleges to involve academics in housing strategy development under the Whole of Community Leadership Model. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Integrate PECH activities with local addiction and harm reduction initiatives for holistic support to homeless individuals. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Create and execute an advocacy plan to enhance multi-tiered responses to chronic homelessness. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Actions

Actions

Our 30 PECH Actions are clear projects, initiatives, and/or achievements we will work toward. Each Action aligns with one or more Strategic Focus Areas. Below we have grouped Actions by the Focus Group they most strongly align with; however, a key feature of the resiliency and flexibility of our PECH is that progress toward any one Action moves us forward toward multiple Strategic Focus Areas.

It is imperative that these actions be reviewed with an understanding that further work to prioritize them and assign system accountability is necessary and still to come. No one organization, sector, or level of government can solve the crisis of homelessness in isolation. As such, accountability for leading these actions will lie with community organizations, all three levels of government, civil society, and the community leadership table.

Create Policy and System Accountability

- 1.1 Revise current Homelessness & Supportive Housing Frameworks to ensure all Housing Stability System programs/services operate according to Housing First and Housing as a Human Right principles, cultural competency, anti-oppression, gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) lenses and ensure that equity and reconciliation are centred within all system frameworks. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- 1.2 Implement a housing-focused Street Outreach Framework and a Human Rights Based Approach encampment response protocol (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024) to better support people living rough/experiencing unsheltered homelessness.
- 1.3 Apply an intersectional gender-based analysis plus (GBA+) lens to homelessness prevention policy and strategies to ensure equitable housing outcomes are advanced for women, and gender-diverse individuals and communities.
- 1.4 Expand the local Coordinated Access System (PATHS) to enhance integration and coordination between health, addictions, mental health, acquired brain injury, justice, income support, child welfare, and other critical system partnerships to increase service pathways, service connections, and permanent housing outcomes.
- 1.5 Implement a Housing Stability System Workforce Strategy, across the region, to ensure a professionalized and healthy workforce. We will advance salary and benefit compensation, employee well-being and retention, as well as training and professional development.
- 1.6 Launch a Housing Stability System Data Strategy to monitor and track progress on ending chronic homelessness and establish data-informed decision-making processes.
- 1.7 Implement a User Experience Strategy, across the region, to ensure system service users are supported in all Housing Stability System programs and services. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- 1.8 Create a climate and extreme weather protocol based on a human rights approach. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Centre Community Voices

- 2.1 Establish an All of Community Leadership Table to lead the implementation of The Plan to End Chronic Homelessness recommendations and perform ongoing assessments of activities and progress towards our community's goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2030 . The work of the All of Community Leadership table will be to ensure systems and strategic planning integration that work together to end chronic homelessness. This will include: Ontario Health Teams Strategic Plans, Region of Waterloo Strategic Plan, Waterloo Integrated Drug Strategy, Rural Upstream Collaborative-Engage Rural and the Community Safety and Wellbeing Plan.
- 2.2 Develop a comprehensive and integrative Lived Expertise process, including establishing a Lived Expert Working Group, with representation from across the region, to support ongoing learning and system reviews of organizational and system policies and processes. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- 2.3 Establish REDI-specific partnerships, strategies and funding streams to advance equitable homelessness response supports and initiatives to build capacity.

REDI work is inclusive of not only Black, Indigenous, and Racialized groups, but also groups where there is established systemic intersectionality. These partnerships, relationships and networks are currently lacking and must be expanded to a great extent. Where work is currently underway such as with Black communities, Indigenous communities, communities supporting physical disabilities, developmental disabilities, acquired brain injury, people living in rural areas, as well as, people experiencing criminalization in the Justice system, these relationships must be built out and resourced in order to flourish.

- 2.4 Establish an annual funding application and review process for community organizations, across the region, to support emerging ideas and prototypes to respond to homelessness. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Build System Bridges

- 3.1** | Identify surplus/underutilized land(s) with the intention of creating more housing options and respond to unsheltered experiences of homelessness, across the region. We will do this through partnerships with area municipalities/townships, not-for-profits, faith-based organizations, and postsecondary institutions. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- 3.2** | Establish specific health-related coordination efforts, processes, and supports with local health system partners to create a more integrated health and homelessness system of care. This includes embedding the work of the PECH within the local Ontario Health Teams, Public Health programs, local hospitals, mental health and addictions providers, community health programs, and other health system programs across the region.
- 3.3** | Align the PECH and related initiatives with local resettlement organizations and services to support Newcomers to Canada experiencing homelessness across the region. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Advance Equitable Housing

