



CANADA MORTGAGE AND HOUSING CORPORATION

PROJECT PROFILE

The Dr. John M. Perkins Centre

Hamilton, Ontario



A derelict building with a colourful past has been transformed into 46 light-filled apartments and a community development centre. The Dr. John M. Perkins Centre opened in September 2011, created by Hamilton-based Homestead Christian Care (Homestead). Founded in 1974 to serve individuals with mental illness, Homestead provides a range of affordable housing options to 216 tenants in Hamilton and Woodstock.

“There’s a significant need, and few options for supportive affordable housing — particularly for singles.”

Highlights

The Dr. John M. Perkins Centre in Hamilton offers 46 affordable bachelor apartments in a former tavern and rooming house. Completed in September 2011, the project added a third storey for two floors of apartments above a community development centre.

Client group: Lower-income single adults at risk of homelessness due to a disability

Developer: Homestead Christian Care

Number of units: 46 (including 8 barrier-free)

Tenure: Rental

Who was involved? Government of Canada (CMHC), Government of Ontario (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing), City of Hamilton, Homestead Christian Care and significant private sector support

said Graham Cubitt, Homestead’s director of projects and development. “Hamilton has a six-year waiting list for affordable single-person apartments.”

The Affordable Housing Solution

Paul’s Driftwood Tavern opened in 1949 as a popular dining lounge. Rented rooms on the building’s second floor welcomed workers during Hamilton’s industrial boom. Sixty years later, the

building had been a nightclub, brothel, strip club, and marijuana grow-op. The roof leaked, and windows were broken. Despite its decline, the former tavern had potential, and Homestead Christian Care purchased the building along with its adjacent parking in 2009.

In the early stages of the project, CMHC provided Seed Funding and an interest-free Proposal Development Funding

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(PDF) loan, which were used to help cover the costs of activities including developing a business plan, conducting a need and demand analysis and an environmental site assessment, and preparing architectural drawings. The PDF loan was repaid after Homestead Christian Care successfully applied for funding through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program Agreement.

The Perkins Centre is Homestead's most extensive adaptive reuse project to date.

"The renovation turned the building inside out," said architect Emma Cubitt of INVIZIJ Architects (formerly Garwood-Jones & Hanham Architects). "Removing the uninsulated exterior walls, we transformed the building's facade and altered interior layouts. We added a third storey and a new light well, which floods the apartment corridors and the ground-floor atrium with natural light."

The upper floors feature 46 bachelor apartments, including 8 barrier-free, with very functional living spaces. Tenants pay \$474 per month including utilities, reflecting the Ontario Disability Support Program's housing allowance (in 2012). Tenants have common laundry facilities as well as free storage, Internet access, parking, and support services.

The high-performance building includes superior insulation, condensing boilers, energy recovery ventilation, water-saving fixtures, and rooftop solar panels, resulting in 41-per-cent energy savings over standard construction. The ventilation system integrates with

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the light well, utilizing warmed air during heating seasons. In addition to being environmentally friendly, these features help reduce the building's operating costs and enhance its long-term affordability, while improving occupant comfort.

The ground floor and basement include meeting rooms, a community kitchen and retail space, enabling partnerships with other organizations. McMaster University's School of Nursing holds community-nursing classes on site. New Hope Church organizes a variety of activities, including a non-profit bike shop providing youth training and low-cost transportation. Like the American community development pioneer for whom it was named, the Perkins Centre mobilizes community assets for social renewal.

The \$6,958,000 project received \$5,290,000 in assistance from CMHC and the Government of Ontario through the Canada-Ontario Affordable Housing Program Agreement. Homestead Christian Care contributed the building, which was purchased in 2009 for \$1,025,000. The City of Hamilton provided \$277,000 in municipal fee waivers. The significant private sector support contributions that added to the project's success included the donation of appliances from the Home Depot Canada Foundation and the ArcelorMittal Dofasco Corporate Community Investment Fund.