Identifying Factors for Success in Planning and Designing Supportive Housing in Ottawa, Ontario

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Executive Summary

Housing is a primary urban element, and one that extensively informs both the physical environment of cities and the socio-economic rhythms of urban societies more broadly. In Canada, there exists a significant range of housing types and tenures, which roughly serve to highlight the country’s broader societal stratifications. And while housing in Canada is managed predominantly through the mechanisms of the private market, public policies, subsidies and social housing are critical in maintaining a relative balance and supply that addresses societal needs. In measure however, Canada’s housing policies have thus far failed to ensure equity and access to housing for all members of Canadian society, and chronic homelessness has become an endemic urban crisis (Gaetz et al., 2013a).

Homelessness and housing access issues have broad implications, for disenfranchised individuals as well as healthy, sustainable community development more broadly. Research has firmly established the significant and bilateral connections between housing status and health, and a pervasive lack of access to adequate housing has remained a substantial contributing factor to poor health status and widespread health inequities in Canada (Bryant et al., 2011). Complex mental and physical health and addictions are disproportionately prevalent amongst the homeless, and particularly amongst the minority of chronically homeless individuals that are reliant on emergency shelters and provisional services for their long term accommodation, health and human service needs. In a recent survey, it was found that 71% of long-stay shelter clients in Ottawa have either, or both, mental health and substance use issues, and approximately one third have physical disabilities (Wright & Poushinsky, 2013).

Beyond exacerbating public health, human rights and social justice issues, the relegation of homeless individuals with considerable support needs to temporary shelters, provisional and institutional health care, and emergency response services is ultimately associated with considerable public expense. Nation wide, the annual cost of homelessness to the Canadian economy is estimated at $7.05 billion (Gaetz et al., 2013a). Review of the shelter paradigm alongside progressive housing options has further revealed that developing and providing affordable, community-based housing with supports is considerably more cost effective than the status quo (Gaetz et al., 2013a; Pomeroy, 2005).

Largely following two broad housing paradigms, “Housing First” and the “Continuum of Care”, housing and supports have been integrated in various manners in post-War Canada. “Supportive housing” is a particular model that is established in this report as consisting of permanent, single-site social housing that offers a range of integrated on-site
support services for complex mental and physical health conditions, and socio-economic issues, in a secure, stable and accessible environment. Supportive housing serves target resident populations that experience significant challenges and barriers to securing and maintaining independent affordable housing, and to accessing adequate support services. Residents in supportive housing generally require more extensive support services than can be effectively coordinated in scattered-site housing options, yet don’t require, don’t choose, or cannot qualify for community based residential treatment or long term institutional care. Supportive housing is a complex model, which involves housing, healthcare and social service layers that not only make it challenging from economic, political and technical planning perspectives, but also make assessment of its specific outcomes particularly demanding.

Increasingly, municipalities have been vested with the responsibility to plan, fund and implement strategies to address local housing and homelessness issues. Required under the provincial Housing Services Act, 2011, the City of Ottawa, Ontario has adopted a new ten-year plan, A Home for Everyone, which sets the local policy stage with three key priorities; “ensuring that everyone has a home”, that “people get the support they need” and “working together” (City of Ottawa, 2014a). In this plan the City recognizes the primacy of support services in the housing system that address issues such as mental and physical health and addictions. However, it is also acknowledged that critical and fundamental gaps exist where the current stock of social and affordable housing does not meet the local demand and the requirements for accessibility and integrated support services (2013b).

Against this background, the central purpose of this research is to document and critically assess the predominant challenges and success factors that are related to the development of supportive housing in Ottawa. It approaches two examples of recent projects in Ottawa, The Oaks and the 314 Booth Street residence, operated by the Shepherds of Good Hope and Cornerstone Housing for Women respectively. These projects present valuable and tangible points of investigation into planning processes and project design considerations. To structure and focus the analysis, this report addresses two central research questions:

- What are the key factors for success in planning and designing supportive housing?
- What lessons and recommendations can be drawn from The Oaks and Cornerstone’s 314 Booth Street supportive housing developments?
An exploratory, mixed-methods research design was employed, which included an in-depth literature review, document review, the project case studies, and key informant interviews with City of Ottawa Housing Services Branch Staff and administrators from two local housing providers. Central to the methodological approach of this work was ensuring that it considered the knowledge and expertise of those that are directly involved in supportive housing in Ottawa, including planners, administrators and staff from local housing and service providers, as well as the clients themselves.

Through systematic analyses of the collected data, this research establishes a set of key success factors for planning and designing supportive housing in Ottawa. Organized thematically, these factors are presented in broadly synthesized categories that appeal to the emergent areas of concern. Classified as either planning and process factors or physical features and design factors, the discussion of each of the success factors in chapter seven addresses and describes the finer grain details and constituent issues. The key success factors identified are:

**Planning and Process Factors**

i. Amenable Political and Regulatory Environment  
ii. Effective Resource Leverage  
iii. Sustainable Housing System Capacity  
iv. Coordination and Integration  
v. Evolution, Innovation and Leadership

**Physical Features and Design Factors**

i. Strategic and Accessible Location  
ii. Dedicated Building Composure  
iii. Tailored Amenities, Features and Services

Following these factors, this report also offers a set of recommendations that were designed to support and encourage successful outcomes for future supportive housing development in Ottawa. While most of the recommendations address conditions that are ultimately at the City’s discretion, ongoing engagement and collaboration with local housing and service providers, community organizations and developers will be vital in supporting positive planning, design and policy development outcomes. These recommendations are:
#1: *Develop a Municipal Supportive Housing Strategy that Establishes Clear Objectives and an Evaluative Framework*

The City of Ottawa Housing Services Branch should develop a strategic document to guide ongoing planning efforts towards supportive housing provision in Ottawa, which complements and elaborates on the framework provided by the City’s new ten-year plan. Such a strategy may be an effective means of marshaling relevant policies, providing an opportunity to develop a set of core objectives, explicating monitoring and evaluation procedures, and directing the City’s fundamental policy intentions and goals for supportive housing.

#2: *Describe and Provide for Supportive Housing in the City of Ottawa Zoning By-Law*

The City of Ottawa Planning and Growth Management Department should seek to establish and provide for a definition of supportive housing in the *City of Ottawa Zoning By-law No. 2008-250*. Supportive housing should be established in consideration of its:
- unique and specifically intended land use function;
- incorporation of private dwelling units and professional on-site services, and;
- differentiation from “residential care facilities” and other types of “residential use buildings.”

#3: *Limit Prescribed Parking Requirements for Supportive Housing Projects*

In conjunction with the proposed zoning by-law amendments, the City of Ottawa should explore proactive policy options to attenuate parking requirements for new supportive housing projects. Exemptions and reductions to parking requirements are significant planning obstacles for supportive housing projects that protract and complicate the approvals process, despite the recognition that residents uniformly do not have use of personal automobiles.

#4: *Streamline Development Review and Approvals Processes*

In conjunction with the Planning and Growth Management Department, the Housing Services Branch should continue to support the simplicity and efficiency of the development application and review process. Mitigating some of the risks faced by project proponents by enhancing certainty and clarity in the development process
may incentivize further development of supportive housing that aligns with the City’s agenda. Site selection and procurement policies, zoning, transparency requirements and timelines for approvals and permits are particular areas of concern that should be addressed.

**#5: Design and Implement Innovative Public Engagement and Planning Research Strategies**

Traditional public consultation and engagement procedures can be ineffective in addressing politically sensitive projects, and can create particular barriers for supportive housing development. In excess of mandated processes, the Housing Services Branch should explore and implement innovative public participation strategies that seek to gather more representative samples of community perspective, address concerns, build support, encourage innovation, and promote awareness and understanding of the supportive housing model. The Housing Services Branch should also bolster its strategic planning research efforts that approach its core objectives and evaluative mechanisms.

**#6: Streamline Funding to Facilitate and Encourage Successful Supportive Housing Development**

The Housing Services Branch should endeavour to simplify and package capital and operating funding in a manner that encourages supportive housing development. The Housing Services Branch should also explore policy options that direct funding in a manner which allows supportive housing providers to structure tenancy agreements to reflect average market leases as closely as possible. These strategies can simplify administrative challenges related to housing subsidies and income supports, and serve to promote the autonomous rights of residents.

**#7: Codify Design and Site Quality Indicators**

The Housing Services Branch should develop a succinct set of indicators that address dimensions of quality and factors for successful supportive housing to promote best practices and encourage innovation and ongoing improvement. Based on the outcomes of this research, preliminary indicators are suggested to address:

- a mid-rise project form, containing a range between 35 and 60 units;
- universal, barrier-free accessible design in all units and common areas;
- self-contained, apartment style units;
• indoor and outdoor design features and amenities that support a positive and healthy social climate within the project, as well as between it and the surrounding community;
• locations that are accessible and well-serviced by public transportation.

#8: Mandate that all New Supportive Housing Units are Self-Contained

The Housing Services Branch should require that all new supportive housing units are private, self-contained, apartment style units with kitchen and washroom facilities. Self-contained units are recognized as a leading best practice by the literature, staff and administration involved in local supportive housing provision, Housing Services Branch staff, and are overwhelmingly indicated to be the preference of prospective residents.

#9: Sustain Advocacy, Education and Community Engagement Efforts

All local stakeholders, including the Housing Services Branch, should continue efforts to raise awareness around issues of housing and homelessness in Ottawa. By highlighting implications for health, social justice and human dignity, and demonstrating the effectiveness of coordinated planning efforts, the supportive housing model may be elevated in the public and political consciousness. Such action will be crucial in rallying the support and funding needed to realize future success in supportive housing provision, as well as progressive housing system development more broadly.
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All photographs are the work of the author
Terms & Acronyms

CHPI: Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative
CMHC: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
Cornerstone: Cornerstone Housing for Women, proponent for 314 Booth Street
CSH: Corporation for Supportive Housing
HSB: City of Ottawa Housing Services Branch
MCSS: Ministry of Community and Social Services
MMAH: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing
MOHLTC: Ministry of Health and Long Term Care
OC Transpo: City of Ottawa’s public transportation service
ODSP: Ontario Disability Support Program
OW: Ontario Works
Para Transpo: City of Ottawa’s accessible public transportation service
1.0 Introduction

As a fundamental need and internationally recognized human right, housing is the critical foundation upon which all other aspects of a human life may be built (OHRC, 2012). Access to secure and affordable housing, and supports in maintaining it, are essential for positive social, educational, economic and health outcomes. While the private market offers an array of housing that meets the needs and means of the majority, research illustrates that at least 30,000 Canadians are homeless on any given night (Gaetz et al. 2013a). The situation in the nation’s capital is no exception; the Alliance to End Homelessness notes that in 2013 more than 6700 individuals accessed emergency shelters and there were over 10,000 households on the waiting list for social housing in Ottawa (2013).

Looking deeper, the City of Ottawa is home to a significant number of individuals that rely on local emergency shelters for long-term accommodation, and that depend on provisional and community-based services for the necessities of daily life and primary care (Wright & Poushinsky, 2013). As well as being profoundly impoverished, many in this population are faced with complex mental and physical health challenges and addictions that exacerbate the barriers they face in accessing and maintaining permanent housing. A lack of supply and suitably integrated health and socio-economic support services in affordable housing has left many to circulate through the shelter, emergency medical, and
criminal justice systems, with substantial negative effects on their stability, well-being and dignity, and at great expense to public coffers.

Given these circumstances, affordable housing and homelessness is high on the agendas of local governments across Canada, which have become increasingly shouldered with the responsibility for planning, funding and implementing local housing strategies. In Ontario, the Housing Services Act, 2011 requires local comprehensive housing and homelessness plans that take a “system-based perspective” and account for the “full spectrum of services and partners” (City of Ottawa, 2013b, 7). Ottawa’s strategy, A Home For Everyone, was approved by City Council in early 2014, and sets the local policy stage with three key priorities; “ensuring that everyone has a home”, that “people get the support they need” and “working together” (City of Ottawa, 2014a). Critically, the City recognizes that support service capacity is an “integral part of the housing system”, and must be provided in conjunction with a spectrum of housing options that meet individual needs (2014a, 5).

These documents provide strong recognition that a broad palette of supports and services must be integrated with affordable housing to ensure stability for those with various and diverse needs. In its ten year plan, The City further reaffirms its commitment to ending chronic homelessness and pledges to prioritize those with the most significant needs (2014a, 6). Yet, a critical and fundamental gap exists where it is recognized that the current “supply of affordable and social housing stock does not meet the demand, nor does it meet the design accessibility, size and supportive requirements of our community” (2013b, 10). In striving to fulfill the intentions laid out in the policy framework, City staff and local housing and service providers are critically tasked with planning and managing the coordinated development of new affordable housing and supportive services.

There are numerous housing models that integrate housing and support services, which vary widely by their particular means of service provision, the populations they serve, types and levels of support offered, physical form, affordability and administrative conditions. And while this spectrum of housing and support options is as wide as it has ever been, significant work has yet to be done to achieve broader success in making the system accessible, suitable and secure for everyone. With respect to the Ottawa context, this report specifically approaches supportive housing, which is a model that integrates affordable housing with a range of on-site support services for complex mental and physical health conditions, addictions, and socio-economic issues.

Supportive housing offers long-term housing for individuals who generally, also have histories of chronic homelessness, require more extensive supports than are available in more independent housing options, and yet don’t require, don’t choose, or cannot qualify
for community based residential treatment or long term institutional care options. Two recent local supportive housing developments, The Oaks and the 314 Booth Street residence, provided by Shepherds of Good Hope and Cornerstone Housing for Women respectively, are explored as case studies in this report.

Supportive housing in particular has come to be recognized as a critical component of Ottawa’s coordinated efforts to end chronic homelessness, and figures largely in the current work of the City’s Housing Services Branch (HSB). At least 225 permanent supportive housing units were created between 1999 and 2013, including 55 in The Oaks and 42 in the 314 Booth Street residence, and there are currently three new supportive housing developments underway which will add 112 further units (ATEH, 2013).

1.1 Research Questions

This report is aimed at exploring critical factors that shape the provision of dedicated supportive housing for chronic shelter users and homeless individuals with complex support needs in Ottawa. It addresses two principal research questions:

- What are the key factors for success in planning and designing supportive housing?
- What lessons and recommendations can be drawn from The Oaks and Cornerstone’s 314 Booth Street supportive housing developments?

This work considers existing literature and documents, as well as information gathered from persons directly involved in the realization and success of local supportive housing; the planners, project administrators, staff and residents. By establishing and analyzing the current conditions, state of knowledge and specific challenges, this report culminates with a discussion of the identified factors for success, and offers a set of specific recommendations relevant to the City and local supportive housing providers.

1.2 Structure of the Report

This report is organized into eight chapters, including this introduction. Chapter two outlines the design and implementation of the data collection and analysis methods that were employed in addressing the research questions. Chapter three offers a background discussion of how supportive housing is conceptualized and where it fits in local planning efforts that concern housing and homelessness. Chapter three also provides a brief
overview of the current housing and homelessness situation in Ottawa, and reviews two key policies that guide local supportive housing provision. Chapter four explores planning and design features in two case study projects, The Oaks and Cornerstone’s 314 Booth Street residence. Chapter five contains an in-depth analysis of three key documents that inform best practices in supportive housing provision, outline the current system of housing and supports in Ottawa, illustrate input gathered from local shelter and housing providers, and provide data and perspectives from current long-term shelter users that may be well accommodated in new supportive housing. Chapter six provides the analysis and findings drawn from four interviews, two of which were conducted with City of Ottawa HSB staff and two with senior administrators from each of the case study projects. Chapter seven presents a discussion of the identified success factors and lays out a series of recommendations meant to support future planning and design efforts for supportive housing in Ottawa. The report concludes with chapter eight, which summarizes the key findings and outlines several areas of concern for future research.
2.0 Methodology

This chapter discusses the research methods employed in this report, and develops the rationale for their use in addressing the research objectives. The context of the methodological approach and the researcher’s position in relation to the topic are explained, and some limitations of the research and methods are outlined.

Broadly stated, the goal of this research is to explore the critical planning factors involved in the provision of permanent supportive housing for chronic shelter users and homeless individuals with considerable support needs in Ottawa. In approaching this topic, this research began with a systematic and in-depth exploration of the literature concerning supportive housing and its context in Ottawa. From this background, further methods were selected to ensure that this research considered data from a range of sources. Central to this approach was ensuring that this project included the knowledge and expertise of those who were directly involved in the realization and success of supportive housing projects: the planners, service providers and residents.

This report follows an exploratory case study methodology and draws from a range of distinct data sources. The undertaking of a literature review, document analysis, and conducting semi-structured interviews with key informants offers depth to the exploration
and allows for triangulation of the data collected. Further, consideration of these divergent sources of information enhances the construct validity of the findings and serves to address potential concerns of researcher bias. Most crucially, this research approach ensures that the findings and analysis have been developed through a process of critical corroboration and “cross-checking” (Winchester & Rofe, 2010, 17).

2.1 Data Collection & Analysis

2.1.1 Literature Review

As a first step in the research process, a review of literature concerning the dominant models of affordable housing and housing with supports was undertaken to establish a working knowledge of the topic and to guide the development of the research objectives. The literature review establishes the fundamental context of the report, and serves to “situate the research in an appropriate theoretical framework” (Monk & Bedford, 2010, 323). Exploring the wide body of empirical literature approaching affordable housing issues was integral in developing the present line of inquiry from a field with a myriad of issues and areas of concern that deserve critical exploration.

The literature review was also crucial for establishing a working definition of supportive housing for this research. Understanding the particular local role of supportive housing in Ottawa is key in placing it against the housing continuum and establishing its role in local housing and homelessness strategies. The general findings of the literature review also served to illuminate some important opportunities and challenges for the present research topic. Particularly notable here are factors including the conceptual murkiness of supportive housing, the limited available discussion of planning and design factors, and the predominance of psychiatric models of care in the academic literature.

2.1.2 Document Analysis

The collection and analysis of a range of documents is central to the methodology of this report. The data collected from a selection of key resources identified during the literature review provides the basis for a critical examination of the current knowledge and best practices regarding supportive housing development. These documents also fundamentally inform the framework for the Ottawa context, which is further explored through the interviews and case studies.
This research is critically anchored by two recent reports that were completed for the City of Ottawa Housing Services Branch (HSB). Both reports are concerned with supportive housing in the local context and provide access to data gathered by research means beyond the scope of the present work. Both works offer data from professionals involved in supportive housing projects in Ottawa, as well as from the individuals who call them home. Thus, these resources provide information that complements the data gathered more directly in this research.

The first of these reports is *Models of Housing with Supports*, authored by Social Data Research Ltd. and L. Bonnie Dinning Associates (SDR, 2008), which addresses optimal models for the provision of housing with supports in Ottawa, and identifies local needs, best practices, and potential priorities by means of a survey of fifteen experts in the field of supportive housing in Ottawa; all but one of whom was involved directly in providing supportive housing at the time of the study. The second is *Housing and Support Needs and Preferences: Clients Using Ottawa Shelters*, prepared by Marion Wright and Natasha Poushinsky (2013). Their report involved a survey of 242 local shelter users, and provides vital insight and client perspective towards supportive housing in Ottawa.

Beyond the background literature, this research also draws heavily upon the work of the Corporation for Supportive Housing, and in particular their 2013 publication *Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing* (CSH, 2013). While the CSH is an American organization, their work offers a uniquely focused analysis of strategies to address the challenges of planning and implementing “high-quality, effective, and sustainable supportive housing units” (CSH, 2013, 1). The CSH takes a view to building the capacity of both housing providers, encouraging investment from public systems and ensuring that the use of supportive housing resources is optimized. Their bottom line concerns improving the outcomes for tenants of supportive housing, particularly for those tenants who experience the most acute housing stability challenges (CSH, 2013, 1).

The document analysis, which is presented in chapter five, systematically reviews each of the three documents in detail, and describes their key themes, perspectives, findings, roles and contributions to the research landscape. Each document’s particular strengths and weaknesses are explored, and it is illustrated how they inform the background, interview and case study components of this report.
2.1.3 Interviews

A key objective of this research is to document the major success factors and challenges in developing supportive housing projects in Ottawa, and interviews offer an opportunity to collect local knowledge that is unavailable through other research methods. As such, the interview data is especially important given that there is currently little written research concerning the present topic, and none that was found to directly approach the planning and design of the two case study projects. Four key informant interviews were undertaken with administrators from The Oaks and 314 Booth Street, as well as with municipal HSB involved with supportive housing development.

The interviews serve two central purposes in addressing the research questions posed by this report. Firstly, the interview questions were designed to inform, enhance and validate the success factors developed from the background research and document analysis. Secondly, interviews offered the chance to gather a diversity of alternate perspectives, experiences and approaches particular to the local context. This approach is critical in not only filling gaps that may be left by other research methods, but also in allowing for exploration of areas of divergence and consensus on the issues at hand (Dunn, 2010).

The semi-structured interview was adopted as the ideal format for the purposes of this research, as it allows for focused inquiry on the most salient research priorities, while letting participants provide a depth and breadth of insight and information that may otherwise be overlooked or underappreciated by the researcher (Dunn, 2010). Thus, while some of the interview questions sought specified, categorical responses, the majority were designed to encourage open-ended thought and discussion. The prepared interview questions are presented in Appendix C and Appendix D.

The data collected from each of the interviews was organized and examined using a process of latent content analysis, which allowed for the data to be divided into a set of principal factors and issues. Once all four interviews were coded in this fashion, they were cross referenced and compared to one another, and a set of elements and issues was developed and used to organize their presentation and analyses. These criteria are categorized broadly as either planning elements or design elements, and are presented in chapter six.
2.1.4 Qualitative Case Studies

This report explores two case study examples, The Oaks and the 314 Booth Street supportive housing residence. As an important point of clarification, the objective of this work is not to evaluate these projects, but rather to use them as points of investigation in the process of mapping out the current knowledge surrounding supportive housing in Ottawa. The case studies provide an tangible demonstration of the key planning and design factors, and are an opportunity to focus the perspective of this work.

