



A Long-Term Affordable Housing and Homelessness Plan for the County of Huron

2026-2035

Cover Photo: Gibbons Street Housing Development

Acknowledgements

Huron County developed this Housing and Homelessness Plan with guidance from County staff, input from local municipalities and community partners, and lived and living expertise from residents with direct experience of housing instability and homelessness.

The Plan was prepared by Cassandra Vink (Vink Consulting) in association with Jodi Ball (J Consulting Group), under the leadership of Huron County staff.

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Land Acknowledgement and Commitment to Reconciliation

We acknowledge that the land we stand upon today is the traditional territories of the Anishinaabe, Haudenosaunee, and Neutral peoples and is connected to the Dish with One Spoon wampum, under which multiple nations agreed to care for the land and its resources by the Great Lakes in peace.

We also acknowledge the Upper Canada Treaties signed in regards to this land, which include Treaty #29 and Treaty #45 ½.

We recognize First Peoples' continued stewardship of the land and water as well as the historical and ongoing injustices they face in Canada. We accept responsibility as a public institution and as treaty people to renew relationships with First Nation, Métis, and Inuit people through reconciliation, community service, and respect.

We recognize that the impacts of colonization and ongoing systemic barriers, including within housing and homelessness systems, continue to contribute to disproportionate homelessness and housing inadequacy among First Nation, Métis, and Inuit peoples. Through this Plan, we commit to doing better by strengthening relationships and partnerships, advancing culturally safer approaches, and supporting Indigenous-led and Indigenous-serving solutions to prevent and end Indigenous homelessness.



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Executive Summary

Huron County's Housing and Homelessness Plan is a 10-year roadmap for 2026–2035 that sets priorities and actions to prevent and reduce homelessness, strengthen housing stability supports, and increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing. It is designed to align the County, local municipalities, non-profit and housing providers, and health and social service partners around clear targets, a practical sequence for implementation, and a shared approach to tracking progress. The Plan is grounded in local data, analysis of housing and special housing needs, and extensive engagement with residents, community partners, and people with lived and living experience.

WHAT HAS CHANGED AND WHY THIS PLAN IS NEEDED

Over the past decade, Huron County has significantly strengthened its housing and homelessness response. Governance and staffing capacity improved, Coordinated Access and the By-Name List were implemented, partnerships deepened, and housing stability and outreach supports expanded. The County also maintained its community housing portfolio and advanced new development.

At the same time, the evidence shows that housing need is rising. Huron County is projected to grow by about 12,200 residents and 3,800 households between 2026 and 2035. Population aging is expected to increase demand for accessible and supportive housing, and migration-driven growth will increase pressure on rental and ownership options priced within local incomes. In 2021, an estimated 1,175 households were in core housing need, and household growth is expected to add about 1,514 additional households within income ranges that typically require non-market housing or rental assistance. Beyond affordability, there are significant gaps in accessible housing, supportive housing for people with complex needs, developmental disability housing, and seniors care and supportive living options.

Homelessness pressures are also significant. As of March 31, 2025, there were 139 active households on the By-Name List, and most were experiencing chronic homelessness. System analysis and engagement identified key constraints: prevention is not yet strong enough, discharge pressure from other systems adds demand, interim safety options are limited during heightened risk periods, and exits are slowed by a shortage of deeply affordable and higher-acuity housing and supports.



WHAT WE HEARD

Across engagement activities, there was strong alignment on priorities: increase affordable and supportive housing supply, strengthen the housing continuum including interim safety options, improve access to mental health, addictions, and practical housing supports, use local planning and incentive tools to accelerate delivery, and improve coordination across housing, health, income supports, justice, and transportation.

STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK AND EQUITY FOCUS

The Plan is guided by four system-level intended outcomes:

- Affordable rental housing growth is encouraged with community partners, private developers and multiple levels of government, including the preservation of the existing affordable housing stock.
- Immediate safety needs of people who are unsheltered are met through safe, appropriate, time-limited emergency responses during periods of heightened risk.
- Homelessness is prevented more often through earlier identification, discharge planning, and effective diversion and prevention supports.
- More people are rehoused with the right supports, including supportive housing and ongoing intensive case management.

Housing is treated as a fundamental human right. Implementation will prioritize residents facing the greatest barriers and highest risks, including people experiencing chronic or recurrent homelessness, Indigenous peoples, survivors of intimate partner violence, youth and young adults, older adults, people with disabilities and complex health needs, and households facing systemic discrimination. Equity will be reflected in low-barrier and culturally safer service design and in how progress is measured over time.

THE FIVE GOALS AND WHAT THEY WILL DELIVER

Goal 1: Expand Access to Affordable Housing by exploring potential priority sites, reducing time and cost barriers through a delivery accelerator package, securing long-term affordability agreements and compliance, closing the renter affordability gap through advocacy and partnerships and ensuring publicly supported projects are under compliance with affordability agreements by 2028.

Goal 2: Stabilize and modernize existing social housing to protect affordability and capacity protects existing community housing through a multi-year state-of-good-repair and retrofit program, a transparent capital prioritization process, and a structured approach to end-of-operating-agreement transitions. Key targets include:

- no net unit loss due to asset failure or EOA risks by 2031 and 2035,
- completing an EOA risk and viability assessment and adopting a transition framework by 2028



Goal 3: Strengthen the System of Housing and Homelessness Supports strengthens prevention, maintain the county-wide safety response during periods of heightened risk, expand standardized rehousing tools, and shifts the local mix toward permanent supportive housing and higher-acuity supports. Targets, which are subject to federal and provincial funding and cross-ministry collaboration, include:

- reducing chronic homelessness among active By-Name List households from 92% to 80% or lower by 2035
- reducing inflow into homelessness by 15% by 2035, and
- reducing the median time from identification to housing placement for prioritized high-acuity households by 2031, sustained or improved by 2035.

Goal 4: Ensure homelessness services are equitable, well-resourced, and data-informed strengthens Coordinated Access so prioritization leads to real placements, formalizes pathways into housing with supports, applies an equity and human rights lens across service design and monitoring, advances advocacy for sustainable funding and enhanced income supports, and uses shared performance data to guide improvement. Key targets include:

- continued placements through coordinated access pathways subject to provincial and federal funding
- removing at least three priority access barriers (such as acuity, household compositions, and pets) by 2031 and reducing at least one identified equity gap by 2035, and
- reporting common indicators on equity with regular improvement actions informed by data.

Goal 5: Expand accessible, supportive, and age-friendly housing and increase housing diversity across Huron County through continued modernization of planning and zoning to enable as-of-right housing diversity, addressing infrastructure constraints, supporting purpose-built rental and entry-level ownership options, advancing supportive housing for seniors and people with disabilities, and continuing to champion best practices in accessibility and age-friendly design standard in publicly supported projects. Targets include:

- continued monitoring and adjustments to recent OP and zoning changes by 2031,
- increasing the share of missing middle and higher-density housing compared to a 2026 baseline,
- embedding accessibility and age-friendly expectations by 2027, and

IMPLEMENTATION AND MEASUREMENT

The Plan includes detailed implementation tables that list actions, leads, partners, and activity timing across Years 1–2, 3–5, and 6–10. Progress will be reviewed annually using a small set of practical indicators for each action. The Plan will be reviewed at five years to confirm progress, adjust targets where needed, and strengthen actions based on results and emerging conditions.



1.0 How to Read the Plan

This Plan is designed to be easy to use for different readers. If you want the big picture, start with Sections **3 to 7**. They explain the purpose and scope, summarize what the data shows and what we heard, and present the Strategic Framework and the five goals, including intended outcomes, key targets, key actions, phasing, and how progress will be measured.

If you want the evidence behind the goals and targets, refer to the supporting reports described in Section **1.1** below (What We Heard, Housing Needs and Special Housing Projections, Population and Housing Projections, and Legislative and Policy Context). These provide the analysis and engagement findings that informed the Plan.

1.1 Supporting Reports

This Housing and Homelessness Plan is supported by several background reports that provide additional analysis and documentation used to inform the Plan's goals, targets, and actions. These include:

- A **What We Heard Report**, which summarizes input from residents, service providers, municipal leaders, housing partners, and people with lived and living experience of homelessness gathered through surveys, interviews, and focus groups.
- A **Supporting Technical Report on Housing Needs and Special Housing Projections** provides detailed analysis of housing needs that are not well met through the private market, including non-market housing, accessible housing, supportive housing, housing for people with developmental disabilities, and housing for seniors.
- A short paper on **Population and Housing Projections** highlights key demographic trends shaping housing demand in Huron County, including projected population growth, household growth, and population aging.
- A **Legislative and Policy Context Report** outlines provincial requirements for Housing and Homelessness Plans and summarizes progress made since the County's previous 2014–2024 Plan.

Together, these reports provide the evidence base and community input that informed the development of this Plan. These reports have been attached as appendices to the Plan.



1.2 Acronyms

The following is a list of acronyms used in the plan.

AMO – Association of Municipalities of Ontario
ARU – Additional Residential Unit
BNL – By-Name List
CAO – Chief Administrative Officer
CAS – Children’s Aid Society
CIP – Community Improvement Plan
CMHA – Canadian Mental Health Association
CMHC – Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation
EOA – End of Operating Agreement
ICM – Intensive Case Management
MOH – Ministry of Health (Ontario)
MOU – Memorandum of Understanding
ODSP – Ontario Disability Support Program
OP – Official Plan
OW – Ontario Works
PSH – Permanent Supportive Housing
RGI – Rent-Geared-to-Income
SPCA – Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals



2.0 Purpose, Scope, and Approach

2.1 Plan Purpose and Decision Context

This Housing and Homelessness Plan is Huron County's shared roadmap for the next 10 years. It sets priorities and actions to prevent and reduce homelessness, strengthen housing stability supports, and increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing. The Plan is intended to align County, municipal, non-profit, and health and social service partners around clear targets, an implementation sequence, and a common way to track progress.

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

The Plan is developed to meet Ontario requirements for Service Managers under the *Housing Services Act, 2011* and related provincial guidance for local housing and homelessness plans. It establishes local housing needs, sets objectives and measures, and outlines how progress will be monitored and reported, with attention to priority groups including survivors of domestic violence and people with disabilities.

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHER LOCAL PLANS

This Plan is designed to work alongside other local strategies and planning documents, including:

- **County and Local Official Plans, land use, and growth planning:** aligning local planning policies (and, where relevant, servicing considerations) to enable a wider range of housing types and remove barriers that slow or prevent housing delivery.
- **Poverty reduction and income security efforts:** complementing broader affordability work through local prevention and housing supports.
- **Health, mental health/addictions, and community safety planning:** strengthening pathways and partnerships so people can exit homelessness and remain stably housed.

2.2 Scope

This Plan focuses on the housing supply, housing stability, and homelessness actions that Huron County and community partners can most directly influence over the next 10 years. It covers the full pathway from preventing housing loss to ending homelessness and supporting long-term housing stability.



WHAT THE PLAN COVERS

- **Prevention and stabilization:** diversion/problem-solving, eviction prevention, short-term financial help, and housing retention supports.
- **Crisis response:** short-term options that keep people safe while rapidly connecting them back to housing.
- **Rehousing and flow:** housing search and landlord engagement, move-in supports, portable assistance where available, and short follow-up to reduce returns to homelessness.
- **Time-limited transitional/bridge pathways:** clear entry/exit expectations aligned with coordinated access.
- **High-acuity pathways:** intensive supports and supportive housing for people with the greatest barriers.
- **Affordable housing supply and delivery conditions:** Affordable rental housing growth through community partners, private developers and multiple levels of government, protecting existing community housing, and reducing delivery barriers (land readiness, incentives, approvals, partnerships).
- **System backbone:** coordinated access, data/performance, roles, governance, and accountability.

WHAT'S OUT OF SCOPE

This Plan does not attempt to redesign areas primarily controlled by other systems (e.g., income support policy, clinical healthcare capacity, justice policy, market pricing). These systems directly shape homelessness risk, for example, when incomes do not cover housing costs, when people cannot access health and mental health/addictions care in time, or when institutions discharge people without stable housing. While Huron County cannot control these systems, the Plan includes advocacy and partnership actions to improve local outcomes and reduce avoidable homelessness, including:

- **Health:** strengthen discharge planning, referrals, and tenancy supports; advocate for service capacity where gaps drive housing instability.
- **Justice/community safety:** improve discharge/re-entry coordination and crisis pathways; advocate for practices that prevent discharges into homelessness.
- **Income and affordability:** advocate for adequate income supports and benefits access; strengthen local prevention and stabilization supports that bridge affordability gaps.
- **Transportation:** reduce travel barriers through service design, outreach, and alignment with local transit/community transportation efforts.



2.3 Planning Principles

This Plan is guided by a set of principles that shape how actions are chosen, designed, and implemented. These principles are intended to support consistent decision-making across partners and keep efforts focused on outcomes.

Housing as a fundamental human right - Decisions prioritize access to safe, adequate, affordable housing, especially for those facing the greatest barriers.

Equity and inclusion - Identify and reduce disparities in access and outcomes across population groups; remove systemic barriers.

Housing-led and person-centred - Organize the system around getting and keeping people housed, with supports tailored to individual needs.

Prevention first - Invest upstream to prevent homelessness through diversion, eviction prevention, and discharge planning.

