



CREATING A PLACE TO CALL HOME

 **MennoHomes**

2020 ANNUAL REPORT

A FEW WORDS FROM OUR EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR AND CHAIR

In many ways 2020 was a year of looking ahead. At our annual general meeting in January, there was a buzz of excitement and energy as we officially kicked-off our *A Place to Call Home* capital campaign to support our new housing initiative at 544 Bridgeport Road East, Kitchener. While construction had not yet begun, we were looking ahead, anticipating the preparation of the site for the new building that would eventually take shape. We were looking even further into the future anticipating the completion of that building that will eventually become a new home for 48 households in Waterloo Region. We were looking ahead to spring when work onsite could begin. Little did we realize how the spring of 2020 would affect our plans.

From an operational perspective, the impact of COVID-19 was immediate. Our first instinct was to ensure our tenants were safe and felt supported. New cleaning protocols were put in place, but the relationships that had been established by Karen Lebold,

our community support worker, helped ensure that physical distancing did not turn into social distancing. We did not want our tenants to carry the extra burdens of isolation and loneliness. Thank you to our stellar team of Karen and our property managers and building superintendents who went the extra distance to support the people who call the housing we provide their home.

When we began discussion with St. Paul's Evangelical Lutheran Church, and later with Parents for Community Living regarding the redevelopment of the 544 Bridgeport site, the waiting list for affordable housing in Waterloo Region was just over 4,000 households. It is now over 6,000. The combination of escalating real estate prices and the pandemic have created a perfect storm for people with limited incomes in search of affordable rental housing. COVID-19 has highlighted even more strongly the importance of having a place to call home.

The emergency restrictions also meant a delay in the start of construction for our new apartment building. The coordinated efforts of Edge Architects, Van-Del Construction, and the City of Kitchener planning and

building departments helped us navigate this unknown working environment and allowed us to move forward in new and creative ways. The project is now back on schedule. More than once, it was apparent that the desire to support the creation of new affordable housing helped to expedite various activities. Thank you to this team of professionals that made this possible.

When the pandemic hit, the strength and resilience of our community in Waterloo Region also became apparent. Local

agencies pooled their efforts to work together on a front-line response. While MennoHomes was not a direct participant in this initiative, we did put a pause on our capital fundraising efforts so as not to interfere with their efforts. When we were finally able to re-launch our capital campaign, the depth of support has been humbling. Thank you!

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As a small organization, MennoHomes has historically leveraged creative partnerships to create new housing. This was once again evident towards the end of 2020 as we merged with Waterloo Mennonite Homes and initiated a partnership with Mennonite Disaster Service to rehabilitate a vacant house in downtown Kitchener. We continue to explore partnership opportunities as we recognize that we are stronger together.



The support of board members, volunteers, individual donors and institutional funders is critical to our ongoing efforts to build affordable housing. The success of our *A Place to Call Home* capital campaign would not have been possible without the leadership of our campaign chair Carl Zehr and incredible team of volunteers. Thank you!

Thank you as well to retiring board member Arnie Bender, who in addition to serving on the board for six years provided much needed assistance with renovations and maintenance. While Arnie will no longer be a board member, we are thankful that he will continue to volunteer in this manner and remain an active member of our building committee.

We are pleased that Jennifer Justason and Saleh Saleh agreed to be nominated for their first terms on the board and we welcome them to the board table and the important work of MennoHomes following their election. Thank you to all board members for your commitment to MennoHomes, for sharing your expertise and time, and for all that you do to bring about the vision of MennoHomes of caring communities where every person can thrive in a safe and affordable place they call home.

In closing, 2020 was a year when we as a community have spent much time looking ahead to the end of the restrictions related to COVID-19. We continue to do so. We are also looking ahead to those life-changing events in 2021 when tenants of our new

buildings, or even those potentially moving into one of our existing ones, can finally have an affordable place to call home. Thank you for your support and for being part of the caring community that is committed to increasing affordable housing in Waterloo Region.