As Robert Yin (2009) notes, “the case study’s unique strength is its ability to deal with a full variety of evidence – documents, artifacts, interviews, and observations – beyond what might be available in [other research approaches]” (11). The topic of this research is marked by a considerable degree of complexity, and the case studies design is particularly effective in allowing for a thorough investigation of the constituent issues.

2.1.5 Site Visits

One site visit to each of The Oaks and 314 Booth Street was completed, which strengthened the case studies by offering first hand exposure to the site location, physical design, building culture and other factors that are unavailable or less apparent through existing documentation. The site visits also offered an opportunity to collect original photographs, which added further depth and context to the project profiles.

2.1.6 Discussion & Recommendations

Chapter seven draws together the analyses and findings of the background research, document review, case studies and interviews, and lays out the identified planning and design factors for successful supportive housing. The structure of the discussion follows the framework developed in the analyses of the interview data, and presents two orders of success factors; planning and process factors, and physical features and design factors. The analyses and discussion also highlight some critical issues and lessons, which together with the identified success factors were used to develop and inform a set of recommendations that seek to encourage successful outcomes in planning and designing supportive housing in Ottawa.
2.2 Limitations & Ethical Considerations

A key element of this research involves critical discussion of how supportive housing is defined and constituted. In the interest of achieving an appropriately detailed and nuanced focus on supportive housing, this work does not deal with the broader spectrum of affordable housing with supports, including transitional housing and emergency shelters. Nor does the scope of the present research allow for an exploration of the broader issues of access to supportive housing, including waiting lists and client evaluation practices, despite recognizing their importance.

While this report does provide general discussion of support service planning and coordination, and it catalogues various types of services that may be available, it does not critically analyze this element of supportive housing. In addition to maintaining focus on the principle lines of inquiry, this was necessitated by the fact that the details of clinical and social support services are largely rooted in the realm of healthcare and service delivery professionals and researchers.

It is important to recognize that the interview participants involved in this research were selected on the basis of their professional involvement with supportive housing in Ottawa, and the case study projects in particular. As such, the interviews do not directly gather perspectives from a wider selection of stakeholders, including those that may have opposed the projects at various stages of their planning and development. Further, while tenant perspective was considered through other research methods, gathering their direct input on the physical and social characteristics of the case study projects lay beyond the scope of this work.

2.2.1 Research Ethics

As this research considers data gathered from human interview participants, approval from the General Research Ethics Board (GREB) was sought and obtained. As a particularly important measure of ethical rigour, all willing interviewees were provided up front with a Letter of Information and Consent Form. These documents, available in Appendix A and Appendix B, outline the intentions of the project, explicate the freedom to participate and withdraw freely from the research at any time, and seek name attribution and audio recording permissions. Only those that explicitly consented to having their names attributed to their statements have been identified in this report. Otherwise, all available means have been taken to maintain the confidentiality of the participants.
2.2.2 Positionality

As Robyn Dowling explains of all qualitative research endeavours, “the interrelations between society, the researcher, and the research project are of critical and abiding significance” (2010, 27). Contained here is the recognition that societal structures of knowledge and power bear consequential influence over a researcher’s interaction with their subjects and subject material. As a basic step towards mitigating personal bias, these influences ought to be recognized and addressed wherever possible. As such, the researcher here would like to acknowledge that this topic was established in part because of their personal interest and belief in the importance of affordable housing as a fundamental planning concern and issue of social justice. Further, exploration of the Ottawa context was inspired by the researcher’s work with the City of Ottawa Affordable Housing Unit during the summer of 2013.

2.2.3 Generalizability

While being tailored specifically to the City of Ottawa, this research explores some conditions and challenges that are roughly equivalent across the province of Ontario. In light of continuing federal and provincial disengagement with affordable housing provision, planning for supportive housing has become a task common to municipal governments across Canada. It is hoped that this report may lend to the broader discussions surrounding affordable housing and offer some relevant clarity and direction for all those concerned with supportive housing across the country.
3.0 Background & Context

This chapter contextualizes the topic of supportive housing in Ottawa by summarizing the findings and key themes of the background research that examined relevant literature, professional reports, and planning policy documents. It explores the definition of supportive housing, how it factors in housing and human service planning in Canada, as well as the current conditions in Ottawa that supportive housing responds to.

3.1 Defining Supportive Housing

The term “supportive housing” has a broad range of interpretation, often even where it is considered in a single geographical context, and it is frequently conflated with other housing and homelessness intervention models such as emergency shelters and transitional housing. There is also considerable inconsistency across the literature where “supportive housing” is often interchangeably referred to as “supported housing” (Tabol et al. 2010). This is a condition that is exacerbated by the fact that the topic of integrated housing and support provision is covered widely by several distinct disciplines, including those oriented around urban planning, housing policy, public health, and social psychology. In Ontario, while supportive housing is recognized as implying housing that contains on-site support services, it is more generally assumed to be an umbrella term that encompasses numerous types of housing with supports (SDR, 2008).
Beyond simply deranging the academic discourse on this topic, this inconsistency may frustrate the ability of researchers to link specific successful housing initiatives with particular program elements (Tabol et al., 2010, 453). As more than didactic nagging points, these conceptual issues can present practical challenges to the pursuit of fine-tuning specific supportive housing programs, and may inhibit opportunities for mutual learning and collaborative refinement amongst planners, housing providers and administrators. Further, it is worthwhile to recognize that beyond the scholarly literature, a great deal more complexity and variation is added to the picture where local planning, policy and program terms tendered by public and private organizations are considered.

The City of Ottawa, in its City Housing Strategy 2007-2012, recognizes a distinction between “dedicated supported housing” and “support services to housing” (2007). The City establishes that “supported housing” exists where support services are provided in the home by community-based organizations, and that “supportive housing” involves support services that are available on the site of the residence. “Transitional housing” is recognized as a closely related housing form of supported housing that involves temporal limitations to occupation (City of Ottawa, 2007). On its website, the City of Ottawa also labels supportive housing as “residential services” and “domiciliary hostels”, which are described as “[p]rivate or non-profit residences” that “provide long term housing to vulnerable adults who require some supervision and services to maintain their independence in the residence. Residents are typically living with a psychiatric, developmental or physical illness and or disability” (City of Ottawa, 2014b). While existing local supportive housing developments, including The Oaks and 314 Booth Street, are catalogued here, the term “supportive housing” is not explicitly deployed anywhere on the “Residential Services” main page (City of Ottawa, 2014b).

The Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), an American organization that has been extensively involved in research and best practices in supportive housing, defines supportive housing as “a combination of affordable housing and supportive services designed to help vulnerable individuals and families use stable housing as a platform for health, recovery and personal growth” (CSH, 2013,1). The CSH recognizes four key components of the supportive housing model (2013):

- housing;
- supportive services;
- property and housing management; and
- the housing’s relationship to the community.

Thus, the on-site integration of affordable housing and support services begins to emerge as a hallmark of supportive housing. Yet, rather than a uniform concept, supportive
housing is a model that is manifest in a dynamic berth of particular arrangements of physical form and in the level, type and administration of support services (Pomeroy, 2005, 14). Focusing on the Ottawa context, this report addresses supportive housing as a model of permanent, single-site, social housing that offers a range of integrated on-site support services for socio-economic issues and complex mental and physical health conditions in a secure, stable and accessible environment. This model targets resident populations that experience significant challenges and barriers to securing and maintaining affordable housing and access to adequate support services. Residents of supportive housing generally require more extensive supports than can be provided in scattered-site, housing options with mobile services, yet don’t require, or cannot qualify for, community based residential treatment or long term institutional care.

The Regional Municipal of Waterloo, Ontario, in its Supportive Housing Framework (Social Planning, 2014) provides an effective illustration of the range that exists within the supportive housing model, which is given in Figure 1. This figure demonstrates where supportive housing fits relative to other housing and support models and more intensive supportive living options including community based residential treatment and long-term institutional care. Currently, supportive housing in the City of Ottawa aligns generally with the three subgroups given under the “Permanent Single Site Attached” step in the diagram. Broadly, this report’s approach to the term “supportive housing” is succinctly represented by this step, which is outlined in red in Figure 1. This work takes a specific focus on the “self-contained” model of supportive housing, which is given particular attention in the literature and documents, and is characterized by the two case study projects.

The physical design and layout of supportive housing in Ottawa varies, with many existing projects consisting of congregate living environments where tenants share many, or all, of their facilities with other residents (City of Ottawa, 2014b; Sylvestre et al., 2007, 82). Clustered apartment-style units are also prevalent, and range from basic single rooms to fully outfitted apartments with private kitchens and bathrooms. Supportive housing units exist in both dedicated-use buildings and within those that contain other types of social or market housing.
In addition to varying by form, supportive housing projects offer a range of support services that address the needs of residents. Some services may be available from on-site staff, others by mobile staff that make scheduled visits to the building or specific residents. Supportive housing residents may also access supplemental or alternate community-based support services off-site. In sum, support services may include:

- alcohol and substance abuse treatment
- mental health services
- healthcare services
- medication management and assistance
- personal care and housekeeping supports
- 24 hour crisis intervention
- meal and/or food security services
- transportation services
- vocational counseling
- job market and placement services
- financial management assistance
- housing loss prevention services
- social activities and skills assistance
- housing community and administrative engagement
- counseling
3.2 Contextualizing Supportive Housing

Social housing in Canada consists of a vast constellation of different types of housing, with varying administrative models, financing schemes, tenures, and physical forms. As one particular subset, supportive housing is affordable housing with on-site support services that is designed to accommodate the needs of those struggling with complex mental or physical health issues, substance use issues, homelessness, or some combination of these challenges that compromise their ability to live stably in more independent housing options. In further exploring the position and role of the supportive housing model, it’s useful to place it within the broader spheres of affordable and social housing, and homelessness intervention strategies in Canada.

3.2.1 Affordable & Social Housing in Canada

Affordability is a term that is widely deployed in regards to all types of housing, yet begs critical appraisal in definition. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) defines housing as being affordable where its total cost accounts for less than 30 percent of a household’s gross income (CMHC, 2013a). This definition is reflected in the Province of Ontario’s *Provincial Policy Statement*, which is consequential as municipalities have a statutory obligation to ensure consistency with this framework in contemplation of local land use and development decisions (Province of Ontario, 2014). As a general term, “affordable housing” encompasses all forms and tenures of housing offered by the private, public and non-profit sectors, and “can refer to any part of the housing continuum from temporary emergency shelters through transitional housing, supportive housing, subsidized housing, market rental housing or market homeownership” (CMHC, 2013a).

Despite standardized definitions however, the notion of affordability in practice eludes neat, objective measurement (Streich, 1993). “Affordability is more than a concept of positivist economics; it encompasses issues of social standards, the notion of reasonable payments for housing in attainment of a level of social well-being, and questions about social equity and equality of opportunity” (Streich, 1993, 257). As an issue of social justice and a barometer of societal prosperity more generally, affordability is entangled with the complex web of factors that concern the fundamental need for shelter. Serious affordability challenges are a longstanding and growing concern in Canada’s major urban centres, due in part to shortages of affordable housing, changing employment prospects and reduced government income supports (Moore & Skaburskis, 2004; Sewell, 1994). For Ontario’s most destitute low-income citizens, particularly those dependent on income supports such as Ontario Works (OW) and the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP), housing
affordability is cast in much sharper relief. As of 2013, rent for an average market bachelor apartment in Ottawa would consume 122% of a monthly OW transfer, and 71% of ODSP (ATEH, 2013, 11).

Deep affordability is a core element and critical end goal of Canada’s system of “social housing”, which the CMHC defines as a subset of “affordable housing” that usually entails government-subsidized rental housing provided to those who are otherwise unable to access adequate housing through the private market (CMHC, 2011, 127). Contained in the CMHC’s definitions of social housing and affordable housing is the idea of a “housing continuum,” which, as depicted in Figure 2, offers a rough sketch of the range of dwelling options available to Canadians. Supportive housing is included as one of the identified types of social housing that occupies the CMHC’s continuum left of the divide.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Emergency Shelters</th>
<th>Transitional Housing</th>
<th>Supportive Housing</th>
<th>Subsidized Housing</th>
<th>Market Rental Housing</th>
<th>Market Homeownership Housing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

Figure 2: The CMHC’s Continuum of Housing (CMHC, 2013a)

A basic, yet fundamental concept that recognizes a diversity of need in housing options, the notion of a “continuum” has broadly underpinned housing policy at all levels of government across Canada. Understood in a general sense, the housing continuum appeals to the need for communities to have a broad range of housing options that suit the needs of all residents. A number of demographic dimensions are recognized as informing the needed range of housing, including life stage, income and individual support needs (City of Kingston, 2013, 4). In conjunction with affordability, the importance of a range of supports in housing, across the entire housing continuum has gained increasing recognition. In its City Housing Strategy 2007-2012, the City of Ottawa illustrates the continuum with regard to support service requirements, and explains that supports are essential for all households, regardless of their specific characteristics or housing status (City of Ottawa, 2007, 23). Figure 3 depicts the City’s continuum of housing and supports.

As illustrated in Figure 3, there are a variety of recognized support services that extend beyond what may be considered the traditional domain of housing. Households accommodated in the private market and social housing system alike may require economic, medical or social services that assist them in stabilizing, maintaining and improving their housing status.
Both the CMHC and the City of Ottawa’s versions of the continuum are rudimentary illustrations of Canada’s broad and diverse range of housing. While they provide some context for supportive housing, they also contain broader implications that deserve critical attention. The practical existence of a seamless range of housing with sufficient capacity is not evident in Canada, and the assumption that individuals ought to progress along a given path towards private market options leaves little room for individual preference and choice, and obscures the complex, variable and fluctuating needs and circumstances of residents (Rog, 2004; Serge, 2003). Given these concerns, in its recent ten-year plan, the City of Ottawa has tendered a new illustration, shown in Figure 4, of its envisioned housing system. Rather than a linear continuum, it is a circular depiction that emphasizes the centrality of the individual, and acknowledges the broad array of housing types, support models and partners.

While, like the continuum, this non-linear housing model depicts a system that has yet to be fully realized in practical capacity, it offers a more flexible, holistic, and less prescriptive guiding vision for Ottawa’s housing system. This model also further solidifies the role of a spectrum of support services in all types of housing, and recognizes supportive housing as one of a variety of housing options that respond directly to individual needs. The plan acknowledges that linear formulations of housing programs and services are not well suited to accommodating diverse and dynamic support needs, and it places a emphasis
on integrated housing and support as critical practice in homelessness prevention (City of Ottawa, 2014a). Figure 4 also serves to highlight the kaleidoscopic nature of the wide range of various models of housing with supports that exist. This diversity, as it is explored in the first section of this chapter, can be in part attributed to two distinct approaches towards the integration of housing and supports; Housing First and the Continuum of Care. These two systems of thought, widely understood as being philosophically antithetical, have been widely influential in the planning and implementation of housing and support programs.

Figure 4: The City of Ottawa’s Envisioned Housing and Support System (City of Ottawa, 2014a, 2)
Housing First

“Housing First” has become an oft-cited and widely accepted approach to homelessness intervention programs that prioritizes access to permanent housing, without qualification caveats. This “recovery-oriented” and “rights-based” approach is rooted in the principles that housing is a fundamental human right and critical precondition for addressing personal and socio-economic challenges that are inevitably exacerbated by the experience of chronic homelessness (Gaetz et al., 2013b). The expectation in delivery is that “once tenants secure stable housing, they can start to address other issues in their lives that may have led to housing instability in the past” (Kraus et al., 2005, 27).

Core principles of Housing First include personal choice and self determination, permanent housing, individualized support services, harm reduction, social and community integration and housing provision without readiness requirements (Gaetz et al. 2013b). Research has increasingly highlighted the effectiveness of Housing First as an approach, and it is noted that “most people who are homeless, even if they have substance use issues and concurrent disorders, can be successfully housed directly from the street if they are given the right supports when they want them” (Kraus et al., 2005, h).

Continuum of Care

The “Continuum of Care” is a paradigm that has widely influenced mental health care, residential services and homelessness interventions across North America (Kraus et al, 2005; Ridgway & Zipple, 1990; Serge et al., 2006). This approach references the linear nature of the housing continuum as it is discussed above, and assumes progress to occur as an individual moves from end to end; from shelters and social housing to market housing, from temporary to more permanent accommodation, and from more restrictive to more independent accommodation (Ridgway & Zipple, 1990; Rog, 2004). There is an expectation that individuals with mental health and substance use issues proceed along a linear trajectory to recovery, and that depending on their status, housing is essentially a prescription that is offered in accordance with the continuum. While it is critically differentiated from the concept of the housing continuum, this model operationalizes the continuum in a particular manner.

The Continuum of Care model has been criticized for restricting personal choice and self determination by requiring individuals to demonstrate their readiness for a certain housing type, abstinence from substance use, or by qualifying individuals though participation in specific human services, disconnected from housing (Kraus et al, 2005, 6). Further, the
Continuum of Care functions by pushing individuals between various physical settings, which precludes the opportunity to offer them permanent housing options that can accommodate their changing needs and marginalizes their housing stability and social networks (Polvere et al., 2014, 12).

Housing First and the Continuum of Care have received considerable attention in the literature, and this work does not endeavour to appraise or compare them in depth as others have done so effectively (see Gaetz et al., 2013b; Gulcur et al., 2003; Kraus et al., 2005; Polvere et al., 2014; Ridgway & Zipple, 1990). Rather, Housing First and the Continuum of Care are highlighted to provide background to the current topic, and to recognize them as important to framing much of the current discourse on housing practices and homelessness intervention programs. Rather than fitting supportive housing neatly or exclusively under either of these closely defined approaches, this report considers supportive housing within a range of housing options in Ottawa, and recognizes that it is planned and provided in ways that reference elements of both approaches.

While there are examples of where supportive housing has been supposed as being synonymous with the Continuum of Care approach (ie. Polvere et al., 2014, 22), supportive housing can offer permanent housing that is planned and administrated in accordance with the principals of Housing First (ONPHA, 2013, 6). As recognized, “one size does not fit all”, and moving to reconcile the opportunities that may be presented by each of these paradigms may provide communities with the best opportunity to offer a suitable range of housing and support options (SDR, 2008, 30). Despite debates concerning specific types of housing and their relationship and integration with support services, there is consensus across the literature that:

- Housing is an essential human right, and a fundamental necessity and basis for care.
- Housing and health supports are more effective when provided together.
- Fulfilled consumer preference is associated with positive health and housing outcomes.
- No single housing model can meet the range and diversity of support needs and personal preferences in housing.
- The current system of housing currently meets neither the qualitative or quantitative scope of need for affordable housing and supports services.
3.2.2 Local Housing and Homelessness Strategies

The responsibility for social housing provision in Canada has been decentralized and increasingly devolved to municipal governments, generally under the auspice of promoting planning and policy tailored to local circumstances (Leone & Carroll, 2010). The Province of Ontario’s Housing Services Act, 2011 has continued this trend by requiring local housing authorities to develop comprehensive ten-year plans to address housing and homelessness. In addition, the evolution of land use planning regulations that are administered by municipal authorities has meant that the form and nature of housing in Canada’s cities is determined to a great extent on a local basis (Hulchanski, 2004).

In Ontario, and across Canada, mental healthcare has also been decentralized and shifted from an institutional service to one that is predominantly community-based, and political jurisdiction for the provision of housing for persons with mental illnesses has been shuffled between different ministries and levels of government (Hartford et al., 2003; Sylvestre et al. 2007, 82). This realignment, precipitated by legislative changes as well as rights and advocacy work, has had a profound effect on the number of homeless persons across the country, and synchronously on the demands placed on local emergency shelters, public health systems and affordable housing supplies, as many individuals that may have been formerly accommodated in institutional settings now participate in the social housing system. A longstanding divide between Canada’s mental health and substance addictions service systems has further magnified the challenges faced by individuals with complex and concurrent disorders in accessing housing in conjunction with the support services they require (Serge et al., 2006).

While supportive housing inputs remain fragmented across a number of authorities, including the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), the Ministry of Health and Long Term Care (MOHLTC) and the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS), the basic responsibility for planning and designing integrated housing generally rests on municipal housing departments and local community housing providers (McClain, 1993). Given this systemic orientation, and the mounting social and economic costs of inaction, responding to growing issues of homelessness, housing affordability and support needs has risen to the forefront of municipal agendas. And thus, local efforts, guided by strategies like A Home for Everyone, become critical and predominant areas of focus for planning research concerning housing and homelessness.
3.2.3 Housing, Homelessness & Health

Despite the increasing localized attention, and considerable ongoing planning effort and investment, a national homelessness crisis has emerged in Canada. Homelessness is a multifaceted issue, which has been attributed generally to shifts in the economy, housing market and in policy approaches to poverty and mental illness during the last several decades (Gaetz et al., 2013a, 14; Hartford et al., 2003). Recent estimates suggest that at least 30,000 Canadians are homeless on a given night, and more than 200,000 face homelessness in the course of a year (Gaetz et al., 2013a, 5). The magnitude of the current state of this issue is broadly the result of a societal failure to provide sufficient support systems to ensure that all members of society, regardless of their circumstances, have access to adequate housing, necessary support services and income (CHRN, 2012).

As detailed by Gaetz et al. in their 2013 report, homelessness generally involves a cumulative interplay of “structural factors”, “systems failures” and “individual circumstances” (4). Critical here is the recognition that homelessness is not simply an individualized problem, and interventions must approach the complex web of factors that perpetuate the cycles of poverty and instability that lead to homelessness. While a lack of affordable and social housing is a critical and persistent factor, addressing homelessness requires considerably more than simply ensuring all members of society have access to a habitable space. Rather, the root complexion of the issue necessitates a coordinated, flexible and stable palette of support services to accompany housing.