Low-barrier, dignity, and trauma and violence-informed - Services are safe, respectful, and accessible, minimizing exclusion and prioritizing safety and choice.

Right supports, matched to acuity - Clear pathways and intensity matched to need, with ability to step up/down.

Evidence-informed and accountable - Use data and lived expertise, track a set of outcomes, and adjust based on results.



2.4 How the Plan was Developed

This Plan was developed by bringing together quantitative data on housing need and homelessness pressures with local expertise from County staff, local municipalities, service providers, and people with lived/living experience, to identify practical actions that fit Huron County's context.

DATA SOURCES

The consulting team reviewed and synthesized available local and external data, including:

- **Population and housing projections** for Huron County
- **Homelessness and housing instability data** (e.g., coordinated access / By-Name List trends and local service-system indicators)
- **Program and service inventory information** from local partners (capacity, referral pathways, and pressure points)

The consulting team also conducted analysis and prepared local projections of non-market, supportive, and homelessness-related housing needs, including needs not well captured through standard market housing analysis.

ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

Engagement was designed to reflect the full housing and homelessness system and to include those most affected by housing instability. It included:

- **Service providers** across homelessness, housing support, community mental health and addictions, income/employment, youth, and intimate partner violence services to identify what is working, where bottlenecks exist, and what would make interventions more effective.
- **Local municipalities** to align actions with land use planning, approvals, infrastructure constraints, and local incentive tools.
- **People with lived/living expertise** to ground priorities in real experience of accessing housing and supports in a rural context, including what creates safety, dignity, and success in housing.
- **Indigenous knowledge holders** to inform culturally safer approaches, strengthen relationships, and ensure the Plan reflects Indigenous priorities.

Input was analyzed for themes (areas of agreement, differences across geographies or sectors, and implementation considerations), then tested against the evidence to confirm feasibility and impact.



3.0 Progress Since the 2014-2024 Plan

Over the past decade, Huron County significantly strengthened its housing and homelessness response. What was once a set of largely program-based efforts has evolved into a more coordinated, data-informed, community-wide system with clearer governance, stronger internal capacity, improved access processes, and expanded housing and support options. This progress created essential foundations for the next phase of work.

Stronger system infrastructure and coordination

Key investments over the decade improved how the system is governed and how households move through supports:

- **Established governance structures** (Housing & Homelessness Steering and Advisory committees) to support cross-sector planning and shared decision-making.
- **Expanded County capacity** through new and dedicated roles (e.g., homelessness and housing services leadership, coordination, stability, and liaison functions).
- **Implemented Coordinated Access**, including standardized assessment and prioritization and an ongoing case conferencing table, with a By-Name List launched in 2022 to support consistent, equitable matching and system monitoring.
- **Deepened interagency collaboration** across municipal, non-profit, health, justice, and community partners, supporting smoother referrals and more coordinated responses.

Expanded affordable and supportive housing capacity

Over the plan period, Huron County made tangible progress in growing and sustaining its housing portfolio:

- **New community housing delivery** (including net new units and larger affordable developments).
- **Secured capital investment** from provincial and federal government to support new development and strengthen the portfolio.
- **Maintained and improved existing stock**, supported by annual capital improvements and preventative maintenance, sustaining approximately **470 community housing units** in very good condition (including RGI and affordable units).
- **Housed 606 households** through the social housing portfolio over the last 10 years.



It also supported local municipalities in their planning for affordable housing:

- Supported planning staff in implementing ‘as of right’ housing framework in long range planning documents (10 Official Plans and 9 local Zoning Bylaws) **including expanded permissions for ‘dwellings with support’, intensification projects and diversified forms of housing.**

More robust prevention and housing stability supports

The County also strengthened prevention and stabilization capacity, helping people avoid homelessness or exit more quickly:

- **Launched and expanded housing stability and rehousing supports** (including individualized support, landlord mediation, and practical stabilization assistance).
- **Expanded outreach capacity**, improving the system’s ability to engage people earlier and connect them to housing and supports.
- **Introduced Bridge Housing (2024)** in partnership with CMHA, using a dispersed model to provide temporary housing with wraparound supports as a pathway out of homelessness.
- **Strengthened youth-focused prevention partnerships**, including collaboration with child welfare to support earlier intervention for youth and families at risk.

Improved data, transparency, and performance focus

Huron County has moved toward more consistent, evidence-informed system management:

- Completed homelessness enumerations (2018 and 2021) to establish early baselines.
- Implemented the By-Name List (2022), enabling more timely visibility into active homelessness, inflow/outflow, and outcomes.
- Established monthly public “Share-Outs” to improve transparency and support shared problem-solving across partners.

WHAT THIS PROGRESS MEANS FOR THE 2026–2035 PLAN

The last plan period built a stronger backbone, governance, staffing, coordinated access, partnerships, and an improved housing portfolio. The next stage of work must build on these foundations to address the remaining constraints that limit results: insufficient deeply affordable and supportive housing options, limited interim safety capacity, and continued pressure on prevention and housing stability supports in a tight housing market.



4.0 Understanding Local Housing Need and Homelessness Pressures: What the Data Shows

4.1 Population and Household Trends Shaping Housing Need (2026-2035)

Huron County is anticipated to enter a new growth period that differs from historical trends. The **population is projected to increase by 12,200 residents** between 2026 and 2035, reaching 82,600 by 2035, while households are projected to increase by 3,800 (about 380 households per year).

At the same time, population aging is expected to be the most significant demographic driver of housing need. **Residents aged 75+ are projected to increase** by 50% (about 4,427 residents), rising from 13% of the population in 2026 to 17% by 2035. Aging increases the share of residents living alone, on fixed incomes, and with mobility or health-related vulnerabilities, meaning that even without major economic shocks, demand for prevention, accessible and supportive housing, and system navigation supports is expected to rise.

Growth is also expected to be increasingly migration-driven, primarily from elsewhere in Ontario. Future migration is anticipated to include more working-age adults and families, increasing competition for both rental and ownership options priced within local income ranges.

4.2 Projected Housing Demand and Supply Trends

Housing demand in Huron County is projected to shift toward medium- and high-density housing forms (including townhouses and apartments). Over 2026–2035, about half of new development is expected to be medium density (25.4%) or high density (26.7%).

Demand for purpose-built rental is also expected to grow. Watson & Associates Economists forecasts an increase of approximately 1,374 rental units (2026–2035), potentially about 36% of all new residential construction if delivered entirely through new development. The share of renter households is projected to increase from 22.7% (2026) to 24.3% (2035).

Importantly, a shift to new built forms does not automatically produce housing that is affordable to low-income households or suitable for people with accessibility or support needs. The projections underscore the **need for deliberate policy and investment to ensure that new supply includes purpose-built rental and non-market options** that support stability and prevent homelessness



4.3 Housing Needs Beyond the Market

Based on 2021 Census **core housing need** data, an estimated **1,175 households** in Huron County were in core housing need (housing that is unaffordable, unsuitable, or in poor condition, and would require spending 30% or more of before-tax income to obtain acceptable alternative housing). While updated local core housing need data is not yet available, national estimates suggest **core housing need rose to about 65% above 2021 levels by 2024 (and could reach 79% above 2021 by 2026)**, so Huron County's current non-market housing gap is likely larger than the 2021 baseline and the figures in this report should be treated as conservative estimates.

Need is concentrated among very low- and low-income households, and disproportionately affects single-person households, followed by two-person households.

Disaggregating core housing need helps clarify the *type* of response required:

- **Affordability-only: 935 households** are in core housing need primarily due to affordability (their housing is otherwise suitable and in good condition), suggesting rent-based supports may address need for many households.
- **Major repairs: 65 households** live in homes needing major repairs but are otherwise suitable/affordable, indicating a role for repair/rehab programs to prevent displacement.
- **Multiple issues: 175 households** face combined affordability/suitability/condition challenges and are more likely to need access to alternative non-market units (including new social/affordable units).

Looking ahead, household growth alone is projected to add approximately **1,514 additional households (2026–2035) who fall within income ranges that typically require non-market housing or rental assistance**, with projected demand again concentrated among very low- and low-income households and smaller household sizes.

Beyond affordability, there are several housing needs that the market does not reliably meet because they depend on accessibility features, dedicated support services, and sustained operating funding. Current gaps include:

- **accessible housing** for people with mobility-related disabilities (about **1,020 units**),
- **housing for people with developmental disabilities** (about **160 to 190 units**),
- **supportive housing for people with mental health and/or substance use challenges** (about **225 to 570 units**), and



- **seniors care options including long-term care (about 340 to 585 beds) and supportive housing for seniors (about 70 to 170 units).**

Over **2026–2035**, additional need is projected to grow by about **100 accessible units, 25 to 30 developmental disability units, 25 to 55 supportive housing units for mental health/substance use needs, 270 to 305 long-term care beds, and about 65 supportive housing units for seniors.**

Across these needs, common implications are that planning should use ranges, new housing must be paired with service capacity and operating funding, solutions will require a mix of approaches (new build, preservation, scattered-site and congregate models, and income supports), and universal design should be standard so new supply is usable by more residents over time.

4.4 Housing Needs Related to Homelessness

Housing needs for people who have experienced homelessness require housing options matched to acuity, paired with the supports needed to achieve and maintain stability. Effective responses include a mix of permanent supportive housing for very high needs, housing with intensive supports and rental assistance (including Housing First style approaches) for high needs, and rapid rehousing with light, time-limited supports for lower acuity households.

Current known need (as of March 31, 2025) includes **139 active households** on the By-Name List, most experiencing chronic homelessness, with an acuity profile that is largely medium to high; based on this profile, approximately **7 households require very high-intensity permanent supportive housing, 119 households require housing with intensive supports and rental assistance or social housing, and 12 households require rehousing supports paired with affordable housing.**

Looking ahead, trend-based projections suggest homelessness pressures could rise substantially if current inflow and system constraints persist, with the By-Name List potentially growing to roughly **440 active households by 2035** and about **1,300 households experiencing homelessness at some point over the 10-year period.** Under assumptions about phased delivery over time, addressing homelessness over 2026–2035 could **require approximately 17 very high-intensity permanent supportive housing units and about 600 intensive support and rental assistance spaces,** with requirements falling meaningfully if prevention reduces new chronic homelessness (for example, to roughly 14–15 permanent supportive units and 500–540 intensive support spaces under stronger prevention scenarios).



4.5 Pressure Points Within the Homelessness System

Huron County has made major progress building a more coordinated response, but the system is still constrained at several points along the pathway.

- **Prevention is not strong enough yet:** too many households enter homelessness and stay long enough to become chronically homeless, which suggests missed chances to intervene earlier.
- **Discharge pressure from other systems adds demand:** without strong discharge planning and rapid housing pathways, people can be released from hospitals, treatment, or custody into homelessness or precarious housing.
- **Emergency and interim options are limited:** especially during winter, gaps in safe, time-limited emergency responses increase reliance on unsafe or inconsistent arrangements.
- **Bridge Housing is stretched by those with complex needs and support fit:** it stabilizes some households and supports transitions when the right next-step options exist, but a notable share of exits return to homelessness, often linked to behavioural and safety needs that exceed available support intensity.
- **Supportive options are the bottleneck:** coordinated access can prioritize households with the greatest barriers, but there are more high-need households than supportive housing and intensive supports available, so people wait longer and placements are delayed.
- **Transitional housing is not consistently reaching those with the greatest barriers:** current patterns suggest it is not always well matched to the highest-need households, and returns to homelessness remain a concern.

These constraints help explain why homelessness is becoming more chronic for some households and why the system cannot yet reliably deliver timely, sustained exits for those with the highest needs.



5.0 What We Heard

5.1 Overview of the Engagement Process

The County of Huron undertook a comprehensive engagement process to inform the update of the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan. The goal of this phase was to listen and learn from residents, partners, and people with lived and living experience in order to better understand housing needs, system pressures, and opportunities for action.

The engagement process was designed to be inclusive, accessible, respectful, and action-oriented. Multiple participation methods were offered to reduce barriers and reflect Huron's rural context. Activities included:

- **Community Survey** open to residents and community members across the County
- **Stakeholder Focus Groups** with:
 - Non-profit housing providers
 - Private developers, landlords, and real estate professionals
 - Housing, homelessness, health, and justice service providers
 - Indigenous knowledge keepers
 - Municipal leadership
- **Key Informant Interviews** with County staff
- **Targeted Engagement with People with Lived and Living Experience of Homelessness**, conducted in partnership with local service providers at familiar community locations.
- **A workshop with key stakeholders.**

In total, more than 300 survey respondents and dozens of community partners, municipal representatives, service providers, and individuals with lived experience contributed input.

Engagement participants reflected a broad cross-section of the community, including seniors, youth, families, people with disabilities, business owners, elected officials, Indigenous organizations, and individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

This engagement phase provided both system-level insights and lived experience perspectives, forming the foundation for identifying key themes and priorities to guide the updated Plan.

OVERALL THEMES

Across engagement activities, there was strong alignment on the most pressing housing and homelessness issues facing Huron County. While perspectives varied by stakeholder group, common themes emerged.



Increase the Supply of Affordable and Supportive Housing

Participants across all groups identified housing affordability and limited supply as the most urgent challenges. There is a clear need to expand affordable rental housing, deeply affordable housing, and supportive housing options.

