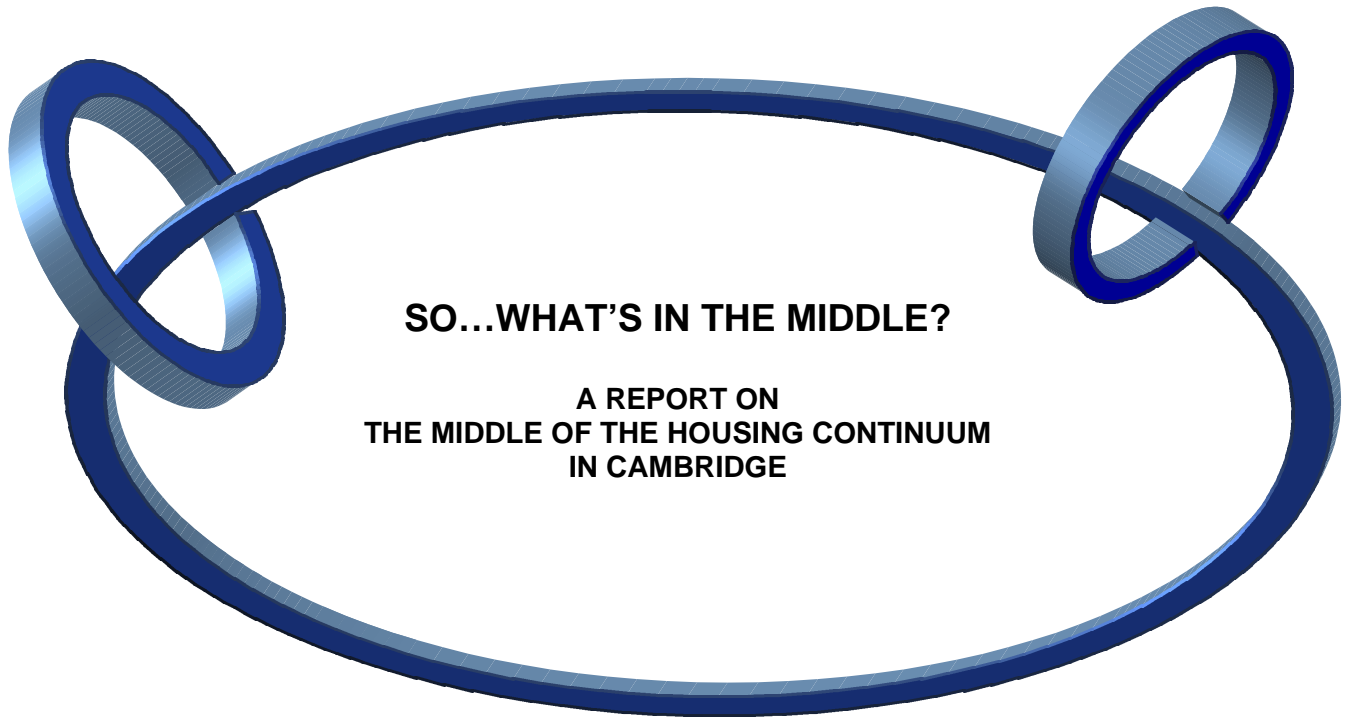




Social Planning Council
of Cambridge and North Dumfries



SO...WHAT'S IN THE MIDDLE?

**A REPORT ON
THE MIDDLE OF THE HOUSING CONTINUUM
IN CAMBRIDGE**

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Jan Mah, Researcher

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1.0 INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background And Purpose

Cambridge consists of four, small, Southern Ontario communities located along the Grand River, which, over time grew into what we know today as the City of Cambridge. The small communities still reflect the core areas of Cambridge. They are Galt, Hespeler, Preston and Blair. In 1986, the population of Cambridge was approximately 80,000. In 2000, the population had grown to approximately 108,000.

The enclosed report documents a housing inventory project undertaken to gather information over a seven-week period from July 25 – September 10, 2000 regarding housing options not previously researched in the Cambridge community. The study is descriptive and exploratory in nature.

The genesis for this work was *Understanding Homelessness in Waterloo Region* (1999) and the subsequent year of developmental work undertaken by Cambridge Action on Homelessness Group. Before being able to confidently begin the creation of a long-range plan for addressing homelessness in Cambridge, it was thought that we should do an inventory of what housing we currently have in our community.¹ Unfortunately, appropriate funding to do such research and long range planning work has been elusive. With a small amount of funding from Cambridge Out of the Cold, the Social Planning Council of Cambridge and North Dumfries endeavoured to create a small research project which focused on the portion of the housing continuum which was least known to us – rooming houses and low cost hotel rooms. The focus was primarily on getting a better understanding of the types of people living in these forms of housing.²

At the June 21, 2000 meeting of Cambridge Action on Homelessness Group, significant discussion took place about what we need to put in place in Cambridge in order to deal with the local housing crisis. It was recognized at that time that we needed to gather some information

¹ We knew that we did not need to carry out research on the people living on the streets because that was completed in 1999. We also knew that we did not need to study social housing and market housing because there was already much information available on these housing types on our continuum.