A significant body of evidence-based research has firmly established the bilateral connections between homelessness, housing status and health outcomes, and demonstrated the serious implications that are associated with homelessness and insecure, unhealthy housing conditions (Wellesley Institute, 2012; REACH³, 2010; Frankish et al., 2005). The ability to find and maintain affordable, secure, and quality housing is fundamental to a person’s health and well-being, and a pervasive lack of access to adequate housing has remained a substantial contributor to poor health status and widespread health inequities in Canada (Bryant et al., 2011).

Mental and physical health issues and addictions are disproportionately prevalent amongst homeless populations that also face the most significant barriers in accessing healthcare services (Frankish et al., 2005). Following their Health and Housing in Transition Study, The Research Alliance for Canadian Homelessness, Housing and Health (REACH³, 2010) reported that those without a healthy place to live, whether homeless or vulnerably housed, face an increased risk of serious physical and mental health issues,
hospitalization, assault, marginalized access to healthcare and quality food, and premature mortality.

Homelessness is however not a uniform condition or experience, and the finer-grain circumstances and needs must be taken into account when planning intervention efforts. Kuhn and Culhane (1998) established a typology of three categories of shelter use for homeless adults; “transitional”, “episodic” and “chronic” (Gaetz et al. 2013a, 28). While the chronically homeless account for a small portion of the overall population, they exhibit the greatest severity and complexity of needs; many have serious and often concurrent mental health conditions, substance abuse issues and physical disabilities (28). This finding is illustrated in Ottawa in the work of Marion Wright and Natasha Poushinsky (2013), who surveyed 242 local long-term shelter users. Understanding the characteristics of these populations is a fundamental step to approaching the development of homelessness interventions and supportive housing, and their work is reviewed and analyzed closely in the following chapters of this report.

The REACH³ report recognizes that healthy housing is the fundamental solution to these problems, and that in order to support positive heath outcomes, housing must be decent, stable and appropriate. These three characteristics are defined in specific fashion (REACH³, 2010, 8):

- “Decent” Housing as that which is high quality, safe, clean, in good repair and offering privacy, personal space, and protection from extreme weather conditions.
- “Stable” Housing as being affordable, by costing no more than 30% of residents’ income.
- “Appropriate” Housing is that which offers supports that address the needs of residents, allowing them to stay successfully housed.

The associations between health and housing status also begin to inform the substantial costs associated with insecure housing and homelessness. Again, Gaetz et al. outline the significant cost that homelessness bears on the Canadian economy; factoring in shelters, social services, health care, emergency services and corrections, homelessness is a $7.05 billion burden on Canada’s economy every year. In his 2005 report, Steve Pomeroy examines the relative costs associated with approaching homelessness through institutional and emergency response services in comparison to “community based supportive and affordable housing” (ii). Measured by the total cost to government, Pomeroy found that the current cost of construction and supportive housing services are substantially lower than the costs associated with institutionalization and emergency services. Critically, Pomeroy submits that “investment in long-term supportive options, and potentially in affordable independent living, is a better form of investment than directing
limited funds to build more emergency shelters” (vi). And while variable in proportion, this finding held across all four surveyed cities, which offers a distinct relevance to the broader Canadian context (19).

3.2.4 Community Context

Planning interventions in housing, particularly in major urban centres, often capture considerable public interest, stir extensive political controversy and receive broad coverage in the media. This is particularly true of publically funded social housing initiatives, and perhaps none more than supportive housing projects (Galster et al., 2004). By virtue of the deep-set social stigmatization of mental illness and addictions, supportive housing projects almost inevitably elicit concern from local residents that fear their property values and personal safety will be compromised by the accommodation of “those people” in “that project” in their community (Wellesley Institute, 2008, iii). Across North America, “NIMBY” (not-in-my-back-yard) opposition to affordable housing projects is a significant obstacle to their development, and puts proponents on the defensive by inducing fear of negative outcomes on local crime rates, property values, poverty rates, public services and education (Scally & Koenig, 2012, 436).

Alongside housing and support services, the CSH recognizes supportive housing’s relationship to the community as a key constitutive component of the model (2013). While there can be significant challenges managing community consultation processes and encouraging the successful community integration of supportive housing, the literature presents a strong basis of findings that indicate supportive housing can contribute significantly to positive community development.

In several co-authored works, George Galster, Kathryn Pettit and Peter Tatian (Galster et al., 2002; Galster et al., 2004), have explored the supposed impacts of supportive housing projects on local neighbourhoods in the American context. Their 2002 work gauges the impact of supportive housing developments on local crime rates in Denver, Colorado, wherein they found no significant evidence that supportive housing facilities precipitated increased rates of reported crime (311). They do note, however, that where larger supportive housing projects of 53 or more residents were considered specifically, reported violent crimes and total crime increased notably in the immediate vicinity. The authors explain that this effect is not readily attributable to the residents of these larger projects, and is likely one of their social context more broadly. They suppose that the crime impacts associated with these larger facilities are more likely a product of deflated social control and a loss of local collective efficacy. This work highlights the importance of giving careful,
context-specific consideration to the physical scale and siting of supportive housing developments. Further, Galster et al. note that more effective public engagement and education is required, particularly as conventional fears towards the negative impacts of supportive housing are generally unfounded and actual local experiences around them are much more positive than predicted (312).

Again approaching the Denver context, Galster et al. (2004) found that neither the announcement, nor development, of supportive housing projects had any negative impact on proximal housing prices. Rather, areas nearby new supportive housing developments experienced increases in the general level and overall price trends. Recognizing that supportive housing developments can be planned and designed in ways that produce positive local externalities is a key policy lesson drawn from these findings, and one that again emphasizes the importance of careful siting, management, maintenance, community outreach and effective oversight to the corollary success of such projects.

Similar positive effects on neighbourhood property values were reported in Connecticut (Anderson, 2002), and these findings are supported in the Canadian context by work completed by the Wellesley Institute (2008), which again found that local supportive housing projects had no negative effects on property values or crime rates, and rather they made notable contributions to the strength of their local communities. In their report concerning supportive housing developments in Toronto, the Wellesley Institute illustrates the positive contributions to the neighbourhood made by tenants, including contributions to the local economy, community vibrancy, public presence, watchfulness and cordiality, and the “collective efficacy of their neighbourhoods through actions around noise and speed, tidiness and crime” (2008, 28). A 1994 University of Toronto planning study found that early opposition to supportive housing projects on the basis of safety and neighbourhood quality were unfounded, and highlighted a link between local resident’s acceptance of a project and their knowledge of supportive housing tenants and the objectives of the development (Hill et al., 1994, 24). These findings indicate the importance of community engagement in planning efforts that involve the supportive housing model.

3.3 Ottawa Context

3.3.1 Geographic Context

Ottawa is Canada’s capital city and fourth largest metropolitan centre. Situated at the confluence of the Ottawa River and the Rideau River, Ottawa lies in close proximity to the neighbouring city of Gatineau, Québec. Together, Ottawa and Gatineau form the basis of
the National Capital Region and the census metropolitan area of Ottawa-Gatineau. As of January 1st, 2001, twelve municipalities, including the former City of Ottawa, were dissolved to create the new amalgamated City of Ottawa (City of Ottawa Act, 1999). Led by the Province of Ontario, this move significantly expanded the city’s political and geographical boundaries. By the 2011 census, the City’s population was 883,391, and 1,236,324 across the Ottawa-Gatineau CMA (Statistics Canada, 2014a, Statistics Canada, 2014b).

The City of Ottawa covers an area of just more than 2,790 km², with a population density of 316.6 persons per km² (Statistics Canada, 2014a). These figures starkly contrast those of Canada’s other major municipalities; Toronto covers 630 km² with 4,149.5 persons per km², Montréal covers 365 km² with 4517.6 persons per km², and Vancouver covers just less than 115 km² with 5249.1 persons per km² (Statistics Canada, 2014a). Even while much of Ottawa’s population resides within the central urban sub-areas, the size and diffuse nature of the municipal boundaries are an important consideration in the coordination of strategic municipal housing policies and programs.

### 3.3.2 Housing Affordability in Ottawa

Ottawa is one of Canada’s least affordable housing markets, particularly for renters. According to CMHC data, Ottawa’s average rents are the fourth highest in the country, behind only Vancouver, Toronto and Calgary (CMHC, 2013b). Ottawa’s overall rental vacancy rate of 2.5% in 2012 was below the national average (CMHC, 2013b). Further, bachelor units, which represent the private rental market’s most affordable type of housing, had the lowest specific vacancy rate in 2012 at 2.1%, a figure that has dropped further to 1.9% in 2013 (CMHC, 2013c). Tables 1 and 2 provide an overview of recent statistics on Ottawa’s rental market and illustrate the proportion of minimum wage and principal income support programs available that are needed to cover housing costs.

#### Table 1: Average Market Rent and Vacancy Rate by Unit Size in Ottawa, 2013 (CMHC, 2013c)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Unit Size</th>
<th>Bachelor</th>
<th>1 Bedroom</th>
<th>2 Bedroom</th>
<th>3+ Bedroom</th>
<th>Overall</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Average Rent</strong></td>
<td>$766</td>
<td>$932</td>
<td>$1,132</td>
<td>$1,396</td>
<td>$1,015</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Vacancy Rate</strong></td>
<td>1.9%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>3.0%</td>
<td>4.1%</td>
<td>2.9%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Table 2: Individual Minimum Wage, Income Supports and Average Bachelor Rental Unit Costs Compared in Ottawa, 2013 (ATEH, 2013, 11)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Proportion of Income Needed to Cover Average Monthly Bachelor Unit Rent ($766)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Minimum Wage (Hourly)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Works (OW) Monthly Income (Single Person)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) Monthly Income (Single Person)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In their 2013 Report Card on Ending Homelessness in Ottawa, the Alliance to End Homelessness Ottawa (ATEH) characterizes the state of Ottawa’s housing affordability with an “F” letter grade, noting that the development of new affordable housing is outpaced by demand and rising housing costs, and that Ottawa’s poorest residents struggle to access affordable housing (2014, 3).

3.3.3 Homelessness and Emergency Shelter Use in Ottawa

Gathering statistics on homeless populations is a challenging task, and one that has only recently begun to receive more rigorous attention from researchers (SDR, 2008; Gaetz, 2013a). While emergency shelter statistics do not capture the whole picture of homelessness in Ottawa, they do provide a useful opportunity to examine trends, demographic characteristics, housing preferences and support needs of individuals that are reliant on the local emergency shelter system. Summaries and studies such as those presented by the ATEH (2014) and Wright and Poushinsky (2013) thus provide data that offer a useful frame of context for the present report, and give a basic indication of the target populations for supportive housing in Ottawa.

While the ATEH also assigns a failing grade to the observed average annual length of shelter stay, which increased from 2012 by an average of 4 days, they recognize that 548 fewer people in total used emergency shelters in 2013 than did in 2012 (2014, 3). While this decrease is encouraging, they note that the total proportion of Ottawa’s population accessing the emergency shelter system has remained essentially unchanged over the last decade (2014, 8). The ten-year trend for average length of shelter stay is further revealing, where length of stay has nearly doubled, and use on a total bed night basis has increased...
by 53% (2014, 8). In 2013, a total of 6705 individuals used emergency shelters in Ottawa for a total of 489,289 bed nights, and the average length of stay amongst all shelter clients was 73 days (ATEH, 2014, 10).

Wright and Poushinsky’s 2012 survey involved 242 long-stay shelter clients in Ottawa that had shelter involvements of six months or more (2013). The authors note that approximately 20 individuals declined to participate, and shelter staff estimated that roughly 20 more were not present while the survey was conducted (2013, 13). The data revealed an average age of 45.6 years, an average length of shelter involvement of 6.1 years, and illustrated a significant prevalence of health issues amongst this population; Table 3 provides a summary of the health issue statistics. 17 of the 242 individuals (7%) that participated in this research had accessed supportive housing in the past.

Table 3: Prevalence of Health Issues, by Total Number and Proportion, Amongst 242 Long-Stay Shelter Clients in Ottawa (Wright & Poushinsky, 2013)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Health Issues</th>
<th>Total Sample (n: 242)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health Issues Only</td>
<td>35</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Substance Use Issues Only</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concurrent Mental Health &amp; Substance Use Issues</td>
<td>81</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosed or Suspected Acquired Brain Injury</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Diagnosed or Suspected Developmental Disability</td>
<td>29</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Disability</td>
<td>75</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other Ongoing Health Issues</td>
<td>80</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As illustrated in Table 3, mental health, substance use and physical disability predominate amongst Ottawa’s long-stay shelter clients. Those with either or both mental health and substance use issues represent 71% of Wright and Poushinsky’s total survey sample. Physical disabilities were also highly prevalent, having been identified in nearly one third of all respondents.

3.3.4 Policy Context

While there is a range of plans and strategies that inform affordable housing, social housing and homelessness interventions in Ottawa, two key documents provide the most direct overlay of the current policy framework as it pertains to supportive housing. The first is the City of Ottawa’s municipal housing and homelessness strategy, A Home for
Everyone: Our Ten Year Plan 2014-2024, which was approved by Council in September 2013. The second is the Ontario MMAH’s Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI), which came into effect on January 1\textsuperscript{st}, 2013.

A Home for Everyone: Our Ten Year Plan 2014-2024

Under the provincial \textit{Housing Services Act, 2011}, the City of Ottawa was required to develop a comprehensive ten-year housing and homelessness plan, which was to take a “system-based perspective” and “take into account the full spectrum of services and partners” (City of Ottawa, 2013b, 2). The result, \textit{A Home for Everyone}, consolidated four previous housing and homelessness plans; the \textit{City Housing Strategy 2007-2012}, the \textit{Community Action Plan on Homelessness 2009-2014}, Action Ottawa 2003 and he \textit{Housing and Homelessness Investment Plan 2011}. Responsibility for the implementation of the plan is assigned to the City’s Housing Services Branch (HSB) (City of Ottawa 2013b, 17).

\textit{A Home for Everyone} identifies three main priorities that shape the plan’s commitments to ending chronic homelessness and building an integrated and holistic housing system that offers everyone a safe and affordable home in a neighbourhood of their choosing. The plan defines an “integrated housing system” as “the full range of housing, supports and related services available” that “includes all levels of government and the private and not-profit sectors” (City of Ottawa, 2014a, 7). The three described priorities are:

1. Ensuring Everyone has a Home
   a. A range of housing options meets demands through:
      • Construction
      • Purchase
      • Redevelopment
      • Housing subsidies
   b. Housing is in a good state of repair and well-managed.

2. Ensuring People Get the Support they Need
   a. People receive the right types of services and support to keep their homes and to prevent homelessness.
   b. People who become homeless are safe and receive adequate temporary shelter and supports to find housing.
   c. There is no chronic homelessness.
3. Working Together
   a. Ottawa has an integrated housing system, responsive to the housing and support needs of residents.
   b. Improved service planning and coordination and sustained funding from all levels of government, meet people’s needs.

A Home for Everyone contains a number of targets and actions that are not exclusive to supportive housing, but can be related directly to its provision under the plan’s framework. It identifies goals of achieving a 40% savings in emergency shelter funding, transitioning 100 long-stay shelter clients into housing with supports by 2015, and ensuring that emergency shelter stays are 30 days or less by 2024 (City of Ottawa, 2014a, 5). The plan makes general reiterations that savings will be reinvested into the housing system, a housing first approach will be utilized, outcome based measures will be developed, and that proactive, city-wide planning for individual needs will be undertaken.

The plan provides directives that apply to the design of supportive housing projects where it calls for affordable housing to be close to transportation, employment and services, and to contain barrier free units. It further recognizes that on-site supports should vary from “short to long-term and low to high intensity” and can include “crisis response, financial support, addiction and mental health services, case management, counseling, employment support, life skills coaching and general health supports” (City of Ottawa 2014a, 5).

This plan is acknowledged to be a living document that will evolve with the system on an ongoing basis (City of Ottawa, 2013b 16). And while it recognizes the importance of coordinating housing with a range of supports and services, and offers a strong set of actionable statements, the plan does not make a clear prioritization of permanent housing.

The Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)

Administered across Ontario by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) phases the consolidation of funding that was previously spread across five separate provincial housing and homelessness strategies, all but one of which had been managed by the MCSS. The five programs brought together under the CHPI are the (Province of Ontario, 2012, 1):

- Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program
- Emergency Energy Fund
- Emergency Hostel Services
• Domiciliary Hostel Program
• Provincial Rent Bank

In addition, CHPI funding is eligible for stacking with other programs, including municipal investment, funding from the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care (MOHLTC) and federal funding available through the *Homelessness Partnering Strategy* (Province of Ontario, 2012, 10).

The vision for the CHPI describes a shift towards a more “coordinated and integrated” and “proactive and permanent” system of services that address housing and homelessness issues in Ontario (Province of Ontario, 2012, 2). The CHPI reiterates a range of principals and objectives consistent with Ontario’s *Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy*, including the use of a Housing First approach. The guidelines offer two key program outcomes, which are designed for use in assessing the program’s performance and ensuring accountability (Province of Ontario, 2012, 4):

1. People experiencing homelessness obtain and retain housing; and,
2. People at risk of homelessness remain housed.

While the Province of Ontario sets the CHPI guidelines through the MMAH, the program is delivered locally by independent Service Managers (SMs), either directly, or in conjunction with local agencies and organizations (Province of Ontario, 2012, 5). There are 47 Service Managers across Ontario, with the City of Ottawa HSB acting as the designated SM exclusively within the City’s municipal jurisdiction.

Towards planning for supportive housing at the local level, the CHPI allows local SMs to flexibly allocate funding across four categories of housing and homelessness prevention services (Province of Ontario, 2012, 13):

1. Emergency Shelter Solutions
2. Housing With Related Supports
3. Other Services and Supports
4. Homelessness Prevention

Whereas SMs were previously unable to transfer funding allotments between these categories, The CHPI allows for funding to be focused on any particular services and activities that fit under the program’s umbrella and address the two program outcomes. Supportive housing is captured principally under the third category, which includes operating funding for long-term housing and support provision. The CHPI also carries forward previously established Provincial expectations for housing funded under the former Domiciliary Hostel Program, which includes many of Ottawa’s existing supportive housing developments.
The CHPI provides program funding for local operations that “prevent, reduce and address homelessness” and to “facilitate the development of seamless support services programming” (Province of Ontario, 2012, 4). The CHPI provides operating funding for services and activities, and does not contribute to capital costs such as land, building construction or conversion. While it does not provide for bricks and mortar costs, the CHPI contributes $33 million dollars to housing and homelessness initiatives in Ottawa (City of Ottawa, 2013b, 11). Combined with the flexibility it allows the Housing Services Branch (HSB) to plan housing and service provision locally, and the ability to combine it with other public funding sources, the CHPI is a critical coordinated policy document that shapes local supportive housing provision.
4.0 Case Studies

There are a variety of private, non-profit and cooperative organizations that provide supportive housing in Ottawa, and existing projects vary widely by building type, size, target clientele and type of support services offered. Two of Ottawa’s most recently developed supportive housing facilities are The Oaks, provided by Shepherds of Good Hope, and Cornerstone Housing for Women’s 314 Booth Street residence. Both facilities are dedicated site, permanent supportive housing projects, and provide stable, secure living environments for low-income residents with complex mental and physical health conditions, substance use disorders and histories of impoverishment and homelessness.

Both projects were characterized by HSB staff and proponent administration as being particular successful examples of supportive housing in Ottawa. Despite the challenges that arose during the planning processes, which are explored in further detail in chapters six and seven, both The Oaks and 314 Booth Street incorporate effective, functional and carefully designed features and amenities that cater to the specific needs of their residents. Each project has also integrated well into its surrounding neighbourhood, and gained increasing community acceptance. The case study profiles presented in this chapter serve to illuminate these design features, describe notable planning elements, and provide some background context for each project.
4.1 The Oaks

4.1.1 Location

The Oaks is located at 1053 and 1057 Merivale Road, in a Traditional Mainstreet Zone, in Ottawa’s Carlington neighbourhood. It falls within the municipal Ward 16, River, and in the provincial and federal electoral district of Ottawa Centre. Merivale Road and Kirkwood Avenue are arterial main streets, and the Shillington Avenue collector street connects the location to Fisher Avenue to the east (City of Ottawa, 2013d). While The Oaks is located considerably farther from the downtown core than the 314 Booth Street Residence, there are a variety of amenities and services located nearby, which include:

- Alexander Park
- Meadowvale Park
- Carlington Park
- Bellevue Manor Park
• Carlington Community Health Centre
• Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre
• Alexander Community Centre
• Carlington Recreation Centre
• Caldwell Family Centre
• Retail, convenience stores, shops and restaurants along Merivale Road and Carling Avenue
• Westgate Shopping Centre
• Carlington Community Garden

The Oaks is serviced by OC Transpo bus routes along Merivale Road and Kirkland Avenue. Highway 417 is easily accessible to the north of the site. Merivale Road is designated as a cycling Spine Route and as a Major Pathway south of Caldwell Avenue where it connects to the Experimental Farm Multi-use Pathway. Connections to the Cross-town Bikeway are available at Baseline to the south and Prince of Wales Drive to the east (City of Ottawa, 2013c).

Figure 6: Location of The Oaks at 1053-1057 Merivale Road (ESRI ArcGIS)
Figure 7: The Oaks 1057 Merivale Building

Figure 8: The Oaks 1053 Merivale Building
4.1.2 Provider

Founded in 1983, Shepherds of Good Hope is Ottawa’s largest non-profit provider of shelter, housing and services for the homeless. From its beginnings as St. Brigid’s Soup Kitchen, Shepherds of Good Hope today operates nine facilities across Ottawa, including five supportive living communities, shelter programs, a support service location and the Good Day Workshop social enterprise initiative (Shepherd of Good Hope, 2014). Across their facilities, Shepherds of Good Hope serves over 1600 individuals every day (Shepherds of Good Hope, 2014).