Dan Driedger
Executive Director



Nancy Regehr
Chair





REFLECTIONS ON COVID-19

The pandemic of 2020 was the uninvited house guest that did not know when to leave and eventually just moved in. At least that is how it feels some days. As a community, it's fair to say we were not prepared for the sudden life-changing effect on our everyday lives, nor the length of time COVID-19 would continue to impact us.

At MennoHomes, our first priority is the health and safety of our tenants, volunteers, staff, and the broader community.

For our tenants, we immediately undertook enhanced cleaning and disinfection of our apartment buildings, especially high-risk areas such as lobbies, door handles, elevators, etc. Our property managers and superintendents were quick to respond and creative in their ability to source supplies that had suddenly become scarce. We unfortunately had to cancel events in the community rooms used by tenants. Social distancing became the new catchphrase but for many of our tenants, social isolation was a primary concern for us.

Karen Lebold, our community support worker increased her regular contact with tenants by phone or email to simply "check-in" and see if there were additional supports

they needed. As restrictions lifted during the summer months, she was able to begin meeting with tenants again in open-air settings from a safe distance. The second wave once again meant that in-person visits with tenants ended. The pandemic has highlighted not only the need for proper housing but has reinforced the critical importance of the additional supports provided by Karen.

Our office at 50 Kent closed to the public and will remain so for the foreseeable future. Pivot has become the new buzzword for change and that is exactly what we had to do. Ester Neufeldt, our bookkeeper, quickly and adeptly transitioned to working from home, initially from the kitchen table until a more appropriate in-house setting could be arranged. Likewise our volunteer committees began making use of email, video and teleconferencing.

Thank you to everyone for their flexibility and the relatively seamless way we were able to put these new processes into place. These forced changes have provided an opportunity to re-imagine how we work together and we anticipate some of these changes truly becoming our new way of doing things.

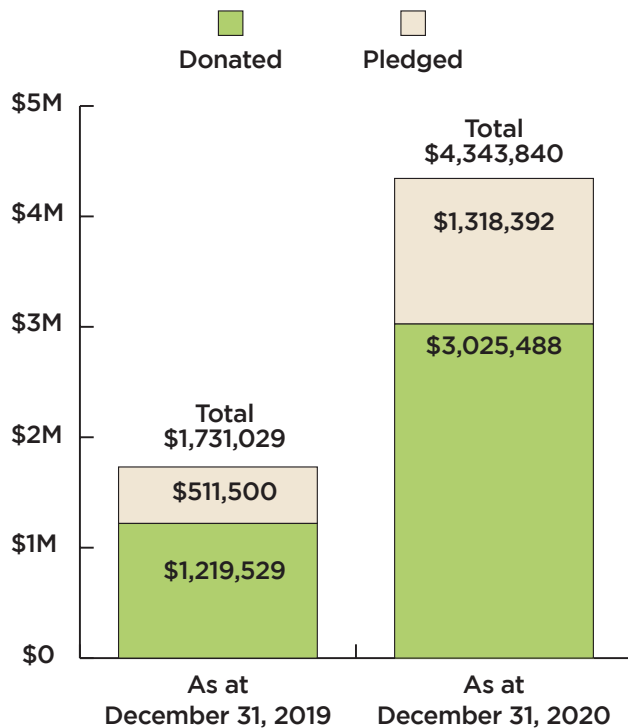
“We, as a society, have a responsibility to make sure that appropriate housing is available to everyone.” – Carl Zehr

