



County of Huron | Social and Property Services

Housing and Homelessness 2021 Annual Report

www.HuronCounty.ca/housing



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Fundamental Right to Housing Statement

The Corporation of the County of Huron is dedicated to enhancing the social and economic well-being of Huron County through the creation and preservation of affordable housing.

The County supports an individual's fundamental right to housing without discrimination as protected under Ontario's Human Rights Code.

Everyone deserves access to a safe and affordable home.



County of Huron Social and Property Services is working proactively alongside the County's Planning and Economic Development departments to increase the housing stock available at all points on the housing continuum. This will ensure that everyone in the community has access to safe and affordable housing now and tomorrow.

Addressing the Long-term Affordable Housing & Homelessness Plan

1. Leadership and Governance

- A new addition to the leadership and governance objective was the development of a Homelessness Taskforce. The Taskforce is comprised of agency partners, private business partners, and elected officials. This group provides direction to staff on emergency solutions and makes recommendations to County Council regarding future steps to address affordable and supportive housing solutions.
- Advocacy is a central feature in the leadership objectives. In 2020, a communications team was developed for the County of Huron. This team works in partnership with staff and leadership and has designed and executed an education and awareness campaign, known as *Be Part of the Solution*. This campaign has been recognized at national tables as an effective tool that can be used to both educate on the complexities of homelessness and support difficult conversations. It identifies the actions currently being taken by the County of Huron and partners, as well as highlighting 5 actions anyone can take to help Be Part of the Solution.

2. Expand Access to Affordable Housing, Including Housing with Supports

- The County of Huron developed a Housing Initiatives team of staff from the Planning, Social and Property Services, and County Administration to look at all options for affordable development within Huron.
- Two units owned and operated by the County under the Huron County Housing Corporation are being redeveloped to create six units in total, where there are currently two units. Each triplex will consist of two one-bedroom units on the main floor, and a two-bedroom unit on the second floor. Two of the units will remain rent geared to income housing units to replace the original single family detached homes. As a mix of County-owned affordable rental and rent geared to income units, the six units would represent an increase of four new units. These units will help address the identified need for affordable housing within the County and the needs of those on the County's By-Name List.

3. Data Collection

- In December 2021, the second *Homelessness Enumeration* project was held. A point-in-time count method was used in tandem with a registry week that served as a kick off to the ongoing collection of real-time data held on a By Name List. The data clearly indicated that the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness is continuing to rise. The ongoing collection of data, measured monthly, will enable system providers to see over time where the inflow of homelessness occurs and where it's best to focus resources.

4. Develop an Emergency Service System Oriented Toward Ending Homelessness

- Commit to diversion from emergency shelter as a best practice whenever possible to do so.
- Develop a rapid re-housing program for those experiencing episodic homelessness.
- Adopt and educate a housing first philosophy and incorporate the principals of housing first in appropriate aspects of the department client services.
- Shift service delivery to a Coordinated Access System using the by-name list that enables municipal partners

to keep track of who is experiencing homelessness, their depth of need, and begin to match them to appropriate housing and supports.

5. Increased Targeted Efforts to Prevent Homelessness

- Create a formalized homelessness diversion strategy to be incorporated in an integrated social services delivery model.
- Develop a comprehensive and holistic eviction prevention strategy.
- Prioritize homeless prevention initiatives, including support to reduce the burden of housing and household expenses for low-income households.

6. Improve Service Coordination

- Implement and provide community training for a common assessment tool.
- Engage with all community partners and stakeholders to collaboratively commit to eliminating chronic homelessness.

7. Use Municipal Tools to Facilitate Affordable Housing Preserve and Improve Existing Social Housing

- Improve coordination, communication, and integration with all municipalities in the Huron County services area.

8. Preserve and Improve the Existing Social Housing

- Support the sustainability of the social housing stock.

9. Establish a People-Centered System of Housing and Homelessness

- Connect clients with the peer support worker.
- Develop a housing preference form to help clients identify their housing goals.
- Stay connected to clients in their ongoing housing stability.
- Create crisis management plans with high risk clients that supports them to maintain their housing.
- Engage in meaningful service training for service practitioners that focuses on compassionate approaches in services delivery, motivational interviewing, and allow the client to guide the process in obtaining and retaining appropriate housing.