² We knew that we would not be able to collect data on the entire universe of rooming houses and low cost hotel rooms because of time and financial restrictions. We were most interested in knowing who lives in these forms of housing because this information would help inform our thinking around the long range planning work to be done (e.g., developing an emergency shelter in Cambridge, etc.)



about the people who live in rooming houses and low cost hotels. Once again, there was recognition that we have information already gathered about people who are homeless based on the 1999 study.

The objectives of the current project included the following:

- a) To summarize what “we already know” about the opposite ends of the continuum through already published reports (e.g., housing statement updates produced by government planning departments, *Understanding Homelessness in Waterloo Region* (1999), etc.)
- b) To seek out, using a snowball technique, information on the variety of rooming houses and low cost hotel rooms in which people reside including the street address, the total number of units, the structure of the units, the family composition of the people residing there and the weekly/monthly cost.
- c) To use a combination of service providers’ insights and people who are under housed themselves to get information.
- d) To create a map with the spatial distribution of these units and their types so that we can better understand where the variety of people live for whom new shelter might be developed.
- e) To produce a report which summarizes our findings. An appendix will be created that contains a spreadsheet of information including street address, etc. that can be used by outreach workers and others when they are trying to assist people to find housing.

1.2 Cambridge Housing Continuum – The Image of Chain Links

The definition of homelessness using a continuum was documented in a report called *Understanding Homelessness in Waterloo Region* (1999) using categories of “literal”, “hidden” and “at-risk-of-homelessness”. The definition had evolved from a Toronto report, *Golden Report on Homelessness* (1999) as well as concepts used by the United Nations.

“The homeless population includes not only people living on the street or in shelters but also people at risk of becoming homeless. [It includes] those who are absolutely, periodically, or temporarily without shelter, as well as those who are at substantial risk of being on the street in the immediate future.” (Toronto Mayor’s Homelessness Action Task force: Golden, 1999)

The focus of this current work is on those people who were considered “hidden” or “at risk of homelessness”. The “hidden” group refers to “people who live in illegal or temporary

accommodation and/or rely on friends and acquaintances for shelter” (Deitrich et al. 1999, p. 13). “People who are at risk of being homeless if their current housing is considered unsafe ... unaffordable ... overcrowded ... insecure ... and/or inappropriate” (Deitrich et al. 1999, p. 13.) However, it is noteworthy that the study team could not reach a consensus on where rooming and boarding houses, and short-stay-low-cost hotels belong on our housing continuum. We recognize there may not be consensus on where rooming houses, etc. may lie on the continuum, but information about the people living in these units is critical for our local planning work.

For purposes of this report, we have used links in a chain to illustrate the housing continuum. The focus of this current work is on the middle link of the chain. Since our housing work is exploratory, we will evolve toward a greater number of links in our chain as we gather more information. We believe the housing continuum should include all members of our community. We also believe that all the links should be equally strong. A weakness in any link decreases the strength of the entire chain.

As is reflected in the following "chain links" illustration of the housing continuum, the focus of the project was on hotel/motel rooms³, rooming house rooms⁴, rooms above businesses⁵, bachelor suites⁶, apartments⁷, domicile/care hostels⁸. Outdoor and abandoned locations⁹ where people are living were not the focus of this research, but the researcher encountered people living in these situations anyway.

³ Hotel/Motel rooms refer to those rooms rented on a daily, weekly and monthly basis. Light cleaning and linen changes supplied by the renter. Baths are shared. Kitchen facilities are sometimes offered on a shared basis.

⁴ Rooming house rooms refer to those rooms located in private residences and rented on a monthly basis. Such rooms typically offer shared baths with other rooming house residents. Also, some kitchen facilities are also available on a shared basis.