- 4.1 Implement Indigenous homelessness and Indigenous-focused reconciliation strategies, led by Indigenous groups and leaders, to enhance permanent housing outcomes for Indigenous communities and support generational healing, guided by Key Concerns identified through Wellbeing Waterloo, Truth and Reconciliation Commission Calls to Action, The National Inquiry into Missing and Murdered Indigenous Women and Girls Calls to Justice, and the United Nations Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples.
- 4.2 Expand on use of existing community housing stock to increase permanent housing outcomes for individuals experiencing homelessness; including the use of community housing units to support people who have recovered from their experience of homelessness to leave Supportive Housing
- 4.3 Create new permanent Affordable and Supportive Housing to meet current and future housing needs to end chronic homelessness. This includes deeply therapeutic and harm reduction-focused Supportive Housing to ensure those with the greatest depth of need are supported to stay housed. (Our current 570 Supportive housing units are meeting 50% of our current need) (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- 4.4 Create a Seniors Strategy, embedded within the broader PECH, to respond to the unique needs of Seniors experiencing homelessness, including but not limited to addressing lack of social connection and income support for Seniors experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness due to a lack of affordability in the private market and appropriate housing options.
- 4.5 Co-Create with rural based agencies a Rural Homelessness strategy and actions, embedded within the border PECH, to address the unique needs of people at risk of or experiencing homelessness in each of the four Townships.
- 4.6 Implement alongside system partners, a housing-focused strategy with dedicated resources to end Veteran homelessness.

Focus on Preventing Homelessness

- 5.1** Reduce inflow into chronic homelessness by working with area municipalities to implement policies and programs focused on mitigating the loss of affordable housing in the private market, while continuing to incent affordable housing development. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Expand on inflow prevention and eviction prevention work through the expansion of the rent fund, eviction prevention (from all housing including supportive and community housing) and rehousing services to significantly reduce inflow into chronic homelessness.
- 5.2** Create a Youth Strategy, embedded within the broader PECH, to respond to the unique needs of youth experiencing homelessness and develop upstream approaches that target youth at risk of experiencing homelessness and end generational experiences of homelessness. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- 5.3** Expand and create new multi-service agency housing hubs across Waterloo Region to ensure universal access to community-based supports that increase housing stability and for public spaces to be readily available for individuals experiencing homelessness outside of shelter operating hours. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Change the Narrative on Housing and Homelessness

- 6.1 Launch a comprehensive public engagement and education strategy for partners, Council, area municipalities, provincial and federal government, businesses, and residents to increase awareness and understanding of homelessness related challenges and responses. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- 6.2 Implement a comprehensive Housing Stability System Data Strategy to monitor and track progress on ending chronic homelessness and establish data-informed decision-making processes. This resource will also be leveraged to support advocacy efforts and inform our community of the realities of homelessness. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- 6.3 Establish an ongoing memorializing process for those lost to homelessness. This includes partnering with interest-holders in the Housing Stability System, Lived Experts, Mutual Aid Groups, Unsheltered Communities, and the Coroner's Office. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Advocate and Collaborate for Broader Change

- 7.1** | Strengthen partnerships with school boards, local universities and colleges to ensure that professors and academics in multiple fields are engaged in developing upstream education programs on the risks of homelessness. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- 7.2** | Align the All of Community Leadership Model and PECH activities with existing addictions, substance use, and harm reduction community-led initiatives to ensure integrative supports for individuals experiencing homelessness active in their substance-use. This includes alignment and integration with WRIDS, Public Health, and other community-based services and supports across the region.
- 7.3** | Develop and implement a coordinated advocacy and inter-governmental relations plan to strengthen a multi-tiered response to chronic homelessness. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

The background of the page is a light gray map of the Waterloo Region, showing a dense network of streets and roads. The map is centered and covers the entire page.

Investment Strategy

2024–2030

Investment Strategy 2024-2030

To respond to the growing homelessness and affordable housing crisis, the Region of Waterloo is directing unprecedented investments towards programs, supports, and capital projects to meet the needs across the community. In 2024, the Region of Waterloo will invest more than \$245 million into Affordable Housing and Homelessness, including capital and operating investments, from all sources of funding. Of the approximately \$245 million invested across the housing continuum, 23% is directed towards homelessness and supportive housing programs.