4.1.3 Planning & Design Features

Opened in early 2010, The Oaks is the second newest facility in Shepherds of Good Hope’s housing portfolio. Purchased with six million dollars of combined federal and provincial capital funding, The Oaks’ facilities occupy two buildings that were converted and renovated from their former use as the Cardinal Suites Hotel. The Oaks now offers a total of 55 supportive housing units, along with common rooms, a main kitchen and dining area, a variety of service and administrative facilities in the main building at 1057 Merivale.

Units

45 units are designated and funded under the Domiciliary Hostel Program, 15 of which are reserved for senior residents, over the age of 65. 30 of these units are designated for residents that are part of the Managed Alcohol Program (MAP), and have moved from the program’s first level at Shepherd’s 256 King Edward facilities.
The other 10 Domiciliary Hostel units are for residents with mental health issues, who receive on-site services from the Canadian Mental Health Association.

The 1057 Merivale building contains 36 supportive housing units and the building at 1053 Merivale contains 19 further units. Six units are double occupancy. All units are self-contained, and include washrooms and kitchenettes.

**Common Space**

The Oaks has a range of common areas for residents on the ground floor of the larger building at 1057 Merivale Road. These include:

- Main kitchen
- Communal dining and gathering room
- Lounge area
- Media / television room
- Computer lab
- Multi-purpose games and exercise room
- Outdoor patio space and barbeque area
- Covered outdoor smoking area
- Resident-tended communal garden
Service & Administrative Facilities

The ground floor of The Oaks 1057 Merivale building also contains a range of administrative spaces and support service facilities, including:

- Administrative offices
- Medical offices
- Medical service room
- Front desk reception and service desk
- MAP wine tap equipment
- MAP winemaking room

Support Services

Support services provided on-site in The Oaks are coordinated through partnerships between Shepherds of Good Hope, the Canadian Mental Health Association and Ottawa Inner City Health.

The Oaks’ most unique support service program is the Managed Alcohol Program, which takes a harm reduction approach to alcohol addiction, and provides participants with hourly dosages of wine. The 1057 Merivale building contains its own dedicated wine making facilities, which were developed in partnership with a local vinification company. MAP dispensation is administered at the front desk, where draught taps are located.
Comprehensive medical supports are provided by the three partner organizations, and full time registered nurses provide physical and mental health support services. Additional weekly visits are made by a doctor and medical team. Support staff and client care workers are available and on-site 24/7. In addition, residents are provided where necessary with supports in meal preparation, laundry, personal care, and transportation arrangements.

4.2 314 Booth Street Residence

4.2.1 Location

Cornerstone Housing for Women’s 314 Booth Street residence is located in a General Mixed Use Zone (GM) in Ottawa’s Little Italy inner city neighbourhood, south west of the downtown core. Politically, it is in the Somerset municipal Ward 14 and the provincial and federal electoral district of Ottawa Centre. Located on a major collector road, in close proximity to the arterial main streets of Bronson Avenue, Preston Street and Somerset.
Street West, there are numerous amenities and services within walking distance of the residence (City of Ottawa, 2013e). These include:

- McNabb Park
- Primrose Park
- Plouffe Park
- City of Ottawa Plant Recreation Centre
- Somerset West Community Health Centre
- Booth Neurology
- Saint Vincent Hospital
- Ottawa-Carleton District School Board Adult High School
- MCSS Income and Employment Supports Offices
- Supermarkets, grocers, restaurants, cafes, shops along Preston Street, Somerset Street West, Bronson Avenue and Gladstone Avenue.
- Dalhousie Food Cupboard Community Food Bank
- Preston Farmers’ Market
- Sweet Willow Community Garden

The site is proximal to numerous transportation corridors, including OC Transpo bus routes along Preston Street, Gladstone Avenue and Somerset Street West. The Transitway bus rapid transit corridor, the O-Train light-rail transit line and Highway 417 are easily accessible, as will be the Bayview station of the Confederation light-rail transit line, which is slated to open in 2018. Booth Street is a designated cycling Spine Route, which connects the site to the local cycling infrastructure network outlined by the city’s Transportation Master Plan, including the Cross-Town Bikeway and the Off-Road Multi-use Pathways system (City of Ottawa, 2013c). In addition, 314 Booth Street is within walking distance of Cornerstone’s other facilities; the 515 McLaren Street supportive housing residence, the McPhail House supportive housing residence at 251 Bronson Avenue, and the Women’s Shelter at 172 O’Connor Street.

**4.2.2 Provider**

Cornerstone Housing for Women is a community ministry of the Incorporated Synod of the Anglican Diocese of Ottawa and operates as a non-profit charitable organization. Cornerstone has been involved in providing shelter, housing and services for homeless women in Ottawa since 1983, and today operates three supportive housing residences and one emergency shelter facility.
Figure 18: 314 Booth Street Residence Frontage

Figure 19: 314 Booth Street Residence Eccles Street Façade
Cornerstone’s approach involves providing safe, community-oriented housing in combination with a range of professional health and social services catered to the needs of each individual. They focus on creating environments that promote independence, dignity and hopefulness amongst residents (Cornerstone Housing for Women, 2014). Cornerstone supports a Housing First approach to homelessness and advocates for increased attention and resource allocation for housing with supports for women with mental illnesses, addictions, physical health challenges, and those transitioning to more independent living.

4.2.3 Planning & Design Features

Opened in June 2011, 314 Booth Street is Cornerstone’s newest and largest facility, which provides 42 self-contained apartments integrated into an affordable supportive housing community. The building is a four-story purpose-built development, which includes office spaces, service delivery spaces and resident common spaces and amenities. The project design team included the local firms CSV Architects and Corush Sunderland Wright Landscape Architects Limited. The entire building is designed to have an open airy atmosphere, which allows for natural lighting and ventilation. Common spaces throughout the building are fully accessible and all floors are elevator serviced. 9 parking spaces are provided in a surface lot across the street for on-site staff and community service partners.

As a winner of the City of Ottawa’s 2011 Urban Design Awards, the Booth Street residence was recognized with an Award of Merit for Urban Infill, in the mid to high-rise category. This award recognized the effectiveness of the design in contributing to community sustainability through its physical suitability in the neighbourhood context and its enhancement of local public space and social connectivity (City of Ottawa, 2011).

Units

314 Booth Street contains two distinct unit types. There are 29 self-contained studio apartments designed for universal accessibility to the Ontario Building Code’s barrier-free requirements and follow provisions of the Canadian Standards Association Accessible Design for the Built Environment SA B-651 standards. These units contain basic kitchenettes, but do not include stoves, as full meal service is provided for senior residents. 20 of these units are allocated to senior residents, 50 years of age or older. 13 other self-contained studio apartments are designed for visitability with full living, sleeping, kitchen and washroom areas.
Common Space

314 Booth Street has a range of various resident common spaces, including:

- Communal gathering rooms with televisions, phones, kitchens, laundry machines, storage facilities and attached balconies on every level
- Main floor dining room
- Main floor living room
- Quiet refuge room
- Prayer Room
- Computer lab
- Outdoor amenity space, including a patio, barbeque space, gazebo and a resident-tended garden

Service and Administrative Facilities

The main floor contains offices and meeting space for program staff, service providers and administration.

- Medical examination room
- Maintenance room
- Building services, garbage and recycling facilities
- Staff common room
- Community board room
- Storage

Support Services

314 Booth Street involves partnerships with several organizations that
coordinate to provide services and supports to residents. Cornerstone Support Workers, Ottawa Inner City Health, and the Canadian Mental Health Association provide on-site services. Somerset West Community Health Centre also provides health care supports and residents have access to their clinic located directly across Booth Street from the building. The Canadian Mental Health Association administers support services in four units for residents with severe concurrent disorders.

Supports for 314 Booth residents are organized through a case management model, whereby a Case Manager works with each tenant to create a plan of care customized to their needs and preferences. The service plans are then coordinated amongst staff and service agencies. Comprehensive healthcare services are provided by a doctor and team of medical staff on a weekly schedule.

A registered professional nurse works on-site and is available on-call. Residents have 24/7 access to personal support workers who provide basic healthcare and personal care services. Cornerstone also has an on-site addictions counselor, and the organization’s entire specialized support staff network is readily accessible.

Senior residents are provided with three daily meals, and all residents have the option of subscribing to meal services. Various other recreational, social, and skills-oriented activities and programming are available for residents, co-sponsored by the partner organizations and a large network of volunteers in the community. These include on-site culinary education and computer training sessions. A spiritual care team that features a variety of multi-faith leaders is also available. Residents are also able to take advantage of the building’s common spaces to host guests and visitors.
5.0 Document Analysis

This chapter consists of an analysis of three key documents that inform the approach and context of the present research. Identified during the preliminary literature review and background exploration, these documents make particularly important contributions to the supportive housing discourse in Ottawa. The analysis of these specific documents recognizes them as particularly rich resources for the present work, both in an informational and methodological sense. Thus, this chapter intends to describe their roles and contributions to the research landscape, explain the specific perspectives they offer, investigate their particular strengths and weaknesses, and illustrate how they inform the data collection and interviews conducted as part of the present work.

Two of the documents under review, *Models of Housing with Supports* and *Housing and Support Needs and Preferences: Clients Using Ottawa Shelters* are professional reports that specifically concern the Ottawa context. Both were prepared in conjunction with local planners to direct and inform coordinated development of affordable housing and support services. These works offer perspectives from both local supportive housing providers and clients, which are critical to conceptualizing supportive housing that addresses the preferences and needs of future residents. The third document, *Dimensions of Quality*
Supportive Housing, prepared by the Corporation for Supportive Housing (CSH), offers a comprehensive catalogue of factors that they have identified as being fundamental to successful supportive housing. While not geographically specified, the CSH document is a uniquely detailed and categorical tool that deals with evaluative criteria specifically for supportive housing.

5.1 Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing

The CSH’s 2013 document, *Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing*, is the key descriptive piece of their housing resources toolkit, which establishes characteristics of good quality supportive housing projects. Based on research conducted with housing providers, funders, tenants and other stakeholders, the CSH has assisted numerous housing organizations using this document as a framework. Through this process, this resource has been updated to reflect recognized best practices and to enhance its most effective components. In this work, the CSH defines supportive housing as “a combination of housing and supportive services designed to help vulnerable individuals and families use stable housing as a platform for health, recovery and personal growth” (1).

The CSH outlines four principal project components, which they use to organize five dimensions of quality for supportive housing projects. The CSH matrix is provided in Figure 25. The first of the four elements is “project design and administration”, which is described as addressing the “process of planning and leading the supportive housing project, including key decisions about physical structure, team members and funding” (6). Considering that the present research deals with planning and design factors, the analysis focuses specifically on this component of the CSH work.

The CSH breaks down its five dimensions of quality individually as they relate to factors involved in supportive housing project design and administration. These five indicative dimensions of quality are listed below, along with a distillation of some of their constituent factors.

1. **Tenant-Centered:** *Every aspect of housing focuses on meeting tenants’ needs.*
   - Tenants are meaningfully involved in the project planning on an ongoing basis.
   - The influence and incorporation of tenant input can be demonstrated.
   - Clear goals and targets for the project are established and refined amongst partners and are adhered to.
   - Physical unit and building design meets tenants’ needs.
**Figure 25: The CSH's Dimensions of Quality Supportive Housing Summary Matrix (CSH, 2013, 5)**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>- PROJECT COMPONENTS -</th>
<th>- DIMENSIONS OF QUALITY -</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Tenant-Centered</strong></td>
<td><strong>Project Design and Administration</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Accessible</strong></td>
<td><strong>Property and Housing Management</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Coordinated</strong></td>
<td><strong>Supportive Services</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Integrated</strong></td>
<td><strong>Community</strong></td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Sustainable</strong></td>
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</table>

Tenants play an active role in planning the supportive housing project, and all partners share a common commitment to helping tenants thrive.

Staff educates tenants of their rights and responsibilities as leaseholders, actively soliciting tenant feedback.

Services are voluntary, customized and comprehensive, reflecting the needs of all household members.

Tenants have meaningful opportunities for leadership through avenues such as tenant associations and board positions.

The housing application and screening process is part of a larger community strategy to coordinate access to housing.

Tenants who have high service needs or who are high utilizers of existing systems are given priority for available units.

There is an overall strategy promoting the ability of tenants to choose from a variety of housing models and neighborhoods.

Goals outlined in community planning efforts, such as 10-year plans to end homelessness and consolidated plans, are furthered as a result of this supportive housing.
o Private rooms available to all tenants, private bathrooms and kitchens in each unit.
o Space for essential daily activities, including cooking, eating, sleeping, socializing and studying.
o Common community space.

2. **Accessible**: *Tenants of all backgrounds and abilities enter housing quickly and easily.*
   • Units are affordable, which means tenants pay ideally no more than 30%, and strictly not more than 50%, of their income for rent and utilities.
   • Development is located in neighbourhoods that meet tenant needs for safety, security, employment, education, services, shopping, recreation, socialization and public transportation.
   • Entire development, including units and common areas, is physically accessible to everyone.

3. **Coordinated**: *All supportive housing partners work to achieve shared goals.*
   • Particular roles are clearly established and codified amongst all partners involved in the project.
   • Ongoing communication and regular meetings are ensured amongst from staff with each organization.
   • All partners are engaged in ongoing evaluation and quality improvement processes.

4. **Integrated**: *Housing provides tenants with choices and community connections.*
   • The project is physically attractive, integrates with the community in appearance and scale, and meets or exceeds local standards for quality and maintenance.
   • Project partners are actively engaged in local community planning processes and dialogues.

5. **Sustainable**: *Housing operates successfully for the long term.*
   • Project funding is adequate and allocated to ensure its ongoing operation for the purposes intended and to preserve its long-term affordability for tenants.
   • Sufficient financial project performance plan is in place to cover debt servicing, capital costs and other expenses.
   • Project design features target economic and environmental efficiency that benefits tenants and the development generally.

The CSH recognizes that while supportive housing projects can make positive community contributions for a wide variety of stakeholders, their fundamental purpose is to enhance
their tenants’ lives. To this end, they offer five core outcomes of successful supportive housing:

1. **Tenants Stay Housed:** Tenants, including those who transition to other types of housing, remain permanently housed.

2. **Tenants Are Satisfied with the Services and Housing:** Tenants needs and expectations are met to their satisfaction, which is an important recognized quality of life outcome.

3. **Tenants Increase Their Income and Employment:** Tenants are able to obtain or maintain benefits and/or employment income.

4. **Tenants Improve Their Physical and Mental Health:** Tenants are able to access needed physical and mental health care that enables them to improve their health status.

5. **Tenants Have Social and Community Connections:** Tenants are supported in developing community connections and social networks.

### 5.1.1 Additional Considerations

This document provides a comprehensive set of explicit criteria that inform successful planning and design features for supportive housing projects. It is the product of ongoing work with supportive housing stakeholders, and maintains an important focus on housing outcomes for clients. The document lays out its dimensions of quality in an effective manner, separating features that speak to concerns that arise at the various stages of a project, from design to operation. Each of the specific criteria is explicit and well articulated, which enhances their potential functionality.

Taken as a whole, the scope of this document may make it challenging to apply to a specific project, particularly where certain program components are mandated by external authorities, or are entangled with issues at a broader system level. It may also suffer from being overly generalized for the purposes of a specific provider or housing department, where specific local plans, processes, regulations and political environments bear influence. Further, it may be challenging to consider which criteria or features should be prioritized where administrative or economic limitations exist. In some instances, in recognizing that a project does not achieve a given criteria, it may not be clear as to how
this issue may be rectified or mitigated. As such, the approach taken by this work may make it a more effective tool for planning new projects than addressing issues that exist in current ones.

This document provides a selection of specific criteria that are of particular use for this report where they can be explored through the project case studies and during interviews. While they will not be implemented as evaluative criteria, each factor will serve to highlight specific features or points of concern that have not been available from the other data sources.

5.2 Models of Housing with Supports

Models of Housing with Supports is a report that was prepared for the Housing Services Branch by Social Data Research Limited and L. Bonnie Dinning Consulting in 2008. The final report consists of a literature review and an analysis of Ottawa’s current system, and presents a framework for the provision of housing with supports in Ottawa in light of best practices and identified local needs. This work included a survey of fourteen local key informants involved in housing and homelessness, which was designed to gauge the current state of affairs, populations in need, alternate housing models, best practices and local priorities.

This report recognizes the significant diversity of need that exists amongst persons and households that rely on affordable housing with supports for shelter in Ottawa. As such, a range of different models of providing housing with supports has been established, which includes transitional housing, supportive housing and more independent supported housing. In addition to these general categories, the authors recognize that housing providers may also offer a mix of various unit types and sizes, and thus have some flexibility to serve their residents along a “continuum” of housing that offers different levels of support dependent on their needs.

The authors acknowledge that the notion of the housing continuum is troubled by the fact that in practice, it is not truly continuous; there are individuals whose particular needs are not being met by available housing and support services. As a consequence of the gaps in the system, some individuals live without the supports they need, and inevitably suffer the consequences of living in inadequate housing, relying on the emergency shelter system or facing homelessness.
Three models of housing with supports are described in this report: transitional housing, supportive housing and supported housing. The discussion of supportive housing recognizes that in Ontario, this term specifically relates to housing “where supports are linked to a specific accommodation unit and staff work on site supporting all who live there” (20). While this means that supportive housing may be a shared accommodation arrangement, it also includes developments with multiple self-contained apartment units. In supportive housing, residents may receive support from both on-site staff and external community agencies. The authors relate that the focus of supportive housing centres on creating a safe environment where staff can actively foster a cohesive community atmosphere, and residents are involved in decision-making, daily homemaking tasks and conflict resolution. While supportive housing has been characterized as an “interim step” in the housing continuum, the authors note that in ideal circumstances, it is rather a permanent home, “for as long as it suits the person’s needs and preference” (39).

Taken together, the report notes that these models of housing with supports have positive impacts for housing stability, reduced hospitalization rates, greater housing satisfaction, better housing quality, higher overall quality of life and positive socio-economic impacts. From a cost/benefit perspective, this report notes that the literature strongly supports the notion that institutional and emergency service responses are significantly more costly than residential, community based housing options. Further, supportive housing provides a vastly more stabilized and general higher quality of life than do shelters and emergency services. It is recognized that providing individuals with supports in housing may allow them to recover their ability to live stably and independently. Individuals that are consequently able to participate in the labour market can productively contribute to the economy and may reduce their reliance on social assistance. Where persons may continue to require ongoing support for daily living, supportive housing offers access to services in a dignified fashion and allows residents a higher quality of life and level of self-confidence. These findings reflect the results of the literature review conducted as part of the present report, which provided overwhelming support for investments in permanent housing and support services as a vastly more effective and cost efficient means of accommodating and supporting stability for persons struggling with homelessness, acute mental and physical health issues and addictions (Pomeroy, 2005; Greenberg et al., 2013; MHCC, 2011).

Where supportive housing developments consist of congregate living arrangements, certain disadvantages for residents have been recognized in this work, including limited privacy and lack of power and control, as well as having no choice of whom they live with. In some circumstances, residents may be expected to move into a new housing arrangement if they are deemed to be doing well, which not only means they lose their
homes, but the supports and social networks they have established. The authors recognize that some supportive housing providers have begun to reorient their programs in order to address these issues and offer residents greater control and more independent and individualized services.

*Models of Housing with Supports* describes two philosophical approaches to housing those with special needs that have evolved “following modern society’s rejection of institutional care” (24). The first, the “continuum of care” approach, is based on a paradigm where a range of housing options are available, each providing different levels and types of support. Residents are accommodated according to their needs, and may move between different environments as required. The authors explain that the continuum is thought to end with independent living, or where an individual reaches their optimum level of development. A particular challenge for this model is its reliance on the availability of a sufficiently wide variety of housing and support options to meet the needs of all clients. An inadequate selection or supply results in individuals being housed in inappropriate circumstances as the housing and support combination is not available or does not exist. The second model discussed is the “person-centred” approach, which focuses primarily on having individuals exercise maximum control over their own homes and support service access.

In respect to the broader local system, selecting and optimizing housing and service provision requires effective assessment of the needs of each individual, and this report highlights that a hybrid approach to the continuum of care and person-centred models offers the best opportunity for success. Several key factors that should be ensured include:

- The availability of a variety of housing with supports options, which focus principally on varying the type of supports rather than the location of the housing.
- Support for client choice and control.
- Person-centred needs assessment that factors personal preferences.
- Continual reassessment of the options provided.

There are some key conclusions that can be drawn from *Models of Housing with Supports*. Broadly, it recognizes that supportive housing exists amongst several predominant models of housing with supports, each with distinct advantages and disadvantages. The body of evidence reviewed in the report highlights that the specific needs of residents are paramount in developing supportive housing, and given the complexity and range of these needs, it’s important to recognize that “one size does not fit all” where housing is considered. While supportive housing is an important model, it will not be the best fit for all persons requiring supports in housing, and it’s critical that a
flexible range of options exists for residents to optimize their housing circumstances. Towards this, the authors call for greater community cooperation and coordination between program and service providers to fill existing gaps and ensure that an appropriate spread of housing and support types are offered. While outwardly simple, the authors deliver an important recognition in that “housing and support services are interdependent; both are less effective in the absence of the other” (3).