Stakeholders emphasized the need for:

- Smaller unit sizes and accessible units
- Housing suitable for seniors, families, and individuals with low or fixed incomes
- Supportive housing for people with mental health, addiction, or complex needs.

Engagement with Indigenous knowledge keepers did not point to clear consensus on creating stand alone Indigenous specific housing in Huron at this time. Instead, they emphasized ensuring that new housing supply and programs are culturally safe, trauma informed, flexible, and designed with Indigenous guidance, with options for cultural connection and community-based supports for those who want them.

Long waitlists, limited turnover, and rising costs were described as contributing to housing instability and homelessness. There was strong recognition that current supply does not match the scale or diversity of need.

Strengthen the Housing Continuum and Local Emergency Housing Options

Engagement participants identified gaps across the housing continuum, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, and supportive housing. The absence of certain housing options was described as contributing to prolonged stays in crisis settings, hidden homelessness, and cycling in and out of housing instability.

There was interest in exploring locally appropriate emergency and interim housing solutions, including winter shelter options and culturally safe interim approaches, that reflect Huron's rural context and geography.

Improve Access to Supports that Help People Obtain and Maintain Housing

A consistent message across engagement was that housing stability is closely linked to access to supports. Housing alone is often insufficient, particularly for individuals with complex needs.

Priority support areas identified included:

- Mental health and addiction services
- Primary care access
- Income supports and rent subsidies
- Ongoing follow-up and case management once housed



- Practical supports such as transportation, help navigating systems, and assistance with applications.
- Trust based, trauma informed supports delivered in ways that do not penalize people for mistakes and that offer choice and follow up.
- Cultural connection supports for those who want them (connection to teachings, community, Elders, reconnection support).

Participants highlighted that improved access to coordinated and integrated supports is essential to long-term housing stability.

Use Local Tools and Partnerships to Support Housing Delivery

Municipal leadership, non-profit housing providers, and private sector stakeholders emphasized the importance of using local planning and financial tools to improve housing feasibility and delivery.

Opportunities identified included:

- Community Improvement Plans (CIPs)
- Development charge waivers and tax incentives
- Flexible zoning and support for intensification
- Use of surplus or underused municipal land
- Partnerships between municipalities, non-profits, and private developers
- Alternative housing models such as cooperative housing, shared housing, additional residential units (ARUs), and reuse of existing buildings.

Participants identified development costs, economic conditions, infrastructure capacity, and regulatory processes as key barriers.

Address System Coordination, Transportation, and Barriers to Access

Across engagement activities, participants identified challenges related to system coordination, transportation, and navigating complex services and processes. Strengthening coordination between housing, health, income support, and justice systems was identified as a continuing priority.

Transportation barriers were highlighted as particularly significant in a rural context, affecting access to housing, employment, services, and supports. Participants also identified stigma, discrimination, and administrative barriers as factors that limit equitable access to housing and assistance.

Improving system integration, discharge planning from institutions, and public education around housing and homelessness were identified as important areas for action.



Indigenous knowledge keepers emphasized that stigma and fear can prevent people from seeking help or identifying as Indigenous, which can mask the true scale of need. They also highlighted that transportation barriers and being housed away from family and community supports can undermine stability, reinforcing the importance of local access, flexible hours, and strong coordination.

SUMMARY

Feedback from engagement participants confirmed that housing affordability, limited supply, gaps in the housing continuum, and access to supports are central challenges facing Huron County. There was strong alignment across stakeholder groups on the need for coordinated, multi-sector solutions that reflect the County's rural context and diverse community needs.



6.0 Strategic Framework

The data and engagement tell a consistent story: housing need in Huron County is rising, and the homelessness response system is constrained by limited deeply affordable and supportive housing options, gaps in interim safety responses, and prevention that is not yet strong enough to stop households from becoming chronically homeless. Population and household growth, an aging population, and migration-driven demand are expected to increase the need for affordable, accessible, and supportive housing over the next decade. The Strategic Framework below translates these realities into a clear aim and intended outcomes to guide priorities, sequencing, and accountability.

Accordingly, the Plan is guided by the following key intended outcomes:

- Affordable rental housing growth through community partners, private developers and multiple levels of government, including the preservation of the existing affordable housing stock.
- Immediate safety needs of people who are unsheltered are met through safe, appropriate, time-limited emergency responses during periods of heightened risk.
- Homelessness is prevented more often through earlier identification, discharge planning, and effective diversion and prevention supports.
- More people are rehoused with the right supports, including supportive housing and ongoing intensive case management.

These priorities are advanced through five goals that work together across the housing and homelessness pathway, from increasing supply and protecting existing affordability, to strengthening supports and improving equity and system performance:

- **Goal 1: Expand Access to Affordable Housing**
- **Goal 2: Stabilize and modernize existing social housing to protect affordability and capacity**
- **Goal 3: Strengthen the System of Housing and Homelessness Supports**
- **Goal 4: Ensure homelessness services are equitable, well-resourced, and data-informed**
- **Goal 5: Expand accessible, supportive, and age-friendly housing and increase housing diversity across Huron County**



6.1 Target Populations and Equity Focus

Housing is a fundamental human right. In implementing this Plan, decisions will prioritize access to safe, adequate, and affordable housing, with a focus on residents facing the greatest barriers and highest risks of homelessness and housing instability.

The Plan's equity focus recognizes that housing need is not experienced evenly. Actions will be designed to reduce barriers and improve outcomes for priority populations, including:

- **People experiencing chronic or recurrent homelessness**, and those with the greatest acuity and complexity.
- **Indigenous peoples**, consistent with rights-based approaches and in partnership with Indigenous communities and organizations.
- **Survivors of intimate partner and gender-based violence**, with safety, confidentiality, and choice at the centre.
- **Youth and young adults**, including those leaving care or without family supports.
- **Older adults**, particularly those with fixed incomes, accessibility needs, or limited supports.
- **People with disabilities and/or complex health needs**, including mental health and substance use challenges.
- **Households facing systemic discrimination** (e.g., racism, stigma, barriers related to poverty, criminalization, or documentation).

Engagement with Indigenous knowledge keepers emphasized that Indigenous housing insecurity is often hidden. They also emphasized that trust, relationship-based engagement, and trauma informed practice are essential. In implementing this Plan, the County will work with Indigenous partners to support culturally safe access, offer choice based supports (including options for cultural connection for those who want it), and ensure engagement and program design are guided by appropriate protocols, including careful identification and vetting of Elders and knowledge keepers where their involvement is requested. Equity will be reflected in how services are designed and delivered (low-barrier access, culturally safer and trauma-informed practice, rural accessibility), and in how progress is measured (tracking outcomes where possible by population group and geography to identify gaps and adjust course).



7.0 The Action Plan

7.1 Goal 1: Expand Access to Affordable Housing

WHY THIS GOAL MATTERS: Goal 1 matters because housing costs and limited affordable options are a primary driver of housing instability and homelessness in Huron County. Increasing access to affordable housing requires more than building new units. It also requires faster and more predictable approvals, practical tools that reduce delivery costs, and clear affordability rules so public investments create real, long-term affordability. In the near term, rental assistance and stronger partnerships are also essential to bridge the affordability gap for low income renters while new supply is planned and delivered.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- Increased rental assistance that bridges the affordability gap
- Affordable rental housing growth through community partners, private developers and multiple levels of government, including the preservation of the existing affordable housing stock
- Affordable housing is delivered faster
- Long-term affordability is secured and compliance is stronger, so promised affordable units are actually delivered and retained
- 100% of publicly supported projects are under compliance with affordability agreements by 2028, with annual monitoring and 95%+ compliance by 2035.

OBJECTIVES:

- 1.1: Affordable rental housing growth through community partners, private developers and multiple levels of government, including the preservation of the existing affordable housing stock
- 1.2: Reduce cost and time barriers to delivery of affordable housing
- 1.3: Secure long-term affordability and accountability
- 1.4: Close the affordability gap for renters



KEY ACTIONS:

- 1 Reduce time and cost barriers using an affordable housing delivery accelerator package (CIP, municipal tools, approvals fast-track, additional residential units (ARUs), and conversions)
- 2 Secure long-term affordability and accountability (County affordability framework and compliance)
- 3 Close the renter affordability gap (advocacy and landlord partnerships)

PHASING:

- **Years 1–2:** affordability framework, and pilot delivery accelerators
- **Years 3–5:** scale municipal tools and approvals changes
- **Years 6–10:** strengthened compliance

HOW WE’LL MEASURE PROGRESS:

- approvals timelines
- ARUs and conversions created
- rent assistance advocacy outcomes (dollars/households served, if successful)



7.2 Goal 2: Stabilize and modernize existing social housing to protect affordability and capacity

WHY THIS GOAL MATTERS: Goal 2 matters because Huron County's existing social housing is one of the community's most important sources of long-term affordable homes, and it cannot be replaced quickly or cheaply if units are lost. As buildings age and operating agreements expire, providers face increasing pressures related to capital repairs, financial viability, and maintaining affordability. Stabilizing and modernizing the portfolio protects tenants, prevents unit loss, strengthens providers through transition periods, and supports energy efficiency and climate resilience so these homes remain safe, functional, and affordable for the long term.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- Existing social housing remains safe and functional.
- Providers are financially stable and resilient through end-of-operating-agreement transitions.
- Affordability is protected and unit loss is minimized, with at-risk assets stabilized (including ownership/operations transitions where needed).
- Governance and organizational capacity are stronger.
- County investments are strategic and predictable, leveraging provincial/federal funding.

KEY TARGETS:

- **Maintain no net loss of community housing units** due to asset failure or EOA transition risks **by 2031 and 2035.**
- **By 2028, complete an EOA risk and viability assessment and adopt a transition framework; by 2031, implement transitions for all providers reaching EOA during the period, tied to unit-retention outcomes.**

OBJECTIVES:

- 2.1: Protect safety, function, and asset condition of community housing and promote environmental sustainability and climate resilience
- 2.2: End-of-Operating-Agreement stability and affordability protection
- 2.3: Strengthen governance practices, capacity and decision-making for community housing sustainability



KEY ACTIONS:

- 1 Protect and modernize existing community housing assets
- 2 Use a transparent, outcomes-based capital investment process
- 3 Plan and manage End-of-Operating-Agreement transitions to prevent unit loss
- 4 Deploy a targeted EOA stabilization toolkit tied to unit retention
- 5 Strengthen provider governance and capacity to sustain the portfolio

PHASING:

- **Years 1–2:** address immediate EOA risks, and continue repair and retrofits
- **Years 3–5:** implement service agreement transitions and stabilization supports as EOAs occur and strengthen provider governance supports
- **Years 6–10:** sustain ongoing asset renewal and climate resilience investments and maintain long-term portfolio viability and affordability protections.

HOW WE’LL MEASURE PROGRESS:

- asset condition and unit preservation (state of good repair progress, life safety issues addressed, unit loss avoided)
- capital investment leverage and delivery (County dollars leveraged with provincial and federal funding)
- retrofit and climate resilience outcomes (energy use, emissions reductions and resilience upgrades completed)
- EOA transition progress (providers transitioned, agreements in place, assets stabilized, affordability protected)
- provider capacity and governance indicators (uptake of supports, board stability, compliance readiness)

7.3 Goal 3: Strengthen the System of Housing and Homelessness Supports

WHY THIS GOAL MATTERS: Goal 3 matters because housing stability is not achieved through housing supply alone. Many people at risk of homelessness need timely prevention, diversion, and practical supports to stay housed, and people who become homeless need fast, coordinated pathways back into housing. Indigenous knowledge keepers emphasized that people may avoid services due to stigma and lack of trust, and that being rehoused away from family and community supports can undermine stability. Trauma informed, relationship-based supports and culturally safe options are important for prevention, rehousing, and long term success. In Huron County, gaps in prevention, interim safety options, rehousing tools, and higher-acuity supports can lead to longer periods of



homelessness, higher chronicity, and more returns after placement. Strengthening the system of supports helps prevent homelessness earlier, reduce harm for unsheltered residents during periods of heightened risk, and ensure more people can exit homelessness quickly and remain stably housed with the right level of support.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- Immediate safety needs of people who are unsheltered are met through safe, appropriate, and time-limited emergency responses during periods of heightened risk
- Homelessness is prevented more often through earlier identification, discharge planning, and effective diversion and prevention supports
- People exit homelessness faster into stable housing, supported by rehousing tools that remove common barriers (e.g., deposits, credit/criminal record barriers, headleases)
- More people are rehoused with the right supports, including supportive housing and ongoing intensive case management
- Housing stability improves after rehousing, with fewer returns to homelessness, supported by timely access to mental health, addictions, primary care, and coordinated tenancy supports

KEY TARGETS:

Subject to federal and provincial funding and cross-ministry collaboration

- **Reduce the share of active By-Name List households who are chronically homeless from 92% (baseline) to 80% or lower by 2035.**
- **Reduce the number of new households entering homelessness (BNL inflow) by 15% by 2035** (from a 2026 baseline).
- **By 2031, reduce the median time from identification to housing placement for prioritized high-acuity households** and sustain or improve results by 2035.

