



Dundas Works Roundtable #5: HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IN DUNDAS
Tuesday, March 20th, 2018 Salvation Army 7-9pm Minutes Rev.3 - July 12th, 2018

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

Bob James welcomed the group, gave some background, introduced the topic, speakers and structure for the evening. We had 26 people in attendance. Bob also presented some numbers for various income levels and the ability of owning or renting in Dundas.

Speaker Jim Sweetman reviewed parts of the Urban Hamilton Official Plan and defined their meaning of affordable and mandate on housing types. He then discussed the provincial Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe and ran some numbers using these perspectives.

Tim Leslie framed the group discussions and questions to focus upon. We then broke into three discussion groups. A representative from each group gave a very brief summary of key points to wrap up the evening.

Dundas has become unaffordable to low income and many middle income earners. There is a pronounced shortage of affordable rental and ownership dwellings. For a vibrant, sustainable future, a complete community requires housing with a range of types to accommodate all levels of affordability, all ages, and offering support services. This includes ownership, rental, social housing, rent-geared-to-income, lodging homes, shared/community living, socially supported, and emergency/temporary shelters.

Affordability can be achieved by increasing availability and other methods such as the following:

- 1) Incentivise or legislate developers to build more rental housing. Also, legislate inclusionary zoning to create affordable, accessible, and socially supported units.
- 2) Set rent controls and maintain strict enforcement.
- 3) Create zoning to permit granny flats, multiple units per home, laneway housing, and community or shared land ownership models.
- 4) Design a Secondary Plan that encompasses all of Dundas (core and outer neighbourhoods) to include mixed-use development, supporting all residential types listed above.
- 5) Require infill (underutilized) and vacant public property (like schools, churches) to be converted for affordable housing or community use rather than sold to developers.
- 6) Gear future development to "net zero" building codes to decrease operating costs. (Net zero codes employ a combination of technologies that reduce energy requirements and use on-site renewable energy systems.)
- 7) Provide incentives (i.e. tax breaks, grants) for sustainable housing plans. Housing should be viewed as a need, not as an investment. Be more open to renting rather than owning, which is more similar to European communities.

Dundas Works Roundtable #5
HOUSING AFFORDABILITY IN DUNDAS
Detailed Meeting Minutes

Welcome by Bob James

Welcome to the fifth in a series of public roundtables looking at the Dundas we wish for our own—and in this case, our children's— future.

Again, we have for you the minutes of previous roundtables, but this time they are on our web page. We will be taking minutes tonight, and they will be on the website soon, and available in print for the next meeting (probably in May).

Let's begin tonight by looking at what your child/ grandchild, or yourself can realistically afford. Remember the outcry when the province proposed raising the minimum wage to \$15/hour? Well, we looked at what that minimum wage (higher than the current \$14) allows you to rent or buy. Minimum wage, if you can find full-time and steady work, gives you a gross income of just over \$30,000 per year. Poverty guidelines suggest housing costs should not exceed 1/3 of your income: \$10,000 per year, or \$870 per month. A mortgage payment of this amount translates into a house cost of about \$200,000 (assuming 5% down payment—or \$10,000, if you can find it). I was unable to find a house or condo at this price in Dundas, or a rental below \$1,000/month (there was one basement apartment for \$900, with some utilities).

So our hope is to begin this evening by looking at “housing affordability”: we value the diversity of Dundas, but feel that, right now, many if not most people in the broader community cannot afford to live in this town; it is just too expensive. My own children are in their mid-30's and established, but could not buy or rent the house that I live in (I'm not sure I could afford to buy it now). Those on fixed incomes—seniors, single parents, persons with disabilities, people on assistance—have increasing difficulty with affording a place here. What we as a community have called social housing has served to compartmentalise “the poor”, and allowed us to feel better living in our more comfortable accommodation. So tonight is not about what we know as social housing. It is about those “starter homes” and “starter apartments” that we had when we were growing into adulthood; and the downsizing asked for by many seniors. If we wish our community to be truly sustainable, we have to have younger people with or without families, moving into our housing: a community only of seniors is a community with no future.