There are several critical findings that are most relevant for the present report. In regards to supportive housing design, this report recognizes that self-contained units are favoured by most residents, and may be especially beneficial for those receiving specific treatments. Access to independent units accounts for the importance of privacy and personal control over one’s own housing, which have been recognized as particular issues in shared living arrangements. The literature review within the Models of Housing with Supports report highlights a consensus towards the need to emphasize “apartment or bachelor style units (in other words self-contained units that include at a minimum some cooking facilities and an ensuite bathroom); but with access to some shared areas for socialization, possible delivery of support services, and in some cases opportunities for communal cooking and shared meals” (18). The following lessons, best practices and priority needs identified in the report’s survey offer support for self-contained units:

- “With a high risk/need population, there are significant benefits to having self-contained units to minimize criminal associations and allow clients to focus on their own case plan” (8).
- “There is a need for more subsidized housing units (individual apartments). Many people are living in shelters who might better be housed in longer term arrangements” (9).
- “There is a need for all housing to be self-contained and affordable” (10)
- “For individuals with serious mental illness who are homeless, studies of consumer preference have consistently shown that the housing of choice is regular apartments or houses and that integrated housing (into the community at large) is a preference as opposed to dedicated or segregated housing and definitely as opposed to congregate living models. Models that promote integrated, self-contained, regular housing situations should figure large in any targeting of resources” (10-11).

The importance of operating partnerships between housing providers and service agencies is also highlighted, which may manifest physically as drop-in service locations proximal to housing sites, or even integrated directly with new developments.

In terms of planning-level directives and priorities, this report notes that systemic gaps persist, and the present range of housing is not continuous or flexible enough to meet the
needs of all residents. Noting that while the variety of housing types is broadly insufficient and providers are often not effectively linked, the report suggests that the focus should level on adding permanent housing with supports, rather than transitional housing. It is recognized that individuals may fall through the cracks where they move out of transitional housing and do not have access to permanent housing options that offer appropriate supports, and often end up living in shelters. Some of the key directives drawn from the survey that inform planning approaches to supportive housing include:

- “Scattered units (using a “Housing First approach”) in different locations are a good option; however, some residents feel isolated and sometimes lose their housing before needed supports are put in place. It is more difficult to stay connected to these residents and provide support when needed, particularly when the housing and support services providers are not part of the same organization. The “Block Lease” approach works well as housing and supports are provided by the same agency” (6).
- “Increased choice in housing setting is related to positive housing outcomes” (7).
- “It is important to have a strong staff presence (on-site or on-call) and to ensure that all clients are aware that 24 hour crisis intervention assistance is available. This results in fewer significant crisis situations, very little property damage and a positive relationship with the surrounding community, most specifically immediate neighbours (7-8).
- “More resources should go towards finding housing with support solutions for persons who are mentally ill, homeless or developmentally disabled” (9).
- “There is a need for more second stage housing for persons with mental health problems, addictions, and HIV/AIDS. Currently it is a vicious circle – clients get well enough to leave a group home with 24/7 support, go into independent living but then lose their housing because it’s not enough support. There is no continuum of care right now. A lot of people are being “recycled” through the system” (9).
- “There is a need to create, stabilize and maintain long-term supported housing and create additional capacity for individuals leaving treatment” (9).
- “There is a need for more permanent housing with supports available 24/7 for people with severe mental illness (with or without an addiction)” (10).

Models of Housing with Supports is a strong background document that informs the context of this research by providing an outline of the system of housing and support provision in Ottawa. By the same token, however, it is not specific to supportive housing projects, and acts most effectively where it lays out the broader system of housing with supports and offers important perspective from local stakeholders and experts in the field. This report complements the present research methods particularly where it offers relatively raw findings from local informants and housing providers. Considering the
information gathered from fourteen additional participants adds depth to the present dataset, and allows for comparative analysis of the findings drawn from the interviews conducted as part of the present work. As a product of 2008, it is also important to consider how the landscape has evolved over the five years since.

This report highlights the diversity and complexity of the system of housing and supports in Ottawa. It offers a detailed deconstruction of the system and a typology of housing with support models and philosophical approaches to housing provision. In approaching the system broadly, this work showcases important lessons, best practices and priorities for local action. However, these findings are not deeply distilled or prioritized, and are rather presented as a relatively raw compilation of the survey results. The impact of the report and its findings may have been more clearly articulated and operable if they had been presented as more discriminately developed recommendations or conclusions.

5.3 Housing and Support Needs and Preferences: Clients Using Ottawa Shelters

Prepared by Marion Wright and Natasha Poushinsky in 2013, Housing and Support Needs and Preferences: Clients Using Ottawa Shelters is a report that discusses the findings of research on the emergency shelters system and its clients in Ottawa. A survey of individuals accessing local shelters was conducted to assess length of stay, previous housing experiences, preferred housing arrangements, and the type of supports considered necessary to successfully transition to housing outside of the shelter system. In addition to the client survey, shelter staff and administrators were consulted through interviews and focus groups to provide complementing information and insight to the system and relevant planning challenges and opportunities. The intent of the project was to assess the opportunity to successfully move long-term shelter users to alternative housing with supports suitable to their needs, in order to offer them better housing outcomes and reduce the pressure on the local shelter system.

The research involved a “housing preference questionnaire tool” which was developed in collaboration with City Housing Branch Staff and shelter managers to gather data from shelter clients. The questionnaire was either self-administered or completed through an interview conducted by project or shelter staff, and was available in both hard copy and web-based formats. This study sampled 242 chronic shelter users, a population comprising roughly one third of the total local shelter capacity. Data was gathered from shelter staff and administrators by means of “staff and leadership” sessions. These involved a focus group, with questions designed to elicit information from front line staff
and managers pertaining to their experience and ideas on potential operational improvements and policy development.

*Housing and Support Needs and Preferences: Clients Using Ottawa Shelters* also includes a literature review focusing on research concerning housing and shelter use, with particular attention to that conducted in the Canadian context. This section touches on many of the constituent issues and paradigms of housing and homelessness planning, and identifies a wide selection of the most recent and relevant research. Highlighted here are findings concerning the housing first model, productive housing values, the importance of consumer preferences, the economic impetus for housing provision and the links between health and housing.

This report offers a range of conclusions, divided into two categories, regarding housing and system-level changes. Towards housing, the authors relate that most of the individuals currently relying on shelters for accommodation could be successfully transitioned to alternative housing. In order to facilitate this, a range of housing types is required to address the varied character and degree of need. Several specific housing types are recognized, including independent scattered units, shared units, small homes and larger apartment clusters. In greater detail, the authors describe several types of housing, of which the following align generally with the supportive housing model (8):

- “Small multi-unit homes or apartment buildings with individuals who know each other from the shelters and could live communally (and offer social support to each other) and additional housing supports as needed with income support;”
- “A ‘head lease’ arrangement with a provider”, where individuals “would share a rented home with on-site support for mental health and addiction issues and physical health needs”;
- “Specialized facilities for chronic shelter users with serious health needs, with portable supports” which could “encompass larger facilities (10-15 individuals) or a specialized “supportive housing” section in one of the shelters.”

Shelter staff also identified a small but notable population of individuals that are reticent to participate in social interaction and treatment programs, yet feel safe in the shelter environment. Staff indicated that these persons would be best served by supportive housing offered on the shelter site.

In regards to system-level changes, this report highlights the importance of coordination and partnerships amongst local agencies in the development of suitable housing alternatives and facilitation of the client transition process. The authors call for a coordinating team and an “inter-agency implementation team” comprised of housing and shelter providers, to act as a liaisons during this process. They offer a goal of
reestablishing the shelter system as a network of that focuses on providing emergency shelter for specific populations in need, rather than acting as a long term housing provider. More broadly, it is recognized that this systemic reorientation has wide research support that indicates it is associated with both positive housing outcomes and economic efficiencies and reduced pressures on emergency medical and law enforcement services.

A considerable proportion of this report is devoted to reporting key descriptive statistics drawn from the client survey. Some of the key demographic statistics of the sample population include:

- Average shelter involvement length of 6.1 years
- 81% of respondents were men
- Average age of 45.4 years

From the sample population, six distinct clusters of individuals were identified on the basis of a variety of demographic and health status characteristics. These six clusters were:

1) Youth and young adults
2) Seniors (55+)
3) Persons with mental health and/or substance use issues
4) Persons diagnosed with, or suspected to have, acquired brain injury
5) Persons identifying as Aboriginal
6) Persons with fewer health issues, not presently receiving mental health or substance use services

In respect to supportive housing design, the most pivotal contribution of this report are the data which illustrate shelter clients’ preferences towards housing types and the character of support services required to allow them to maintain their housing. The results demonstrate a clear preference for self-contained units, especially for those with complex and multiple health needs. 81% of respondents indicated that having their own apartment was important or very important, and 53% definitively stated they do not want to live with a roommate. 68% indicated that having their own room and bathroom was important or very important to them. While a fractional minority, 6% of the respondents did communicate a preference towards living with a roommate. The general preference for having an independent unit held for all six of the identified clusters.

Where the delivery of support services is concerned, 45% of respondents indicated that some level of on-site support would be important or very important to them, and 22% identified that having 24/7 supports would be important or very important. While it was generally found that individuals with fewer health issues reported a lower level of need for supports, 33% of this specific cluster still indicated that having on-site supports would be
important or very important. Those with substance use issues and persons identifying as Aboriginal were the most likely to identify the importance of having 24/7 supports on-site.

Survey participants were asked to identify factors they consider to be important to their success in maintaining housing. Table 4 illustrates the incidence of responses for a variety of factors for housing success. Meal preparation was found to be of principal importance, where 81% of respondents indicated it as a success factor. This was further supported by staff that reported that some clients who had moved out of the shelter would return for meals, which in turn suggests that supportive housing should offer cooking facilities and/or meal preparation services for residents, particularly where communal dining is supported. Only 9% of respondents identified meal preparation as barrier to leaving the shelter, pointing to the idea that the social and economic aspects of food preparation are paramount.

Table 4: Factors in Housing Success and Loss for Long-Stay Shelter Users in Ottawa (Wright & Poushinsky, 2013, 51)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Success Factor</th>
<th>Success Factor %</th>
<th>Reason for Leaving Housing %</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Finances</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>57%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Employment</td>
<td>68%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Interpersonal Relationships</td>
<td>49%</td>
<td>62%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landlord</td>
<td>55%</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Physical Health</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mental Health</td>
<td>52%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Drug or Alcohol Use</td>
<td>23%</td>
<td>78%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Budgeting</td>
<td>51%</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Meal Preparation</td>
<td>81%</td>
<td>21%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Social Support e.g. family and/or friends</td>
<td>67%</td>
<td>36%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Support from a Community Organization</td>
<td>65%</td>
<td>39%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>28%</td>
<td>72%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All respondents to the survey were recognized as being “exceptionally poor” and finances were one of the most commonly recognized barriers to securing housing outside a shelter. The Ontario Disability Support Program, Ontario Works, and Personal Needs Allowances were the most commonly reported income sources. As a related factor, employment was also a commonly reported barrier. While only 5% of clients indicated they had employment income, 50% communicated a desire to return to work. Budgeting was identified by slightly more than half of shelter clients as being an important factor in retaining housing.
Amongst surveyed shelter clients, there is a discernable consensus towards the importance of supports for social-recreation activities, highlighted where 41% identified support for life skills and social inclusion as important or very important. In addition, Table 4 indicates that 62% of respondents identified “interpersonal relationships” as a factor in previous housing loss. “Social support” in the form of a network of friends and family was identified by 67% of clients as being a factor for housing success. The findings of the staff focus group reinforced the notion that familiar and supportive relationships between shelter staff and clients are a distinctly positive aspect of living in a shelter, and many clients indicate the importance of the social networks they develop in them.

Substance use support (38%), mental health support (39%) and individual case management were also widely identified to be of particular importance by clients. The need for drug and alcohol treatment was cited as barrier to leaving the shelter by 29% of respondents, and mental health supports by 28%. 25% indicated that they were receiving mental health supports in shelters, and 14% from a community organization. 32% were utilizing substance use supports in shelters, and 14% from a community agency. The most conspicuous factor identified by clients as contributing to housing loss was drug or alcohol use, at 78%.

5.3.1 Additional Considerations

Shelter staff noted that many clients with particularly complex needs have been left to the shelter system as a result of the closure of the Rideau Regional Treatment Centre and the current mandate of the Royal Ottawa Mental Health Centre. Despite being profoundly inadequate to accommodate the needs of these individuals, shelters have become the last remaining option for many. However, as administrators reflected during the leadership sessions conducted by Wright and Poushinsky (2013), shelters have become the preferred homes for many, and often remain more attractive than community housing options. This is given by a range of circumstances that include the broad array of supports offered in shelters, enhanced healthcare services that are less available outside shelters, the sense of community and social connections, and a familiarity with the system. Concurrently, staff and administrators recognized that the challenges and risks for shelters have become more acute as they have come to face this greater demand from clients with more complex needs. This increasing pressure was also recognized as exacerbating the uneven distribution of attention and supports amongst shelter clientele, whereby some clients inevitable suffer as a result of shelter staff’s attention being preoccupied with the most challenging individuals.
In sum, this report provides a uniquely detailed look at the characteristics of shelter users in Ottawa, and it offers an important assemblage of their self-perceived needs and preferences for housing types and support services. Most principally, it features the perspectives and opinions of these clients regarding the types of supports they feel they need to successfully access and maintain housing outside of shelters. Complemented by consultation with shelter staff members and administrators, the findings and conclusions are succinctly broken out into housing-specific and system-level categories. In addition, this work presents a strong background literature review that illuminates and describes some leading resources that concern housing and support provision.

Where it addresses alternative housing types and support services for shelter users, this work is the most recent and relevant resource to offer the voices of potential future supportive housing residents to the present work. The results of the client survey are described in detail and well illustrated by tables and graphs. While they are largely descriptive, rather than specified, the perspectives and recommendations offered by staff and administrators are clearly presented, and again add a unique layer of knowledge to the analysis. Taken together, this report presents valuable data that informs planning and design factors for supportive housing, that is simply not available elsewhere in the literature, and would otherwise be beyond the scope of the data collection process of this work.
6.0 Interview Findings & Analysis

This chapter explores the major themes and findings that were gathered through the semi-structured interview process. Four key informant interviews were conducted with participants who were selected on the basis of their knowledge and extensive experience in senior leadership positions involving supportive housing development in Ottawa. Candidates were identified through the background research process and via communication with several individuals involved in the local supportive housing sector. A semi-structured approach, as explained in this report’s methodology chapter, was adopted in order to attend to the unique perspectives of each participant.

Two interviews were conducted with City of Ottawa Housing Services Branch (HSB) staff members, which were oriented towards specific policies, directives and challenges faced by HSB staff and planners. The other two interviews, with administrators from The Oaks and Cornerstone housing communities, focused more on project-specific design and locational features and service provision. All participants were asked to provide input on policy and regulatory hurdles, and to reflect on the major challenges, successes and lessons drawn from their experiences, particularly in relation to their respective engagements with the two case study projects.
Latent content analysis of the information gathered through the interview process was conducted to explore the dominant themes and perceptions of success factors and lessons that emerged. This process accentuated valuable insights and perspectives from supportive housing providers and local government staff involved in their planning and design. Not only did the results inform the broader conditions and challenges inherent in supportive housing provision, but were also a valuable source of information specific to The Oaks and Cornerstone’s 314 Booth Street Residence.

Each of the themes and elements identified in this analysis are deeply interrelated and cannot practically be formulated in isolation. For instance, building design has direct impacts on project cost and affordability, and is critically influenced by planning policy and regulations. In the interest of clarity, this section is organized into two broad categories of analysis. The first approaches the system and processes involved in planning for supportive housing, and the second deals with physical design, service provision and locational factors that appeal more to specific project elements.

6.1 Planning Elements

6.1.1 Political & Organizational Factors

The interviews highlighted a diversity of challenges and uncertainties that make the supportive housing development process demanding, unpredictable and risky for the organizations behind them. Reflecting on the successful realization of the Oaks and 314 Booth Street, senior administrators emphasized the need for advocacy and leadership from civil society, municipal staff and politicians. Strong working relationships amongst Ottawa’s local non-profit housing and service providers and the City’s Affordable Housing Unit were recognized as critical in developing shared goals and objectives towards housing and homelessness, and in making meaningful steps towards meeting them.

6.1.1.1 Political Factors

Political volatility and risk-aversion were identified as preeminent challenges for project proponents, as the availability of funding and support critically hinges on the appetites of each level of government. While acknowledging the intractability of political cycles and priorities, several interview participants recognized how engaging and building support from local City Councilors and Members of Provincial Parliament was critical to the success of The Oaks and 314 Booth Street. Particularly important was their ability to liaise
with their constituents and strengthen the relationships between the providers and the local communities during the consultation process.

The need to raise broad political awareness of the importance of strategic planning and investment in housing was a common theme, and several participants addressed the particular lack of engagement and leadership from senior levels of government. Paul Soucie, former Executive Director of Shepherds of Good Hope, identified a stark “disconnect at the federal level,” noting the absence of a comprehensive national housing strategy and a lack of political accountability in addressing the housing and support needs of Canada’s most vulnerable and marginalized citizens (personal communication, May 15, 2014).

6.1.1.2 Organizational Factors

Senior administrators from Shepherds of Good Hope and Cornerstone spoke to the complexity and ambiguity of the development process, and emphasized the need for dedication, courage and commitment in the organizations involved. Both recognized the tenuous nature of building political and community support, securing funding, gaining the necessary planning approvals and managing the development process, all of which make projects particularly risky and uncertain for small non-profit organizations. In navigating these challenges, Paul Soucie highlighted the importance of having dedicated leaders with the ability to galvanize the support of their staff and board of directors, and to guide them through the execution of a project. He acknowledged that patience, creative problem solving and communication are paramount, and stressed the importance of developing a clear vision towards the organization’s mission and long-term objectives.

As part of a changing approach to homelessness interventions, supportive housing was described as a critical component of a system which has come to place a much greater emphasis on the integration of permanent affordable housing and support services. HSB Staff noted two principal and concurrent goals in their work with local housing and shelter providers; enabling those in need to move directly into appropriate housing in coordination with the support services they require, and reorienting emergency shelters away from being long-term service and accommodation providers. Recognizing that shelter providers play a crucial and deeply entrenched role in the communities they serve, a HSB Manager recognized the challenges involved in encouraging the transformation towards permanent housing solutions, without destabilizing the crucial front-line work they perform.

Both senior administrators underscored the importance of the strong relationships between their organizations and other non-profit housing, healthcare and support service
providers and the City’s HSB. They acknowledged that developing goals, objectives and strategic plans has been a collaborative process, which will continue to be crucial in expanding the local supply of supportive housing and achieving system-level results.

6.1.2 Financing

As in any matter of real estate development, financial viability is a principal concern for providers and municipal housing departments involved in building and operating supportive housing. Non-profit organizations like Cornerstone and Shepherds of Good Hope engage in ongoing private fundraising that is integral to the sustainability of their operations. However, given the expense of developing new projects and the politically contingent nature of housing investments, securing timely and appropriate government funding remains a principal and complex challenge.

6.1.2.1 Economic Rationale

There was consensus amongst interview participants that while the cost of providing affordable housing and dedicated support services is significant, it is ultimately much cheaper and eminently favorable in contrast to the expenses associated with accommodating individuals in the shelter system on a long-term basis. Participants echoed the literature in recognizing the significant emergency medical, hospital, policing and criminal justice costs affiliated with the shelter paradigm. HSB staff observed that this also results in a large percentage of the City’s resources being directed to a small minority of Ottawa’s homeless and under-housed residents. Further, both project administrators and HSB staff agreed that the costs associated with supportive housing are amply justified by the positive results it has for the stability and prosperity of residents, as well as Ottawa’s communities more broadly.

6.1.2.2 Public Funding

Supportive housing projects are largely contingent on funding that flows from all three levels of government, through a variety of ministries, departments, programs and initiatives. Supportive housing providers generally must manage revenues through social assistance programs including the Ontario Disability Support Program (ODSP) and Ontario Works (OW), and secure discrete funding allocations for capital construction and operational costs. Administrators and HSB staff noted the complexity involved with this dichotomy and described several fundamental challenges and consequences of the shifting landscape of public investment in affordable housing.
In particular, the impact of the recent reorganization of provincial funding under the Ministry of Municipal Affairs’ (MMAH) Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) was recognized during several interviews. HSB staff acknowledged that the CHPI allows for a greater degree of flexibility for municipal Service Managers (SMs) to direct operational funding towards supportive housing programs. Under the previous model, the City was faced with losing the per diem subsidy when an individual was moved out of a shelter and into affordable housing. While the CHPI allows local SMs to reallocate these funds towards long-term supportive housing and other initiatives, it does however cap the total amount of available operating funding at $33 million (City of Ottawa, 2013b).

As one of the five programs consolidated under the CHPI, the Domiciliary Hostel Program has been an important funding component for Ottawa’s supportive housing, yet it was recognized as posing distinct challenges for providers (Cornerstone Administrator, personal communication, May 15, 2014). Most notably, it requires a housing provider to be involved directly in residents’ finances, and does not allow residents to have tenancy arrangements that function like average market leases. As explained by a HSB manager, many individuals that have lived and had meals provided in emergency shelters on a long-term basis are accustomed to having discretionary spending control over their social assistance allowances, which generally total approximately $1500 per month. In supportive housing, a resident’s shelter allowance is allocated towards their room and board, they are required to contribute towards food and support services provided, and they are provided with a personal needs allowance that averages between $100 and $200 per month. This scenario has made it challenging to convince some entrenched shelter users to move into supportive housing arrangements, as they perceive it as a loss of income. As such, it was acknowledged that in some instances, the current "social welfare system is kind of encouraging people to stay on the street" (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014).

