

Delegation to the City of Guelph Re: Affordable Housing

We are providing a written comment to the agenda item 7.1 Mayoral Direction B3 - Strategic Real Estate Partnerships on Underutilized City-Owned Assets, 2024-308.

**We believe the City of Guelph needs to make affordable housing a priority and treat the housing crisis with a greater sense of urgency.**

We are a collection of representatives from non-profit organizations and projects that primarily provide food-related programs and services. Our position that affordable housing needs to be a priority is informed by our knowledge that food insecurity is an income-based issue. By addressing the cost of a household's biggest financial pressure (rent, mortgage) we are hopeful we will see impacts on our participants' ability to financially access the food they need to be well.

We would like to share some recent experiences that shed light on our position.

Due to unprecedented demand for food services, Hope House is now considering a waitlist for new clients. They have been serving 3,000 unique clients each month, compared to 2020 when they were serving 3,000 unique clients per year.

The SEED has had a waitlist for its services since later in the pandemic. This number reached 800 households as of December 2023. Beginning January 2024, they were able to begin offering services to 400 households on this waitlist, but it has once again grown to have over 800 households waitlisted.

Chalmers Community Services Centre has seen an important increase in the number of clients they serve over the past six months. For example, in February 2024, they served 2084 portions compared to 1182 in 2023. They offer a first-come first-served model that will likely face additional pressures resulting from its partners needing to turn away clients. People facing food insecurity typically access more than one food access service and being turned away from one means they'll need to turn to another.

Our non-profit food network is well-connected, collaborative, transparent with one another, and we lean on one another for support where needed. We are proud of the work we do, and we are here for the community we have been able to support. The challenge is that there is a much larger community of people who simply cannot be served who are increasingly in need of support.

In all the years our organizations have been running we have never felt the pressure and desperation from our community more strongly. We have done everything we can to improve the quantity and quality of food moving through our spaces, and we've reached a limit of what we can do.

We acknowledge the work that has been done to date in the report discussed in agenda item 7.1, we are simply encouraging the City to continue this work at an urgent pace that matches the crisis we see unfolding at our doors.

With gratitude for the work that you do,

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