Some perspective here: Dundas has the second highest percentage of single moms in the region, at 11%. We have relatively few immigrants (people born outside of Canada) at 18%, and visible minorities number 5%. Our poverty rate is the second highest in the region, at 11%. (All figures are from a 2009 study done by Hamilton's Social Planning and Research Council).

Dundas Works continues its work to draft a Vision for Dundas, together—one we can use to defend and enhance the public, social places that we collectively value in the place where we actually live. We wish to be pro-active in influencing the future of our much-loved town. The City has, separately, begun the process of working towards a Secondary Plan for Dundas, to which we hope to contribute. So...we have held four roundtables to date—on Dundas values, public spaces, accessibility, and development; and tonight is our fifth.

Summary to date: We all would like a community in which people have the ability to live comfortably, interact socially, and earn a living locally. We all would like a community in which transportation—whether by foot, by bicycle, by car, by wheelchair/ scooter, or by public transit—is easy and safe. We all respect and encourage diversity in cultures, age groups, socio-economic status, religions, and

gender identities. We all value the welcoming nature of Dundas and want to maintain and enhance it. We also value our built and natural heritage and wish it to be well maintained. We all recognize the need for ongoing development and intensification, but insist that it be within the principles that sustain our community.

These same four issues seem to keep coming up:

1. transportation and connections
2. affordability and development
3. public assets
4. democratic engagement in Dundas

We have Jim Sweetman with us again tonight, who will give us a very brief introduction to the concepts and values involved in the struggle of providing (rental, mostly) housing at reasonable cost.

After the intro, we will divide into groups for discussion, then re-form to share our ideas. And we will let you go by 9 PM. Enjoy the evening.

Jim Sweetman

Welcome everyone. Thank you for choosing to come here tonight.

I must say it has been eventful preparing for tonight's discussion. What with a flu outbreak and some late scheduling conflicts, it seemed the universe – or at least some parts of it - were conspiring against us. But it is the most adaptable, not the strongest, who survive. So here we are.

I want to start by thanking the Salvation Army for allowing us the use of their space on very short notice. It is the second time we have held a Dundas Works event here. And I want to express my appreciation to Amica – who have generously provided us with refreshments for tonight. We will hold a future community meeting at Amica but we will do so outside of flu season.

It is most unfortunate that Graham Cubitt is unable to join us tonight. No doubt his experience as the Director of Projects and Development for Indwell would provide us an interesting perspective on housing affordability in our community. Please read an article by Jon Wells in the March 13 edition of the Spectator for more information about Graham and Indwell.

Tonight's topic – as advertised – is “Housing affordability in Dundas. Will our grandchildren be able to live here?” So my part of the agenda is to provide some background for tonight's conversation.

A personal note: I was a grandchild for 36 years. I was fortunate that I knew each of my four grandparents quite well. I often wonder what they'd think of things now.

Quoting from the Urban Hamilton Official Plan:

“Housing is a basic human need. Housing needs to change and evolve as social, demographic, and economic conditions change. The long-term sustainability of communities is based on building a diverse, flexible housing stock today to meet the changing needs at both household and community levels.

.....There must be a sufficient supply of housing with a range of housing types, forms, tenures, densities, affordability levels, and housing with support services.”

So there is a kind of “housing spectrum”. The full range of housing types means ownership, rental housing, social housing, rent-geared-to-income housing, lodging houses, shared and/or congregate-living housing arrangements, housing with supports, and emergency and transitional housing.”

One of six Urban Housing Goals states:

“Increase Hamilton's stock of affordable housing of all types, particularly in areas of the City with low levels of affordable housing:

So what does “affordable” mean?