HSB staff also called attention to federal and provincial fiscal policies that place time restrictions on capital funding expenditures for affordable housing projects. These limitations were recognized as forcing development timelines to be compressed to the point where the HSB and proponents are unable to devote adequate time to research, planning, design processes and public consultation ahead of supportive housing projects. As one participant related, “it’s very hard to design a project and get it ready for construction when you don’t have money, and then when you do have the money, you have to do it very, very quickly” (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014).
6.1.2.3 Land Acquisition & Site Development

Securing sites for supportive housing development is a major cost component, especially for central locations in larger cities like Ottawa with competitive real estate markets. Several interview participants emphasized the additional challenges involved in negotiating the sale of a property while meeting transparency requirements. In the case of The Oaks, it was recounted that the vendor was aware of the City’s capital funding formula, which resulted in a “very ugly negotiation” and ultimately inflated the cost of purchasing the property (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014). As noted by a HSB Manager, public transparency can ultimately hurt the department’s projects, and often means that it not only ends up paying more, but also cannot achieve the same densities as a private sector developer.

In respect of these challenges during the planning stages for The Oaks, the HSB was able to get City Council’s approval for an exemption from the City’s procurement procedures in order to fast-track the site selection and signing process. While also acknowledging internal support from the real estate department that recognizes the unique challenges of developing affordable housing, staff noted that the department is often left to “face criticism for paying more for a project” in order to locate it favorably (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014). Reflecting on The Oaks, Paul Soucie also acknowledged that despite higher than expected land acquisition costs, the return on investment and savings realized through the project have proven to be overwhelmingly worthwhile.

In light of the issues posed by land availability and acquisition, senior administrators from Shepherds of Good Hope and Cornerstone both emphasized the importance of having individuals with experience and a strong understanding of real estate markets, business practices and negotiation strategies as part of the project planning team. In the case of the 314 Booth Street residence, Cornerstone established a Foundation Board that assumed responsibility for the construction and ongoing management of the physical facility (Cornerstone Administrator, personal communication, May 15, 2014).

6.1.3 Planning Policy, Process & Regulatory Factors

In regards to policy and regulatory hurdles, HSB staff members recognized some distinct challenges posed by the development approval process and identified disconnections between the city’s land use planning framework and its roles and responsibilities to plan and provide social housing. The influence of zoning by-laws and public consultation in the
approvals process was underscored, and the need for strong communication strategies, education and advocacy were common threads.

6.1.3.1 Zoning

Recognized as part of a new housing paradigm, and a new form of civic infrastructure, supportive housing projects are “facilities that don’t necessarily match definitions in the zoning bylaw or even the building code” (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014). In addition to noting that “there was no zoning definition that actually described what we were building”, one participant expressed that zoning provisions can be particularly exclusionary for affordable housing; even where uses are ostensibly permitted, specific requirements such as setbacks, side yards and buffers mean that in reality “there’s almost no place for us to be” (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014). The lack of compatibly zoned land makes finding suitable sites particularly challenging and significantly complicates the development process.

While zoning and building code definitions have been established for residential care facilities, shelters and group homes, these uses diverge from supportive housing projects that incorporate self-contained dwelling units with support service components. As a consequence, HSB staff explained that projects like Cornerstone are reviewed by the Planning and Growth Management Department as residential apartment buildings, with their on-site services contemplated as ancillary uses. Staff further recognized that building code standards for residential care facilities result in significantly higher development costs, and the residential apartment designation also produces notable incompatibilities with supportive housing, particularly in regard to parking requirements.

6.1.3.2 Parking Standards

Parking requirements and traffic concerns were recognized to be significant planning obstacles. Unlike regular market housing developments, the need for parking in supportive housing facilities is limited to that of the staff and administrators that work on-site. Given their socioeconomic circumstances and health conditions, residents of supportive housing uniformly do not own automobiles. Several participants recognized this, and it was described that “not a single tenant would be able to own a car” (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014). Where required, parking was identified as being extremely costly, and thus posing a significantly erosive impact on the financial feasibility of deeply affordable housing. This was further highlighted as a particular concern for inner-city locations where land constraints often necessitate underground lots. Subsequently,
successfully obtaining approvals for reductions in the applicable zoning by-law parking provisions stands as an imperative challenge in planning supportive housing projects.

Formerly, such parking requirement reductions could be achieved through the “Cash-in-lieu of Parking” by-law, and non-profit organizations developing supportive housing were able to realize exemptions for a nominal sum per spot. However, this by-law was repealed in July 2013, and parking reductions are now processed as minor variances or zoning amendments through the City’s Committee of Adjustment. HSB staff related that this policy shift has complicated the process and exposed projects to a new layer of opposition. Applications are considered during regular public hearings, which have become an avenue for traffic and parking related remonstrations from those opposed to new supportive housing developments.

6.1.3.3. Public Consultation

All interview participants spoke to the importance of strategic communication and public consultation in planning supportive housing. As a formalized feature of the planning framework, consultation is critical in successfully building community and political support for a project, yet HSB staff explained that traditional consultative mechanisms often act as a “double-edged sword” (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014). Most critically, participants emphasized the need to take a proactive approach, and highlighted that an effective community engagement program extends beyond the legally mandated procedures.

Where projects have been faced with significant local opposition, HSB staff recognized that simply providing an opportunity for the public to comment and provide design input has not proved effective in convening representative public opinion, building support amongst a community, nor in satisfying its concerns. A HSB Manager recognized that groups organizing against a project are increasingly familiar with the planning framework and are generally well aware of potential avenues for legal recourse. As such, they have been able to exert considerable pressure on the approvals process by taking procedural actions that protract timelines and carry significant expense for project proponents. It was noted that on some occasions, this strategy might encumber a project enough to derail it entirely.

HSB staff have recognized that public forums about supportive housing are generally attended only by those who are in opposition to a project. A member of the HSB recalled that The Oaks drew what was described as “probably the biggest group we’ve ever seen come out against any project that we’ve done” (HSB Manager, personal communication,
May 16, 2014). Tensions were described as being particularly high during the open house, and police presence was required to keep the session under control. Several interview participants related the strong reaction in part to the stigmatization of the Shepherds of Good Hope and their clients. Widely known as an emergency shelter provider that operates several programs in Ottawa’s downtown core, the association between Shepherds’ and The Oaks prompted a variety of assumptions amongst concerned community members about the nature of the project.

Paul Soucie related that throughout the planning process, Shepherds of Good Hope aimed to have The Oaks become the “best neighbour” in the community, a goal which he counted as having been achieved through proactive and ongoing engagement with the community. He noted that through their public engagement efforts, The Oaks “became part of the fabric of the community” (Paul Soucie, personal communication, May 15, 2014), which promoted accountability and helped to build a trusting relationship. HSB staff also recounted that some community members that fought bitterly against The Oaks have tendered apologies to Shepherds of Good Hope for their roles in the opposition.

All interview participants highlighted the need for strong communication plans, and noted the importance of engaging in outreach from the very beginning of the planning process. Both Paul Soucie and a senior administrator from Cornerstone reflected on their close personal involvement with the projects and noted the value of making themselves directly available to the community during the planning and development process.

6.1.3.4 Planning Approach

HSB staff spoke to the need to invert the current paradigm, under which they recognized that public consultation “often works against us” (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014). In particular, a HSB Manager explained that as the predominant consultative mechanism, town-hall style forums often do not yield productive results or a balanced view towards a community’s opinions and preferences regarding social housing development. A HSB Manager noted, “we only hear from the people who complain, we don’t hear from the people that don’t care or that are supportive” (personal communication, May 16, 2014). In order to address these issues and gather more representative data, it was suggested that alternative methods of soliciting meaningful public feedback should be explored. Furthermore, a local opinion survey was suggested as a particular method that may be effective in gathering the opinions of those not otherwise inclined to provide their input or attend an open house session (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014).
Housing staff also highlighted the need to engage in more systematic planning that approaches supportive housing as basic civic infrastructure, much in the way that schools and hospitals are geographically planned and distributed. HSB staff explained that given the complicated and tenuous nature of securing funding and approvals for supportive housing, projects are often planned in a reactionary and rushed fashion, which is an approach that distinctly “lack[s] a formalized methodology to move forward” (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014). Without proactive planning research, municipal housing strategies that appeal to the need for supportive housing are not well positioned to inform the technical elements that affect the development of specific projects. Determining ideal locations, densities and mixtures for social housing in a community is particularly challenging without having undertaken the requisite land use planning studies.

All participants spoke to the shift away from the shelter paradigm, and underscored the need to carefully manage the reallocation of resources and efforts into permanent housing and support services. In order to realize this system-level reorientation and ensure that major service gaps are not created, HSB staff emphasized the importance of ongoing planning and research that addresses the scope and evolution of the need for supportive housing in Ottawa. A Branch Manager recognized that the pressures on the system will continue to grow with Ottawa’s population, particularly where it’s affordable housing system improves and attracts people from surrounding areas and neighbouring cities.

6.1.3.5 Engagement and Education

During each of the interviews, attention was called to the need to raise awareness and promote understanding of the importance of supportive housing in local housing and homelessness plans. It was acknowledged that education and engagement with the issues concerning this new type of housing infrastructure amongst professional planners, politicians, housing and service providers, and the public is critical in achieving successful outcomes on both project-specific and system-wide levels.

HSB staff noted that outside of their department, many city planners do not have a deep understanding of the challenges involved in developing supportive housing. More broadly recognized was a lack of knowledge concerning the needs and circumstances of the residents of supportive housing, and how this type of housing addresses them in an efficient, effective and dignified manner. A discernable disconnect between planning and housing language was recognized as being symptomatic of this disengagement, particularly where planning by-laws and the building code fail to adequately contemplate
the specified and unique role of supportive housing developments. In this regard, a HSB Manager indicated that a new interdepartmental committee was recently struck with the Planning and Growth Management Department to address these issues and promote bilateral engagement (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014).

In discussion of the need to build recognition and political accountability for the societal responsibility to provide dignified support for marginalized people, participants underscored the importance of demonstrating the functionality and effectiveness of supportive housing. Projects like The Oaks and 314 Booth Street illustrate the contrast to the deep inadequacies, inefficiencies and injustices of leaving many of the most vulnerable individuals to rely the shelter system for housing and support. In looking to future projects, interview participants recognized the need to illustrate the successes realized in these projects, and how they have enabled healing and vastly elevated the dignity, respect, and sense of community amongst their residents.

Senior administrators from Shepherds of Good Hope and Cornerstone highlighted the need to raise awareness about supportive housing particularly given the deep social stigmas that exist around mental illness, substance use and homelessness. They acknowledged the importance of illustrating that the reality of these projects is very different than many of the fears that arise during the planning phase. Both the Oaks and 314 Booth Street have successfully established strong volunteer networks in their respective local communities, which were recognized as having further strengthened their community relationships, as well as being an important demonstration of their success. Also acknowledged was the engagement and advocacy from organizations such as the Alliance to End Homelessness in Ottawa, the Canadian Mental Health Association and researchers at the University of Ottawa. As Paul Soucie related, “we have the right language”, and the order of the day now lies in the execution (personal communication, May 15, 2014).

6.2 Design Elements

In approaching design factors, there was strong recognition amongst interview participants that supportive housing facilities must be tailored to their target resident populations as well as their neighbourhood contexts. Acknowledging the need for the supportive housing system to accommodate a range of support levels and various tenant demographics, the importance of designing each building according to its specified function was emphasized during the interviews. All participants described the most salient design processes and
6.2.1 Architecture & Site Plan

Attractive and context-appropriate architecture was recognized as important insofar as a building should create a sense of pride amongst residents and contribute to the social integration of the neighbourhood. Given the intention to create permanent, stable housing in conjunction with the challenges of the deep social stigmatization that exists towards these projects and their residents, several participants noted that the appearance of supportive housing facilities should not outwardly label them as institutions or low-income housing.

Both administrators noted that both 314 Booth Street and The Oaks were designed to maximize natural lighting through the site design and large windows, which is an important feature that supports mental health.

6.2.1.1 Units

Self-contained units with kitchens and washrooms, which resemble and function much like regular market apartments were emphasized as the most imperative design feature. An administrator from Cornerstone explained that having self-contained units allows residents a much greater degree of privacy, dignity and independence that ultimately supports stability and personal development. Self-contained units were also recognized as ideal from a building management perspective, whereby staff and administration aren’t faced with the challenges of managing shared facilities, resolving related conflicts, and “don’t have to get involved in people’s lives in nearly the same way” (Cornerstone Administrator, personal communication, May 15, 2014).

Units in both case study projects are modest in size, at roughly 34 square meters (approximately 365 square feet). HSB staff had been concerned that the units were too small, and that they would “set standards that are too low for people” (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014). However it was related that the feedback they have received in this regard has been positive, with residents of The Oaks and 314 Booth Street being generally very pleased with the size and outfit of their units.
6.2.1.2 Scale & Aesthetics

HSB staff related that the optimal size for a supportive housing project is determined by the need to balance a stable and supportive environment with the building’s economic viability and the local neighbourhood character and scale. Critical factors include the ability to provide appropriately sized self-contained units, full-time staffing and support services that meet the needs of all residents, adequate space for common areas, amenities, offices and service space, while ensuring that facilities don’t become over concentrated. A HSB Manager pinpointed the ideal number of units at 55, in a range between 35 and 60.

Neighbourhood integration is also a key factor in building design, and as one interview participant related, “perception really affects the community” (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014). This reflected a consensus amongst interview participants that design is integral to the success of a supportive housing project, both as it contributes to the quality of life for its residents, as well as shaping how it interacts with and complements the surrounding community. In both The Oaks and 314 Booth Street, outdoor amenity space where residents are able to smoke was recognized as a simple but important feature. If they were instead left to congregate on the street in front of the building, their presence may well incite negative reactions from the community. Conversely, a building like Cornerstone’s, which interacts with the streetscape and offers space for social interaction, was noted as having a positive and integrative effect in the community.

6.2.1.3 Common Space & Amenities

Common spaces and amenities, both indoors and outdoors, are important features in supportive housing, particularly as they are able to foster productive social relationships amongst residents and enhance their independence and autonomy. In the 314 Booth Street residence, common rooms on each floor of the building are equipped with kitchen and laundry appliances, tables, lounge space, televisions, and telephones. As noted by a Cornerstone administrator, these features allow the residents a large degree of flexibility to manage their own daily living activities and social interactions.

Several interview participants recognized common kitchens as a particularly important feature, and large central cooking and dining facilities feature as prominent social spaces in both 314 Booth Street and The Oaks. In addition to acting as meal service preparation facilities, main kitchens and dining rooms were also recognized as important spaces for
activity programming, education and social enterprise engagements that involve residents, staff and community volunteers.

6.2.1.4 Accessibility, Safety Features & Building Systems

Building security systems, including reception desks, closed circuit television monitoring, emergency alarms, and electronic key fob accessed entranceways and fencing were highlighted by senior administrators from both case study projects. These features were recognized as being important for controlling public access to the building and maintaining the safety of residents and staff. It was also explained that these systems are designed to allow residents to maintain the independence to manage their own personal engagements and host guests in common spaces and their units.

Considering building systems such as HVAC systems and energy efficient technologies, the need to carefully balance up front costs with ongoing operation and maintenance was underscored. One of Cornerstone’s senior administrators expressed the tensions between innovation and reliability by relating, “you want to be the leading edge, not the bleeding edge” (Cornerstone Administrator, personal communication, May 15, 2014). Further acknowledged was the fact that it is easier to secure up front funding for capital costs, as opposed to maintenance, repair and retrofit costs in the future. Thus, designing efficient and “future proofed” buildings that minimize operating and maintenance expenses can be substantial for the economic sustainability of a project, as well as in addressing important environmental priorities.

Project administrators and HSB Staff noted the importance of accessibility in supportive housing, given that most residents are faced with mental and physical health conditions. Designing for accessibility and visitability to the highest possible standards is crucial for independence and dignity for all residents, and ensures that buildings are flexible and adaptable to future needs as well.

6.2.1.5 Service Facilities & Administrative Space

Working space for staff, administrators and service providers is integral to the provision of support services and organizational operations required in supportive housing. While the size and nature of specific facilities must be tailored to meet the needs and preferences of each project and its residents, during the interviews administrators acknowledged the importance of having spaces that allow for collaboration with partner organizations, various service providers, on-call staff and volunteers. Meeting rooms, medical service space, and
offices for administration, case managers and other support workers were recognized as central features in both The Oaks and 314 Booth Street.

6.2.2 Locational Factors

The limited availability of development sites and the associated suitability requirements for supportive housing projects makes location an important and challenging consideration. Several key locational characteristics that support the success of current projects were emphasized during the interviews.

6.2.2.1 Civic Context

Interview participants described centrally located sites, outside of the downtown core, as being ideal for supportive housing. This was related to the need to balance social connectivity with insulation from the areas of “hard-core” poverty, homelessness and criminal activity, which were noted as being “quite concentrated” (Cornerstone Administrator, personal communication, May 15, 2014) in Ottawa’s downtown. HSB staff also added that strategic design and siting, regardless of the neighbourhood, is important where it can mitigate the potential that a supportive housing project may attract predatory criminal activity and narcotics trafficking.

Mixed-use, medium density areas along arterial main streets were offered as being most appropriate, yet HSB staff also noted that having a dedicated project site is most conducive to ideal project design. Broadly, City staff related that supportive housing projects should be distributed throughout the city rather than being restricted to inner-city neighbourhoods, acknowledging that “it’s not fair to isolate everyone with mental health and addictions in the core of the city” (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16, 2014). Having projects in a diverse range of areas supports the ability for the system to offer a greater degree of choice for residents to decide where they live, and does not limit them to Ottawa’s downtown neighbourhoods. The geographic diffusion of supportive housing was also recognized as serving to address the issues involved with the centralization and concentration of poverty and instability in specific areas of the city.

In the case of the Booth Street project, a senior administrator from Cornerstone acknowledged the diverse socio-economic character of the neighbourhood as contributing to the development’s positive relationship with the community.
6.2.2.2 Transportation Access

City staff and senior project administrators emphasized that accessibility to public transportation is a vital consideration in locating supportive housing. It was acknowledged that residents with extremely limited economic means and complex health challenges are restricted in their access to many means of transportation. As such, it is integral that supportive housing is proximal to and well serviced by OC Transpo. HSB staff also illustrated the need to consider site function, connectivity and accessibility for vehicles, in respect of the development’s traffic impacts and pursuant to the Private Approach By-laws. This was acknowledged to be important for Para Transpo services and private transportation pick-up and drop-off for supportive housing residents (HSB Staff Member, personal communication, May 16, 2014).

6.2.2.3 Walkability

Interview participants recognized that supportive housing residents greatly benefit from having community services, public amenities, retail and entertainment options within walking distance. Walkability promotes independence and autonomy amongst residents, and constitutes a fundamental planning principle of healthy community design. In the case of Cornerstone, 314 Booth Street lies in close proximity to the organization’s other facilities, which was recognized as an integral feature for residents and staff alike. Social networks between residents that have moved between buildings can easily be maintained, and staff from each location are able to easily access the facilities, meeting spaces and organization’s administrative offices at 314 Booth Street (Cornerstone Administrator, personal communication, May 15, 2014).
This chapter draws together the findings and analyses of the documents, interviews, case studies and prevalent background literature. It lays out an assemblage of the predominant planning and design factors for successful supportive housing in Ottawa, and points to some critical areas of concern and potential improvement for local housing providers and municipal housing and planning authorities. The data considered in this report was sourced from a range of researchers and stakeholders involved with supportive housing, from planners and project administrators to residents and staff. The criteria presented in this chapter attempt to synthesize the contributions of each of these perspectives, and seek to draw out, and punctuate, the main congruencies between them.

The first and second sections of this chapter address the identified factors for successful supportive housing provision, which primarily concerns the descriptive (i.e., the “what”) component of this report’s findings. The discussion of these factors brings together planning process and policy issues, major design factors and physical features, and highlights some critical lessons drawn from the analyses of the two case study projects. The third section of the chapter lays out a selection of recommendations, which appeal to
the question of “how” might the identified success factors be parlayed into meaningful and actionable strategies.

Considering the complexity and vast range of issues involved in supportive housing, this research has also illuminated questions and concerns that are pivotal to the topic at hand, but lie beyond the scope of the present objectives. By posing questions and highlighting areas of particular concern and uncertainty, it is hoped that this work may provide some direction for future research that may approach supportive housing from a planning perspective. Several specified suggestions for areas deserving future investigation are laid out in the concluding chapter of this report.

7.1 Planning & Process Factors

7.1.1 Amenable Political & Regulatory Environment

Political determinations at all three levels of government ultimately dictate the resources available for public programs and initiatives, as well as the abilities of planners and organizations to implement them. In matters related to housing and homelessness, Canadian municipal governments have been shouldered with an increasing burden of responsibility for the planning, management and financing of new and existing projects. Yet while there is a deficit in federal leadership, and Canada remains without a national housing strategy, what investment and support does flow from senior levels of government is essential for local supportive housing initiatives.

Local political support for the creation and implementation of effective and integrated housing and homelessness strategies, such as Ottawa’s recent 10-year plan, is vital in giving planners the opportunity to assess and respond to local needs with the most efficacious strategies. In realizing projects like The Oaks and Cornerstone’s 314 Booth Street, Ottawa’s City Council has meaningfully supported the work of the Housing Services Branch (HSB) through various motions and directives. In particular, Council’s 2011 approval of a $14 million investment in housing and homelessness programs has provided necessary financial resources, and instances of HSB exemption from municipal land procurement procedures has enabled staff to secure appropriate and quality sites for supportive housing development. Ongoing strategic and pecuniary support from Ottawa’s Mayor and Council will be critical in sustaining the current portfolio and realizing future projects.
By coalescing housing, healthcare and social services, supportive housing in Ontario is also contingent on the policies, funding allocations and interactions of multiple provincial ministries. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing’s (MMAH) Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) is a key integrative policy document that has addressed some of the challenges created by this complexity and fragmentation by consolidating five housing and homelessness programs, four of which were formerly administered by the MCSS. As such, the CHPI is representative of the need for a clear, focused and integrated policy framework that supports the development and management of supportive housing projects that span traditional boundaries between housing, healthcare and social services.

