



TORONTO STOREYS

Toronto Has A New Housing Model To Fight Homelessness — And It's Working

by [Richard Lyall](#) Feb. 16, 2018



St. Clare's operations manager Andrea Adams, left, and physical assets manager Mohammad Anvari pose at 25 Leonard Ave., where excavation has begun for a three-storey building that will provide purpose-built rentals for homeless people. (Photos courtesy of RESCON)

As Torontonians shiver through this cold winter, it's easy to forget those who don't have a home.

But recently, there has been reason to hope this year will see the start of something different. There is hope that we can end [homelessness](#) by working together at all levels.

Late last fall, Prime Minister Justin Trudeau unveiled the \$40-billion [National Housing Strategy](#), which will create 100,000 new housing units and repair another 300,000 for vulnerable families and individuals over the coming decade. The plan is to cut chronic homelessness in Canada by 50 per cent.

During this bitter winter, homelessness has been front and centre at City Hall: [Toronto City Council](#) has pledged to create 1,000 new shelter beds over three years, while advocates press for more to be done.

But something even more is needed to address homelessness.

The private sector and developers have been called upon to play a role in finding some more permanent housing. Another partial solution to this very complex issue was revealed recently.

A group of 21 [residential construction builders/developers](#), infrastructure contractors and unions have raised \$1-million to build 22 apartments, with housing supports for people experiencing homelessness.

Excavation of the St. Clare's Multifaith Housing Society parking lot at 25 Leonard Ave. began in December ahead of spring construction. St. Clare's is a Toronto landlord dedicated to working in partnership with 18 of Toronto's social service agencies to provide safe, permanent housing for vulnerable populations experiencing homelessness.

The City of Toronto is delighted that Toronto developers are stepping up to the plate, and is contributing a \$500,000 capital grant through its Open Door Program. The City will also waive municipal fees and development charges.

Some might say the construction of 22 apartments is a drop in the bucket when there are more than 5,000 people in need of a secure place to sleep, overwhelming Toronto's shelter system and, in some cases, preferring to sleep outside.

They are right.



The living area of one of the current units at 25 Leonard Ave.

But let us put this into perspective: This is Toronto's first purpose-built, permanent housing with supports for people experiencing homelessness, in close to 10 years. Until recently, there hasn't been enough shared interest in building housing for chronic homeless populations. This has led to an incredible drain on our shelter, hospital, long-term care and criminal justice systems.

We must start somewhere.

And we believe the best place to begin is with a model that works for the City's most vulnerable. St. Clare's is a model that works.

Currently, it successfully houses more than 500 people in 383 apartments in Toronto's West End. More than half of its tenants were previously homeless. This has only been possible with the support of the City of Toronto and, more recently, corporate partners.

People without homes often suffer from addiction, mental health issues, HIV-AIDS or other life-changing diagnoses. Often, a person suffers from more than one issue, making them a complex individual. This leads to recurring homelessness. But at St. Clare's, its partnerships with social service agencies ensure that support is in place to break that cycle.

When St. Clare's hands over keys to a new tenant, we always say, "Welcome home." They are thrilled, without exception, says operations manager Andrea Adams. It's such an improvement from living rough on the street or at a temporary shelter.

I am delighted that so many people — including the public and private sectors — are coming together to tackle homelessness in Toronto head on.

Homelessness affects everyone. The intensification project of 25 Leonard Ave. provides a blueprint for success that should be followed by others.



The current rental apartments at 25 Leonard Ave. are located in downtown Toronto's Kensington Market.

Thank you to those who have helped with the intensification of 25 Leonard Ave.

- Aspen Ridge Homes
- Brown Group
- Carpenters District Council
- Carpenters Union, Local 27
- Empire Communities
- Great Gulf Homes
- Greenpark Homes
- Heavy Construction Association of Toronto
- Hullmark Realty Canada
- Laurier Homes
- Liberty Development
- Lindvest
- LiUNA Local 183
- LiUNA Ontario Provincial District Council
- Mattamy Homes
- Menkes Developments
- Ontario Formwork Association
- Silvercore Properties
- Sorbara Group
- Tridel Corp.
- Yorkwood Homes