OBJECTIVES:

- 3.1: Enhance prevention and early intervention
- 3.2: Expand interim safety response to prevent harm among unsheltered residents
- 3.3: Expand rehousing supports
- 3.4: Shift and expand supportive housing to match acuity and real-life needs
- 3.5: Increase access to mental health, addiction, and trauma supports



KEY ACTIONS:

Subject to availability of provincial and federal funding:

- 1 Strengthen prevention and early intervention to reduce inflow
- 2 Expand time-limited minimum safety response for unsheltered residents during heightened risk
- 3 Expand rehousing supports to speed exits and reduce returns
- 4 Shift and expand supportive housing and higher-acuity supports to match need

PHASING:

- **Years 1–2:** strengthen prevention and rehousing basics, establish the time-limited minimum safety response for heightened risk periods, and begin shifting pathways toward higher-acuity supports.
- **Years 3–5:** scale prevention and rehousing capacity, expand supportive housing and intensive supports as operating funding is secured, and strengthen tenancy-sustaining clinical partnerships.
- **Years 6–10:** sustain and expand permanent supportive housing and higher-acuity supports, reduce reliance on interim safety responses as exits improve, and continue improving stability outcomes and reducing returns to homelessness.

HOW WE’LL MEASURE PROGRESS:

- prevention performance (inflow reduced, fewer households becoming chronically homeless, discharges to homelessness prevented through protocols)
- unsheltered safety response (use during heightened risk periods, time-limited stays)
- rehousing effectiveness (exits to housing, time from identification to housing, and housing stability at 6 and 12 months)
- supportive housing and higher-acuity capacity (placements into supportive housing or ICM, wait times, and match between acuity and supports)
- returns to homelessness (rate of returns after housing placement and reasons, used to improve service fit)
- access to clinical supports (connections to mental health and addictions and primary care supports that sustain tenancies)



7.4 Goal 4: Ensure homelessness services are equitable, well-resourced, and data-informed

WHY THIS GOAL MATTERS: Goal 4 matters because strong housing and homelessness programs only work when they are fair, well resourced, and consistently connected to real housing and support options. In practice, coordinated access can only deliver timely placements if barriers are removed for priority populations, higher acuity pathways exist, and rehousing and support capacity matches need. This goal also recognizes that Huron County cannot achieve better outcomes without adequate and equitable funding, stronger cross system operating supports, and shared data that shows who is being served, who is not, and where inequities persist. By strengthening coordinated access, applying an equity and human rights lens, and using performance data to guide decisions, the system can shorten time to match for high acuity households, improve housing stability after placement, and narrow equity gaps over time.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- Coordinated access is more effective and equitable, with shorter time to match for high-acuity households.
- Rehousing and support capacity is aligned with acuity, including timely access to ICM/clinical supports.
- Affordable housing pathways expand and housing stability improves after placement (fewer returns).
- Shared data and equity-focused performance monitoring drive continuous improvement and narrowing equity gaps.

KEY TARGETS:

- **Continue placements through coordinated access pathways**, sustain/improve by 2035, subject to provincial and federal funding
- **Remove at least 3 priority access barriers (such as acuity, household composition, and pets) by 2031 and show measurable reduction in at least one equity gap by 2035.**
- **Common indicators on equity reported on schedule, with at least 2 improvement actions per year informed by data.**

OBJECTIVES:

- 4.1: Make coordinated access more effective and equitable
- 4.2: Design and deliver housing and homelessness services in ways that address systemic inequities and improve access and outcomes for priority populations



- 4.3: Secure equitable, sustainable funding and income supports that reduce homelessness and enable supportive housing
- 4.4: Ensure programs are guided by reliable data and equity-focused performance monitoring to improve outcomes over time

KEY ACTIONS:

- Strengthen coordinated access so prioritization leads to real placements
- Formalize coordinated access pathways into housing with supports
- Apply an equity and human rights lens across service design and monitoring
- Advocate for sustainable funding and enhanced income supports
- Use shared data and equity-focused performance monitoring to drive improvement

PHASING:

- **Years 1–2:** strengthen coordinated access and remove key barriers, establish interim higher-acuity pathways, and launch shared equity-focused performance measures and reporting.
- **Years 3–5:** formalize coordinated access pathways into housing with supports, scale equity and priority access policies, and advance funding and housing–health agreements to expand supportive housing operating capacity.
- **Years 6–10:** sustain and refine equity and performance monitoring, embed cross-system funding and operating models, and continuously improve coordinated access so prioritization consistently translates into timely, equitable placements.

HOW WE’LL MEASURE PROGRESS:

- coordinated access performance (time to match and placements achieved for prioritized households)
- equity in access and outcomes (disaggregated results where possible, including who is not being served, and reductions in gaps for priority populations)
- barrier reduction (policy and process barriers removed, eligibility barriers reduced)
- housing with supports pathways (number of housing-linked-with-support providers participating in coordinated access and volume of placements through shared referral pathways)
- resourcing and advocacy outcomes (funding equity gains, supportive housing operating dollars secured, and progress on housing–health agreements)



- shared indicators in place, regular reporting produced, and evidence that data is being used to adjust policies and practices to improve outcomes and reduce inequities over time

7.5 Goal 5: Expand accessible, supportive, and age-friendly housing and increase housing diversity across Huron County

WHY THIS GOAL MATTERS: Goal 5 matters because Huron County's housing needs are changing as the population grows and ages, and the current housing mix does not provide enough options that are accessible, age-friendly, and suited to different household sizes and incomes. Expanding housing diversity helps residents find homes that fit their needs at different life stages, supports older adults and people with disabilities to remain housed in the community, and creates more attainable rental and ownership choices for smaller households, families, and the local workforce. This goal focuses on monitoring recent planning changes, removing infrastructure barriers, supporting the delivery of missing middle and purpose-built rental housing, and advancing supportive and accessible housing so more people can live safely and independently.

INTENDED OUTCOMES:

- More accessible housing is available
- More supportive housing is available for seniors and people with disabilities
- More age-friendly housing options exist (safe, barrier-reduced, right-sized, close to services/transport)
- A larger share of new housing is “missing middle” and higher density (e.g., duplex/triplex, townhomes, small apartments, ARUs)
- More purpose-built rental housing is delivered across a range of price points.
- More entry-level ownership options are delivered (e.g., smaller homes, townhouses, condos)

KEY TARGETS:

- **As of 2024, all municipalities have adopted OP and zoning changes that enable missing middle and gentle intensification as-of-right** (including parking minimums); monitor, adjust and refine by 2031.
- **By 2031, increase the share of new housing that is missing middle or higher density** (including ARUs) compared to a 2026 baseline, and sustain or improve by 2035.
- **Adopt a clear accessibility and age-friendly design expectation for publicly supported projects; by 2031, most publicly supported projects meet the standard, and sustain through 2035.**



OBJECTIVES:

5.1: Enable and deliver housing diversity across the continuum

5.2: Expand accessible, age-friendly, and supportive housing with community support

KEY ACTIONS:

- Monitor planning and zoning to enable “as-of-right” housing diversity
- Identify and address key infrastructure and servicing constraints
- Support delivery of purpose-built rental and entry-level ownership options
- Partner to advance supportive housing for seniors and people with disabilities
- Make accessibility and age-friendly design the standard (especially where public funding is provided)
- Build community understanding and acceptance about homelessness, affordable, supportive and higher-density housing

PHASING:

- **Years 1–2:** monitor planning and zoning to enable more housing types as of right, set clear accessibility and age friendly expectations for new development, and advance early supportive housing projects for seniors and people with disabilities through pre development and advocacy.
- **Years 3–5:** adjust ‘as of right’ zoning as necessary to scale delivery of missing middle, purpose built rental, and entry level ownership options¹, address priority infrastructure constraints where they limit projects.
- **Years 6–10:** sustain housing diversity across the County, and embed accessibility and age friendly design as a consistent standard across new supply and publicly supported housing.

¹ Entry-level ownership refers to smaller, lower-cost ownership housing, such as townhouses, stacked townhouses, low-rise condominiums, compact homes, or other modest forms of ownership that are priced below typical resale ownership options in the local market. Where public land, funding, or incentives are used, projects should be assessed against the PPS definition of affordable ownership housing, which is the least expensive of:

1. housing where the purchase price results in annual accommodation costs that do not exceed 30% of gross annual household income for low- and moderate-income households; or
2. housing where the purchase price is at least 10% below the average purchase price of a resale unit in the municipality.



HOW WE'LL MEASURE PROGRESS:

- housing diversity enabled (OP and zoning updates completed, as-of-right permissions expanded, maximum building heights increased where appropriate)
- housing mix delivered (share of new units that are higher density, including ARUs; number of duplex/triplex/fourplex, townhomes, and small apartment units permitted and completed)
- purpose-built rental delivery (number of rental units permitted and completed, including a range of unit sizes and price points where trackable)
- entry-level ownership supply (number of smaller homes, townhouses, and low-rise condos permitted and completed, where trackable)
- accessible and age-friendly housing outcomes (number or share of new units incorporating key accessibility or age-friendly features, especially in publicly supported projects)
- supportive housing for seniors and disabilities (projects advanced through stages, funding secured, units or spaces created, and occupancy where available)
- infrastructure barriers addressed (priority constraints identified, coordinated funding applications submitted or approved, and constraints removed or mitigated)
- community understanding and acceptance (education and communications activities delivered and indications of improved readiness, such as smoother approvals or reduced opposition, where measurable)



Appendix 1: What We Heard Report



Huron County 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

What We Heard Report

January 2026



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The County of Huron would like to thank all community members, organizations, and partners who took the time to participate in engagement for the Housing and Homelessness Plan update. The insights shared through surveys, focus groups, interviews, and lived experience conversations were essential to understanding housing needs, challenges, and opportunities across the County.

We extend our appreciation to residents who shared their experiences and perspectives, as well as to service providers, housing partners, municipal leaders, private sector stakeholders, and community organizations who contributed their knowledge and expertise. In particular, we acknowledge the individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness and housing instability who shared their stories and insights, helping to ground this work in real experiences.

The County also recognizes the collaboration and support of local municipalities, community partners, and service organizations that helped facilitate engagement activities and encouraged participation.

This Plan is strengthened by the time, care, and openness of those who participated. Their contributions will help guide the next phases of this work as the County continues to develop a Housing and Homelessness Plan that reflects community needs and priorities.



About the Project

Huron County update its 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan to better understand current and future housing needs across the County and to identify practical, coordinated actions to strengthen the local housing and homelessness system.

Housing stability is fundamental to individual well-being, economic vitality, and community health. As a large and diverse rural county, Huron faces unique housing challenges related to affordability, availability, access to services, and transportation. These challenges affect a wide range of residents, including seniors, youth, families, workers, people with disabilities, and individuals experiencing homelessness or housing instability.

The updated Plan was developed to:

- Assess housing needs across the full housing continuum, from homelessness prevention and emergency supports to affordable, supportive, and market housing
- Identify gaps, pressures, and barriers within the housing and homelessness system
- Review current programs, policies, and service coordination
- Identify opportunities to strengthen partnerships and improve access to housing and supports
- Develop practical, evidence-informed strategies to guide County and community action over the next 10 years

A strong and inclusive engagement process was central to this work. The Plan was informed by residents, service providers, housing partners, municipal leaders, Indigenous partners and knowledge holders, and people with lived and living experience of homelessness and housing instability. Their insights helped ensure that future directions reflect real experiences and local priorities.

This “What We Heard” report summarizes key themes and messages from Phase 1 engagement activities, which focused on listening and learning. The findings were used to inform the development of the draft Housing and Homelessness Plan and were brought forward for validation and discussion during Phase 2 engagement.



How to Read this Report

This report summarizes what we heard during Phase 1 community and stakeholder engagement for the Huron County Housing and Homelessness Plan update. It is intended to share key messages, experiences, and perspectives gathered through surveys, focus groups, interviews, and conversations with people with lived and living experience of homelessness and housing instability.

The findings presented here reflect community input, not final decisions or recommendations. Some perspectives may differ or reflect local experiences that vary across the County. Where possible, this report highlights common themes that emerged across multiple engagement activities.

This “What We Heard” report was one step in a broader planning process. The information shared here was used to:

- Inform the development of the draft Housing and Homelessness Plan
- Support discussion and validation during Phase 2 engagement, including a stakeholder workshop
- Help identify priorities and areas for action over the next 10 years

A full Plan was developed following Phase 2 engagement.

Engaging the Community

Our Approach

Hearing directly from the community is central to developing an effective Housing and Homelessness Plan. Huron County, together with the project consulting team, designed an engagement process that was inclusive, accessible, and grounded in lived experience.

The approach to engagement was guided by the following principles:

- **Accessible and inclusive:** Multiple ways to participate were offered to reduce barriers related to location, technology, mobility, and comfort level.
- **Respectful and trauma-informed:** Engagement with people with lived and living experience was conducted in ways that prioritized dignity, safety, and choice.
- **Collaborative and transparent:** Participants were informed about the purpose of the engagement and how their input would be used.
- **Action-oriented:** Conversations focused not only on challenges and gaps, but also on opportunities and possible solutions.

Engagement activities were designed to reflect Huron County’s rural context and to ensure voices from different communities, sectors, and lived experiences were heard.



Summary of Activities

During Phase 1 of the project, the County and consulting team undertook a range of engagement activities to gather input from residents, partners, and stakeholders across the housing and homelessness system.

Engagement activities included:

- **Community Survey**
An online survey open to residents and community members across Huron County to share their experiences, concerns, and priorities related to housing and homelessness.
- **Stakeholder Focus Groups**
Sector-specific focus groups with:
 - Non-profit housing providers
 - Private developers, landlords, and real estate professionals
 - Housing, homelessness, health, and justice service providers
 - Municipal leadership
 - Indigenous knowledge holdersThese discussions explored system gaps, emerging pressures, and opportunities for improvement.
- **Key Informant Interviews**
One-on-one interviews with County staff to gain deeper insight into system performance, policy alignment, and partnership opportunities.
- **Engagement with People with Lived and Living Experience**
Conversations with individuals who have experienced homelessness or housing instability, conducted in partnership with local service providers and at familiar community locations. These discussions provided critical insight into real-world barriers, service gaps, and supports needed to regain and maintain housing.

Together, these activities provided a broad and detailed understanding of housing needs and homelessness challenges across the County. Input gathered through engagement formed the foundation for identifying key themes, priorities, and areas for action, which were further explored and validated during Phase 2 engagement.



Who We Heard From

Over the course of Phase 1 engagement activities, the project team heard from a wide range of residents, organizations, service providers, and partners across the housing and homelessness system. Engagement took place between December 2025 and January 2026 and included both quantitative and qualitative input.

In total, engagement activities included input from more than 300 survey respondents, as well as targeted discussions with community organizations, service providers, municipal leaders, and individuals with lived and living experience of homelessness and housing instability.

Engagement participants included:

- 304 community survey respondents, representing a broad cross-section of residents and community members across Huron County
 - 262 respondents identified as residents
 - 32 respondents identified as individuals with lived experience of homelessness
 - Respondents also included non-profit service providers, housing providers, business owners, employers, municipal staff, elected officials, and representatives from faith-based and Indigenous organizations
- Stakeholder focus groups, involving representatives from:
 - Non-profit housing providers (7)
 - Private developers, landlords, and real estate professionals (2)
 - Housing, homelessness, health, and justice service providers (9)
 - Municipal leadership (7)
 - Indigenous knowledge holders (2)
- Key informant interviews with:
 - County staff across multiple departments (6)
- Engagement with people with lived and living experience of homelessness, conducted in partnership with local service providers and community organizations, including:
 - Heart to Home Bridge Housing Residents (4)
 - Northern Huron Connection Centre (9)
 - Southern Huron Connection Centre (12)

Together, these engagement activities provided valuable feedback to inform and guide the Housing and Homelessness Plan by both system-level perspectives and lived experience, reflecting the diverse realities of housing and homelessness across Huron County.



What We Talked About

Across all engagement activities, participants were asked a consistent set of core questions to understand housing needs, system challenges, and priorities for the future. While specific questions were tailored to different audiences (i.e., residents, service providers, municipal leaders, or individuals with lived experience), discussions focused on similar themes to ensure input could be meaningfully compared and synthesized.

Engagement activities explored the following topics:

- **Current housing challenges**
Participants were asked to identify the most pressing housing issues facing Huron County today.
- **Populations facing the greatest barriers**
Discussions explored which groups of residents face the most difficulty accessing and maintaining safe, adequate, and affordable housing, and why.
- **Homelessness and housing instability**
Participants shared experiences and perspectives related to homelessness, hidden homelessness, emergency shelter access, and pathways into and out of housing instability.
- **Support services and housing stability**
Engagement explored the types of supports needed to help people obtain and maintain housing.
- **Barriers to meeting future housing needs**
Participants identified challenges to increasing housing supply and improving affordability.
- **Opportunities and solutions**
Participants were invited to share ideas and approaches that could help address housing and homelessness challenges, including policy tools, partnerships, funding approaches, land use strategies, and service coordination.
- **Lived experience perspectives**
Conversations with individuals who have experienced homelessness or housing instability focused on existing barriers, service gaps, and what has helped, or could help, people regain and maintain housing.

The following section summarizes key themes that emerged across engagement activities.



Community Insights

What We Heard from Phase 1 Engagement Activities

The following section summarizes what we heard from different groups who participated in Phase 1 engagement for the Huron County Housing and Homelessness Plan. Input is presented by stakeholder group to reflect the range of perspectives shared. These summaries reflect participants' experiences, observations, and perspectives. A detailed breakdown of results by question from the community survey is provided in Appendix A.

Residents and Community Members

Input from residents and community members was gathered primarily through the online survey, which received 304 responses from across Huron County. Survey respondents represented a range of housing situations, ages, and perspectives, including homeowners, renters, individuals sharing housing due to cost pressures, and people actively seeking housing.

Housing Needs, Challenges, and Gaps

Residents consistently identified housing affordability as the most pressing housing issue in Huron County. Most (81%) respondents pointed to the lack of affordable rental housing, with many also identifying homelessness, the lack of affordable ownership options, and limited access to housing with support services as significant concerns. Respondents noted that rising housing costs are affecting a broad range of households, including seniors, families, youth, single parents, people with disabilities, and working individuals.

Many (18%) respondents described their current housing costs as burdensome, with a significant portion reporting that housing expenses have forced difficult trade-offs. These included taking on additional work or debt, reducing food expenses, delaying medical care or prescriptions, and postponing education or training. Some respondents also reported challenges related to housing condition, housing size not meeting household needs, physical accessibility, or difficulties with landlords.

Residents identified several barriers to meeting future housing needs, including high development and construction costs, broader economic conditions such as inflation and interest rates, and a lack of funding or incentives to support affordable housing development. Some respondents also noted regulatory barriers, transportation challenges, and community opposition as barriers in meeting housing needs.

Future Opportunities and Desired Change

Survey respondents expressed strong interest in a range of approaches to help address housing challenges in Huron County. Commonly identified opportunities



included repurposing vacant or underused buildings, increasing funding for affordable housing, and exploring compact or prefabricated housing solutions. Many respondents also supported the use of surplus municipal land for housing and measures to speed up development approvals.

Residents emphasized the importance of expanding housing options across the continuum, including affordable rental housing, supportive and transitional housing, and housing that allows people to age in place. Respondents also highlighted the need for rent subsidies, stronger mental health and addiction supports, emergency shelter services, and supports that help people maintain housing stability.

Housing, Homelessness, Health, and Justice Service Providers

Input from housing, homelessness, health, and justice service providers was gathered through a focus group involving organizations that support individuals and families experiencing housing instability, homelessness, or complex health and social challenges.

Housing Needs, Challenges, and Gaps

Service providers consistently identified housing availability and affordability as central challenges affecting their clients. Participants described a lack of appropriate housing options across the continuum, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, supportive housing, and long-term affordable housing. Population groups identified as being at higher risk include seniors, single adults, women with children, Indigenous people, people with mental health and addiction challenges, and people with developmental disabilities. The absence of certain housing types was described as contributing to longer stays in emergency settings or people cycling through homelessness. Participants also highlighted increases in encampments and visible homelessness and noted that rent supplements, while helpful, no longer effectively bridge the affordability gap for many households.

Providers acknowledged that there are strong relationships and collaboration across sectors; however, participants also noted that greater coordination is still needed. Participants described situations where individuals are discharged from hospitals, correctional facilities, or treatment programs without stable housing or adequate supports in place. Providers further identified limited crisis response capacity in the community, as well as challenges related to short-term or uncertain funding for organizations working in this space.

Service providers also identified gaps in mental health and addiction services, limited access to primary care, and transportation barriers as factors that make it difficult for individuals to access and maintain housing.

Future Opportunities and Desired Change



Service providers expressed a desire to see housing solutions that are paired with appropriate and ongoing supports. Participants emphasized the importance of a coordinated approach that integrates housing with mental health, addiction, medical, and social services.

Participants also identified opportunities to strengthen prevention and early intervention, improve discharge planning from institutions, and continue to enhance collaboration across sectors. Expanding emergency and transitional housing options and improving access to supports were identified as key priorities.

Indigenous Knowledge Holders

Input from Indigenous knowledge holders was gathered through targeted engagement to better understand the housing and homelessness experiences of Indigenous people living in and around Huron County, and to identify culturally safer approaches to housing and support.

Housing Needs, Challenges, and Gaps

Indigenous knowledge holders emphasized that housing insecurity among Indigenous people in Huron County is often hidden and may not be fully reflected in available data. Participants noted that some people may not identify as Indigenous in service systems due to mistrust, stigma, uncertainty about identity or community connection, or fear that disclosure could create additional barriers.

Participants identified barriers related to affordability, overcrowding, transportation, lack of local housing options, and limited access to culturally safe supports. They described situations where people may be living with extended family because they cannot afford housing on their own, or may be placed in communities away from family, culture, and informal supports.

Participants did not identify clear consensus around creating standalone Indigenous-specific housing in Huron County at this time. Instead, they emphasized the need to better understand who is experiencing housing need, what supports they are accessing, and what types of housing and cultural supports people would want. Existing and emerging transitional housing options in Goderich and Exeter were identified as possible places to begin strengthening culturally safe pathways.

A strong theme was the need for trauma-informed, relationship-based practice. Participants emphasized that many Indigenous people experiencing housing instability carry significant trauma connected to colonization, disconnection from culture and community, child welfare involvement, and stigma. They cautioned that rigid or punitive approaches, including “one mistake and you are out” models, are unlikely to support long-term housing stability.

Participants also highlighted the importance of choice in cultural connection. Some



people may want access to teachings, Elders, community events, or reconnection supports, while others may not want Indigenous-specific supports. This reinforces the need for flexible, individualized approaches.

Future Opportunities and Desired Change

Indigenous knowledge holders emphasized that future work should begin with trust-building and continued engagement. Suggested approaches included community information sessions, feasts, soft online surveys, and outreach through trusted community connectors. Participants noted that engagement should include food, transportation, proper protocols, and enough time to build relationships.

Participants identified opportunities to strengthen culturally safe supports within existing housing and homelessness services, including access to vetted Elders or knowledge keepers, Indigenous-informed navigation, cultural connection supports, and trauma-informed training for staff.

Participants also expressed interest in spaces or opportunities for Indigenous people in Huron County to connect with one another, access teachings, share meals, receive help with practical needs such as status cards or service navigation, and rebuild community connection.

For Indigenous youth transitioning from care or into independent living, participants emphasized the importance of choice, life-skills support, patience, and ongoing follow-up. They noted that young people may need time to understand their options and should be able to re-engage if they decline support at first.

Overall, Indigenous knowledge holders emphasized that culturally safer housing and homelessness responses must be guided by Indigenous voices, grounded in trust, and flexible enough to meet people where they are.

Private Sector Stakeholders

Input from private sector stakeholders was gathered through a small focus group. Participants shared perspectives based on their experience developing, managing, or facilitating housing in the local market.

Housing Needs, Challenges, and Gaps

Private sector participants identified housing affordability and supply constraints as key challenges in meeting current and future housing needs. Participants emphasized the most pressing housing need in the County is affordable purpose-built rental housing, particularly for smaller unit sizes.

Participants stated that high construction and development costs, including labour shortages, material costs, and fees (i.e., development charges, costs for studies),



make it difficult to deliver housing at price points that are affordable to many local residents. Participants noted that smaller, more efficient multi-residential buildings would improve feasibility. Economic conditions, such as high interest rates, were also identified as factors limiting feasibility and slowing development activity.

Participants further described regulatory and approval processes as complex and time-consuming and noted challenges related to land availability and zoning, particularly where existing policies limit housing density or flexibility.

Future Opportunities and Desired Change

Private sector stakeholders expressed interest in approaches that could improve feasibility and support housing delivery, including clearer and more streamlined approvals, flexible zoning, and financial incentives to offset development costs. Participants identified opportunities related to partnerships with municipalities and non-profit organizations, as well as the potential use of surplus or underused land for housing.

Participants also expressed interest in alternative housing forms, such as modular or prefabricated construction, as a way to reduce costs and timelines.

Non-Profit Housing Providers

Input from non-profit housing providers was gathered through a focus group involving organizations responsible for delivering and managing affordable and community housing in Huron County. Participants shared insights based on their experience operating housing within funding, policy, and capacity constraints.

Housing Needs, Challenges, and Gaps

Non-profit housing providers identified a significant shortage of affordable and deeply affordable housing in the County, particularly for individuals and households with low or fixed incomes. Participants described long waitlists for social housing and limited turnover, which results in people remaining in unsuitable, overcrowded, or unsafe housing for extended periods.

Providers highlighted challenges related to aging housing stock, rising operating and maintenance costs, and limited capital funding to repair or expand existing properties. Participants described difficulties securing funding, including pre-development funding, and noted that available funding often does not fully reflect rural construction and operating costs. Participants also highlighted challenges related to board recruitment and development capacity as additional barriers.

Several participants emphasized the gap between housing supply and the level of need in the community, particularly for one- and two-bedroom units, accessible housing units, and supportive housing.



Future Opportunities and Desired Change

Non-profit housing providers expressed a desire to see increased and more flexible funding to support both new development and the maintenance of existing housing, as well as increases to rent subsidy funding levels. Participants identified opportunities for stronger coordination between housing, health, and support services, particularly for tenants with complex needs.

Providers also highlighted the importance of partnerships, including collaboration with municipalities, service providers, and other non-profit organizations, to deliver housing more effectively. Participants expressed interest in exploring innovative housing models and approaches that could expand supply while remaining affordable and sustainable over the long term.

Municipal Leadership

Input from municipal leadership was gathered through a focus group with staff from local municipalities across Huron County.