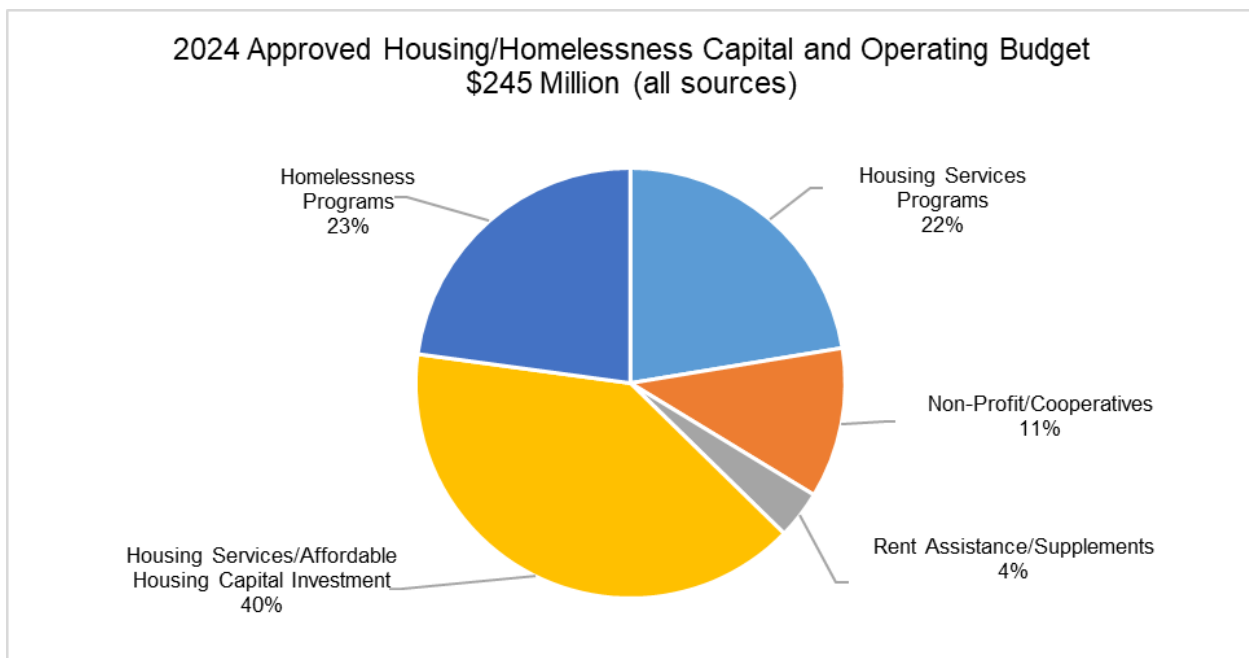


Figure 13. highlights the current investment by the Region of Waterloo, from all sources, in Housing and Homelessness. Of the \$245 million invested in 2024, 23% is directed towards Homelessness and Supportive Housing.

Between 2019 and 2024, the Region has increased municipal tax levy and reserve investment in this critical service area from \$42 million to approximately \$99 million, signalling a deep and historic commitment to achieving homes for all in Waterloo Region. This level of municipal commitment to homelessness and affordable housing is unique when compared to other Regional governments and System Service Managers in Ontario.

To reach a functional end of chronic homelessness in Waterloo Region, significant capital and operating investments are required from all levels of government. It is estimated that a total capital investment in emergency shelter, transitional housing and

supportive housing of \$110M will be required. Operating expenditure increases of approximately \$5M - \$8M annually for the next six years in order to fully implement the Plan can be expected. The range will depend on the extent and nature of capital financing costs required to meet the needs of the community at that time.

The staggering investment needed to address this growing crisis is required from all sectors and levels of government. To achieve an end to chronic homelessness in Waterloo Region, a deepening of commitment and engagement is needed from all levels of government, public and private sector, and key system partners (healthcare, mental health and addictions, justice, etc.). This shared community challenge is not to be owned or solved by one order of government in isolation.

The Investment Plan and Strategy address the immediate community needs and plans for a more stable and outcomes-focused future where every resident of Waterloo Region has a place to call home. This Investment Plan and Strategy shifts the collective focus from reactive emergency-based responses to upstream intervention and permanent solutions. We will shift our collective approach from managing homelessness to ending it.

Shifting the Collective Focus: Managing Homelessness to Ending It

The significant investment into homelessness services and programs cannot be overstated. At approximately 23% of the total investment made by the Region of Waterloo into Affordable Housing and Homelessness, this level of commitment and investment is unprecedented. \$56 million will be invested into homelessness and supportive housing programs in 2024. Despite this significant and encouraging commitment and investment into the local Housing Stability System, currently the majority of funding is dedicated towards reactive and emergency-based responses as the local crisis of homelessness continues to rise at alarming rates. The Plan to End Chronic Homelessness sets out to shift the collective focus towards permanent housing outcomes and upstream interventions so the significant investments being made into the system have a greater return on investment and, most importantly, create permanent housing outcomes for the most vulnerable residents of Waterloo Region.

Current State: Managing Homelessness

Inspiring homelessness prevention and supportive housing work happens on a day-to-day basis across the Housing Stability System and this work cannot be undervalued or overlooked. Since 2019, the Housing Stability System and related investments have been directed towards managing the growing homelessness crisis, including the development of hundreds of emergency shelter beds, increasing street outreach, and hybrid shelter models.

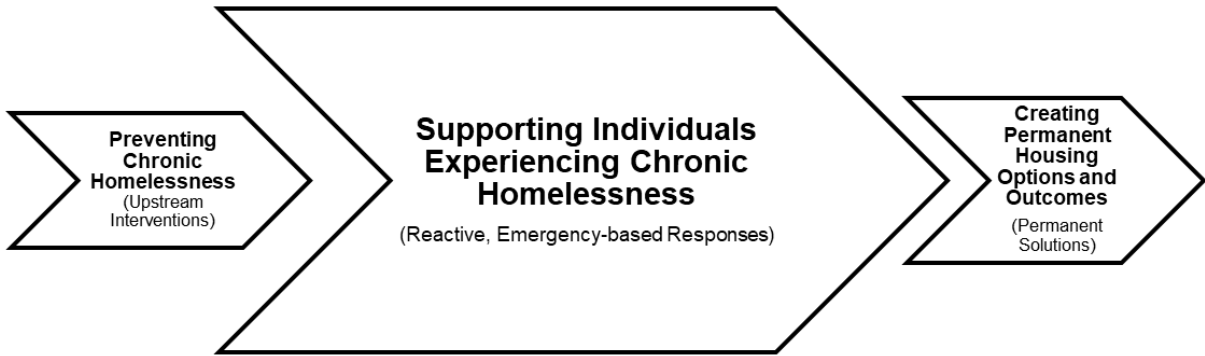


Figure 15. Current state: Managing Homelessness

Future State: Ending Homelessness

As the Plan begins to be implemented, the strategic shift that is required is moving towards a system that is focused on ending homelessness rather than managing it. This means investing resources towards preventing chronic homelessness and creating permanent housing options and outcomes. This shift does not mean reducing service standard levels for individuals experiencing homelessness rather, the intention is to strengthen efforts to meet the needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness so their experiencing of homelessness can be brief, rare, and non-recurring.