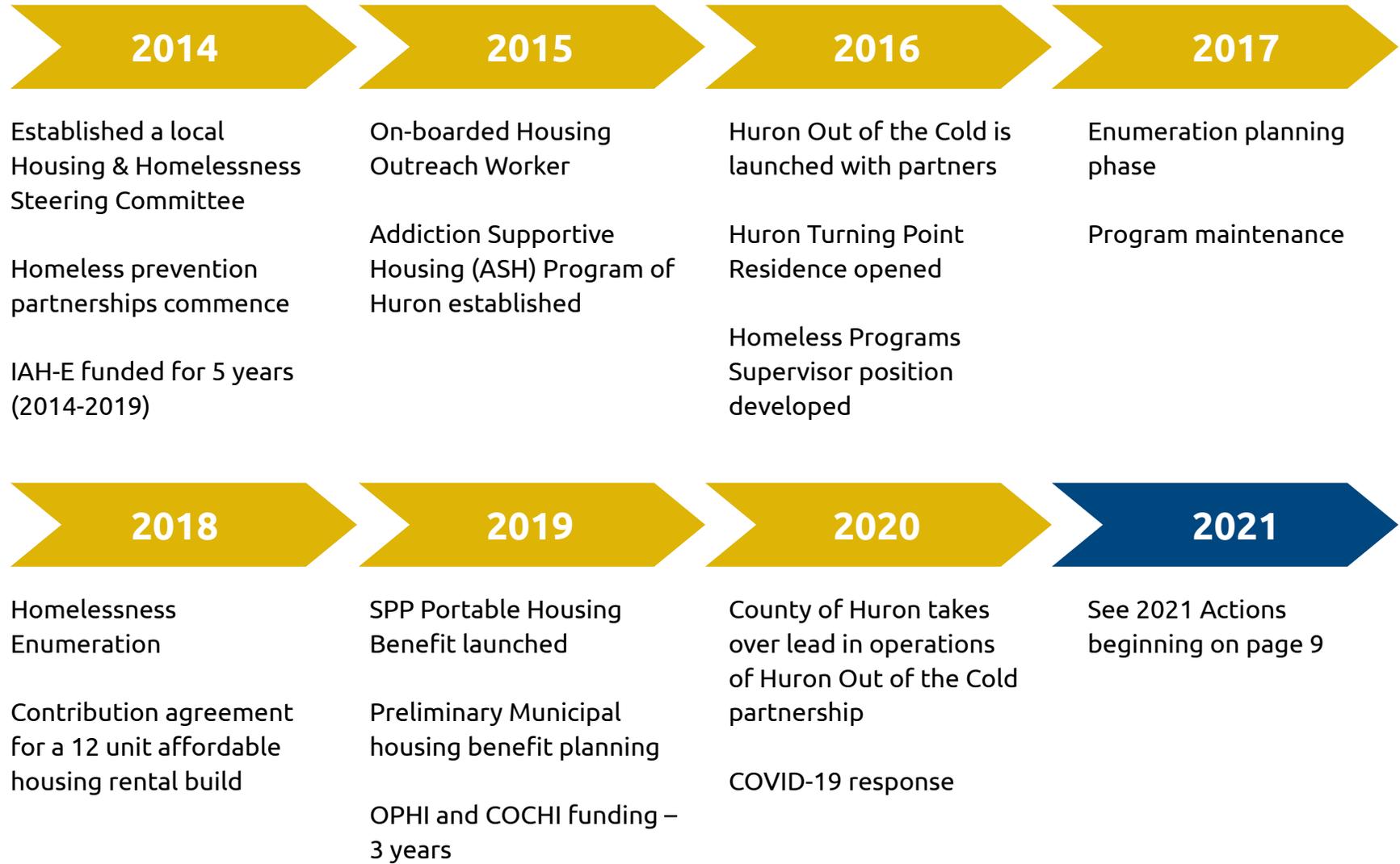
Housing and Homelessness Plan:

<https://www.huroncounty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/Housing-HomelessnessPlan-1.pdf>

Housing and Homelessness Plan 5 Year Review:

<https://www.huroncounty.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Long-Term-Affordable-Housing-and-Homelessness-Plan-Update.pdf>

Actions to Date



2021 Year in Review

Huron Out of the Cold

In 2021, Lakeshore United Church again generously permitted the County and its partners the use of church space to operate the Huron Out of the Cold emergency shelter.

The shelter was open from November until April for overnight use. Due to the closure of many local businesses and services during the pandemic, limited alternate warm space was available. To provide a warming centre for those at-risk, additional daytime hours were offered at the shelter.

