RENTAL QUALITY CONCERNS

Lack of new builds or reinvestment into aging rental stock in Hamilton has led to more and more tenants living in substandard housing. The Canadian Census asks renters and homeowners if their housing is in need of regular maintenance, minor repairs or major repairs. While this is a subjective assessment (and in the case of renters, only gives limited insight into the building's state of repair as few renters have information about the condition of heating or electrical systems, foundations or building envelopes), it is the only data source for information about housing quality at the city level.

Chart 1 shows that renters living in semi-detached housing and large apartment buildings have the highest rates of units in need of major repair. and that Hamilton's rates of disrepair for building types are higher than the Ontario average. Chart 2 shows that the vast majority of Hamilton's renters live in apartment buildings, and over 5,000 of Hamilton's rental units in apartment buildings are in need of major repair. Most of Hamilton's rental housing was built in from 1946 to 1980, and 4,890 of units built in that period need major repairs, as shown in chart 3.

Chart 1. Proportion of Dwelling Units in Need of Major Repair by Building Type, All rental unit types, City of Hamilton and Ontario, 2016
2016 Census, Statistics Canada

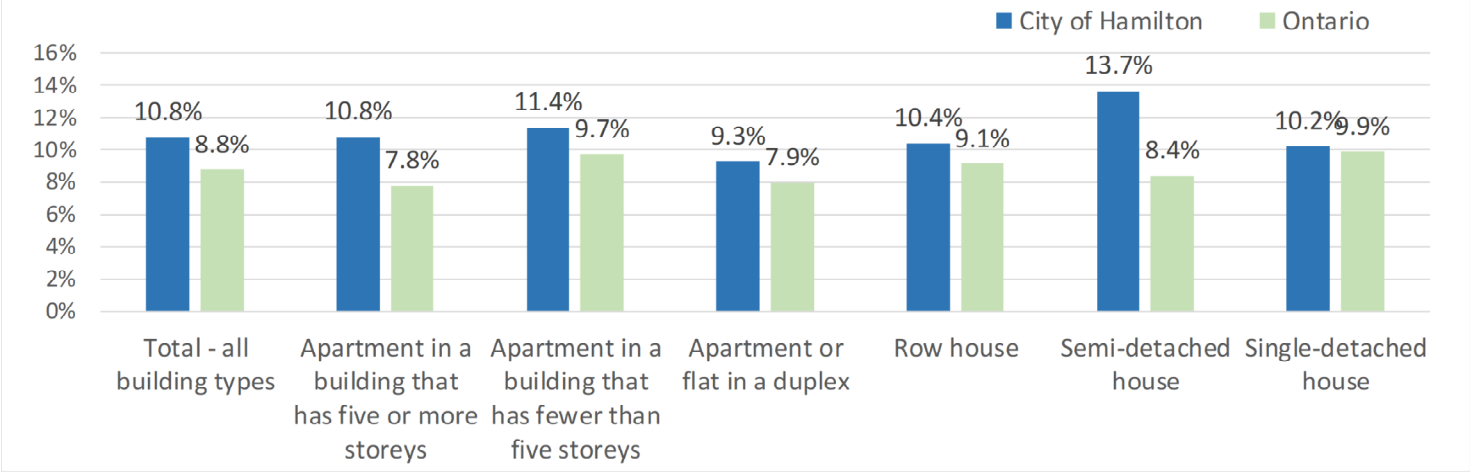


Chart 2. Number of dwelling units in need of repair, by dwelling type, All rental unit types, City of Hamilton, 2016
2016 Census, Statistics Canada

