



Session 307 Local Priorities

Sherry White, Region of Waterloo



About the Region of Waterloo

- Approximately 100 km west of Toronto
- Population of approx. 553,000
- Big city appeal, small town feel
- Three cities and four rural townships
- Surrounded by farm land
- Two tiered municipal government



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Implementation of Local Priorities

- Local priorities first implemented in 2001, following provincial devolution
- 2001 – Urgent Status (Homelessness, separated families, safety)
- 2005 – Sunnyside Priority (Seniors with family member in Sunnyside long term care facility)
- 2007 – Terminally Ill Priority (Household member with life expectancy of less than 2 years)
- 2014 – Overhoused Priority (timely transition of OH RGI households into proper sized units)



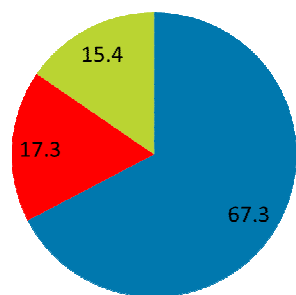
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Achieving Desired Outcomes

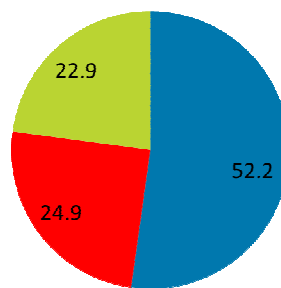
- ✓ Improving housing outcomes for locally defined "disadvantaged" groups
- ✓ Building/maintaining good working partnerships with other housing stakeholders
- ✓ Creative and innovative solutions to local housing issues
- ✓ Addressing homelessness



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2009


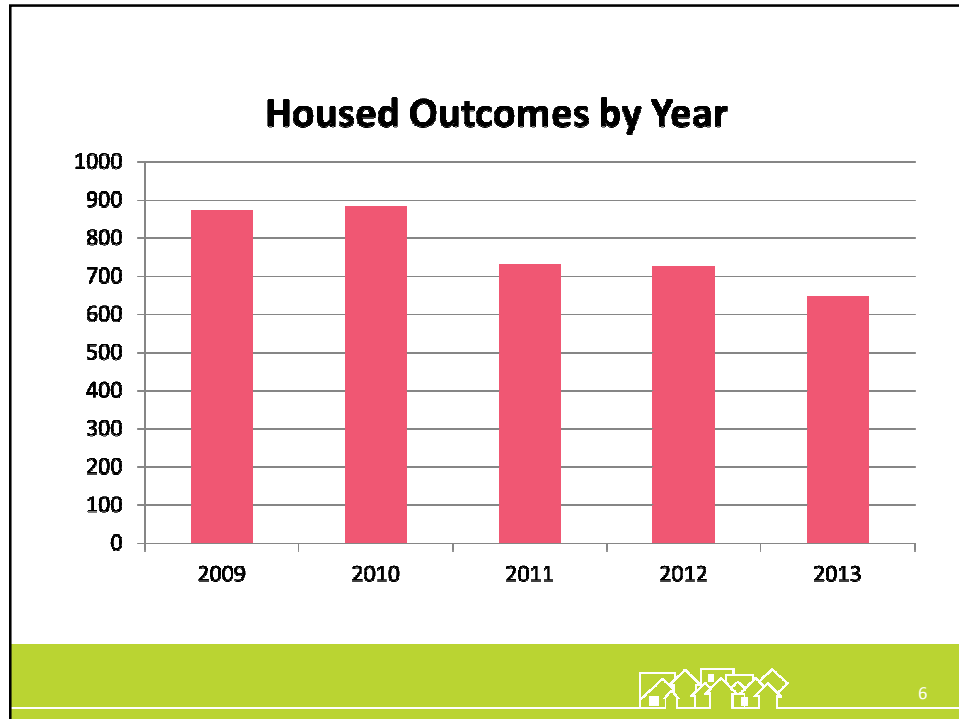
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2013


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Average Wait Times

Unit Size/Type	2009	2013
Seniors (1 bedroom)	1 to 2 years	2.5 years
Non Seniors (1 bedroom)	4 to 6 years	6 to 8 years
2 bedroom	2+ years	3+ years
3 bedroom	1-3 years	3+ years
4 & 5 bedroom	3-5 years	3+ years

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Unexpected Consequences

- Increased wait times for chronological applicants
- Reduced vacancy losses
- More households with higher level of support needs (impact on staff & housing community)
- Language in policy too vague - open to interpretation, creates unrealistic expectations for applicants (e.g. Urgent safety)
- Increased volume in workload, reviews conducted
- Ineffective for special needs applicants (modified units)



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Lessons Learned

- How local is "local"? Need for local residency requirement or risk being a magnet for other service areas
- Local priorities create a disadvantage for chronological applicants.
- Decisions cannot be made in a vacuum – even the smallest changes can have a big impact in other ways
- Don't want to reward bad behavior
- Ongoing education needed for both applicants and their advocates – encouraging realistic expectations



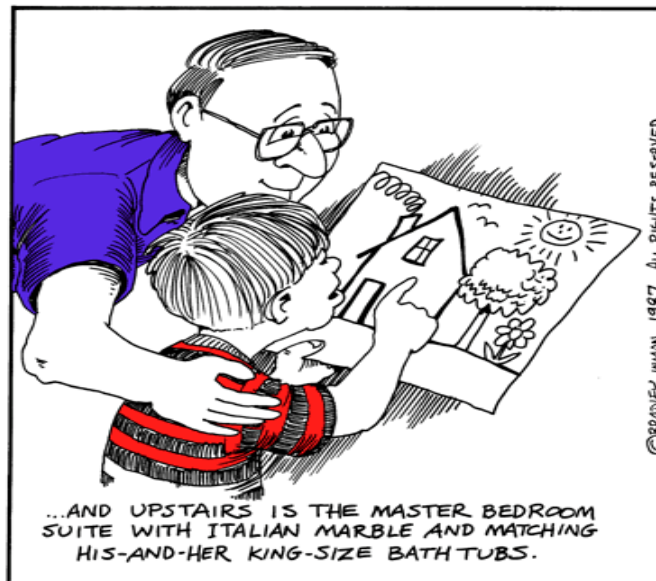
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Moving Forward

- Family Shelter Diversion Project – residency requirements, income thresholds – inclusion of all income sources, incl. CTB, selective completion of forms
- Full review of local priorities – early 2015
- Transitioning of housing programs from Planning to Social Services department
- Merging of housing and homelessness programs



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QUESTIONS?



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