In the 2021/22 shelter season, 45 unique individuals accessed the emergency shelter, while 10 others were moved into permanent housing with supports over the course of the year. This brings the total number housed since the onset of the Heart to Home program to 26. The Heart to Home team is currently supporting 46 individuals in housing stability or outreach services.

In 2021, Huron's homelessness serving system continued to respond to challenges presented by the pandemic. Agencies across the County kept pace with rapidly changing infection prevention and control measures in an effort to protect vulnerable members of the community.

Shelter staff and leadership of Huron Out of the Cold implemented all public health measures and requirements specific to congregate settings. Staff worked to educate and protect shelter service users and monitor their health status in an effort to protect all utilizing the space. Community Paramedics were active partners in very successful vaccine clinics located at the shelter. This is of particular importance as homelessness is an independent risk factor for morbidity and premature death, making COVID-19 particularly lethal in this sector of the population.

Homeless Prevention

Never before has homeless prevention been so critical. In the past, when eviction occurred, households had choice and opportunity to find an alternative place to safely live. In the current housing and rental market, vacancy rates are extremely low. This means finding affordable housing is a near impossible task for many households. The Heart to Home team, along with Pathways are working hard to keep people where they are with the necessary supports they require.

2021 Actions

Advocacy (Be Part of the Solution)

The *Be Part of the Solution* campaign is an awareness and education campaign that offers fact-based resources and reports on current County actions. At its core, it is a call to action, as it identifies five easy to take actions that empower everyone to work together to Be Part of the Solution to reduce and end homelessness in the community.

The campaign was originally launched in November 2021 and continues to be active in 2022. It includes, informative digital and printed brochures, posters, myth busters, social media campaign, YIMBY tools, and much more.

The campaign has received acclaim from regional and national homelessness service providers, including the Canadian organization *Built for Zero*, for being an effective tool in homelessness advocacy and prevention at the local level.

Enumeration

The County of Huron participates in an *Enumeration Project* every two years. The last point-in-time, or PiT count, was taken on November 29, 2021. At this time the County identified 169 individuals experiencing homelessness in Huron. It is important to note that this number represents the minimum number of people experiencing homelessness in Huron County.

By Name List and Coordinated Access

A governance committee was struck in 2021 to develop a framework and terms of reference for a Coordinated Access Committee. Included in this work was a survey designed to help the County understand what services should be prioritized and what criteria should be used to determine prioritization. This information helps to ensure the right services are being offered at the right time.

The framework is rooted in the following a set of guiding principles:

Core Values:

- Housing as a human right
- Equity and Equality
- Evidence informed decision-making
- Trauma and violence informed practice
- Accountability and integrity
- Integration of lived experience of homelessness

Guiding Principles:

1. We believe that affordable, and safe housing is a human right. We are committed to supporting and advocating for the most vulnerable members in our community in a connected and system level approach that meets people's housing goals.
2. We are committed to challenging and dismantling

the systems and structures of oppression (centralized waitlist, document readiness, BMI and health care, marital status, disability status, claw backs, vaccine access) that create barriers to housing.

3. We are committed to equity, which is the fair treatment, access, opportunity, and advancement for all people. At the same time, we will strive to identify and eliminate barriers to housing that have prevented the full participation of some groups in obtaining housing so that every person has an equal opportunity to exit homelessness.
4. We are committed to using an anti-oppression lens to redress and eliminate individual and institutional inequities in housing. Using an intersectional framework, we will recognize how a person's social and political identities have combined to create different modes of discrimination and privilege as identified in the Ontario Human Rights Code.
5. We are committed to working from a trauma and violence informed approach. We understand that trauma and violence have a long-term impact on individuals, families, and communities. We recognize that experiences of trauma and violence may present emotional, physical, cognitive, behavioural, developmental, and social challenges for people experiencing homelessness. We will work to build relationships that foster safety and trust with the people we serve.

6. We are committed to integrating the best available research and evidence into all decision-making. This includes utilizing local data and insights, as well as applicable quality provincial and national data, information, and analyses.
7. We will seek, respect, and integrate the voices and insights of people with lived experience of homelessness and its causes. We will endeavour to encourage participation in all aspects of this work including evaluation.
8. We are committed to transparency and accountability and to the empowerment and support of the populations with whom we work to end homelessness.