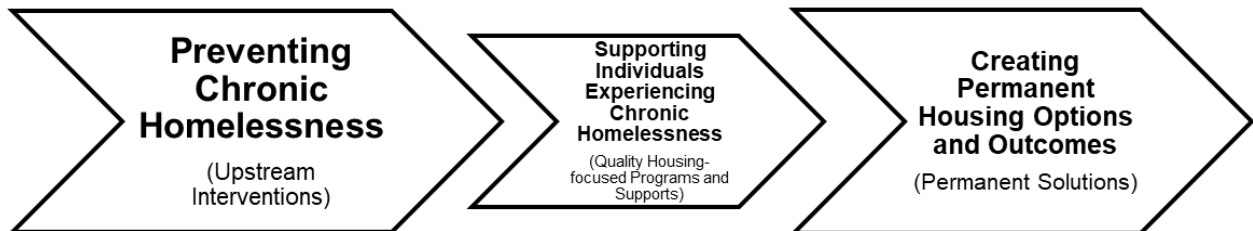


Figure 16. Future state: Ending Homelessness



Tracking Our Progress

KPIs, Outcomes, Solutions and Experiences

Tracking Our Progress—KPIs

As a Built for Zero community (<https://bfzcanada.ca/getting-to-zero/>) we know that the path to ending chronic homelessness is best supported by a data-driven and collaborative peer-learning approach. We also know from other Built for Zero communities that experiencing homelessness is not about having bad luck or the result of individual choices, it is a systems problem that is solvable.

Waterloo Region has achieved a quality by-name list of people experiencing chronic homelessness and a Reaching Home ([About Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy](#)) defined coordinated access system (that works to ensure that those with the greatest depth of need are prioritized for housing vacancies). These are key milestones that work towards ensuring we have the data to understand the scope of the issue, help to make data-informed decisions, and measure progress towards ending all experiences of chronic homelessness.

Establishing and monitoring key performance indicators (KPIs) will be an essential part of the implementation of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, and will be a collaborative responsibility amongst various community and system partners who will make up the All of Community Leadership Table.

We need to set measurable goals and measure progress. We also need to prioritize investments that will help us achieve our goals.

As outlined in the investment strategy, we know that more financial resources and attention need to be put to Preventing Chronic Homelessness and Creating Permanent Housing Outcomes. The more we can invest in preventing experiences of chronic homelessness (Focus Area #5) and accelerate permanent housing outcomes from experiences of chronic homelessness (Focus Area #4), the faster we will achieve our community's goal of Functional Zero chronic homelessness.

Establishing performance indicators and measuring our communities progress towards achieving functional zero chronic homelessness will rest within three areas:

- 1) **Inflow** - Preventing Experiences of Chronic Homelessness: how are the programs, services, and interventions within our community working together to prevent experiences of chronic homelessness to occur?
- 2) **Active** - Supporting Individuals Experiencing Chronic Homelessness: how are the strategies and actions of our community working to reduce the overall number of people experiencing chronic homelessness?

- 3) **Outflow** - Creating Permanent Housing Options and Outcomes: how are investments in permanent housing and permanent housing with supports (Supportive Housing) supporting people to quickly and permanently end experiences of chronic homelessness?

We know that racialized, black, and Indigenous communities are overrepresented amongst people experiencing homelessness. As part of the work to establish community performance indicators, it will be essential to better collect, report on, and act on identity based data. We will need to work alongside Indigenous, black, and racialized communities to better understand and address the disparities and disproportionalities as we work to create equitable systems that work together and serve the housing, health, and human needs of all community members. At the heart of this work will be creating and nourishing relationships with equity-owed groups to better understand their community's experiences of homelessness, and supporting these communities' self-determined priorities and actions to address homelessness within their community.

Change Management Approach

Change Management Approach

Our change management approach consists of five elements:

- **A set of Shared Principles for Change**—these principles will guide those working to implement the PECH.
- **An integrated systems planning approach**—this will be achieved through the formation of a Whole of Community leadership Table that includes the Region of Waterloo (SSM), Area Municipalities, community leaders and lived experts and equity-owed groups/sectors.
- **An investment in the Equipping of Community Leaders and ROW Staff** to practise and implement change management, providing a path forward for authentic system transformation.
- **The Two Loops Model of Systems Change** is a nonlinear theory of system change. It provides a useful framework to understand the transformation process occurring within the HSS.
- **Short-term Action Plan and Next Steps** to keep the work and momentum moving forward

Shared Principles for Change

By following and enacting our **shared principles** to inform our decision-making, guide our behaviour and shape our values as a community:

- Have Lived Expertise Leadership throughout to help the system see itself
- Champion Intersectional Human Rights
- Prioritize Human Well-being Over the Financialization of Housing
- Reform governance and service systems
- Solutions must be for and by equity-owned communities
- Commit to Safe Housing First

(LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Incorporate Lived Expertise Leadership Throughout

- Through this the system will better see itself (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024) and be further equipped to acknowledge ongoing trauma, loss and death.
- Incorporating lived expertise leadership ensures our past mistakes are not repeated and enables us to try new approaches from a bottom-up approach.
- Homelessness is a wicked problem meaning that it is highly complex. To solve complex problems we must explore, test, and iterate to find solutions. This work requires committing to responsive adaptation and a recognition that "messy is a process." (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Champion Intersectional Human Rights

- Human Rights needs to be a building block for our community approach to housing and should drive our empathy, action and advocacy. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- There are deep wounds that need to be healed in our community. Restorative conflict resolution offers a possible pathway. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Recognize that everyone involved brings their whole self to this work of reconciliation - by using the mind, heart, body and spirit to take appropriate actions and rebuild communities of care. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Intersectionality must also be a core tenant of our approach as each individual's story and situation is unique and must be accommodated for. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Decriminalize poverty and homelessness – policing, bylaws enforcement, risk management, policies and procedures (e.g., neo-vagrancy bylaws) to be either removed or transformed to benefit the poor and the homeless. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Prioritize Human Well-being Over Financial Gain

- An economic and value shift is required related to our perception of housing. Currently, being over-housed is a measure of success in our current society. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- "Housing is both a human right and a speculative commodity from which to extract wealth. Therein lies the crux of the housing problem. Until we fully reconcile these contradictory roles that housing plays, we will be in a perpetual state of crisis."—(Doucet, Mcdougall and Jay 2023) (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Challenge the appropriation and privatization of the Indigenous land – partner with the Six Nations of the Grand River, Haudenosaunee Confederacy Chiefs Council, and local First Nations, Inuit and Metis communities and release public lands for alternative housing solutions outside of the private market to Indigenous-led groups, while providing capital funding and capacity building support.

Reform governance and service systems

- Requires a redistribution of power and resources to lived experience groups, equity-owed groups, and community-based entities for the irreplaceable work they do alongside service providers. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- ROW/SSM role/responsibility for systems accountability/coordination and funding allocations will also include backbone support to the community systems table rather than singular decision-maker through the Whole of Community Leadership Model.
- By focusing at the trunk and root levels of this issue we will create change—funding sustainable prevention, committing to continual and intentional evaluation of solutions and leveraging data and evidence to inform our decisions and discussions (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Rebuild communities and involve the capacity of the whole community

- Redirect/invest resources to equity-serving organizations that are doing this work and are led by deserving groups to ensure a “for them, by them” approach is taken for increasing service system capacity. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Homelessness is an equity issue, as such we need to include non-traditional partners, systems and voices in decision-making. By leveraging the collective intelligence and experience in our community we will solve this community problem. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

- View residents, support groups, advocates, and activists as a part of the continuum of care that reaches from informal to formal system supports, with both types of support complementing each other. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- A collaborative or co-design solutions approach is imperative to build trust with those in the community most impacted by homelessness and for others in the community to see themselves as a part of solutions. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Commit to Safe Housing First

- Housing First (HF) will remain an important foundation to our Community Approach to Housing, however it needs to be reviewed/refined with a Human Rights approach. HF must be updated to match our current context and to ensure it is not perpetuating harm to individuals we are trying to support. The application of HF currently prioritizes permanent and supportive housing solutions, flexible wrap-around supports, and integration of health supports. To further implement HF alongside a Human Rights approach requires self-determination and choice to be upheld during experiences of homelessness and for this to continue once someone is housed. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Rethink public land both as a source of housing and reframing it as a health support. Right now, anybody who is rendered homeless has nowhere to be legally. Which directly impacts their health. How might we integrate those two possibilities to consider a lack of housing as a health issue fundamentally? (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- Tailoring solutions to housing (i.e. integrated health supports that address social determinants of health) that meet a specific need is integral to keeping people housed.

Whole of Community Leadership – Integrated Systems Planning

The creation of a Whole of Community Leadership structure is a key element in the change management process for PECH. The change management goal is to transform the way in which the work of ending chronic homelessness is done in Waterloo Region. This structure will empower the community to have greater input and influence into prioritizing investments and actions needed to transform the Housing Stability System to achieve the vision set out in PECH.

At present this is a conceptual model that will be co-developed. The community leadership model would include the following:

- Membership will include the ROW as the Service System Manager(SSM), Area Municipalities and leadership from key sectors and groups that represent the diversity of the community voices that are needed to provide guidance into the implementation of the PECH.
- The role of the SSM will continue to oversee their mandated responsibilities for funding allocations and ensuring accountability to the system frameworks and outcomes.
- Moving to a community systems leadership mode will require more work to be done in defining the distinct and respective roles and responsibilities through a terms of reference. This work will be done in collaboration with the members of the current Co-Creator Table while continuing to invite broader representation from the community that will reflect the context of Waterloo Region.
- Establishing a community systems leadership model will ensure that the implementation of PECH will maintain an adaptive and inclusive leadership that is needed to respond to the current complexities and future challenges of chronic homelessness.
- Dedicated change management process will be required to help table partners to identify the differences of power and influence that they represent. The process must address cultural understandings and lived experience of community partnership that have been hindered by legacies of power and privilege. The goal is to create a new approach and collaboration that both respects the roles and responsibilities ascribed with embracing transparency for change and inclusion on the work to end chronic homelessness. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Whole of Community Leadership Conceptual Model