FINANCIAL UPDATE

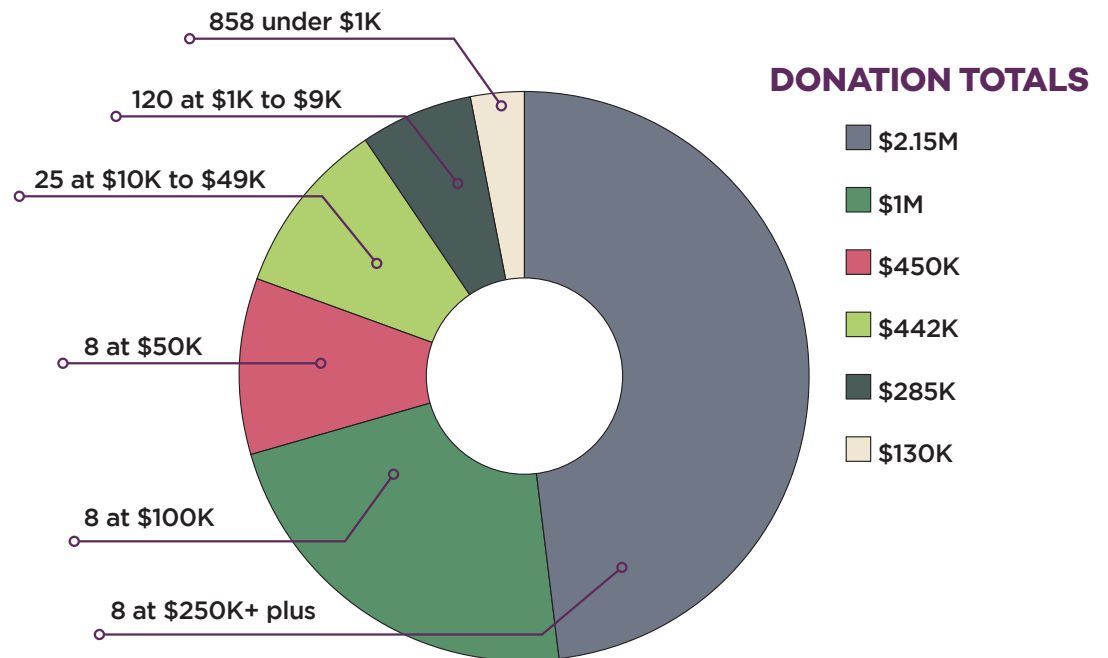
In 2020, MennoHomes was again able to end the fiscal year with a modest operational surplus. The robustness and sustainability of our business model proved its value. Despite the challenges of COVID-19, Tenant rent was sufficient to cover annual operating expenses, allowing fundraising efforts to be directed towards the construction of new affordable housing. Our audited financial statements can be found on our website or by clicking here: [MennoHomes 2020 - Audited Financial Statements](#)

A PLACE TO CALL HOME CAPITAL CAMPAIGN DONATIONS

DONATIONS AND PLEDGES



NUMBER OF DONATIONS BY AMOUNT



DONATION TOTALS

AVERAGE MARKET RENT FACT:

If we use the average market rent for 2019, our tenants' 2020 rent was on average only 74% of average market rent, saving an estimated \$337K!

Thank you to all of our supporters for your generous support of affordable housing in Waterloo Region

FUNDRAISING COMMITTEE REPORT

What a pleasure it has been to work with the fundraising committee for the Bridgeport and Lancaster building project. The efforts from each committee member are very much appreciated. With the support of our local community, I am pleased to report that up to December 31, 2020 we have received cash and pledges totalling approximately \$4.3 million. Our goal of \$5 million is within sight and I am confident we will meet that goal by mid-summer when our tenants move into their new homes.

The financial support and encouragement we have received from individuals, businesses and churches during 2020 has been awesome. Not only did previous donors continue to strongly support MennoHomes but we were also able to achieve another goal of expanding the support base more broadly across the Region of Waterloo. It is gratifying to welcome many new contributors to MennoHomes and the cause for affordable housing.

Before writing this report, I re-read the [MennoHomes 10th Anniversary Report - 2001-2011](#) and observed that the characteristics of the housing market during that first decade are very similar to those of today. As well, the spirit of collaboration, development of partnerships and trust received from the community is still the foundation of the MennoHomes organization in 2021.