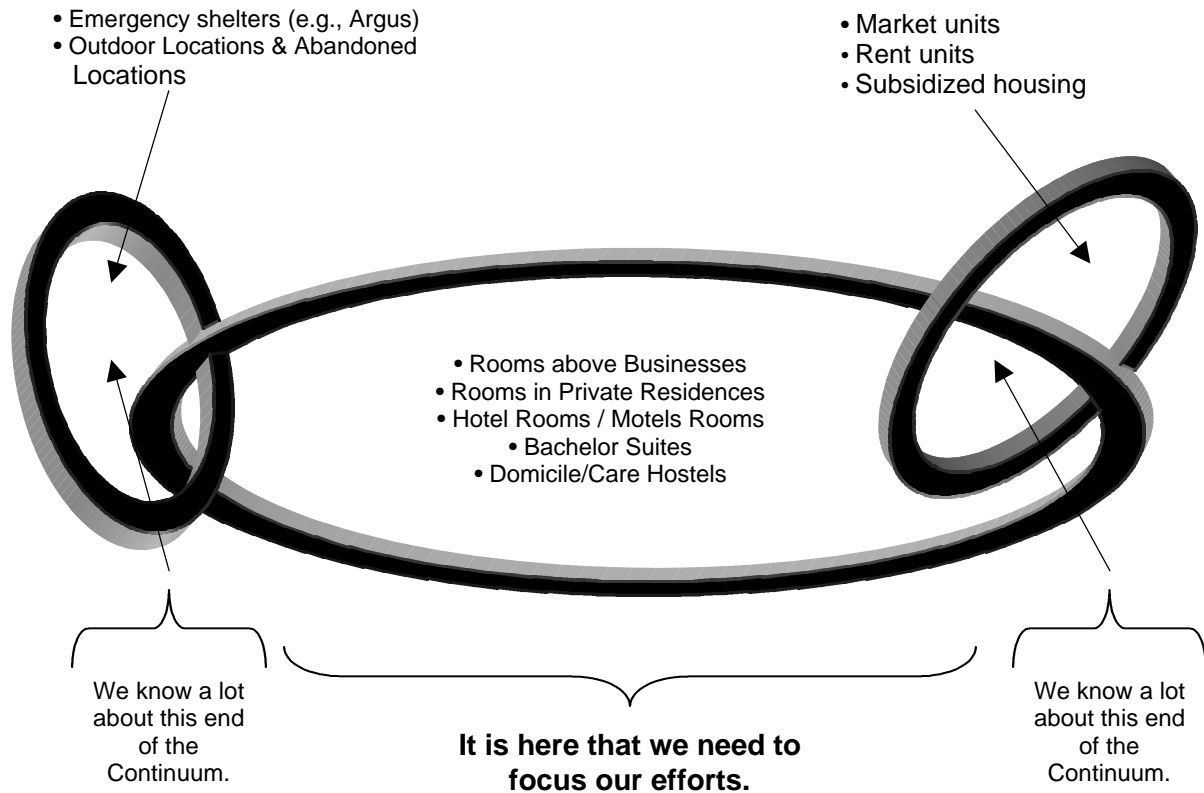
⁵ Rooms above businesses refer to rooms located above licensed bars or other businesses. Such rooms are rented on a weekly and monthly basis, offering shared bathrooms. Bedding may or may not be provided. These locations usually do not offer cooking facilities but may include a hot plate.

⁶ Bachelor suites are one-room units with self-contained baths and some form of kitchen facility located within the room. They are rented on a monthly basis and the tenant provides their own bedding. Some have simple furnishings while others are not furnished.

⁷ Apartments include units with separate bedrooms, kitchens (with fridge and stove) and baths. They may include one, two or three bedrooms and are rented on a monthly basis, unfurnished or partly furnished.

⁸ Domicile/Care hostels are care facilities either in the form of privately run residences or government run facilities, which provide room and board along with some social programming for residence tenants. They are rented on a monthly basis with tenants paying either full rent or subsidized rent. These facilities also provide some degree of medical management if required (disbursement of medications, for example).

⁹ Outdoor and abandoned locations refer to locations such as caves, under bridges, parks, abandoned buildings open to the elements and mall garages.



1.3 Methodology

A review of what we do know about the housing continuum in Cambridge was done. It is felt that once we have a clear understanding of what Cambridge *does* offer people in need of housing, we can then make better plans to meet the housing needs of all individuals. Meetings were arranged with Cambridge Action on Homelessness members, Out of the Cold staff members, a City of Cambridge City Planner, and Regional Planning and Culture Department staff. Community residents living in the various forms of housing were approached through local services such as Welcome Aboard, Open Door, the Vineyard, Cambridge Active Self Help (C.A.S.H.), and Cambridge Out of the Cold Office. These community agency people and the people they serve provided contact names and phone numbers of people who could help provide information for the study.

A snowball technique was then used to expand this information base eventually including people on the street, landlords and building owners, and volunteers in Galt, Preston and



Hespeler. Downtown core areas of each community became the focus areas based on information from people on the street that these areas contained the greatest concentration of homeless people and people staying in rooms. This report includes information on sites visited and/or photographed.

Particular information was recorded on a housing inventory data sheet created by the researcher for the purpose of the project. Information included on the data sheet were addresses where units were located, types of units, numbers of units, vacancy status, unit contents, family composition and monthly or weekly rates. Comments and personal experiences of people living in these accommodations, and on the street, were documented.

A spreadsheet was then created; summarizing the information based on type of housing, and locations, etc. (see Appendix B). As well, a written summary was prepared. A map was then created of the locations (See Appendix C).