Nurse Practitioner and Mobile Crisis Response Team Programs

In response to the pandemic, the Province of Ontario significantly increased temporary funding programs to support COVID-19 response efforts. This temporary funding enabled the expansion of many valuable services in the homelessness system. The County opted to invest a portion of those funds to health care supports for those experiencing homelessness or mental health crisis. In partnership with the Huron Perth Health Care Alliance and the Huron Detachment of the OPP, the services of a Mobile Crisis Response Ride-Along and a Nurse Practitioner are now available to help people in the community with their needs and reduce access to justice or emergency health care.

Partner Profile | Huron Turning Point

Preventing and addressing homelessness in Huron requires the coordinated action of numerous partners and stakeholders. One such partner in Huron is Huron Turning Point Residence.

Huron Turning Point offers a 6 bed transitional housing program for men. This program has had great success in providing effective services to Huron County's vulnerable population. The supports and services that Huron Turning Points offers have lead to multiple clients securing permanent housing and experiencing successful reintegration in the community.

Since opening in 2016, Huron Turning Point has:

- Had 73 applications for housing
- Housed 35 men (6 of whom are currently housed)
- Transitioned 22 men from homelessness to stability, then to permanent and secure housing
- Consistently had a waiting list

The supportive housing that Huron Turning Point provides not only offers safe housing and food, it also provides a sense of community to its residents. In this community, participants can find support and relationships. Men accessing Huron Turning Point's services frequently report being sad when a house-mate leaves, and former clients will often return to socialize and offer support to current guests.

Huron Turning Point Residence is partially funded by the County of Huron utilizing provincial funds from the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)

Huron Turning Point | Impact Stories

(The names have been changed in these true stories)

“Bill”

Bill arrived at Huron Turning Point in September of 2020 having been on and off the streets for a number of years due to addictions and mental health struggles. With a secure and safe place to stay Bill was able, with the support of community partners, to maintain sobriety and establish a good mental health regime. With this stability Bill has been able to maintain and flourish in a full-time job within the community. Bill’s job not only provides him additional income and the pride and purpose that comes from gainful employment, but also fills a need within his community for employees that are hard working and dependable.

Without secure and stable housing provided by the County Bill may still be on the street.

“Rob”

Rob moved into Huron Turning Point in January of 2021. Prior to this, Rob was staying with a family member in an apartment after losing his housing due to the death of a partner. Unfortunately, the family member could not continue to have Rob stay with them as it put their own tenancy at risk. Previous to his stay at Huron Turning Point, Rob had been charged and was awaiting trial. He had obtained a lawyer but was having difficulty paying the fees due to the loss of his partner. Having reached the end of his resources, and considering using his credit cards and bank loans to pay for his defense, we were able to work with Legal Aid Ontario to ensure Rob was able to defend himself without causing financial hardship.

Without supportive housing to help provide a secure home or the supports Turning Point provided, Rob’s legal difficulties could have caused financial ramifications for years to come.

Partner Profile | Addiction Supportive Housing

Another partner providing services and supportive housing in Huron County is the Addiction Supportive Housing Program (ASH). ASH is an intensive therapeutic program with a supportive housing component. The program is designed to be client centered to encourage choice and self-determination. Where possible, clients are able to choose their unit, in the community of their choice, within Huron County.

ASH is designed for those accessing addiction treatment and are experiencing homelessness or are precariously housed. The program staffs one Intensive Addictions Case Manager who supports up to 8 clients per year. ASH provides a safe and stable environment where clients are able to enhance and compliment their addiction treatment plan for substance of behavioural concerns.

Since opening in 2016, ASH has:

- Served more than 49 clients (more than 34 clients have maintained their housing beyond ASH)
- Provided clients with supportive services that focus on many aspects of change: physical, emotional, spirituality, social/family relationships, community, legal, financial/budget, and addiction related goals
- Provided 1:1 support as well as advocacy with system partners to address clients needs

The supportive housing provided by ASH allows clients with addictions and mental health concerns the ability to live independently in our communities while providing a safe space to address their treatment plans and goals.

Supportive housing is a key component in the goal of ending homelessness, and programs of this nature allow clients the ability to focus on their holistic wellness so individuals and their families can learn to manage their unique concerns and lead fulfilling healthy lives.

ASH is run by Choices for Change in partnership with the County of Huron. ASH is fully funded by the County of Huron utilizing provincial funds from the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI).

A Housing First approach in Huron requires:

