



A YEAR OF CHANGE & TRANSITION



2021 ANNUAL REPORT

A FEW WORDS FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CHAIR

While 2021 might have felt like a repeat of 2020, it was actually very much a year of change and transition for MennoHomes. As you review this annual report you will notice changes in staff, our office location, and most importantly in the number of affordable homes we are now able to provide for people with low incomes in Waterloo Region. All good changes!

And that is really the change that we collectively want to make. We want to help make positive change in the lives of people in our community by providing affordable access housing – the most basic need. The waiting list for affordable housing in Waterloo Region remains is now over 6,500 households.

The headlines point to stories discussing the challenges and causes that have led to this shortage of affordable housing. While this means different things to different demographics, within the rental market, housing is considered affordable if the total cost is less than 30% of a household's pre-tax income.

What does this actually mean in real terms? If we use the current Living Wage of \$17.20 an hour, affordable housing for a single

person working 40 hours per week would be \$895 per month. MennoHomes provides housing that this person could afford. Unfortunately, the average market listings for a one-bedroom apartment in Kitchener at the end of December 2021 were \$1,488.

For a senior citizen on a fixed income, the situation is even more challenging. The guaranteed income level for a single pensioner effective January 1, 2022 is \$1,685 per month. This means rent above \$505 per month can only be paid by using money intended for other household expenses.

With your support, we are making a difference. Thank you! In 2021 as a result of new construction, renovations, and mergers, the number of households for which we are able to provide homes grew by 79 to 230. Working alongside many other incredible partners in Waterloo Region, we will continue our efforts. The Region of Waterloo's "[Building Better Futures](#)" affordable housing plan aims to create 2,500 homes in 5 years and MennoHomes is an integral part of this plan. We remain #StrongerTogether.

but our foundational mission and values remain the same. Thank you to past board members for your vision and courage to launch MennoHomes, and to our current board members who continue to carry this vital work into the future.

MennoHomes endeavours to go beyond providing basic affordable housing. This includes ensuring financial sustainability on a project-by-project basis, environmental sustainability in the way our projects are built and operated, and the inclusion of supports through a Community Support Worker or our recently added Community Nurse. Our goal is to create an environment where the people who call our housing their home can thrive. Thank you for joining with us in this important work.

There have been many changes and transitions over the past two decades, but our foundational mission and values remain the same.



Dan Driedger
Executive Director



Nancy Regehr
Chair

544 BRIDGEPORT ROAD EAST UPDATE

What an incredible year was experienced at the corner of Bridgeport and Lancaster in Kitchener. Consistent with this year's theme of change, 544 Bridgeport transitioned from a construction site to new affordable homes for 48 households.

Despite the impact of the pandemic on the availability of building supplies and the skilled labour necessary to put everything together, we were able to complete construction within the COVID-adjusted timeline. Thank you to Edge Architects and VanDel Construction for their leadership and dedication throughout the various stages of delays, lockdowns, and completion.

Our volunteer fundraising committee also remained hard at work this past year. With strong support from a broad range of people in our community who are committed to responding to the need for affordable housing, an additional \$1 million was contributed towards new construction in 2021. Total donations and pledges surpassed our \$5 million fundraising goal by \$300K. Thank you! Donations not required for final construction costs associated with Phase 1 will be used as seed funding for Phase 2.

The 60 people who now call this building their home also experienced change. The

excitement that comes from being told your application has been accepted, to the logistics of packing boxes and moving, and finally living in a new building and meeting your new neighbours comes with mixed emotions. Even positive change can be stressful and this has been amplified by the pandemic.

The building includes a drop-in office for our Community Support Worker. While not everyone needs or wants the same level of support, just knowing a listening ear is available helps. In the fall of 2021, our Community Nurse also began hosting drop-in clinics for interested tenants.

We didn't navigate the changes at 544 Bridgeport alone. St. Paul's Lutheran Church and Parents for Community Living shared all of this with us. We want to express our thanks to them for their trust and patience as we have all walked this new path of partnership together, and will continue to do so.

You can catch a glimpse of all the excitement by visiting our [Virtual Open House](#).



“VIRTUAL”



GRAND OPENING

24 MILL STREET UPDATE

In January 2021 MennoHomes acquired at no cost a property in Kitchener from The Region of Waterloo. The house at 24 Mill St. had been vacant for ten years and required significant renovations before it could be once again suitable for a family to call their home. MennoHomes entered into a unique partnership with [Mennonite Disaster Service \(MDS\)](#) to restore the home. We also took the opportunity to upgrade the house's energy efficiency with improvements such as additional insulation and new windows. Thank you to [Reep Green Solutions](#) for your assistance with this.

This project would not have been possible without the dedicated volunteers from MDS who were able to balance working on the

renovations with the challenges of COVID-19 worksite restrictions. Through a series of unexpected events, a connection was made with a family from Syria that had been privately sponsored three years ago. The family of five was living in a two-bedroom apartment and desperate for something more appropriate that was also affordable.

MDS volunteers led all aspects of the renovation from demolition to cleanup, just in time for the family to move into their new home prior to the start of the school year.

Since the capital campaign for 544 Bridgeport was actively underway, MennoHomes did not launch a public fundraising effort. By word-of-mouth,

donations from people in the community familiar with the project, donations of materials and labour from the dedicated MDS volunteers, and a final gift of \$20,000 from Trinity United Church covered all of the renovation expenses. Thank you!



OPERATIONAL UPDATE

This past year saw a number of changes for MennoHomes from an operational perspective. When we were registered as a charity in 2001, we listed the Mennonite Central Committee address at 50 Kent Ave. in Kitchener as our mailing address. In 2013 we officially moved our office into the “New 50 Kent”. As a small organization we enjoyed being in the midst of other agencies also working to bring positive change to the world around us.

Over the past two years, like many workplaces, we have transitioned to a hybrid work environment. Our lease was set to expire in 2021 so we opted to move into some underutilized space in our basement at The Foundry in Elmira. This 25-unit apartment building was built in 2017 and our new location provides an opportunity for our office staff to interact more directly with some of our tenants. There is also room for further growth if necessary.

The move to Elmira also coincided with some pending staff transitions. Karen Lebold retired in April as our Community Support Worker as Sue Martin came on board. Debbie Simpson secured full-time employment and Lori Martin filled her part-time role as Administrative Assistant. Esther Neufeldt also retired as we welcomed Robin Near as our new Bookkeeper. Thank you to all of our former staff for helping to ensure a smooth transition. Your dedication and commitment has been sincerely appreciated.

Thank you as well to our new staff as they have adapted to their new jobs and work environment in the midst of a pandemic. It has been a joy to welcome you to our team and see you embrace your new roles with curiosity, joy, and enthusiasm.

Visitors to our new office space should note that while Tuesday to Thursday are considered our core in-office days, please schedule an appointment prior to dropping by.



Lori Martin
Administrative Assistant



Robin Near
Bookkeeper



Sue Martin
Community Support Worker



SPRUCELAWN APARTMENTS FOR SENIORS

On November 30th Sprucelawn Apartments for Seniors Inc. merged with MennoHomes.

Sprucelawn has been providing affordable housing for seniors in the village of St. Jacobs for almost 40 years. Started by the three village churches (Lutheran, Mennonite, and United) they saw the need for affordable housing for seniors and built a 30-unit apartment building that backs onto the mill race in St. Jacobs.

Over the past five years, they acquired some adjacent land and have been working through various planning and design activities to build a 28-unit addition. It will consist of 20 one-bedroom apartments and eight two-bedroom ones.

In early 2021 Sprucelawn submitted a proposal to The Region of Waterloo and was successful in securing funding support for the one-bedroom apartments. MennoHomes was identified as a project partner that could ultimately merge with Sprucelawn. This was seen as a way for MennoHomes to contribute our experience towards the success of the new addition while also providing long-term operational expertise to Sprucelawn.

On November 30th, MennoHomes became the sole steward of Sprucelawn and also assumed the various director roles on the board. The majority of the previous Sprucelawn board continues to be actively involved as committee members for Sprucelawn.

Construction of the new addition is scheduled to start in the spring of 2022. A public capital campaign will also be launched at that time. The completion target is summer 2023.



FINANCIAL UPDATE

MennoHomes was again able to end the fiscal year with an operational surplus. Tenant rent was sufficient to cover annual operating expenses, allowing fundraising efforts to be directed towards the construction of new affordable housing. We completed our *A Place to Call Home* capital campaign. With the strong support of donors, we surpassed our \$5 million goal, raising \$5,323,000.

Thank you! Donations not required for Phase 1 will be designated for the construction of Phase 2.

Our audited financial statements can be found online by clicking here: [MennoHomes 2021 - Audited Financial Statements](#).

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

- Nancy Regehr - Chair
- Chip Bender - Vice Chair
- Amie McPhee - Treasurer
- John Oudyk - Secretary
- Jennifer Justason
- Steven Reesor Rempel
- Saleh Saleh
- Brian Unrau

Martin Buhr - President Emeritus



ADMIN & PROGRAM STAFF

- Lori Martin - Administrative Assistant
- Robin Near - Bookkeeper
- Karen Ehlebracht - Community Nurse
- Sue Martin - Community Support Worker
- Dan Driedger - Executive Director

PROPERTY MANAGEMENT

- CITYCORP Management Inc.
- Dubrick Property Management Ltd.
- Alfred Rempel - 544 Bridgeport Road
- Rick & Linda Brown - Rockway Gardens Village
- Sean & Lisa Harkness - Sprucelawn Apartments for Seniors
- Brad Roth / Helen Bartsch - The Foundry
- Violet Balzer - Waterloo Mennonite Homes

VISION

Caring communities where every person can thrive in a safe and affordable place they call home.

MISSION

We create homes for people in need of affordable housing. We develop housing that is economically and environmentally sustainable and includes supportive services.

VALUES

Housing is a Human Right

We believe that adequate, safe and secure housing is a fundamental human right. We are committed to providing quality, affordable housing that is thoughtfully designed and is responsive to the needs of tenants, recognizing that stable and secure housing improves quality of life.

Equity, Integrity and Respect

We respect and value the diversity of people in our community. We adhere to high ethical and professional standards in our work and relationships. We are fair and respectful in our interactions and treat everyone with respect and dignity.

Accountability and Sustainability

We are accountable for our actions. We accept responsibility for our performance and share the results of our work in an open and transparent manner. We balance fiscal prudence with asset preservation, environmental sustainability and social responsibility.

Collaboration and Community

Through collaboration and partnerships, we work with others to achieve common goals, build communities and create places to call “home”. We provide support services to our tenants to develop communities where each person is valued and has a sense of belonging.

Creativity and Innovation

We are open to change and we continuously seek new approaches to enhance the development and operation of affordable housing.



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