

The word "HALIFAX" is written in a bold, white, sans-serif font. It is positioned on a dark blue background that is part of a larger graphic design consisting of several overlapping geometric shapes in various shades of blue.

Homelessness and Encampment Approach

May 3, 2022
Item 15.1.9

Interim Update

- interim update on the municipality's approach to homelessness, encampments, and affordable housing
- based on a reassessment of the approach conducted over the last 6 weeks
- reassessment is ongoing
- report to be completed and brought to Council in summer

Housing Crisis

- Municipality growing faster than market can build housing
- 1% vacancy rate
- 547 residents experiencing homelessness
- 200 shelter beds
- Minimum wage: \$13.35/hr (\$27,768/yr)
- Average rent: \$1,600 (\$19,200/yr)

Past Two Years - HRM

- 2 Modular sites; capacity for 64 persons
- 6 Affordable housing projects; total of new 157 units
- Supported Province to provide emergency shelter space for those experiencing homelessness
- Funded hotel accommodations for 140 people
- \$6M Annually to social and non-profit housing
- Worked with Archdiocese to approve 17 safe emergency shelters

Sleeping Rough

- There have always been people sleeping rough, there will continue to be
- People sleep rough for various reasons:
 - Existing shelter space is full
 - Feeling unsafe in a shelter or other housing option
 - Having been banned from shelter or other housing options
 - Having insufficient supports to remain successfully housed
 - Personal choice

Community Consultation

- Talked with more than 20 groups and numerous individuals including staff (municipal and provincial), political representatives, advocates, service providers, and community residents
- Conversations are continuing
- More information and analysis will be provided in an upcoming report

Key Things We Heard So Far

- The core of the housing and homelessness crisis is a lack of suitable housing stock and poverty
- There is a range of feelings about the municipality's history in dealing with homelessness including optimism, disappointment, frustration, & anger
- There needs to be a place for rough sleepers
- There is a crisis for people in care moving into the general community

Key Things We Heard (cont.)

- There are insufficient mental health supports
- Racism and bias are significant barriers for some residents to find permanent housing
- The municipality needs to engage other experts and be included in discussions on housing and homelessness
- There are many opportunities for improving communication at all levels
- The community has identified many opportunities where they feel the municipality can make a difference

The Ultimate Goal

Every resident of the Halifax Regional Municipality has a safe, suitable, supportive, and sustainable home

Pending Council Approval

- Finalize details and conditions for designated parks
- Design and post signage
- Prepare maps and other materials
- Prepare sites where required
- Arrange for washrooms where required
- Arrange for potable water where required
- Compliance and enforcement planning
- Connect with service providers/navigators

Recommendations

That Halifax Regional Council:

1. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to continue to support the province and other partners to ensure individuals have safe, supportive and affordable housing,
2. Direct the CAO to continue efforts to increase availability of affordable housing as described in the body of the staff report dated April 28, 2022,
3. Direct the CAO to formalize criteria and locations for the designation of overnight sheltering sites in parks consistent with the criteria and locations described in the body of the staff report dated April 28, 2022,
4. Direct the CAO to continue to review options to add non-park sites to inventory of outdoor sites available for overnight sheltering,
5. Authorize the Chief Administrative Officer to negotiate and enter into a contribution agreement with the United Way to convene a lived experience committee to advise staff, and
6. Direct the CAO to return to Council with a subsequent report with additional analysis and recommendations for actions.