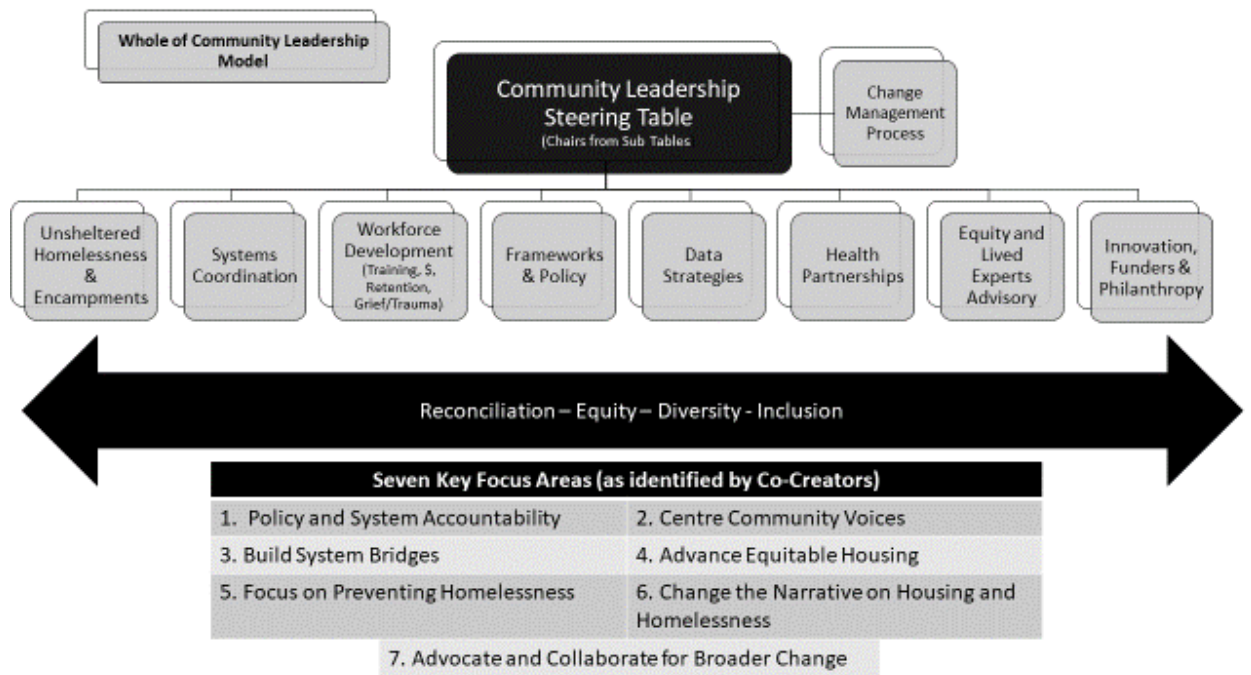


Figure 17. Conceptual Community Leadership Steering Table

An Investment in the Equipping of Community Leaders and ROW Staff

An investment in the Equipping of Community Leaders and ROW Staff to practise and implement change management, providing a path forward for authentic system transformation.

“**Nothing changes unless people do.**” concluded Scott Keller and Bill Schaninger when their 2019 research indicated that around 40% of change management failure is related to employee resistance and almost 35% to management behaviours that didn’t support change. *This is* a staggering display of how much people affect the outcome of change. 70% of change programmes fail. A large part of this sits with the leadership team and their ability to develop themselves and their people throughout the change. This is about seeing leaders as enablers of change rather than change agents, where their focus needs to be on creating an environment that encourages and facilitates change.” (Short, 2021)

The SDCWR Prototyping community of practice, which engaged marginalized voices with lived experience as well as SDCWR and ROW staff, discovered:

- That we as leaders, “get to go first” and model a way forward for others. There are no shortcuts.
- That this work is first and foremost relational work, requiring that we are present to ourselves, compassionate with one another, and passionate about finding and activating the best way forward for all. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- The importance of the ongoing investment of time and energy in creation of the conditions that encourage and facilitate adaptive change. This year long investment resulted in the evolution of prototypes which sought to address the problem of chronic homelessness. Prototype groups continue to adapt as they learn and respond to changing contexts and unanticipated challenges. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)

Ronald Heifetz, Marty Linsky, and Alexander Grashow are credited with developing the *Adaptive Leadership* framework. The framework distinguishes between technical fixes and adaptive change. When the problems we are seeking to solve overwhelm us, we often seek technical fixes, rather than placing ourselves on the necessary path of adaptive change. Change management requires us to appropriately transition from the application of shorter-term technical fixes to longer-term work of adaptive change. Technical issues rely on protocol, procedures, rules and regulations to solve them. Adaptive challenges, on the other hand, depend on dynamic, people-focused solutions. Responding adaptively is long-term, relatively simple and challenging to maintain over time. These ideas are based on the following quotes.