Affordable means:

- a) in the case of **ownership housing**, the least expensive of:
 - i) housing for which the purchase price results in annual accommodation costs which do not exceed 30 percent of gross annual household income for low and moderate income households; or
 - ii) housing for which the purchase price is at least 10 percent below the average purchase price of a resale unit in the City of Hamilton; and,

- b) in the case of **rental housing**, the least expensive of:
 - i) a unit for which the rent does not exceed 30 percent of gross annual household income for low and moderate income households; or
 - ii) a unit for which the rent is at or below the average market rent of a unit in the City of Hamilton (PPS, 2005 amended); and,

Low and Moderate Income Households: means:

- a) in the case of ownership housing, households with incomes in the lowest 60 percent of the income distribution for the City of Hamilton; or,
- b) in the case of rental housing, households with incomes in the lowest 60 percent of the income distribution for renter households for the City of Hamilton. (PPS, 2005, amended)

The Urban Hamilton Official Plan also establishes housing targets.

For New Ownership Housing (not affordable) – 948 units annually

For New Ownership Housing (affordable to low and moderate income households) – 1,291 units annually

So that is 2,239 ownership units annually

For New Rental Housing (not affordable) – 252 units annually

For New Rental Housing (affordable to moderate income households, includes housing with supports) – 125 units annually

For New Rental Housing (affordable to low income households, includes households with supports) – 252 units annually

So that is 629 rental units annually

The 2016 population of Hamilton was about 560,000. The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe forecasts Hamilton’s 2041 population will be 780,000. That’s an increase of 220,000 people in the 25 years from 2016 to 2041.

How many people are expected to live in Dundas?

The population of Dundas in 2006 was 24,700. In 2016 it was 24,285. The percentage of the population over 65 has increased from 15 to 17% while the percentage of the population under 14 has decreased from 18% to 16%. Maybe that’s why some peoples’ vision of Dundas is fewer schools and more graveyards.

The average price of a detached 2-bedroom house in Dundas in the 3 months ending January 2018 was \$544,000. At \$25 per hour, an individual’s gross income is \$52,000 per year. Allowing for 30% of gross to be used for housing, yields \$1,300. A \$280,000 mortgage, at 4% for 25 years costs \$1,475 per month.

The purpose of Dundas Works is to create a community discussion about a vision – a desired, future state - for Dundas.

In our visioning for Dundas so far, we have a consensus on the desire for a more diverse and sustainable community. Can we satisfy that desire without housing people can afford?

Tim Leslie

To help focus our discussion tonight we came up with a few questions that we'd like to discuss in small groups.

- 1. How could we make housing in Dundas more affordable in the future?**
- 2. How could we implement these ideas in the new Secondary Plan for Dundas?**

As we've done in the past we will go around the circle in each of the small groups in order to hear from everybody.

GROUP DISCUSSIONS

TABLE 1: Present at table: Lucienne Tucker, Tanya Jenkins, Sandy Shaw, Sandy Lambert, Marie Dynes, Sarah Ayerst, George Sweetman (scribe), Bob James (moderator)

Question 1: How could we make housing in Dundas more affordable in the future?

-Dundas is very popular; house sold in two days which had not been updated since 1993, sold for over \$500K. People coming from other places find it affordable to them.

-Can we incentivize developers to build something more affordable, both in new and reno
-problem with income stagnation. Hydro bills going up, and decrease in affordability. The planning Act can play a role, perhaps. Secondary plan needs to have "teeth" that can enforce affordability, for example Section 37 (where you can exchange social good for increase in density or other development goodies). Need to prevent just teardowns.

-Lived in Dundas for 35 years. Bottom line counts: how do we allow people to age in place. Where do you rent. Worries that, if she has to move., she cannot live any longer in Dundas.

-what does "not affordable" look like? How do we get ahead of the developers, and know what is happening. It feels like the deal is in before we have a say at all. Concern that the deal was not fair.

-feeling that the City is supportive of people like Indwell, and their ability to build affordable housing. Perhaps we can build on this. Need to be transparent. We can push Council to free up support. She had an old house that was falling down, and sold for \$500K, Could be three apartments. We need to revise our idea of what a "house" looks like; live in smaller spaces; learn what is needed to make a house comfortable.