Housing Needs, Challenges, and Gaps

Similar to other stakeholder groups, municipal staff identified housing affordability and availability as key challenges facing their communities. Participants noted growing demand for a wider range of housing types, including affordable rental housing, smaller units, housing suitable for seniors, and housing for people with low and moderate incomes, including youth looking to stay or return to the County. In some communities, participants described limited housing options contributing to residents remaining in housing that no longer meets their needs (i.e., seniors). Participants also highlighted increases in homelessness and encampments noting limited access to permanent warming centres and few resources to support individuals and families in crisis.

Participants highlighted challenges related to infrastructure capacity, including water, wastewater, and servicing constraints, in some areas. Participants also noted that high development costs and broader economic conditions can affect the pace and feasibility of housing projects.

Municipal staff described challenges balancing housing needs with other local considerations, including land use policies, agricultural land protection, and community concerns related to growth and change. Participants also noted capacity constraints within smaller municipalities, including limited staff resources to manage complex or large-scale housing initiatives.

Future Opportunities and Desired Change

Municipal staff identified a number of local tools and strengths that could support



housing solutions within their communities. Participants noted the role municipalities can play through the use of Community Improvement Plans (CIPs), development charge waivers, tax incentives, and the availability of serviced or municipally owned land to support affordable housing initiatives.

Participants expressed interest in exploring a broader range of housing approaches, including cooperative housing, shared housing arrangements, and other alternative housing models. Municipal staff also identified opportunities related to intensification, such as additional residential units (ARUs), secondary suites, and the reuse or conversion of large or underutilized homes to better meet local housing needs.

Municipal leadership identified several priority areas where change is needed, including increasing the supply of affordable and supportive housing, improving access to mental health and addiction services, and developing local emergency housing solutions that reflect community context. Participants also highlighted the importance of strengthening transportation links to support access to housing, services, and employment.

Participants emphasized the value of continued collaboration between the County and local municipalities, including joint advocacy to senior levels of government and public education efforts to address stigma related to housing and homelessness.

People with Lived and Living Experience of Homelessness

Input from people with lived and living experience of homelessness was gathered through focus groups and interviews conducted in partnership with local service providers and community organizations. Participants shared personal experiences navigating housing instability, homelessness, and support systems in Huron County.

Housing Needs, Challenges, and Gaps

Participants described significant challenges finding and maintaining housing, with affordability identified as a primary barrier. Many participants noted that available rental housing is often priced beyond what individuals receiving income supports or earning low wages can afford. Participants described a loss of rental housing following COVID-19, as well as instances of properties remaining vacant. Long waitlists for social and supportive housing were also commonly mentioned. Participants further highlighted gaps related to discharges from hospitals or correctional facilities without housing or supports in place.

Participants described experiences of hidden homelessness (or “shadow” homelessness), including couch surfing, staying in overcrowded or unsafe housing, or living in informal or substandard arrangements, particularly in rural areas. Some participants shared experiences of discrimination or stigma when seeking housing,



including barriers related to credit history, criminal records, or assumptions about substance use.

Participants also highlighted gaps in emergency shelter options, particularly for men, and described challenges accessing transitional housing. Several participants emphasized that housing without appropriate supports is often not sufficient, particularly for individuals with mental health, addiction, or medical needs.

Future Opportunities and Desired Change

People with lived and living experience expressed a strong need for housing that is stable, affordable, and paired with supports. Participants also expressed a desire to see emergency and winter shelter options re-established in the County.

Participants emphasized the importance of access to mental health and addiction services, primary care, and ongoing follow-up supports once housed. Other supports such as access to a phone, transportation, and support with filling out applications were also identified as needs.

Participants also identified the need for enhanced income supports, assistance with first and last month's rent, and housing options that allow people to keep pets. Many expressed a desire for systems that are easier to navigate and less stigmatizing, and for greater understanding of homelessness within the community.

Emerging Priorities

Based on input received through Phase 1 engagement activities, several common priorities emerged across residents, service providers, housing partners, municipal leadership, and people with lived and living experience. While perspectives varied by stakeholder group, there was broad alignment around the following areas.

These priorities reflect what we heard and were used to inform discussion, validation, and refinement during Phase 2.

1. Increase the Supply of Affordable and Supportive Housing

Across engagement activities, participants consistently identified the need to significantly increase the supply of affordable housing, including deeply affordable and supportive housing. This included a need for a broader mix of unit types, such as smaller units, accessible housing, and housing suitable for seniors, families, and individuals with low or fixed incomes.

Participants emphasized that current supply does not match the level of need, contributing to long waitlists, housing instability, and homelessness.



2. Strengthen the Housing Continuum and Local Emergency Housing Options

Participants across multiple groups identified gaps along the housing continuum, including emergency shelter, transitional housing, and supportive housing. The absence of certain housing options was described as contributing to people cycling through homelessness or remaining in unsafe or unsuitable housing.

There was interest in exploring locally appropriate emergency and interim housing solutions, including winter shelter options, that reflect the rural context of Huron County.

3. Improve Access to Supports that Help People Obtain and Maintain Housing

Engagement participants consistently emphasized that housing stability is closely linked to access to supports. Priority areas identified included mental health and addiction services, primary care, income supports, and ongoing follow-up supports for people once housed.

Participants noted that housing without appropriate supports is often not sufficient, particularly for individuals with complex needs.

4. Use Local Tools and Partnerships to Support Housing Delivery

Municipal leadership, non-profit housing providers, and private sector participants highlighted the importance of using local tools and partnerships to support housing development. These included Community Improvement Plans, development charge waivers, tax incentives, flexible zoning, and the use of serviced or underused land.

Participants also expressed interest in exploring alternative housing models, such as cooperative housing, shared housing, intensification, additional residential units, and the reuse of existing buildings.

5. Address System Coordination, Transportation, and Barriers to Access

Across engagement activities, participants identified challenges related to system coordination, transportation, and navigating complex services and processes. Strengthening coordination between housing, health, income, and justice systems was identified as a continuing priority, as was improving transportation links to support access to housing, services, and employment.

Participants also identified stigma, discrimination, and administrative barriers (i.e., multiple forms, eligibility rules, lack of alignment across service providers) as factors that affect access to housing and supports.



Looking Ahead

This “What We Heard” report represents the conclusion of Phase 1 engagement, which focused on listening and understanding housing and homelessness needs across Huron County.

The next phase of the project focused on validation, refinement, and collaboration. Phase 2 engagement included a stakeholder workshop and additional opportunities to:

- Confirm whether the emerging community priorities reflect local experiences
- Identify gaps, areas of clarification, or differing perspectives
- Explore potential actions, roles, and partnerships to address housing and homelessness challenges

Input from Phase 2 engagement was used to inform the development of the final Huron County Housing and Homelessness Plan, including proposed directions, actions, and implementation considerations.

The County thanks all participants for their contributions and looks forward to continuing this work together.



Appendix A: Survey Summary by Question

As part of the Huron County Housing and Homelessness Plan survey, 304 surveys were completed.

The following provides a summary of survey results by question. Of note, percentages may not total 100% as respondents were able to select multiple responses.

Q1: What do you see as the most pressing housing issues currently facing Huron? (n=303)

The most pressing housing issue expressed by respondents is the lack of affordable rental housing (81.2%). Other top issues include homelessness (48.8%), lack of affordable ownership housing (46.5%), and lack of housing with support services (46.2%).

Answer Choices	Responses	
Homelessness	48.8%	148
Lack of affordable rental housing	81.2%	246
Lack of housing with support services (i.e., mental health supports, supports with daily living)	46.2%	140
Lack of interim housing (e.g. emergency, transitional)	30.7%	93
Lack of diversity/mix in housing forms and types	17.2%	52
Limited availability or long waiting lists for support services (e.g. mental health, addictions, or other essential services)	37.3%	113
Barriers to accessing support services	15.5%	47
Lack of income	36.0%	109
Lack of affordable ownership housing	46.5%	141
I don't know	1.0%	3
Other (please specify)	7.6%	23
	Answered	303
	Skipped	1



Q2: Are there groups of residents that, in your opinion, have a particularly difficult time finding adequate, affordable housing? (n=303)

Survey respondents identified a broad range of population groups that face difficulties in finding adequate and affordable housing. Top responses include single parents (51.2%), youth (50.2%), seniors (48.2%), families (40.3%), and people with disabilities (44.9%).

Answer Choices	Responses	
Youth	50.2%	152
Indigenous Peoples	11.6%	35
LGBTQ2S+	11.6%	35
Seniors	48.2%	146
New immigrants	22.1%	67
People with disabilities	44.9%	136
Racialized communities	11.2%	34
Families	40.3%	122
Single parents	51.2%	155
Women	23.8%	72
Men	21.1%	64
Temporary foreign workers or seasonal labourers	11.6%	35
Students	17.2%	52
I don't know	5.0%	15
Other (please specify additional groups or populations not listed)	14.9%	45
Answered		303
Skipped		1

Other groups of residents identified as facing particular difficulties include low-income people, including people on ODSP and OW and the working poor.

Q3: What do you see as the biggest challenges to meeting future housing needs in Huron? (n=302)

Many challenges in meeting future housing needs were identified by survey respondents. The top response was the high costs of development (e.g. construction costs, land prices, fees and charges, shortage of labour) at 64.2%. Other top challenges identified include economic conditions (e.g. inflation, high interest rates) (56.0%), lack of funding, incentives or subsidies (54.0%), and lack of housing mix (21.5%).

Answer Choices	Responses	
Limited land availability	9.9%	30
High costs of development (i.e., construction costs, land prices, fees and charges, shortage of labour)	64.2%	194
Lack of funding, incentives and/or subsidies	54.0%	163
Zoning and regulatory barriers	17.2%	52
Community opposition to new developments	29.1%	88
Insufficient infrastructure (e.g. sewage capacity, roads, public transit)	21.5%	65
Lack of mix in housing types	30.1%	91
Economic conditions (e.g. inflation, high interest rates)	56.0%	169
I don't know	3.3%	10
Other (please specify)	13.3%	40
Answered		302
Skipped		2

Other challenges expressed including zoning restrictions on development, tightening agricultural regulations, government “red tape”, lack of support services, lack of rent controls and regulations for landlords and tenants, more education/understanding on local housing needs, and transportation.



Q4: What types of housing support services are most needed in Huron? (n=304)

Several support service needs were highlighted by respondents. Overall, rent subsidies was the top response (57.2%), followed by transitional and supportive housing (55.3%), comprehensive supports for mental health and addictions (53.3%), and emergency shelter services (52.0%).

Answer Choices	Responses	
Rent subsidies	57.2%	174
Comprehensive supports for mental health, addictions, and other complex needs	53.3%	162
Services for seniors to age in place	48.0%	146
Emergency shelter services for people experiencing homelessness	52.0%	158
Transitional and supportive housing for people experiencing homelessness	55.3%	168
Programs for first-time homebuyers	45.4%	138
Supports for landlords	18.1%	55
I don't know	2.6%	8
Other (please specify)	12.2%	37
	Answered	304
	Skipped	0

Other housing support services identified by survey respondents as needed include living wage, financial incentives for developers, larger hospital, accessible housing, renovation support, home health care support, RGI housing, tenant supports, supportive housing for people with disabilities, assisted living options for seniors.

Q5: What opportunities and approaches do you think could help address housing challenges and future housing needs? (n=303)

Survey respondents identified support for many approaches in addressing current and future housing needs. Opportunities with strong support from survey respondents include repurposing vacant or underused buildings (76.9%), increased funding for affordable housing (63.4%), compact and prefabricated housing solutions (55.5%), use of surplus Town-owned land (49.2%), tax incentives for affordable housing (38.9%), and speeding up approvals (37.0%).

Answer Choices	Responses	
Repurposing vacant or underused buildings	76.9%	233
Using surplus municipal-owned land for housing	49.2%	149
Speeding up development/project approvals	37.0%	112
Partnerships with private developers	26.1%	79
Increased funding for affordable housing	63.4%	192
Compact and prefabricated housing solutions (e.g., tiny homes, modular units, 3D printing)	55.5%	168
Co-housing or shared living arrangements	20.8%	63
Zoning reforms to allow more diverse and flexible housing types	26.4%	80
Land trusts (land held by a non-profit organization for affordable housing and community benefit) or other non-profit ownership models	21.8%	66
Tax incentives for affordable housing development	38.9%	118
Encouraging mixed-use developments (i.e., mix of housing types and tenure)	23.1%	70
Encouraging renting out of basement apartments or additional self-contained units	21.1%	64
Providing additional supports to small landlords	25.1%	76
Expanding public transit to support new housing areas	29.4%	89
I don't know	2.0%	6
Other (please specify)	9.6%	29
Answered		303
Skipped		1

Other ideas noted by respondents include restricting short term rentals, providing subsidies to homeowners to rent out space/rooms, public transportation, mental health and addiction supports, permit higher densities, and vacant homes tax.



Q6: Which of the following best describes the perspective you are responding from? (n=304)

Most respondents identified as residents (86.2%). Respondents also identified themselves as government staff (13.2%), non-profit service provider (12.5%), and business owner or employer (10.2%). Thirty-two individuals identified as someone with lived experience of homelessness.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Resident	86.2%	262
Individual with lived experience of homelessness	10.5%	32
Non profit service provider	12.5%	38
Non profit housing provider	5.6%	17
Private sector developer	0.7%	2
Private market landlord or property manager	5.6%	17
Real estate professional	0.7%	2
Business owner/employer	10.2%	31
Municipal government staff	13.2%	40
Elected official	2.6%	8
Indigenous government or organization	1.0%	3
Faith-based organization representative	3.0%	9
Funder	1.0%	3
Other (please specify)	10.9%	33
Answered		304
Skipped		0

Where respondents indicated 'other', answers often described additional personal characteristics such as being a senior, an individual with a disability, a parent, a family member caring for someone with a disability for family member of someone experiencing homelessness, or someone looking to move or buy a home.

Q7: How would you describe your current housing costs? (n=252)

Almost one-third (31.0%) of survey respondents indicated that their housing costs were affordable and manageable while 46.0% find them somewhat burdensome but management, and 17.5% find them very burdensome and difficult to afford. A few respondents indicated that they were searching for housing, and 4.4% (or 11 respondents) said that they are not currently paying for housing.



Q8: Have you had to make any of the following sacrifices due to high housing costs in the past year? (n=246)

Most survey respondents indicated that they have had to make sacrifices over the past year due to high housing costs. Forty-five percent of respondents reported taking on additional work or debt, 36.2% of survey respondents reported skipping meals or reducing food expenses, 26.4% reported delaying medical care or prescriptions, 14.6% indicated they postponed education or training, and 10.6% reported they were unable to put their children in extra-curricular/recreational activities.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Skipping meals or reducing food expenses	36.2%	89
Delaying medical care or prescriptions	26.4%	65
Postponing education or training	14.6%	36
Taking on additional work or debt	45.1%	111
Unable to have children participate in extra curricular/recreational activities	10.6%	26
Unable to purchase clothing for children	4.9%	12
None of the above	33.7%	83
Other (please specify)	16.3%	40
Answered		246
Skipped		58

Other sacrifices identified by respondents include not keeping up with home maintenance, reducing recreational and social activities, using up savings, put off having children, put off purchasing a home, skipping bill payments, working multiple jobs, and co-habiting to reduce costs.

Q9: Have you experienced any other challenges related to your housing in the past year? (n=234)

Respondents highlighted a range of other housing challenges including housing size which does not meet the household's needs (19.2%), poor housing condition (16.2%), having landlord issues (10.3%), lack of access to support services (9.4%), and lack of physical accessibility of the housing (7.3%).

Answer Choices	Responses	
Housing size does not meet my/our needs	19.2%	45
Poor housing condition	16.2%	38
Lack of physical accessibility of housing	7.3%	17
Lack of access to support services	9.4%	22
Landlord issues	10.3%	24
I have not experienced any other challenges in the past year	56.0%	131
Other (please specify)	14.1%	33
Answered		234
Skipped		70

Many respondents noted challenges with keeping up with maintenance and inability to afford renovations. Other challenges identified by respondents include high property taxes, inability to expand housing on existing property (due to regulations), high costs of housing and inability to move, and difficulty finding alternate housing options for seniors.

Q10: Have you experienced difficulty finding suitable housing in the past year? (n=252)

Fifty-five survey respondents (or 21.8%) reported that they had experienced difficulty finding suitable housing in the past year.

Q11: What difficulties or barriers do you face in accessing housing that meets your needs? (n=55)

All survey respondents who indicated they have experienced difficulty finding suitable housing (n=55) reported affordability as a barrier. Other top responses include lack of available housing units (63.6%), long waiting lists for housing (43.6%), housing options are not in a desirable location (38.1%), poor quality and condition of housing options (36.4%), housing units are too small (30.9%), and lack of housing options that meet specific needs (30.9%).



Q12: What is your current housing situation? (n=253)

Most survey respondents are homeowners (65.6%). Additionally, 24.5% rent their home, 11.9% share a home with family or friends, and 4.0% are looking to enter the housing market.

Answer Choices	Responses	
Own my home	65.6%	166
Rent my home	24.5%	62
Share a home with family or friends (e.g., living with others to split costs)	11.9%	30
Preparing to enter the housing market (e.g., saving for a down payment, actively searching for housing)	4.0%	10
Assisted living or retirement facility	0.4%	1
Supportive housing (e.g., housing with on-site support services or supervision)	0.8%	2
Long term care home	0.8%	2
Experiencing homelessness (e.g., staying in a shelter, couch surfing, living unsheltered)	1.2%	3
Other (please specify)	5.1%	13
Answered		253
Skipped		51

Q13: What is your age group? (n=252)

By age group, 16.3% were under the age of 34, 61.1% of survey respondents were between the ages of 35-64, 15.5% were between the ages of 65 and 74, and 21.0% were over the age of 75.

Answer Choices	Responses	
18-24	2.0%	5
25-34	14.3%	36
35-54	38.1%	96
55-64	23.0%	58
65-74	15.5%	39
75-84	4.8%	12
85+	0.8%	2
Prefer not to answer	1.6%	4
Answered		252
Skipped		52



Appendix 2: Supporting Technical Report on Housing Needs and Special Housing Projections



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Executive Summary

This Supporting Technical Report provides detailed analysis and projections of special housing and homelessness needs in Huron County. It supports the County's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan by examining housing needs that are not well captured through standard market housing analysis, but are instead shaped by population change, health and support needs, service capacity, and public policy decisions.

The report focuses on six areas of need:

- Non-market housing
- Housing for people with developmental disabilities
- Accessible housing for people with mobility-related disabilities
- Supportive housing for people with mental health and/or substance use challenges
- Long-term care and supportive housing for seniors
- Housing for people who have experienced homelessness.

Across all areas, the analysis examines current gaps between need and supply and projected demand over the 10-year period from 2026 to 2036, using a combination of local data, provincial and national prevalence rates, and population projections.

A summary of current gaps and future needs over the next 10 years are outlined in the following table.

Current Gaps and Future Needs for Special Housing, Huron County (2026-2036)

Area of Need	Current Gap	Additional Need 2026-2036
Non-market housing	1,175	1,515
Accessible housing for people with mobility-related disabilities	1,020	100
Housing for people with developmental disabilities	160 - 190	25 - 30
Supportive housing for people with mental health and/or substance use challenges	225 - 570	25 to 55 units
Long-term care	340 - 585	270 to 305 beds
Supportive housing for seniors	70 to 170	65

Housing for people who have experienced homelessness	7 very high-intensity permanent supportive housing units 119 housing units with intensive supports 12 re-housing supports paired with affordable housing	14-17 very high-intensity permanent supportive housing units 500-600 housing spaces with intensive supports and rental assistance, depending on other prevention and re-housing supports
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Several common themes emerge across all housing types:

- The County should plan using ranges rather than single numbers, recognizing uncertainty and suppressed demand.
- Housing supply must be matched with service capacity and operating funding, particularly for populations requiring ongoing supports.
- Needs will be met through a portfolio of solutions, including new construction, preservation of existing housing, scattered-site and congregate models, and income-based supports.
- Accessible and universal design should be a standard feature of new housing development.
- Expanding supportive and community-based housing can help reduce pressure on long-term care and better align with residents' preferences to remain housed in the community.

Together, these findings provide a clear, evidence-informed foundation for setting targets, prioritizing investments, and strengthening partnerships through the Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Introduction

Purpose of the Supporting Technical Report

This Supporting Technical Report provides detailed analysis and projections about special housing and homelessness needs in Huron County. It supports the County's 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan by taking a closer look at housing types and populations that need more focused planning, investment, and coordination.

While the Housing and Homelessness Plan sets the overall direction, this report focuses on the current size of these needs and how they are expected to grow over time. Many of these needs are not well reflected in standard market housing data because they are shaped by factors such as population change, health and support needs, service capacity, and public policy.

The report is designed to stand on its own as a reference for County staff, local municipalities, service providers, and funding partners. Key findings are also summarized and used in the Housing and Homelessness Plan to help set priorities, targets, and actions.

Scope of Analysis

This report includes analysis and projections for the following housing needs:

- Non-market housing, including rent-geared-to-income and other long-term affordable housing
- Housing for people with developmental disabilities
- Accessible housing for people with mobility-related disabilities
- Supportive housing for people with mental health and/or substance use challenges
- Long-term care and supportive housing for seniors
- Housing for people who have experienced homelessness, including affordable housing and housing with on-site or mobile supports

For each area, the analysis looks at current gaps between supply and need, as well as expected demand over the 10-year planning period (2026–2036). The analysis is informed by population trends and available data on housing supply and service use.

Methodological Approach

The projections in this report are based on:

- Population growth and aging trends
- Review of housing, homelessness, health, and social service data

- Use of provincial and national data where local information is not available
- Consideration of system factors such as waitlists, turnover, length of stay, and unmet or hidden need

Where exact forecasts are not possible, the report uses planning ranges rather than single numbers. This reflects uncertainty while still providing practical information to support decision-making.

How to Use This Report

This report is intended to support:

- Strategic planning and policy development for the Housing and Homelessness Plan
- Capital planning and funding applications, including alignment with provincial and federal programs
- Decisions about the right mix of housing, supports, and prevention approaches
- Ongoing monitoring and future updates by clearly stating assumptions and baseline estimates

By clearly describing the scale and types of housing and homelessness needs in Huron County, this report helps ensure that future actions are realistic, focused, and responsive to local conditions.

Current Gaps and Projected Needs

Non-Market Housing

For the purposes of this report, non-market housing includes housing options that provide rents below average market levels and are accessible to households that cannot secure or maintain adequate housing in the private market without assistance. Non-market housing in this report refers to housing outcomes rather than ownership or delivery models, and includes both publicly funded housing and private-market units made affordable through ongoing assistance. Non-market housing includes:

- Social and community housing, including rent-geared-to-income and other permanently affordable units
- Affordable rental housing, with rents set below average market rent
- Market rental housing paired with rental assistance, such as portable housing benefits or rent supplements.

Current Non-Market Housing Gap

The current gap in non-market housing is estimated using households in core housing need as identified in the 2021 Census. Core housing need captures households living in housing that is unaffordable, unsuitable, or in poor condition, and who would have to spend 30% or more of their before-tax income to access alternative housing that meets all three standards.

Based on 2021 data, an estimated 1,175 households in Huron County were in core housing need (Table 1.1). The majority of these households fall within the very low- and low-income categories, reflecting limited ability to compete in the private rental market.

Single-person households account for the largest share of need, followed by two-person households, a pattern that is consistent with broader provincial and national trends and reflects both demographic change and affordability pressures.

Table 1.1: Current Gap in Non-Market Housing by Income Category and Household Size (Based on Core Housing Need in 2021)

Income Category	Income	Affordable Monthly Shelter Cost	1 person household	2 person household	3 person household	4 person household	5 or more person household	Total
Very Low (up to 20% below AMHI)	< \$15,500	< \$388	260	40	0	0	0	305
Low (21% – 50% AMHI)	\$15,500 - \$38,750	\$389 - \$969	590	140	25	0	40	810
Moderate (51 – 80% AMHI)	\$38,751-\$62,000	\$970 - \$1,550	0	30	0	0	15	65
Median (81% - 120% AMHI)	\$62,000 - \$93,000	\$1,551 - \$2,325	0	0	0	0	0	0
High (>120% AMHI)	> \$93,001	> \$2,326	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total			845	205	45	25	55	1,175

Source: Statistics Canada Census (HART Custom Order)

Interpreting Core Housing Need

Not all households in core housing need require a move to new or different housing. Disaggregating need by the nature of the housing challenge provides important insight into the most appropriate responses:

- Approximately 935 households face affordability challenges but are otherwise living in housing that meets suitability and condition standards. For these households, needs could potentially be addressed through financial assistance, such as rent subsidies, housing allowances, or portable housing benefits.
- An estimated 65 households live in homes requiring major repairs but are otherwise suitably and affordably housed. Targeted home repair and rehabilitation programs could help address these needs and prevent future displacement.
- Approximately 175 households face multiple challenges related to affordability, suitability, and/or condition that cannot reasonably be resolved within their current housing. These households are most likely to require access

to alternative non-market housing options, including new social or affordable units.

This distinction underscores the importance of a mixed non-market housing strategy that includes both supply-side investments and income-based supports.

Emerging Pressures Since 2021

More recent local data on core housing need is not yet available. However, national evidence suggests that housing affordability pressures have intensified significantly since 2021.

In 2024, the Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer (PBO) estimated that core housing need across Canada had already increased by 65% above 2021 levels, with projections of a rise to 79% above 2021 levels by 2026¹. While these estimates are national in scope, they point to a rapidly worsening affordability environment driven by rising rents, interest rates, and construction costs.

Given these trends, it is reasonable to expect that the current non-market housing gap in Huron County is larger than indicated by 2021 Census data, particularly for renters and lower-income households. As such, the figures presented in this report should be interpreted as conservative baseline estimates.

Projected Future Non-Market Housing Needs

Future non-market housing needs are estimated based on:

- Projected household growth between 2026 and 2036, as prepared by Watson and Associates in their 2023 Population and Housing Projections Study
- Use of HART²'s household size projection methodology, based on trends from the 2006, 2016, and 2021 Census
- An assumption of stable income distribution consistent with 2021 patterns.

While income distributions can shift over time, they tend to remain relatively stable in the absence of major structural change, making this a reasonable planning assumption for 10-year projections.