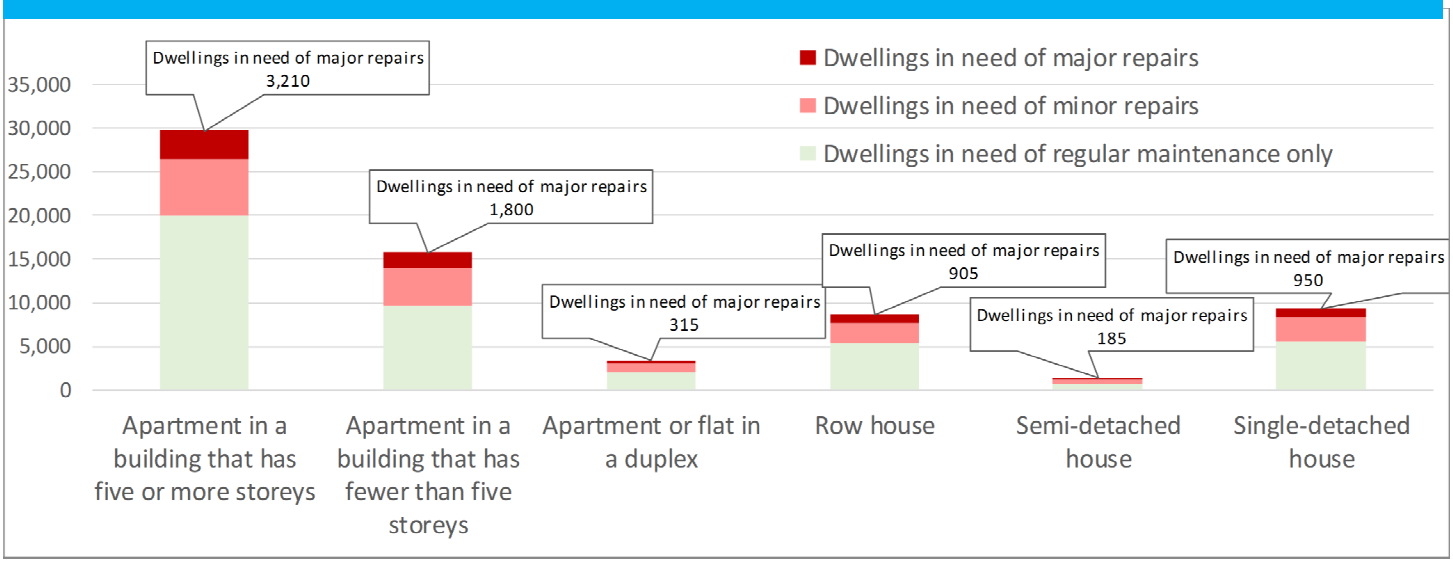


Chart 3. Number of dwelling units in need of repair, by period of construction, All rental unit types, City of Hamilton, 2016
2016 Census, Statistics Canada