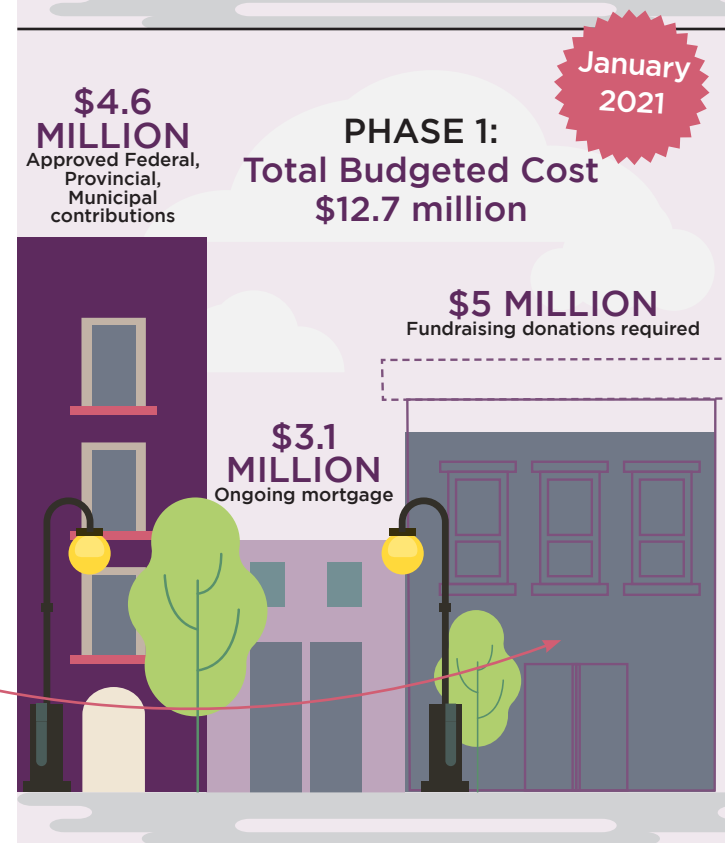
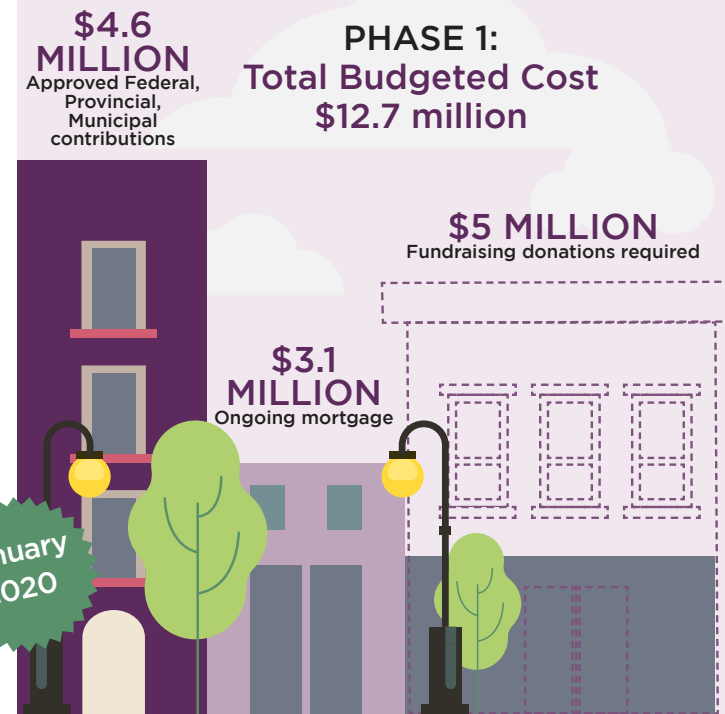
At last year's AGM, I challenged us to look deep into our souls and wallets to assist people who do not have a safe, affordable and comfortable place to call home. You did that and on behalf of our future tenants, thank you very much.



Carl Zehr, Chair

Capital Campaign Committee Volunteers

Carl Zehr - Chair
Bob Astley
Craig Haney
Linda Kieswetter
Hulene Montgomery
Bob Nally
Joanna Taylor





BUILDING COMMITTEE UPDATE – BRIDGEPORT & LANCASTER

When this crisis hit we were in the midst of preparing the site for demolition. On March 18th, the City of Kitchener announced that in response to the COVID-19 pandemic, all non-critical facilities, including the Building Division would close to the public. Our amazing team of architects, engineers, and contractors transitioned well to working remotely. When work restrictions lifted in early May, we were well positioned to proceed. Demolition and site cleanup was completed in mid-May and new construction began at the end of May.

Over the course of the summer, the new building took shape. A significant milestone included completion of the roof installation in early December so that the various sub-trades could work in a warm and dry environment inside. While the construction site has been a buzz of activity, adherence to COVID-19 working protocols have meant a safe working space for everyone.

The project remains on-schedule for completion in June with new tenants expected to move in throughout July and August. Thank you to this dedicated committee of volunteers who have provided their expertise, industry knowledge and experience. A special thank you to Arnie Bender and Earl Martin for their ongoing participation in construction site meetings. The “bench strength” this multi-disciplinary committee of volunteers provide is invaluable to ensuring our projects are developed in an efficient and sustainable manner with an eye to creativity and innovation.

Committee Members

Annie Bailey

J.D. Lawyer – working primarily in real estate, land development, and condominium law

Dave Bechtel

Retired – experience includes building supply, home construction, non-profit housing, finance

Arnie Bender

Retired Carpenter – experience includes residential and commercial construction and site supervision

Stephen Clarke

P.Eng. is a Consulting Structural Engineer

Jeff Elders

P.Eng. in civil engineering with a focus on urban land development

Murray Leis

Owner and operator of Murray Leis Construction Inc.

Earl Martin

Retired – experience includes site supervision, estimating, and project management

Brian Unrau: degrees and experience in various fields of study including architecture, business, accounting, and solar energy



MILL ST.

In mid-December MennoHomes acquired the house at 24 Mill St. in Kitchener as part of a lottery held by the Region of Waterloo to dispose of properties they had deemed surplus. The lottery was open to non-profit housing groups that already provide affordable housing in Waterloo Region and could show they have the experience, expertise, and funds to manage the homes as affordable rental units. There was no cost for the property but, since it has been vacant for ten years, it will require extensive renovations.

MennoHomes will be partnering with Mennonite Disaster Service (MDS) to complete the renovations. Current travel restrictions due to COVID-19 are preventing local MDS volunteers from travelling outside of Ontario. This local project creates a unique opportunity for MDS to contribute to a local housing need. MennoHomes will be responsible for materials and supplies while MDS will oversee the renovations and coordinate their volunteers.

Renovations are expected to begin in February with completion estimated for early summer 2021.



WATERLOO MENNONITE HOMES

Our first conversations with Waterloo Mennonite Homes began in 2017. At the time, we were simply connecting to learn more about each other's organizations and our respective work related to affordable housing. This developed into deeper discussions as we explored how we might collaborate on the creation of new housing in Waterloo Region.

With the development of the new housing project at 544 Bridgeport Road East in Kitchener, these conversations took on new meaning. The question of how best to be partners highlighted opportunities to work

even more closely together.

In early 2020, MennoHomes was approved for participation in the Investment Readiness Program (IRP) funded by the Government of Canada's Social Innovation Strategy and managed locally through Kitchener Waterloo Community Foundation. This program provided the impetus to ask whether MennoHomes and Waterloo Mennonite Homes were working too hard to develop a partnership structure rather than becoming one entity and putting our energy into the creation of new affordable housing. Should we in fact merge? The answer was a

clear yes and the IRP funding provided the financial resources to address the associated due diligence and merger expenses.