-(Bob) three ideas: look at granny flats in larger houses, of which there are many in Dundas; look at laneway housing such as that in Hamilton; learn from Calgary and its experience in "paying it forward" housing for ownership of small houses for people with modest incomes.

Second round:

-look at tax revenue. Keep buildings to less than six or seven storeys. Smaller units should be available.

-we can learn from how the war-time housing got built. We need more say over developers. More information out to the public around development.

-she went to the downtown meeting at the Library for the Downtown Peoples Plan. There were 250 people there. She suggest we have a summit and produce a large unified voice to combat development. Need to watch for the concept floated in downtown of "height by right".

-how do we put the pressure on council to do the things we want?

-Administration at the City Hall gets over-ridden by Council: are we listening to the staff who are more the experts? How do we engage people and get them involved in these discussions?

-She has a neighbour who did a granny flat. We can learn a lot from other modes of handling the problem in other cities or jurisdictions: how do they get these things approved? Additions were a

common thing of the past, now we tear down and rebuild.

Question 2: How could we implement these ideas in the new Secondary Plan for Dundas ?

-not sure; added later: can we get more subsidized income help for housing, etc.

-need political power. She wants mixed incomes in the buildings. Where is Habitat for Humanity, and can they help? Need more rental housing.

-key point is to have 2-3 bedroom units available in renting as well a single bedroom units (for families). The inclusion of “Inclusionary Zoning” in provincial legislation is a good idea, but not currently very meaningful; can we make it better that way. Can we collect the stories of people who are affected by the high cost of housing, to energize people.

-defer

-landlords of existing buildings (such as Helen Street) increase the rents when someone leaves. For instance, a one-bedroom goes for \$1400/month. Can we look again at Rent Control? What is the strength of that legislation? We can use tenants’ associations to advocate for their tenants; they are already getting together to get a wider voice. One issue for them is taxation: tenants pay a higher rate of municipal taxes than owners do.

-it is hard to motivate until there is a crisis, and this takes lots of energy, so you are drained just when things get difficult. Can we nurture connections and let people know what is happening. Faith groups might be called upon for assistance here. And a city-wide strategy would be helpful: strength in numbers.

“Focus on what we have in common”

Summary:

1. Incentives (section 37); push for revisions to Inclusion Zoning legislation.
2. Granny Flats and/or laneway housing
3. Political power: get the people to be heard. Join with other groups to let Council know. Have a summit.

TABLE 2: Dorinda Sussex, Dave Carson, Martin, Sue Carson, Maureen, Gord, Noor Nizam, Chris, Margot Carnahan (DW), Tim Leslie (DW)

Question 1: How could we make housing in Dundas more affordable in the future?

Wide Variety of Affordable Housing Needed

We need to think about how to provide affordable housing both owned and rented for our children and grandchildren within the boundaries of Dundas so that we will have a *complete community* where young people can bring up their families here in the future.

There is a need for affordable housing with support services for *young adults and people with disabilities*

Factors to consider

Influence of escalating prices in Toronto is driving up prices in Hamilton, this is not just a local problem

Real estate practices encourage bidding wars that drive up prices, this could be curbed

Housing is considered an investment, speculation makes housing unaffordable for people just getting into the market

Need more *government accountability* to address affordability...example of Parkside property conversion to a cemetery with extremely limited public consultation: land could have been used for affordable housing...*who is making decisions?? not citizens!!*

Government does poor job of providing affordable housing... we need mixed use neighbourhoods rather than social housing projects...also costs can get out of control... community groups (like us!) do better job

Incentives to Increase Supply of Affordable Housing

Decrease development costs to developers on units that will be affordable to reduce cost for unit owners and/or renters

Current housing climate only supports profitability for developers, this needs to change to get affordable units built