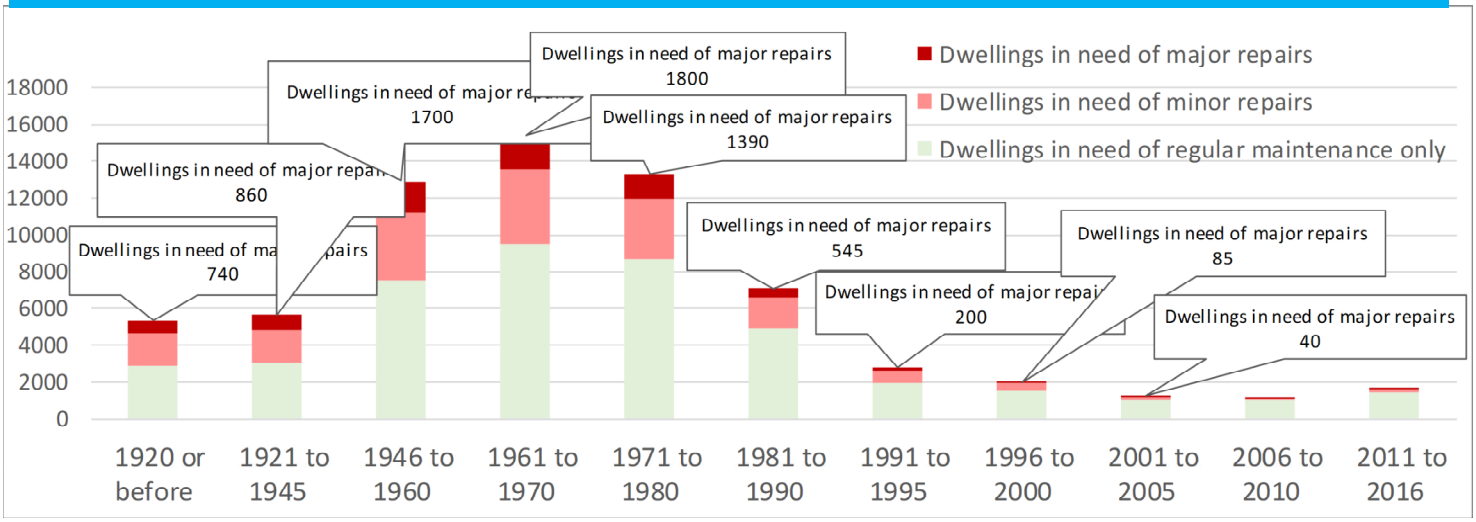
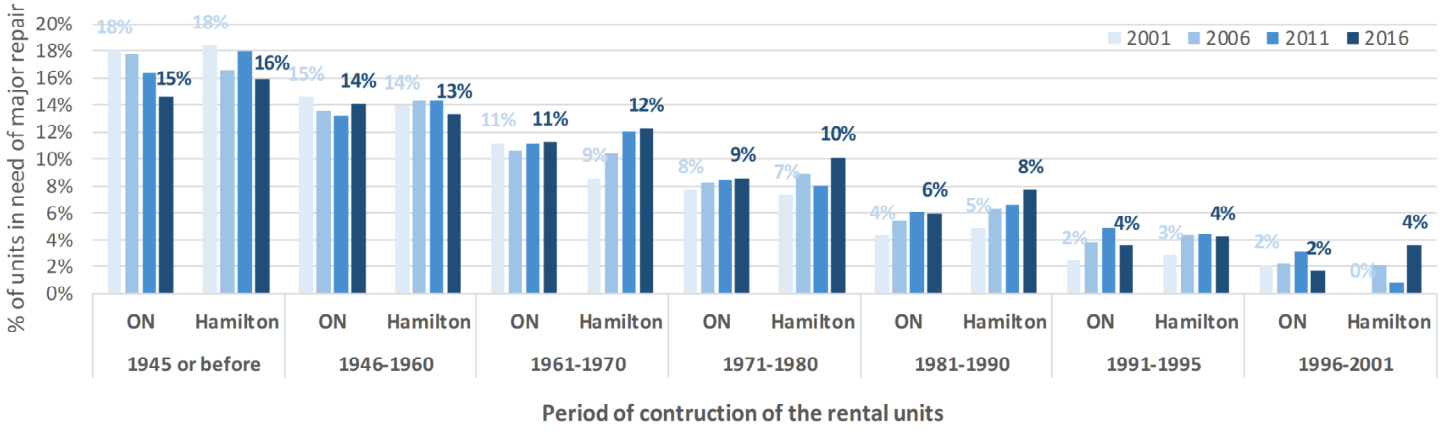


Chart 4 compares the rates of disrepair of rental housing in Hamilton and Ontario by period of construction, according to Statistics Canada data from 2001-2016. Not surprisingly older buildings have higher rates of despair. The chart also shows, however, that for buildings built from the 1960s and onwards, Hamilton has seen rates of disrepair increasing at faster rates than Ontario. This may indicate that Hamilton's rental housing may be of poorer quality and in need of reinvestment in a more urgent timeframe in order to protect tenants from further declines in the quality in their units.

Chart 4. Percentage of rental dwelling units in need of repair, by period of construction, all rental unit types, City of Hamilton and Ontario, 2016
2001, 2006, and 2016 Census, and 2011 National Household Survey, Statistics Canada



IS POOR QUALITY HOUSING MORE PROFITABLE FOR LANDLORDS?

Matthew Desmond's Pulitzer Prize winning book, *Evicted: Poverty and Profit in the American City* (2016), described how lack of investment into unit upkeep was a deliberate business strategy used by some landlords, who also use threat of eviction as a tactic to quiet tenant complaints to inspectors and building authorities. One landlord Desmond interviewed said their most dilapidated housing was by far the most profitable. This is due to a combination of factors, including high eviction rates (meaning that the landlord could keep rents from tenants that had been forced to vacate, security deposits, as well as charging late fees for overdue rents), rapid turnover rates, which allows for the dramatic increase of rent between tenants, and keeping units in a state of disrepair to save on expenses.