

Stronger together

Waterloo Mennonite Homes, MennoHomes merge to strengthen response to affordable housing needs in Waterloo Region

MennoHomes / Waterloo Mennonite Homes
Waterloo, Ont.

When Dan Driedger, executive director of MennoHomes in Waterloo Region, wanted to explore potential partnerships for a new affordable housing project at Lancaster and Bridgeport streets in Kitchener, he approached Waterloo Mennonite Homes (WMH). Since both organizations build affordable housing under the Mennonite umbrella, it seemed like a good fit.

“Both organizations hold a similar vision of providing low-income housing in the Region of Waterloo,” says WMH president Rudy Goertz. “Over time and through much discussion, it felt like the perfect opportunity to not only become a partner, but to merge and become one organization.”

WMH provides housing for low-income seniors in a building adjacent to Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church at 15 George Street, Waterloo. In the 1970s, senior members of the church

explored the feasibility of building a seniors apartment near the church, says Goertz.

And WHM was born. Construction on the 46-unit building began in 1979, and the first tenants arrived in 1980. The building has 43 one-bedroom and three two-bedroom units. Subsidies are available to tenants whose rent is more than 36 per cent of their income, and about 30 per cent of the total units are subsidized.

“We have been working closely with WMH over the past couple of years to support each other. This merger is a natural extension of that collaboration,” says Driedger. “We are humbled they have the confidence in [MennoHomes] to be good stewards of their building and the people who call it their home. This is not a responsibility we take lightly, and we’ll do our utmost to honour their trust.”

MennoHomes Inc., a non-profit, was founded in 2001 to respond to the need

for affordable rental housing in Waterloo Region. It currently provides a mix of single-unit apartments, family duplexes, and multi-bedroom housing for 105 households across the region. Once the merger with WMH is finalized and a 48-unit building in Kitchener currently under construction is completed, the grand total of affordable housing units under MennoHomes will be 199.

Both organizations offer support to residents: WMH employs a parish nurse whose salary is shared with W-K United Mennonite Church, and MennoHomes employs a community support worker for its homes. Once the merger is complete, the operating budgets will merge, says Driedger, and during the transition the roles will remain as they are.

A Place to Call Home update

The MennoHomes project at 544 Bridgeport Road East in Kitchener, called A Place to Call Home, is being built on the former site of St. Paul’s Evangelical Lutheran Church; the church is partnering on the project, as is a local not-for-profit, Parents for Community Living. The 48-unit building will provide a secure, affordable and supportive environment for single people, seniors, families and individuals living with disabilities who meet the Region of Waterloo’s income criteria.

MennoHomes had just launched its capital campaign for A Place to Call Home when COVID-19 hit. The pandemic highlighted the need for affordable housing in Waterloo Region, and the project went ahead; construction is scheduled for completion in mid-June. ☺

For more information about the project, or to help MennoHomes reach its \$5 million fundraising target, visit mennohomes.com.



WATERLOO MENNONITE HOMES PHOTO

Waterloo Mennonite Homes is located next to Waterloo-Kitchener United Mennonite Church in Waterloo, Ont.