Intensification and increasing availability will decrease housing costs, but it needs to be done sustainably.... inclusionary zoning and legislation is essential

Renting needs to Affordable

Make it easier to allow more second rental units in existing houses

No new rental units built since the 1970's...need to increase number of rental units on the market to decrease rents

Rent Controls work only until someone moves out

Current situation is such that fewer rental units being built

Rental Units have been converted to condos

Need to change community values regarding rental units...in Europe 60-70% rent vs Canada/US 60-70% own

Legislate for builders that there is a ratio of condo to rental units in a given project and

Community Land Ownership Models

Use a model of *shared land ownership* to reduce land costs, i.e. community or non-profit organization could own land

Separate housing from land ownership (as above), If community or a cooperative owns land....Then only the house cost would have to be covered by home owner or renter

Shared spaces, community living could reduce costs

McMaster Community Homes at 18 Dundas... 2/3 affordable, 1/3 market... where diversity is the goal to include people with financial and physical disabilities

Hughson Street Baptist - Church owns land...apartments geared to income

Scandinavian Models -consider example from Norway with community owned land...Government has a "housing bank" which offers lower interest rates according to need to build just the housing units....owners may build their own houses with community help to reduce costs even further(like Habitat for Humanity)

Parkside Community Co-operative - Member- owned co-operative owns land and community facilities, people buy or rent units from the co-op at an affordable cost according to how much the unit has cost.... not how much the market says.... then sell back at the cost of inflation

Question 2: How could we implement these ideas in the new Secondary Plan for Dundas ?

New Strategies

Community Methods *can make up for lack of government solutions*

Dundas Secondary Plan could implement "bonusing" for developers to encourage the types of development that benefits Dundas citizens

Advance these ideas to candidates in forthcoming election, ie...ensure that rent control benefits those who actually need it

Development fees need to be structured to provide incentives for development that is needed

We don't have to be limited to the Secondary Plan to find solutions

Change Building and Zoning Codes

Codes need to allow existing single family homes to be *easily adapted* to add a second unit

Build new single family homes that have extra plumbing rough-ins so that they can be easily converted to have a rental unit

Change codes to allow more than one family per home, i.e. university students paired with seniors

Housing is a need not an investment!

Policy changes needed to end house speculation that drives up prices and makes housing unaffordable

Be sure that new affordable housing units are still built to a high standard

Public Land that is not needed for current uses needs to be made available *for free*

Closed schools or public buildings should be used for affordable housing and community uses not sold off to developers

Themes that Emerged from Discussion

Citizens and citizen groups need to have important role so that we have a sustainable way of providing future affordable housing...volunteer groups can partner with government to create development that is desired/needed in community.

Citizens need to speak to and elect candidates that will work with community organizations to implement their solutions...*who is making the decisions for the future: citizens or developers/planners???*

New Government policy and legislation required to increase affordable solutions and allow for new models

Find solutions that *decouple land ownership from home ownership*....consider cooperative living solutions

Increase availability of affordable units to decrease costs

TABLE 3: Art Heidlebrecht, Anne Washington, Michelle Chin (DW), Jim Sweetman (DW), David Wilson, Allison Suichies, Marcia Forsyth, Jessica Griffiths, Paul VandenBrink.