On November 30th 2020 the 46-unit apartment building located at 27 George St. Waterloo was transferred to MennoHomes but the legacy of Waterloo

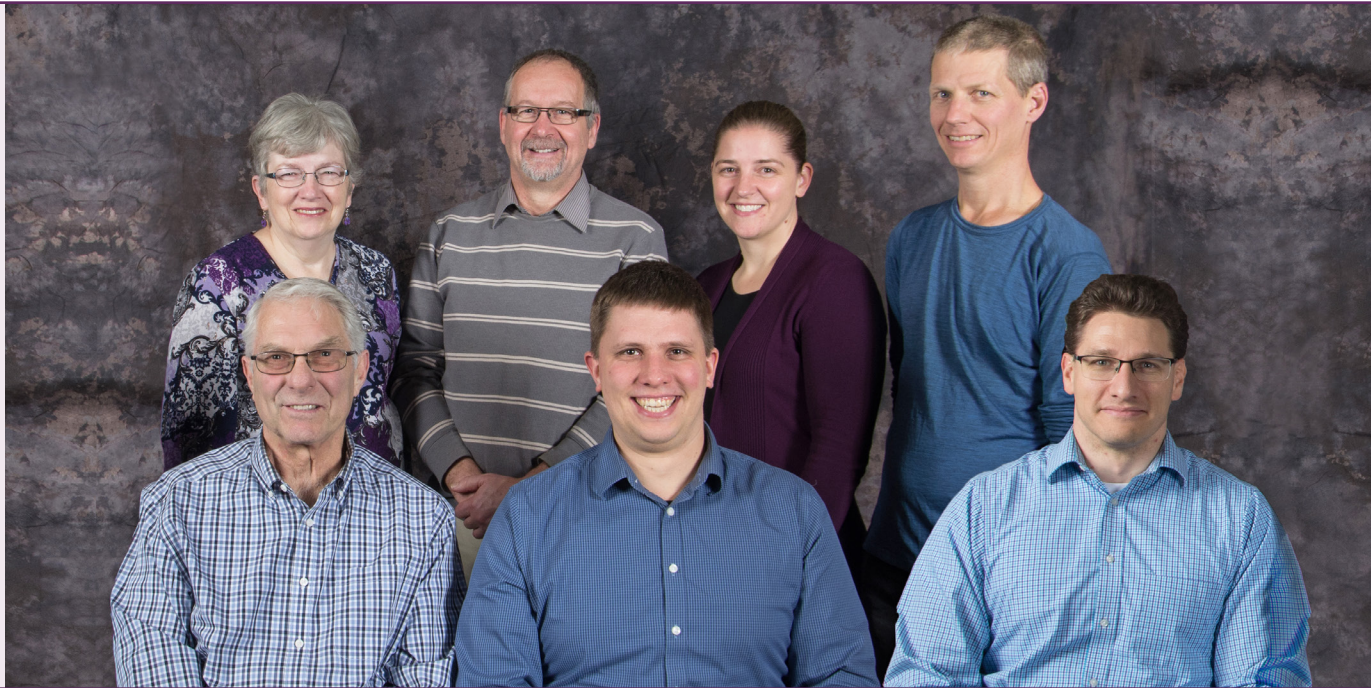
Mennonite Homes remains. The apartment building continues to be referred to as Waterloo Mennonite Homes and a number of plaques within the building honour that history. We are especially thankful to the leadership team of Rudy Goertz, Hardy Willms, and Al Reimer from Waterloo

Mennonite Homes who have navigated this journey with us. MennoHomes is humbled by the confidence that the board and members of Waterloo Mennonite Homes placed in us to be good caretakers of this property. It is a responsibility we take seriously and will do our utmost to honour.

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Nancy Regehr – Chair
Chip Bender – Vice Chair / Secretary
Amie McPhee – Treasurer
Arnie Bender
Steven Reesor Rempel
John Oudyk
Brian Unrau

Martin Buhr – President Emeritus



STAFF

Karen Lebold – Community Support Worker
Ester Neufeldt – Bookkeeper
Dan Driedger – Executive Director

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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