As part of a broader system of social welfare, a wide array of policies and supports are integral in allowing individuals the best opportunity to achieve stable, secure and appropriate housing that meets their shelter and support needs. Income and disability supports must be adequate and administered in a manner that encourages and optimizes access to the type of housing that best meets individuals’ needs and preferences. A notable lesson that arose during this investigation was that current social assistance policies operate in the context of the shelter paradigm to dissuade some individuals from accessing supportive housing options. Residency in supportive housing involves a reorganization of the distribution of benefits, and where monetary support was previously received directly by individuals, it is allocated directly in contribution to the cost of the shelter, food and various supports they receive in supportive housing.

A particularly problematic element of this issue is that funding regulations have necessitated that housing providers make themselves directly involved in residents’ finances by effectively receiving their social assistance allowances, and providing them with a small personal needs allowance. Unlike a traditional lease arrangement where tenants would be independently responsible to pay a monthly rent, this arrangement has not only acted as a barrier to accessing supportive housing for some, it has also had a negative influence on tenants’ satisfaction. While this could be characterized as an issue of optics, working to find strategies to overcome it will be vital in ensuring access for all those in need of supportive housing, and encouraging their satisfaction and stability. To this end, the CSH has acknowledged that tenancy agreements and rent payments should resemble average private market leases as closely as possible, which may serve to help reorient this issue.

Site selection and project approvals are critical phases of the development process, and several policy and procedural conditions have been identified as creating particular challenges for supportive housing. The City’s Zoning By-law and the Ontario Building
Code do not contain provisions or definitions for supportive housing facilities, which severely limits the supply of suitably zoned land and results in added layers of complexity by necessitating amendments and variances. Gaining the necessary approvals has thus been contingent on successfully fitting proposed supportive housing developments into preexisting planning definitions, and seeking review for ancillary uses and relief from zoning provisions such as parking requirements and building envelope restrictions. While retirement homes, residential care facilities, group homes, rooming houses, and shelters are currently identified and provided for, none adequately align with the specific function of supportive housing developments, and as such the zoning by-law fails to appropriately consider their unique and particular function, and related land-use concerns. Developing supportive housing to suit the policy mould of a different type of residential facility complicates the planning and approvals process and can create demanding and expensive design challenges that intrude on their intended function.

7.1.2 Effective Resource Leverage

Economic feasibility and the availability of suitable and adequate resources for capital and operating costs are requisite factors for successful supportive housing provision. Planners, housing staff and providers must effectively procure and manage a range of resources, including federal, provincial and municipal funding earmarked for housing and homelessness, health and social services, social assistance and income support programs. Additionally, leveraging real estate assets, tax rebates, municipal development charge waivers and the independent capital fundraising capacities of community organizations like Cornerstone and Shepherds of Good Hope all unlock resources that can combine to make a project feasible.

Securing public funding is a principal factor in successfully developing supportive housing, and a challenging and complex facet of planning at the municipal level. As a key piece of anti-homelessness interventions, supportive housing is an alternative to some of the other ways in which the City of Ottawa expends resources to provide shelter and services to its most marginalized and vulnerable residents. Rather than a new discrete expenditure, providing supportive housing is part of a strategic reorientation of these resources. This is reflected in the City’s 10-year plan, which targets a 40% savings in funding to emergency shelters and reinvesting in prevention (2014a, 5). Successfully managing the ways in which resources are allocated to housing, homelessness prevention, healthcare and social services is integral to developing a system with adequate capacity to meet the present and future need for supportive housing. Where savings and efficiencies can be realized through
shelter operations, emergency services, healthcare, social services, and law enforcement, strategic reinvestment in supportive housing infrastructure is critical.

The capital cost of housing development is high, especially in large metropolitan centres like Ottawa where property values are amongst the highest in the country. Constructing new supportive housing units in suitable locations will invariably require considerable investment, and land is a critical resource that must be leveraged for both its economic and functional value. In collaboration with local housing providers and other levels of government, municipal staff and planners must actively prioritize supportive housing in their real estate planning. As illustrated in the case of The Oaks, procedural policies related to securing real estate for a publically funded project can further magnify this up front cost. Thus, optimizing supportive housing development opportunities is essential to realizing value in respect of these costs, and strong proactive planning and research is vital in ensuring projects are meet their full potential. Project administrators and HSB staff also recognize that in projects like The Oaks and 314 Booth Street, the most meaningful metrics in the equation are the subsequent long-term savings associated with these projects, which have been realized in conjunction vastly improving the quality of services and care offered to residents. Ongoing analyses that demonstrate the range of costs and savings offered by supportive housing is an important task that requires further attention in the Ottawa context.

A significant degree of the complexity involved with developing supportive housing stems from the wide array of disparate programs, funding sources and authorities, which are in continual flux. Securing and managing agreements and contracts to cover the cost of development and ensure the ongoing operating stability with a multitude of stakeholders is a demanding task. Resources, including funding, land, professionals, and service partners and staff must be identified and strategically harnessed from a variety of sources. As a principal role of HSB staff, sourcing and packaging funding for supportive housing projects in a manner that satisfies relevant expectations and regulations, ensures affordability and allows effective and stable service coordination is an essential factor in successful planning.

Under the CHPI, the HSB is given a greater level of flexibility in allocating operating funding for its housing and homelessness initiatives, and leveraging this flexibility to coordinate housing and services in new supportive housing projects will be critical. Thus, not only are progressive policy and funding schemes important factors for success, City HSB staff that are responsible for developing strategic housing plans, tendering request for proposals for new projects, developing and liaising partnerships and allocating funding are themselves a key factor in the successful development of Ottawa’s supportive housing. Further, their
work is critically complemented and enhanced by the dedication, commitment and expertise of the staff and administration of the local housing providers and community organizations they work with.

7.1.3 Sustainable Housing System Capacity

A spectrum of housing options that vary according to the type, intensity and integration of support services is necessary both within the supportive housing model and across Ottawa’s housing supply more broadly. There must be sufficient capacity to ensure that an adequate and diversified supply of high quality and sustainable supportive housing projects exist (SDR, 2008). Successfully planning such a network of supportive housing, that matches the evolving need in Ottawa, is inextricably tied up with the available capacity in the local system of social and affordable housing. Developing and sustaining a full range of social housing and support services is critical in ensuring that the needs for adequate and affordable housing and support services of all residents can be met.

Sustainability is an important element of supportive housing capacity from an economic perspective, as the ability for projects to maintain their affordability and support service provision on a long-term time horizon is a paramount factor for success. In this manner, sustainability also involves defining the role of supportive housing, and recognizing that it must be planned and designed as permanent housing that affords residents the right and ability to maintain their residency for as long as they choose. Success in achieving system capacity is thus an ongoing process of addressing supply and demand as it evolves.

Two further elements of capacity inform the importance of sustainability in supportive housing, as well as how it extends though the spectrum of market, non-market and subsidized housing. The first involves flexibility and individualization, and the second involves diversity. These elements appeal principally to the most basic of the core outcomes of supportive housing, as identified by the CSH (2013); that tenants stay housed, and that tenants are satisfied with the services and housing.

A critical and defining feature of supportive housing is the collaboration between the housing provider, service providers and individual residents that determines the particular type and nature of the services and supports that are accessed by each individual. Successfully planned and designed supportive housing will enable personalized programs, where residents are meaningfully involved in choosing the type of supports and services they access, and the frequency with which they are provided. Supportive housing should have the capacity to enable tenants to access services that are available both on and off-
site, and must allow them exercise control over their participation in specific programs and activities (CSH, 2013). This capacity for flexibility should respect the evolutionary character and extent of residents’ needs and desires over time. This recognizes the opportunities that supportive housing offers residents to improve life stability, mental and physical health, capacity for independent living and personal care, and personal skills and capabilities to participate in society more broadly.

Diversity is a crucial element of capacity where it informs the need to plan for a range of intensities and types of supportive housing that cater to different needs; as in the housing system generally, there must be a spectrum. Those with the highest levels of need will generally require more extensive full time on-site services, while those with less complex needs and higher levels of stability may be able to access more services of the services they require externally, yet may not be successful in, or have a desire to live in a scattered-site, more independent supported housing scenario with no dedicated on-site supports.

Building sustainable housing capacity involves all the factors for success that are identified and explored in this research, as it is a critical culmination of each of them together. Successful capacity in physical facilities requires political and procedural support, leadership, effectively funding and resource management, collaboration and integration between housing and service providers, and ongoing leadership and refinement.

### 7.1.4 Coordination & Integration

Ottawa’s housing system involves numerous stakeholders; the municipal 10-year plan, *A Home For Everyone*, identifies “the City, the private sector, non-profit sector and the community working together” as those involved in “working together to ensure a full range of housing, supports and related services are available to people who need them” (2014a, 3). Strong working relationships between the HSB and community organizations that provide housing, shelter and mental, physical and socio-economic support services are vital to successfully planning and executing towards a common agenda that focuses on key outcomes for housing and homelessness in Ottawa. At a broader scale, cross-sectorial collaboration between provincial ministries such as the MCSS, MOHLTC and MMAH will be critical in organizing progressive funding and policy directives like the *CHPI*, that support the integration of housing, healthcare and socio-economic supports at the local level.

As explicated by the CSH, coordination amongst all partners and stakeholders in supportive housing involves working together to develop and achieve shared goals.
Through a process of ongoing engagement and evaluation, each partner involved in a supportive housing project should develop clear and formalized roles and responsibilities (CSH, 2013). This process of coordination should also inform planning efforts on a system-wide level, whereby the City and local housing providers are involved in strategically aligning their services and housing portfolios to ensure that the entire range of tenant needs and preferences can be accommodated. Cornerstone and Shepherds of Good Hope both exemplify this manner of coordination in their supportive housing projects where they have each identified specific sub-populations of individuals and worked with the HSB and local service providers to tailor the planning and design of their projects to their specific needs.

Coordination is also enmeshed with idea of planning for supportive housing that is integrated systemically, as well with its physical context and social environment on a project-specific basis. Considering the City’s goal of planning “a full range of housing, supports and related services”, supportive housing must be effectively integrated along the spectrum, or continuum, of housing in Ottawa if the existing systemic gaps are to be closed, and accessibility, simplicity and choice are to be enhanced (2014a, 3). This requires ongoing engagement with, and between, local housing and service providers, particularly as the system shifts its focus and resources away from the shelter paradigm and towards permanent housing models. Coordination here is a critical part of housing system capacity.

One manner of integration that is vital in this shift will be bridging the philosophical and operational gaps between proponents of the Housing First and Continuum of Care approaches. The City of Ottawa has continued to recognize both the Housing First approach and the continuum in their housing and homelessness strategies. Leading with progressive policy, the City and all partners involved in housing and homelessness interventions must together recognize and prioritize the concurrent needs for accessibility, capacity, personal choice, flexibility and individualized services. Promoting integration and planning according to the particular strengths of both approaches will support the development of a more effective housing system with a broader range of options to suit individual needs (SDR, 2008). Integrating and coordinating supportive housing with other models and approaches given along the spectrum is thus a vital factor in successfully ensuring positive long-term housing outcomes and addressing gaps that leave vulnerable and marginalized people inadequately housed or unable to access the services they need.
7.1.5 Evolution, Innovation & Leadership

Between the Housing Services Branch, local housing and support service providers and the research community, there is a deep level of knowledge and expertise that pertains to supportive housing in Ottawa. Significant effort and investment has been made in planning for its provision, with an encouraging level of success having been realized in projects like The Oaks and 314 Booth Street. Yet, given the relative nascence of the supportive housing model, and the complexities associated with coordinating, funding and developing integrated housing and supports services, the planning approach has remained largely reactionary. This is problematic where it translates into increased risk, pressure and uncertainty, as the HSB is forced to devote a significant degree of their efforts to managing disputes at the political and planning approval levels. Continuing to develop proactive and strategic approaches that address the challenges and opportunities recognized in this report, and by the research and literature more widely, will be crucial in the ongoing evolution and success of the supportive housing model in Ottawa.

As supportive housing becomes more broadly established in Ottawa’s housing lexicon, and understood as a critical network of civic infrastructure, there is a recognized need to engage in a greater degree of proactive, methodical planning around it. Conducting research that attends to location, geographic distribution, density and other socio-spatial elements will allow for a more appropriately distributed and scaled portfolio. Engaging housing, health and social service providers, and current and prospective tenants of supportive housing will be key to strengthening and further refining project design elements and support service programs. Ongoing monitoring and assessment of the extent and nature of the need for supportive housing will be essential in balancing the spectrum of housing and supports. This will be especially critical in managing the shift from the shelter paradigm to one of permanent housing with supports. Such bases for planning are necessary in measuring outcomes as the system develops, and are imperative in encouraging evolution and refinement on both project-specific and system-wide levels.

Public engagement is a critical facet of successfully planning supportive housing, and the limitations of traditional consultative mechanisms have been recognized as a particular challenge in the planning process. Beyond fulfilling procedural requirements, carefully planned communication and engagement strategies are crucial in building public and political support for proposed projects, accelerating development timelines and building broad awareness and recognition of the supportive housing model. Further, effective communications plans are vital in encouraging the integration of a project into its surrounding community and ensuring its ongoing success. Thus, innovative and proactive
engagement strategies, in excess of mandated procedures, are an imperative factor for success.

In light of these challenges and opportunities, strong vision and leadership on the part of the HSB and local housing providers will continue to be a significant factor for successful outcomes in supportive housing. Recognition for their ongoing work and its results is important, and reporting successful outcomes can serve to build widespread support and promote political accountability. Gestures such as the City of Ottawa Urban Design Award of Merit that was presented to Cornerstone’s 314 Booth Street residence in 2011 provide important and visible illustrations of the results of successful planning and design. As the national capital, Ottawa has a unique opportunity to inspire and lead by example for the rest of the country in demonstrating it’s initiatives and successes.

7.2 Physical Features & Design Factors

7.2.1 Strategic & Accessible Location

Beyond political and economic concerns, functional considerations of spatial context are integral to the success of supportive housing projects. Simultaneous assiduity towards geography on a project-specific and system-wide level is necessary to ensure that the function of each development is supported by it’s location, and that the network of supportive housing is strategically dispersed throughout the city. The relative weight of specific locational characteristics will necessarily vary based on the target population and scale of each project, and must be balanced with the surrounding urban milieu.

On a system-wide level, ensuring that projects are distributed across Ottawa avoids overconcentration or limiting access to specific areas, and supports the potential for residents to exercise a greater degree of choice towards where they live within the city. As illustrated in regard to 314 Booth Street, locating projects in neighbourhoods that are characterized by socio-economic diversity can encourage integration and acceptance amongst the local community. Providing options outside the downtown core, away from the main concentrations of visible poverty, street homelessness and substance abuse is recognized to be important, especially where it supports the development of new social capacities and interpersonal relationships (Mercier et al., 1999 in Kraus, 2005, 1). These concerns must be critically balanced with regard to preserving individuals’ existing social support systems, respecting their histories and personal choice, and ensuring that those moving into supportive housing are neither directly nor indirectly displaced beyond their will.
Project-specific locational success factors principally concern the physical and social integration of a project, and its connectivity to services and amenities. Location should support residents’ needs for safety, security, employment, education, services, shopping, recreation, socialization and transportation (CSH, 2013). Sites along arterial main-streets are generally ideal for integrating compact mid-rise projects into the existing urban fabric, and likely enhance walkability and accessibility to transportation connections. Proximity and accessibility to public transportation systems is a paramount consideration for residents with very limited economic means, complex mental and physical health challenges, and that are unable to access other means of private transportation. Locating projects where residents are within walking distance of many of their daily needs, and ensuring that the site is well serviced by OC Transpo and Para Transpo, enhances resident’s everyday independence and autonomy.

7.2.2 Dedicated Building Composure

The physical form and layout of a supportive housing project is best able to support successful outcomes for residents and facilitate the work of housing and service providers where it corresponds to the specific needs of the its target population. With respect to general demographics and support needs and preferences in supportive housing, as explored in the work of the CSH (2013) and Wright and Poushinsky (2013), there are a number of emergent global project design cues. As a fundamental priority in all types of housing, both market and non-market, universal, barrier-free design should be employed to ensure physical accessibility in all units and common areas.

Emphasized in the literature, by shelter clients, municipal staff and housing providers at every stage of this research, self-contained units with private kitchen and bathroom facilities are the preeminent design factor for successful supportive housing projects. Private individual apartments have a multitude of positive outcomes for residents and project staff and administration. In contrast to scenarios where residents must share rooms, kitchens and washrooms, self-contained units allow for a much greater degree of privacy, independence and dignity for residents. As permanent housing, self-contained units in supportive housing are vital for long-term stability and personal development and foster the ability for residents to truly make themselves at home. For housing and service providers, the burden of regulating and managing conflicts in residents’ personal space is greatly reduced when residents can be given control and responsibility for their own apartments.
In respect of balancing economic feasibility, on-site service provision, community integration, building amenities and the creation of a stable and supportive environment, the ideal scale for supportive housing projects is considered to be approximately 55 units in a dedicated, mid-rise apartment-style building. This form is exemplified in both The Oaks, which contains 55 units, and 314 Booth Street, with 42. The ultimate number of units that may be effectively accommodated in other projects will vary depending on its specific target population. A range between a minimum of 35 and a maximum of 60 was identified, recognizing that projects catering principally to those with more complex support needs are necessarily smaller than those for residents that have a greater degree of stability and less extensive support service requirements (HSB Manager, personal communication, May 16 2014).

Successful design and architecture must also respect the geographic context of the project and the local character, urban form and neighbourhood complexion. Designing a facility that physically respects its surroundings and promotes the social integration of residents and the broader community is a vital factor for success. As recognized by the CSH (2013), focus must be given generally to designing projects that complement the neighbourhoods and provide residents with choice and community connections. Demonstrated by 314 Booth Street and The Oaks, this requires balancing and buffering common spaces between the public and private realms.

7.2.3 Tailored Amenities, Features & Services

In correspondence with the design and locational factors discussed, amenities and features that make for successful supportive housing must be informed by its core outcomes and serve the physical, mental and social needs and preferences of residents. The ability of residents to maintain individual control over their access to support services, social activities and interpersonal interactions is critical in designing successful facilities and service programs. Residents’ perspectives, including those of prospective tenants as given in the work of Wright and Poushinsky (2013), should be meaningfully involved in physical design processes wherever possible (CSH, 2013). Residents must be involved in designing and managing their support service provision in supportive housing on an ongoing basis (CSH, 2013).

Preeminent project amenities and features that support successful outcomes in supportive housing are found to include:

- Multiple indoor lounge spaces and common rooms.
• A variety of outdoor amenity spaces, including green space, covered outdoor patio space, and a sheltered smoking area.
• Common kitchen facilities and dining room.
• Flexible, private space for work or interaction with family, acquaintances and service providers.
• Accessible design features and appliances throughout all common areas and units.
• Security features that allow effective monitoring and safety while not impinging on residents’ freedom or dignity.
• Private spaces equipped for physical and mental health care service provision.
• Administrative office space.
• HVAC systems, with independently climate-controlled units and common spaces.
• Telephone, computer, internet and television services.

On-site services should be coordinated with and complemented by additional support services and resources available in the community to accommodate the needs and preferences of each resident. While specific integrated support services will thus vary between projects, a central selection of mental and physical health, substance use, crisis intervention, and social and recreational supports and activities are crucial in successful supportive housing. In addition 24/7 access to core physical and mental health supports and crisis intervention services should be ensured (SDR, 2008; Wright and Poushinsky, 2013). As found by Wright and Poushinsky (2013), support services that were identified and given the most importance by long-term shelter users in Ottawa include:
• Support for life skills and social inclusion.
• Substance use support.
• Mental health support.
• Individual case management.

While on-site addictions and healthcare services are integral for residents of supportive housing, positive social relationships and a sense of community was recognized as a central factor for positive housing outcomes and stability, as well as a key reason why some individuals have opted to remain in shelters, rather than access social housing options. As such, social supports and activities that promote strong personal and community connections are a vital factor for successful supportive housing.

7.3 Recommendations

The central objective of this report has been to identify and explore critical planning and design factors that were drawn from the analysis of the background literature, documents,
interviews and case study projects. The following recommendations were developed through the process of assembling and analyzing the identified factors, with the intentions of facilitating the planning and development of supportive housing, and ultimately encouraging successful outcomes in future projects in Ottawa. While they are directed predominantly at conditions and issues that lie within the purview of the municipality, local community organizations, developers and housing and service providers are vital collaborators that must continue to be engaged and involved in planning, design and policy development efforts.

#1: Develop a Municipal Supportive Housing Strategy that Establishes Clear Objectives and an Evaluative Framework

In collaboration with local stakeholders and housing and service providers, the City of Ottawa’s Housing Services Branch should develop a formal supportive housing strategy that fits under, complements, and elaborates on the framework provided by the City’s ten-year housing and homelessness plan, A Home For Everyone. With approval from City Council, this strategy should be implemented as the central guiding document for supportive housing provision in Ottawa.

This strategy should outline the current state of supportive housing in the city and guide ongoing strategic planning efforts. In coordination with recommendation #2, it should seek to standardize the language and terminology in Ottawa by providing official definitions of supportive housing and other relevant terms. It should also consolidate existing policies, strategies and directives that pertain to the funding, planning, design and administration of supportive housing, including the provincial Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative.

The HSB may look to supportive housing strategies that have been developed in other Canadian cities for inspiration, such as the City of Vancouver’s Supportive Housing Strategy (2007) and the Regional Municipality of Waterloo’s Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) Supportive Housing Framework (Social Planning, 2014). Given these precedents, the extensive knowledge and experience of HSB staff with supportive housing, and the broad range of collaborators available, developing a strategy for Ottawa is achievable in the immediate future, and would demand minimal resources.