“The most common leadership failure stems from trying to apply technical solutions to adaptive challenges.”

The Practice of Adaptive Leadership: Tools and Tactics for Changing Your Organization and the World, Ronald A. Heifetz, Marty Linsky, Alexander Grashow, 2009, Harvard Business Review Press

“We look for solutions that are complex, easy, and quick when mostly they are simple, difficult, and long-term.”

ALL: CHANGE - Unlocking Kingdom Potential in a World We Weren't Prepared For, Rich Robinson, to be released Sept 2024, 100 Movements Publishing

As part of the implementation of the Plan to End Chronic Homelessness, leaders must apply an *Adaptive Leadership* approach to guide housing stability system transformation. Along with addressing immediate concerns through technical fixes, they must also attend to the adaptive challenges which most often arise in crises, do not respond to previously applied solutions, and require multiple parts of a system to engage what are often competing perspectives and priorities.

Figure 18, describes the shift from *Technical* to *Technical and Adaptive* and eventually to *Adaptive* Challenges. The final row, describes the problem definition, solution and locus of work in a system that is wholly proactive and able to fully adapt. At this point in time, PECH will require both technical fixes (reactive) and respond to adaptive challenges (proactive).

We have started this work/approach through the SDCWR PECH 2023 community of practice. It will need to continue and expand to other leaders in order to implement the plan. Community and ROW leaders who implement change management must be well equipped to know when and how best to apply a technical fix and to know when and how to respond adaptively. Reaching Functional 0 Chronic Homelessness in Waterloo Region is an adaptive challenge while sub-elements of the challenge may be Technical and Adaptive. This means that a learning mindset is important throughout and that the locus of work should be with interest-holders. (*Adaptive Challenges*, n.d.)

Technical vs Adaptive Challenges			
Challenge	Problem Definition	Solution	Locus of Work
Technical	Clear	Clear	Authority
Technical and Adaptive	Clear	Requires learning	Authority and Interest-holders
Adaptive	Requires Learning	Requires Learning	Interest-holders

(*ADAPTIVE LEADERSHIP*;, n.d.)

The only way to ensure that the PECH will result in long-term, sustainable change, is to equip community leaders and ROW staff to practice and implement change management; or else we’re at risk of collectively creating results that no one wants. Any leader who holds responsibility for PECH results, must invest with others to tend to both the individual leadership awareness and to strengthen their change management competencies. To not invest in leaders for the well-being of our community puts them at risk of being out-of-step and blocking the results we’re collectively wanting to achieve. The work of transformational change, to move from current state to the desired future state, will often be met with moments of challenge that can feel “messy”. It is critical that leaders understand this is part of the journey of learning and is not an indication that the approach is wrong or failing. It is rather an indication that change is happening.

Investment in the equipping of Community Leaders and ROW Staff must include but not limited to:

- Community Leaders and ROW staff who have primary decision-making responsibility.
- Participation in a community of practice over the next 18 months that is intentional, rhythmic and sustainable over time (ie. a commitment of two hours per month, with the expectation that this community of practice is part of each leader's responsibility and role).
- Attention to interior work of leaders, inviting self-awareness and clarity of intention. (LE Prototyping Cohort, 2024)
- attention to strengthening the competencies required to manage change well, ensuring that leaders have the requisite knowledge and ability for their particular role (e.g. PROSCI Change Management training might be a helpful starting point)
- a robust and accountable “action-reflection” cycle, which reinforces the increase in leaders nurturing adaptive responses to problems, rather than technical fixes.

Otto Scharmer, senior lecturer at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) and co-founder of the Presencing Institute notes that all systems thinking starts with distinguishing the symptoms (above the surface) from the root issues (below the surface). A leader needs to do more than just react against symptoms, they seek to understand the root issues in order to drive awareness-based systems change.

Otto summarizes this with four principles:

- *You can't understand a system unless you change it.*
- *You can't change a system unless you transform consciousness/mindset. You need to address all symptoms and root issues.*
- *You can't transform consciousness unless you make a system see and sense itself.*
- *You can't transform a system unless you sense and actualize the emerging future.*

The essence of leadership is stepping from one territory into another. It's our collective responsibility to learn from the past and connect it to emerging future possibilities.

If authentic and sustainable change is to be achieved, an investment in leaders will be required. Along with the system's investment in them, leaders must also be willing to invest in themselves, strengthening their capacity to lead boldly and engage others with competence and care.

The Two Loops Model of Systems Change

The two loops model is helpful as it acknowledges the reality that we need to invest in solutions that are part of the current system (branch-level solutions) to respond to current suffering and challenges in our community, while simultaneously focusing on transforming contributing system structures (trunk and roots).