1. How could we make housing in Dundas more affordable in the future?

2. How could we implement these ideas in the new Secondary Plan for Dundas?

- at present it is not an option for young people to move out of their parental homes, too expensive.
- need a greater supply of affordable housing in Dundas
- we need to consider more mixed-use buildings
- what is going to keep people in Dundas? Could Dundas become a “drive-through” place?
- these are not easy questions, there are many complex issues that affect each other. The character of Dundas is being compromised by its current development. There is concern of having only one voice at City Hall. Many new residents may be commuters and not investing here, not adding to the community life.
- concerned about the replacement of a 17-bed senior’s home with a large “industrial-sized” condo development
- there are lots of condos in Hamilton – will that happen in Dundas too?
- home ownership may be on its way out and rental living increasing. Is there a political will to build more rental units in Dundas?
- look to the boundaries of Dundas and define its physical area. Are we just concerned with the “core” of Dundas? Possible intensification near Head Street, Mill Street. At present the only people that can afford to purchase the usable land are developers who will create expensive condos
- the cost is in the land, not the build. The profit margin is in luxury upscale builds since land is a fixed cost. We must vote with our dollars, shop local, support our merchants. Big box stores suck the life out of small towns.
- give a tax break to first time home buyers and control rental rates? Limit the amount of "foreign" ownership, people who buy should also live here, build more subsidized options such as Indwell and Cotton Mills.

- If we have limited land to build on, our government should make it easier to get permits, grants to build multiple dwellings on a single property, such as a basement apartment conversion, addition, etc. This will generate some revenue for the City but it should not be so much that the multiple dwellings in 1 building are overtaxed and not affordable
- some families are pooling their resources and buying a home together where they all can live.
- how do we attract young people to Dundas, they have different priorities and different ideas about what they need in a home. We need creative ideas written into the Secondary Plan via bylaws.
- Cost is driven by supply and demand. We have low supply and high demand at present, so we need more supply. Infill spaces. We also have to change our mindset about our needs versus our wants. The 3000 sq.ft. "dream home" is not sustainable. Consider more/ most areas of Dundas be rezoned for mixed use, say commercial ground floor with 2 or 3 stories of residential above. If this was possible, rent for merchants might come down and also make more areas of Dundas more attractive, walkable and affordable.
- prioritize the land that we have, we need better destinations in Dundas, such as recreation, evening entertainment. Example: many young teens would prefer to live in Ancaster because that is where the cinema is.
- consider co-op housing, smaller living with communal spaces, Dundas needs to be the whole package, people will go where the jobs are.
- need to be politically active to get these things implemented. Westdale has issues with illegal student house conversions, our conversions need to be legal. Schools are the core of a community.
- mixed use, conversions and infill is good. There are many barriers to do it. Consider laneway housing. Yes to a cinema. Consider community spaces, and people's motivation to live here.
- there are many existing buildings currently unused in Dundas
- we all have to be willing to give up something to get affordability
- also consider the operating costs in addition to capital costs - monthly utilities, etc. All future development should be sustainable development - Net Zero Housing.

open time:

- protect HCA open spaces, these are important. Note the land behind Davidson Blvd is actually owned by the Catholic Church
- Sometimes it seems as though municipal decisions and bylaws override or conflict with the Provincial growth plan (Places to grow) of intensification and growth.

The Growth Plan for the Greater Golden Horseshoe works to:

- Support the achievement of complete communities that offer more options for living, working, learning, shopping and playing.
 - Reduce traffic gridlock by improving access to a greater range of transportation options.
 - Provide housing options to meet the needs of people at any age.
 - Revitalize downtowns to become more vibrant and to provide convenient access to an appropriate mix of jobs, local services, public service facilities and a full range of housing.
 - Curb sprawl and protect farmland and green spaces.
 - Promote long-term economic growth.
- If we can hold our local people accountable to these ideals when making local infrastructure decisions, this should be helpful.
 - do owners of single family dwelling actually want to intensify? We need to realize that NIMBY (not in my backyard) is present in Dundas. As is Gentrification. Changes in our suburbs especially will have to start with us. We need to change our mindsets. Create tax breaks for residents and small operations trying to do the right thing. If people can change from a 1 story building to a 3 story that will go a long way.
 - need to attract younger people to Dundas, there should be incentives for sustainable living arrangements.

- one of the aspects of a more sustainable community is that power generation needs to be decentralized, there are considerable costs involved in transmission, could look at solar, micro dams, geothermal - all proven technology. Any new designs should require a certain percentage of local power generation. consider a power generation coop run by the community.
- we need to understand the Conservation Authority's role in determining what can be developed and where in Dundas. Will the Secondary Plan help?