As part of a supportive housing strategy, the HSB should seek to establish a set of core objectives and outcomes that serve to underpin and direct the fundamental policy intentions. The five core outcomes of successful supportive housing identified by the CSH,
and described in the document analysis chapter of this report, have been adopted in Waterloo’s framework, and may serve as a starting point for the HSB. The CSH’s (2013) outcomes describe that successful supportive housing will have the result that tenants:

- stay housed;
- are satisfied with the services and housing;
- increase their income and employment;
- improve their physical and mental health; and
- have social and community connections.

The HSB should also endeavor to establish a framework for monitoring and evaluating the implementation of the supportive housing strategy that follows the policy directives and identified program objectives. This framework should exceed any requirements for monitoring and reporting that are set out in higher level policies, adding focus towards assessing the success of planning and physical design elements, and supporting a process of continual refinement and improvement.

#2: Describe and Provide for Supportive Housing in the City of Ottawa Zoning By-law

Consistent with the Housing Services Branch, the City’s Planning and Growth Management Department should seek to establish and provide for a definition of supportive housing in the City of Ottawa Zoning By-law No. 2008-250. The explicit manner in which supportive housing may be established in the zoning by-law should:

- Reflect the unique and specifically intended function of this land use;
- acknowledge that it incorporates both private dwelling units and professional on-site support services, and;
- differentiate it from “residential care facilities” and other types of “residential use buildings.”

Further, the City and other municipalities and stakeholders across the province should advocate for the inclusion of a definition and provisions for supportive housing in the Ontario Building Code.

#3: Limit Prescribed Parking Requirements for Supportive Housing Projects

In conjunction with the zoning by-law amendments proposed in recommendation #2, the City of Ottawa should explore proactive policy options to attenuate parking requirements in new supportive housing projects. Recognizing the significant expense associated with
providing parking, and that residents of supportive housing categorically do not have personal automobiles, parking requirements should be limited to reflect the support service providers, administration and other on-site staff. This recommendation also reinforces the importance of ensuring strong public transit accessibility for all supportive housing facilities.

Subject to review by the Committee of Adjustment on a project-by-project basis, parking reduction applications presently open supportive housing projects to an additional forum for public input and opposition, which can protract and encumber the development review process. Establishing supportive housing in the zoning by-law and limiting its associated parking requirements may thus facilitate and expedite project planning and approvals.

#4: Streamline Development Review and Approvals Processes

The HSB, in conjunction with the Planning and Growth Management Department, should continue to work to simplify and improve the efficiency of the development application and review processes. By increasing certainty and clarity in the development process, the City may be able to mitigate some of the risk faced by organizations that seek to develop supportive housing projects, which may serve to incentivize the development of housing projects that align with the City’s housing agenda.

Uncertainty and financial risk are significant barriers to supportive housing development, especially for small non-profit organizations like Shepherds of Good Hope and Cornerstone. Housing development involves retaining and coordinating a wide array of professional services related to design and construction along sensitive timelines. Unforeseen delays and setbacks can vastly convolute the development process and have significant economic repercussions, which may prove to derail a project entirely.

Site procurement and selection polices, transparency requirements, planning department timelines for approvals and permits, and public opposition have been recognized as particular elements that can complicate and protract the development review process for supportive housing. HSB Staff should continue to work with City planners in addressing these areas of concern, and existing initiatives such as interdepartmental committees should be sustained to promote further awareness and understanding of the role of supportive housing amongst all planning and development staff.

As explored in recommendations #2 and #3, amendments to the City’s zoning by-law may support planning approval processes, especially in achieving parking reductions. Delays that arise in relation to consultative requirements could be approached through innovative public engagement and planning research strategies, as given in recommendation #5.
These initiatives may clarify and support the planning rationale for supportive housing projects, and more effectively gauge community perspectives and concerns. Determining the most viable and effective means of facilitating development approvals for supportive housing may take time, and should be explored in conjunction with other affordable housing development objectives.

#5: Design and Implement Innovative Public Engagement and Planning Research Strategies

The HSB should explore new systematic research and innovative public engagement strategies that address current deficits and barriers created by traditional procedures. Public efforts made in opposition to supportive housing projects can have significant costly and deleterious impacts on the approvals process, regardless of whether they are actually reflective of broader community opinion or valid planning concerns. Experience, with The Oaks in particular, has demonstrated that while opposition may be predicated on inaccurate assumptions and social stigmas, effective engagement strategies can successfully result in projects that enjoy broad community acceptance and support.

Proactive engagement and strong communications strategies that exceed the planning department’s mandated consultative procedures and mechanisms have been critical in the success of projects like The Oaks and 314 Booth Street. The HSB and local housing providers should collaborate to develop and implement strategic public engagement tools that seek to gather more representative samples of community perspective and opinion, build support where it exists, gather feedback, address concerns, encourage innovation, and promote awareness and understanding of the importance and need for supportive housing. Potential strategies could include neighbourhood surveys or opinion polls and online engagement tools. Starting with measures that demand relatively few resources and would not impose on existing consultative procedures, such strategies could be implemented into engagement strategies immediately, and may have cumulative positive impacts as they are refined.

The HSB should bolster its strategic planning efforts that approach supportive housing as fundamental civil infrastructure. Determining suitable and available locations, geographic distributions, physical design features, siting factors and densities for supportive housing could be facilitated by integrating a greater degree of land-use analysis with detailed research that demonstrates the scope and evolution of local need for supportive housing units. Ongoing monitoring and research that addresses the core objectives of supportive housing, as discussed in recommendation #1, is crucial in ensuring their achievement and
supporting ongoing improvement. As a specific example, client-preference and satisfaction surveys should be administered in operational supportive housing projects and used to improve the quality of facilities and services. In order to further establish the economic outcomes of supportive housing, the HSB should also conduct research that explores supportive housing in Ottawa from a cost-benefit perspective, and may refer to the work of Steve Pomeroy (2005).

**#6: Streamline Funding to Facilitate and Encourage Successful Supportive Housing Development**

The Housing Services Branch should endeavor to simplify and package capital and operating funding in a manner that facilitates projects that address the City’s objectives for supportive housing, and towards housing and homelessness more broadly. Simplifying and coordinating funding may be advantageous in expediting development timelines, reducing uncertainty and risk, enabling more direct demonstrations of successful funding allocations, and as it allows for replication in future projects. Such achievements may also be advantageous for HSB operations, and improved efficiency is likely to enhance the department’s performance.

Wherever possible, the HSB should implement policies and operating funding schemes that allow supportive housing providers to structure tenancy agreements in a manner that reflects average market leases as closely as possible. By doing so, tenancy agreements may be structured with simplicity and clarity, and residents can be empowered to exercise a greater degree of control over their personal business and finances. Coordinating per diem funding for supportive housing with social assistance programs will also be critical in encouraging access to permanent supportive housing for Ottawa’s most deeply entrenched shelter users.

**#7: Codify Design and Site Quality Indicators**

The City’s Housing Services Branch should develop a succinct set of indicators that pertain to various dimensions of quality and factors for successful supportive housing projects. These design indicators could be included in an official supportive housing strategy, as proposed in recommendation #1. With further review and refinement, indicators could potentially be established as formal requirements, and included in future supportive housing RFPs. Covering both planning and design factors, this research has explored the importance of folding policy and process strategies together with more
technical direction on physical design and siting. Based on the findings, indicators are suggested to address:

- **Project form and scale:** mid-rise buildings containing a range of 35-60 units, dependent on target populations.
- **Universal, barrier-free accessible design** in all units and common areas.
- **Self-contained, apartment style units** (as given in recommendation #8).
- **Indoor and outdoor design features and amenities** that support and promote a positive and healthy social climate inside the project, as well as between the project and the community externally.
- **Locations that are accessible and well-serviced by OC Transpo and Para Transpo services.**

Design and site indicators should be established and operationalized in a manner that promotes best practices while encouraging ongoing innovation and improvement. To this end, it is recommended that they be guided by established program outcomes, as described in recommendation #1. Indicators that follow results-oriented outcomes can be connotative of the intentions of the design, physical features and siting, rather than merely acting as prescriptive regulations.

#8: *Mandate that all New Supportive Housing Units are Self-contained*

The Housing Services Branch should require that all new supportive housing units developed in the City of Ottawa are separated, self-contained apartments that include private washroom and kitchen facilities.

Self-contained units are recognized as a leading best practice by the literature, local staff and administrators involved in supportive housing provision, Housing Services Branch staff and management, and are overwhelmingly indicated to be the preference amongst prospective tenants of supportive housing in Ottawa.

As an immediately and simply achievable policy directive, self-contained units are significant in supporting residents’ personal choice, privacy, independence, dignity and autonomy. They are crucial in providing an appropriate and stable environment on a permanent basis, allow for supportive housing facilities to operate much like regular apartment buildings, and are advantageous from service-delivery and administrative perspectives.
#9: Sustain Advocacy, Education and Community Engagement Efforts

All supportive housing stakeholders, including the Housing Services Branch, should continue to collaborate and bolster their efforts in raising awareness around issues of housing and homelessness in Ottawa. By highlighting its interrelations with health, social justice and human dignity, and demonstrating the effectiveness of coordinated planning, policy and investment, the supportive housing model may be elevated in the public and political consciousness.

Stakeholders should seek opportunities to raise political awareness and rally grassroots, community-level support by demonstrating the success of existing supportive housing projects. The Oaks and 314 Booth Street both broadly serve to exemplify the potentials of supportive housing to effectively and efficiently provide affordable housing and coordinated supports for Ottawa’s most vulnerable and marginalized residents. These developments have enabled healing, personal development, autonomy, dignity and a level of respect, support and community connectivity that was previously unafforded to their residents. In addition, both of these projects have been effectively integrated in their surrounding communities, and have supported successful community development on a broad scale.

Advocates of supportive housing should also continue to lobby senior governments and ministries to move on progressive policy changes and funding allocations that support the ability of local municipal service managers to plan and fund effective housing and homelessness intervention programs.
8.0 Conclusion

This report has explored critical planning and design factors involved in the provision of supportive housing in Ottawa. By integrating data collected from the literature, professional reports, planning and policy documents, City of Ottawa Housing Services Branch (HSB) staff, staff and administrators from supportive housing providers, and prospective consumers of supportive housing, the findings of this research were drawn from a wide cross-section of critical analyses of supportive housing, and local stakeholder input. The success factors and recommendations, outlined in the preceding chapter, summarize the importance of several planning-oriented outcomes for supportive housing in Ottawa. These principally include clarifying and reinforcing definitions and goals, promoting public and political engagement, and refining planning tools and regulations to proactively encourage coordinated, integrated and effective supportive housing development.

Perhaps most basically, this work has highlighted that supportive housing is a complex and layered entity, which is kaleidoscopically nested in the broader housing, social welfare and healthcare systems that undergird modern Canadian society. These layers not only make supportive housing challenging from economic, political and technical perspectives, but also make assessment of its planning processes and specific outcomes a particularly
demanding task. This serves as an important call for ongoing research and planning attention that approaches its many constituent elements in greater detail. Planning is a multi-scalar discipline, and effectively coordinated inquiry at both the project-specific and system-wide levels is integral. Ongoing leadership from the HSB and local housing providers will be crucial in coordinating these efforts amongst a diverse range of stakeholders.

Beyond regulatory or physically tangible planning and design factors, a guiding principle that may be drawn from this report’s results indicates that successfully planned and designed supportive housing emphasizes and prioritizes residents and their needs, preferences and choices. From the outset of planning a project for a specific target population, determining its location and physical design, to devising service provision details and building features and amenities, a tenant-centered approach that allows for flexible, adaptable and individualized housing and supports is reinforced as the key directive for planners and housing providers alike. This approach is paramount in the success of both The Oaks and Cornerstone’s 314 Booth Street residence, and casts them as leading examples of successful supportive housing in Ottawa.

While current and prospective residents of supportive housing experience significant and complex mental and physical health issues, often in conjunction with addictions and other debilitating conditions, successful supportive housing critically balances their needs for healthcare with their broader needs for social support, community, belonging, safety, security, dignity, self-efficacy and autonomy. Supportive housing environments must be formulated principally as places for people to call home, with services that enhance and support their stability and their opportunities to flourish physically, mentally and socially.

Supportive housing also offers the opportunity to make significant contributions to sustainable and healthy community development. Approaching projects as opportunities to implement the most innovative and progressive planning and design features supports the capacity for supportive housing to enhance its surrounding urban environment and contribute to the social and economic development of local communities. Investment in social housing development involves considerable costs, and realizing optimal internal and external results is critical in demonstrating their true value, particularly in light of funding scarcity, competing interests and extensive unmet local need. Where success is achieved, supportive housing is also a valuable opportunity to realize broader efficiencies in the provision of public health, social services, emergency services, and law enforcement.

Given the successes that have already been realized, and the encouraging trajectory that has been traced by the work of the City of Ottawa, the Housing Services Branch, the local
network of researchers, and supportive housing and service providers, the City is well positioned to develop an auspicious supportive housing planning framework, that will allow it to continue to emerge as a leader in the field. Projects like The Oaks and 314 Booth Street provide important demonstrations of the results, and are meaningful precedents for ongoing public and political advocacy and engagement. Most fundamentally will be the opportunity to continue to actualize a system of high quality, affordable housing and integrated support services that enhances Ottawa’s built environment and provides stability, security and dignity for its most vulnerable and disenfranchised residents, to the benefit of the community as a whole.

8.1 Areas for Future Research

This report has dealt with a wide range of issues and elements that pertain to supportive housing development, and it has certainly raised no fewer questions that it answers. There are various threads that may be carried forward from the path set in this research, and there are many branches and offshoots that merit additional and ongoing attention through academic inquiry or professional planning research.

This scope of this research project did not allow the opportunity to gather interview data from a wider array of community stakeholders and key informants, whose perspectives may offer rich avenues for further exploration of the topics contained in this report. Particularly, those that opposed the case study projects may be able to offer valuable insight on their potentially changing attitudes, and in regard to specific project elements. In addition, direct tenant input on the physical and social characteristics of supportive housing projects could be used to form strong indices of the results of this work, and may be effectively compared to the data available from Ottawa’s long-stay shelter clients.

Supportive housing provision must be balanced with the extent and nature of local needs as they evolve, and ongoing research should continue to establish and monitor the existing housing stock, the available balance along the spectrum of support levels, and the nature and population of Ottawa’s homeless and most vulnerably housed individuals. This aspect of planning should also involve critical assessment of housing waitlists, intake procedures and client evaluations, diagnoses and placement processes.

Funding is a challenging issue that deserves ongoing attention. More detailed work approaching the structure and character of tenancy arrangements, and the particularities and interactions of income supports and housing subsidies for residents of supportive housing will be central to optimizing the future management of funding resources, and to
promoting successful housing outcomes. In addition, research has yet to be undertaken to explore a direct cost-benefit analysis for supportive housing in Ottawa, and may advantageously incorporate an assessment of economic externalities such as proximal real estate values.

Case study research that looks at a wider selection of local supportive housing projects would be able to draw further conclusions to site planning, design features and service facilities and arrangements. In addition, three new supportive housing projects that are currently in development in Ottawa, involving the John Howard Society, Montfort Renaissance and the Ottawa Salus Corporation, will provide valuable opportunities to further examine current planning and design success factors.
References


*City of Ottawa Act, 1999*, S.O.1999, c. 14, s. 5.


Appendices

Appendix A: Interview Recruitment Email Script

Identifying Factors for Success in Planning and Designing Supportive Housing in Ottawa, Ontario

[Insert participant name],

My name is Graham Anderson and I am a graduate student in the School of Urban and Regional Planning at Queen’s University. I am contacting you in regards to the research I am currently conducting for my master’s research report.

The report, Identifying Factors for Success in Planning and Designing Supportive Housing in Ottawa, Ontario, seeks to explore supportive housing in Ottawa and establish best practices in planning and physical design. The intended outcome is to provide strategic direction for future projects through the findings and recommendations.

Considering your knowledge and professional experience with [insert name of organization], I would like to invite you to participate in an interview as part of the research data collection process. The interview may be conducted at your convenience either over the telephone or in person in Ottawa, and will last for approximately 45 minutes.

For more information concerning any aspect of the research, please see the attached Letter of Information, or you may contact me directly at graham.anderson@queensu.ca or (604) 808-5545.

Thank you for your time and participation, I look forward to speaking with you.

Sincerely,

Graham Anderson
M.Pl. Candidate 2014
School of Urban and Regional Planning
Queen’s University
Kingston, Ontario
Appendix B: Interview Consent Form

*Identifying Factors for Success in Planning and Designing Supportive Housing in Ottawa, Ontario*

This consent form concerns the research project being undertaken by Graham Anderson of the School of Urban and Regional Planning at Queen’s University. Participants are asked to acknowledge the following:

1. I have read the Letter of Information, and have had any questions answered to my satisfaction.

2. I understand that I will be participating in research for a report entitled *Identifying Factors for Success in Planning and Designing Supportive Housing in Ottawa, Ontario* and that I will be interviewed about supportive housing in the City of Ottawa.

3. I understand that this interview will be conducted at my convenience, either over the phone or in person, and will take approximately 45 minutes to complete. If I indicate my consent in section 7 of this form, I understand that a digital recording of the proceedings will be created, for the sole use of the researcher.

4. I understand that my participation in this research is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.

5. I understand that I am free to choose to remain anonymous in this research, and if so, my individual confidentiality will be protected.

6. I am aware that if I have any questions, concerns or complaints, I may contact the researcher, Graham Anderson, at graham.anderson@queensu.ca or (604) 808-554; the project supervisor, Dr. Leela Viswanathan, at leela.viswanathan@queensu.ca or (613) 533-6000 x 75038; or the Chair of the General Research Ethics Board, at chair.GREB@queensu.ca or (613) 533-6081.

- continued -
7. By initialing ahead of this statement,

____ I grant permission for the researcher to use a digital recording device during the interview;

____ I grant permission for the researcher to attribute my name to any quotes or information provided;

____ I request that my identity be kept anonymous, and that I be referred to only by my professional title. I acknowledge that this may not keep my identity strictly confidential;

____ I grant permission for the researcher to contact me with any follow up questions, and understand that I may decline to respond to such a request.

8. I have read the above statements and freely consent to participate in this research.

Name of participant (please print): _____________________________________

Signature: ____________________________ Date: ___________________

Please return signed consent form to the researcher by fax at (613) 533-6905 or email at graham.anderson@queensu.ca
Appendix C: Example Interview Questions (Project Administrators)

Background
• How would you describe your experience and involvement with supportive housing in Ottawa?
• What was your role during the planning and development of the Booth Street / The Oaks residence?

Planning
• How would you describe your organization’s approach to providing supportive housing? What are there key directives or priorities? What do they focus on? (ie. target populations, resident housing outcomes, project sustainability, cost/benefit considerations)
• How were the partnerships involved in this project orchestrated? (refer to specific partners)
• How did municipal or provincial policies, guidelines or regulations affect the development process for this project? Supportive housing development more generally?
• What was your experience working with the city’s housing and planning departments on this project?
• How is input sought from project stakeholders concerning the physical design and development plans for a supportive housing project? Are these processes effective?

Location
• What key factors determined the project’s location? What are the location’s strengths and weaknesses?
• Are there specific community facilities, service agencies or amenities located near the site that were considered during the planning process?
• How does the project integrate with the surrounding neighbourhood?

Design
• Who was involved in the project’s design process?
• What are the key design features? Were these tailored to the specific needs of the target residents? (ie. units, common areas, features and amenities, project size)
• Are there any design features in these projects that are inadequate or inappropriate?
Support Services
• What key services are available on-site to tenants? On what schedule are they available?
• Are there specific policies or requirements that notably affect support service provision?
• Are there any particular challenges or impediments to offering support services?

Summary
• Would you characterize this project as being successful?
• What were the major challenges and successes with this project? How would these inform the opportunity to develop future supportive housing projects in Ottawa?
• What do you consider to be the biggest challenges in providing supportive housing in Ottawa? Are there specific issues that should be prioritized?
• How would you describe the broad system of supportive housing provision in Ottawa? Is it integrated? Effective?

Conclusion
• Is there anything of note that I didn’t cover that you’d like to add?
• Are there any resources in particular that you might direct me to?
• Would you be willing to be contacted with follow up questions?
Appendix D: Example Interview Questions
(Housing Branch Staff)

Background
• What was your role during the planning and development of Cornerstone’s Booth Street residence and/or The Oaks?

Planning
• How would you describe the City’s approach to planning supportive housing? What are there key directives or priorities? What do they focus on? (ie. target populations, resident housing outcomes, project sustainability, cost/benefit considerations)
• How do municipal or provincial policies, guidelines or regulations affect the development process for supportive housing projects like Cornerstone and The Oaks?
• How is input sought from project stakeholders concerning the physical design and development plans for a supportive housing project? Are these processes effective?

Location
• What key factors determined the project locations? What are the locations’ strengths and weaknesses?
• Are there specific community facilities, service agencies or amenities located near the sites that were considered during the planning process?
• How do the projects integrate with their surrounding neighbourhoods?

Design
• Who was involved in the projects’ design process?
• What are the key design factors? Were these tailored to the specific needs of the target residents? (ie. units, common areas, features and amenities, project size)
• Are there any design features in these projects that are inadequate or inappropriate?

Support Services
• How were support service arrangements or partnerships planned in these projects? Are there specific policies or requirements that affect service provision?
• Are there any particular challenges or impediments to planning for support services? Specific policies or requirements?

Summary
• Would you characterize these two projects as being successful?
• What were the major challenges and successes with these projects? How do these inform the opportunity to develop future supportive housing projects in Ottawa?
• What is the City getting right in planning for supportive housing projects? What is it missing?

Conclusion
• Is there anything of note that I didn’t cover that you’d like to add?
• Are there any resources in particular that you might direct me to?
• Would you be willing to be contacted with follow up questions?