The Current System

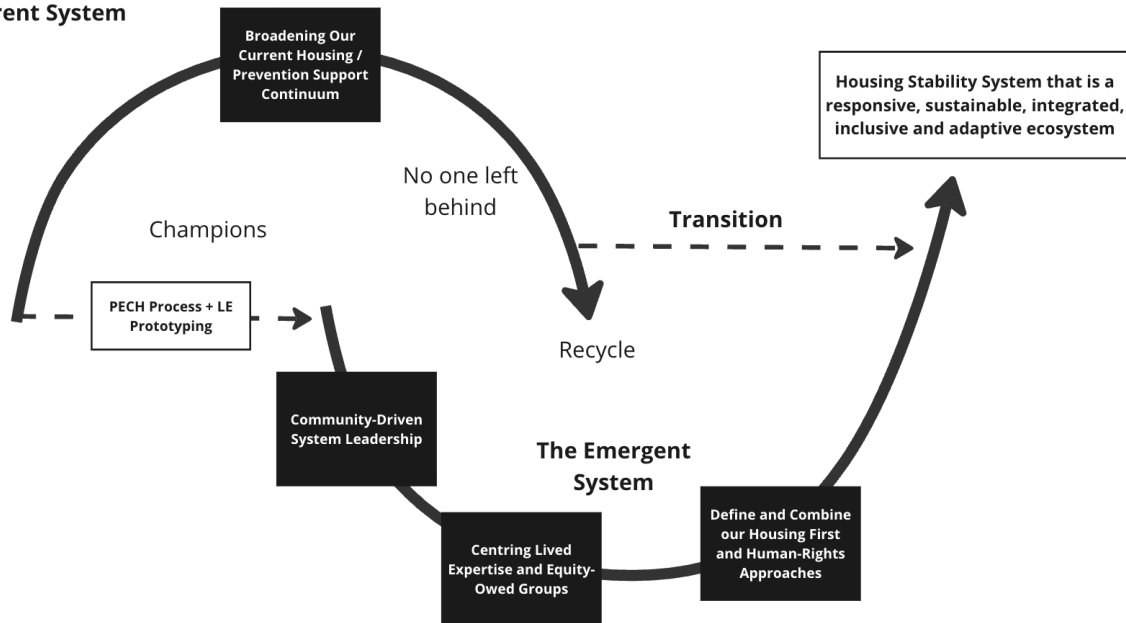


Figure 18. Two Loops Model of Systems Change Diagram

The **Two Loops model** is a nonlinear theory of change. It provides insight into the simultaneous growth and decline processes that are underway within a system during a transition period. It offers a conceptual framework for better connecting the past to the future during change.

- **Champions**—The Two Loops model reaffirms the importance of change agents/champions and their ideas. It provides a pragmatic approach for supporting them, including naming, connecting, nourishing, and illuminating them.
- **No one left behind**—Seeding opportunities for everyone to flourish in an emergent system- particularly those who have been excluded or harmed in the past – is important to its stability and long-term viability. It is also important to assist those who are prospering within the dominant/incumbent system as they are the ones who are most likely to oppose the desired change that is emerging.

- **Recycling**—The model suggests a need to carry forward lessons from the incumbent/dominant system to the new/emergent model. That way, we can maintain and find comfort in the valuable connections to the past, while ushering in new practices.

(Berkana Two Loop Model: A Quick Introduction to an Accessible Model for Systems Change, 2023) (Rose, n.d.)

To stimulate and manage change:

- Name the champions
- Connect them together
- Nourish them, with time, connection and resources
- Illuminate their work, or stories of change

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful, committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it is the only thing that ever has” (Margaret Mead, circa 1982).

Short-Term Action Plan and Next Steps

2024			2025
Q2	Q3	Q4	
Monthly Meetings of the Co-Creator Cohort: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Design and implement the Whole of Community System Leadership Model • Work on implementation and prioritization of PECH Actions • Input into 2025 budget recommendations • Develop and update yearly action plans 			Whole of Community System Leadership Model in place and guiding PECH Implementation
Continuation of the SDC Lived Experts Prototyping Process <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • broadening representation of LE voices from across the Region. 			Lived Expertise Advisory Board(s) and Process(es)
Fee-For-Service and 2024 PECH Budget Initiatives Begin Implementation		2025 Budget report to Council for FFS and PECH priorities	2025 Budget implementation
System Leadership Capacity Building (Topics may include Adaptive Leadership, Community Co-Creation, Human Centred Design)			
	Return to Regional Council with updated 2025-2030 Investment and Advocacy Strategy		
On-going Communication, Engagement and Change Management <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Education on PECH vision, initiatives and coming changes to system agencies and partners • Communication strategy to educate broader community including establishing a central website / dashboard • Leverage Central communication resources to illuminate stories of success and change • Implement a change management process across Whole of Community Leadership partners. 			

- Continue change management through identifying, connecting and nurturing champions within the system

The Final Plan to End Chronic Homelessness Report is the culmination of deep, collective community-based work to respond to a growing crisis. The Final Report does not end the collective work of preventing, addressing, and ending chronic homelessness in Waterloo Region. Rather, this is the beginning of a renewed collective focus to create Homes for All for our community's most vulnerable residents. Staff, Co-Creators, and the community more generally are committed to the work ahead and are deeply encouraged and motivated to begin the work of implementing the Plan.

“A community means we're all in this together. We shouldn't 'other' people in need or blame them.

Any of us could see a reversal of fortune and some of us have never had the benefit of a network.”—Engagement Participant

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Waterloo Region
April 2024

The Plan
to End Chronic
Homelessness

**IN COMMUNITY,
BY COMMUNITY,
FOR COMMUNITY.**
#ThePlan