Based on projected household growth alone, an additional 1,514 households are expected to fall within income ranges that would typically require access to non-market housing or rental assistance to secure affordable housing (Table 1.2). As with

¹ Office of the Parliamentary Budget Officer, Federal Spending on Housing Affordability in 2024, <https://www.pbo-dpb.ca/en/publications/RP-2425-023-S--federal-spending-housing-affordability-in-2024--depenses-federales-axe-es-abordabilite-logement-2024>

² HART (Housing Assessment Resource Tools) Research Group led by researchers from the University of British Columbia.

current need, the majority of projected demand is concentrated among very low- and low-income households, with single- and two-person households comprising the largest shares.

Table 1.2: Projected Future Needs for Non-Market Housing (2026-2036)

Income Category	Income	Affordable Monthly Shelter Cost	1 person household	2 person household	3 person household	4 person household	5 or more person household	Total
Very Low (up to 20% below AMHI)	< \$15,500	< \$388	140	14	0	0	0	153
Low (21% – 50% AMHI)	\$15,500 - \$38,750	\$389 - \$969	781	168	8	-1	0	957
Moderate (51 – 80% AMHI)	\$38,751-\$62,000	\$970 - \$1,550	199	171	19	-3	1	387
Median (81% - 120% AMHI)	\$62,000 - \$93,000	\$1,551 - \$2,325	0	0	18	-2	1	16
High (>120% AMHI)	> \$93,001	> \$2,326	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total			1,120	352	45	-6	2	1,514

Source: Vink Consulting, based on data from Watson and Associates, 2023, Statistics Canada Census, and CMHC Rental Market Survey, 2025.

Note: Minor negative values reflect shifts in projected household size distribution over time and do not represent a reduction in overall housing need.

These projections reflect incremental future need associated with population and household growth and do not include the existing unmet need identified in 2021.

Planning Implications

Meeting non-market housing needs in Huron County will require a mix of new housing supply and affordability supports.

Key considerations include:

- Expanding community and affordable rental housing, particularly for very low- and low-income households
- Increasing access to rent-based supports, such as portable housing benefits, for households facing affordability challenges only
- Preserving and renewing existing affordable housing stock to prevent loss of lower-cost units

- Leveraging naturally occurring affordable housing where possible

Not all households in need require new housing. However, given rising costs and limited rental supply, expanding non-market housing options will remain essential to improving affordability, reducing housing instability, and preventing homelessness.

Accessible Housing for People with Mobility-Related Disabilities

Accessible housing for people with mobility-related disabilities refers to housing that is designed or modified to enable safe, independent, and dignified use by individuals who experience difficulty with walking, using stairs, transferring, or moving within their home environment.

Types of Accessible Housing

People with mobility-related disabilities seek a range of accessible housing options, including both purpose-built and adapted units. Common accessibility features include:

- Step-free entrances and barrier-free paths of travel
- Wider doorways and hallways to accommodate mobility devices
- Accessible bathrooms, including roll-in or no-step showers and grab bars
- Kitchens designed for seated or limited-reach use
- Elevators or ground-floor units in multi-storey buildings
- Adequate interior turning space for mobility aids

Accessible housing may be delivered through:

- Purpose-built accessible or universal design units, or
- Retrofits and adaptations to existing housing stock

Importantly, accessible housing needs span all tenure types, including ownership, private rental, and non-market housing.

Current Gap in Accessible Housing for People with Mobility-Related Disabilities

The Canadian Survey on Disability (2022) indicates that approximately 11% of Ontarians aged 15 and over have a mobility-related disability³. The survey also reports that 16% of people with mobility and agility-related disabilities do not have the

³ Statistics Canada. [Table 13-10-0376-01 Type of disability for persons with disabilities aged 15 years and over, by age group and gender](#)

physical aids they need in their homes⁴, indicating a mismatch between housing design and functional needs.

Applying this proportion to Huron County's population aged 15 and over, and conservatively limiting the estimate to those with mobility-related disabilities, suggests a current gap of approximately 1,022 accessible housing units. This figure represents households where existing housing does not adequately support mobility needs and where accessibility barriers may increase the risk of housing instability, injury, or institutionalization.

This estimate reflects both visible unmet need, such as individuals waiting for accessible units or home modifications, and hidden need, including people who remain in inaccessible housing due to limited alternatives.

Projected Future Accessible Housing Needs for People with Mobility-Related Disabilities

Future demand for accessible housing will be driven by population growth and demographic aging, as mobility-related disabilities become more prevalent with age.

Based on Huron County's projected population growth between 2026 and 2036, an additional 101 accessible housing units are estimated to be required over the planning period.

These projections should be viewed as minimum planning estimates, as they do not fully capture potential increases related to aging in place preferences, longer life expectancy, or rising rates of disability among older adults.

Implications for Planning

Improving access to accessible housing will require both new construction and upgrades to existing homes.

Key considerations include:

- Increasing the number of purpose-built accessible and universal design units
- Supporting home modification and repair programs
- Embedding accessibility requirements into new housing development and land-use planning
- Ensuring accessible units are available across communities to support aging in place

⁴ Canadian Survey on Disability (2017 and 2022): Assistive Aids, Devices or Technologies – Mobility and Agility as cited by Canadian Human Rights Commission at: <https://www.chrc-ccdp.gc.ca/resources/publications/monitoring-the-right-housing-people-disabilities/accessibility-monitoring-the-right-to-housing-for-people-with-disabilities>

Accessible housing should be treated as a core element of housing planning, not a specialized or niche need.

Housing for People with Developmental Disabilities

Developmental disabilities are long-term, often life-long conditions that begin at birth or in childhood and can affect intellectual, cognitive, emotional, or physical functioning. These conditions may limit a person's ability to live independently without appropriate housing and supports.

Housing needs for people with developmental disabilities are shaped not only by affordability, but also by access to supports, suitable housing design, and the capacity of the service system to respond as needs change over time.

Research indicates that many Canadian adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities express a preference to live independently, either alone or with others, when appropriate supports are available (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, 2006). This reinforces the importance of a diversified housing continuum that moves beyond institutional or congregate models alone.

Types of Residential Supports

Residential services for adults with developmental disabilities typically include a range of housing and support models, including:

- Supported Group Living Residences, where three or more individuals live in a staff-supported residence operated by a transfer payment recipient
- Intensive Support Residences, where one or two individuals live in a staff-supported residence and receive intensive, individualized care
- Host Family (Lifeshare) Programs, where individuals live with a host family that provides care, support, and supervision
- Supported Independent Living, where individuals live alone or with others but receive ongoing supports from a service agency
- Specialized Accommodation, including transitional and permanent settings for individuals with a developmental disability and co-existing mental illness (dual diagnosis).

An effective housing system requires a balanced mix of these options, allowing individuals to transition between levels of support as their needs and preferences change.

Current Gap in Housing for People with Developmental Disabilities

Literature on the housing-related needs of adults with developmental disabilities is limited. However, the best available national estimates suggest that the unmet need for housing and residential supports across Canada ranges between 100,000 and 120,000 adults⁵.

Applying these prevalence estimates to Huron County's population aged 15 and over results in an estimated current gap of approximately 159 to 191 housing units required adults with developmental disabilities. This figure reflects individuals who are currently living with family caregivers, in inappropriate accommodations, and on waitlists for residential services. It is important to note that this estimate captures unmet need, and therefore reflects both visible and hidden demand within the community.

Projected Future Housing Needs

Future housing needs for people with developmental disabilities are influenced by population growth, increasing life expectancy, and the aging of both individuals with developmental disabilities and their family caregivers.

Based on projected population growth in Huron County and prevalence of need observed in current data⁶, it is estimated that an additional 27 to 31 housing units will be required over the planning period to meet future demand.

Planning Implications

Housing for people with developmental disabilities must be planned in tandem with support services.

Key considerations include:

- Expanding supportive housing options that allow for greater independence
- Ensuring a range of housing models to accommodate different and changing support needs
- Planning for transitions as family caregivers age

⁵ Canadian Association of Community Living as reported in Meeting Canada's Obligations to Affordable Housing and Supports for People with Disabilities to Live Independently in the community: Under Articles 19 and 28, Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities And under Articles 2 and 11, International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights accessed at: <https://www.ohchr.org/Documents/Issues/Housing/Disabilities/CivilSociety/Canada-ARCHDisabilityLawCenter.pdf>

and Canadian Association for Community Living (2008) accessed at: <https://www.communitylivingbc.ca/wp-content/uploads/NoPlaceLikeHome.pdf>

⁶ Based on the estimated current number of adults receiving residential services and current gap housing

- Aligning housing development with available service and funding capacity

Meeting current and future needs will require ongoing, incremental investment rather than one-time solutions.

Supportive Housing for People with Mental Health and/or Substance Use Challenges

Supportive housing for people with mental health and/or substance use challenges refers to permanent, affordable housing paired with ongoing, flexible supports that enable individuals to live stably in the community. Supports may be provided on-site or through mobile service models and typically focus on mental health, substance use, daily living skills, and connection to health and social services.

This housing type is distinct from short-term treatment or crisis accommodation. Its primary purpose is to provide long-term housing stability for individuals whose mental health or substance use challenges create barriers to securing or maintaining housing in the private market without support.

Housing Preferences and Service Models

Common supportive housing models for people with mental health and/or substance use challenges include:

- Scattered-site supportive housing, where individuals live in self-contained units with mobile supports
- Congregate or clustered supportive housing, where supports are provided on-site
- Hybrid models, combining on-site and outreach-based supports

An effective supportive housing system requires a range of models, recognizing that individuals' needs, preferences, and recovery trajectories vary significantly.

Current Gap in Supportive Housing

The best available Canadian estimates of the need for supportive housing for people with mental health and/or substance use challenges come from the Wellesley Institute, which suggests that the prevalence of need for housing with supports for people with severe mental illness and/or addiction ranges between 0.4% and 1.0% of the population aged 15 and over⁷.

⁷ Wellesley Institute, 2017, <https://www.wellesleyinstitute.com/wp-content/uploads/2017/01/Supportive-Housing-Estimating-the-Need.pdf>

Applying this prevalence range to Huron County's population results in an estimated total current need of approximately 227 to 568 supportive housing units. This estimate includes both individuals currently served by supportive housing programs and those with unmet or hidden need who may be experiencing housing instability, homelessness, or inappropriate housing situations.

In Huron County, supportive housing for people with mental health challenges is currently provided by two service providers:

- CMHA Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services, which operates 16 supportive housing beds across four houses (each with four bedrooms)
- CMHA Huron Perth Addiction and Mental Health Services, which operates 30 subsidies that are supported by case managers, including 26 that are permanent housing. They also have seven units in an owned property that are affordable rent (under \$500).

Based on confirmed supply levels, the estimated current gap in supportive housing for people with mental health and/or substance use challenges is therefore approximately 185 – 525 spaces.

This gap reflects both visible demand, such as individuals engaged with mental health and homelessness services, and hidden demand, including people living precariously with family, cycling through emergency services, or remaining unhoused due to a lack of appropriate supports.

Projected Future Supportive Housing Needs

Future need for supportive housing is closely tied to population growth, as well as broader trends related to mental health, substance use, and housing affordability.

Based on Huron County's projected population growth over the planning period, the incremental increase in need for supportive housing for people with mental health and/or substance use challenges is estimated to be approximately 22 to 56 additional units. This projection reflects growth in overall demand and does not include the existing unmet need identified above.

Implications for Planning

Supportive housing is a critical response for individuals whose needs cannot be met through the private market alone.

Key considerations include:

- Expanding permanent supportive housing, particularly for individuals with higher or more complex needs

- Ensuring housing is paired with flexible, adequately funded supports
- Using a mix of scattered-site and congregate models
- Coordinating supportive housing development with homelessness prevention and health system planning.

Supportive housing will remain a key pressure point in the housing and homelessness system over the life of the Plan.

Long-term Care and Supportive Housing for Seniors

Seniors need a range of housing and care options as their needs change over time. These options differ in levels of independence, support, affordability, and funding. For this report, seniors' housing and care options are defined as follows:

- **Independent living**
Private apartments or housing communities for seniors who can live independently but may value accessibility features, shared amenities, or social opportunities. This category also includes seniors' subsidized housing, such as rent-geared-to-income and affordable units.
- **Seniors care residences**
An umbrella term used in this report for shared housing that provides services such as meals, housekeeping, medication supervision, and limited personal assistance for seniors who remain independent in most daily activities. This includes:
 - **Retirement homes:** privately operated and regulated residences where seniors pay the full cost of housing and care. These homes do not receive government operating funding and are accessed directly by residents.
 - **Supportive housing for seniors:** housing that provides varying levels of support, from meals and housekeeping to personal care. Supports may be government-funded, self-paid, or a mix of both. Unlike retirement homes, affordability and public funding play a key role in access.
- **Assisted living services (home-based)**
Treated in this report as a service rather than a housing type. Assisted living supports higher-risk seniors to remain in their own homes and is accessed through Ontario Health at Home. Services may include personal care, homemaking, and emergency response systems.

- **Long-term care**

Publicly subsidized homes that provide 24-hour nursing and personal care for individuals whose needs can no longer be safely met in the community.

Current Gap in Long-Term Care for Seniors

Demand for long-term care is commonly assessed using waitlist data, which reflects seniors who have been assessed as eligible and are actively seeking placement. Based on provincial waitlist patterns and Huron County's share of Ontario's senior population, an estimated 339 seniors may currently be waiting for long-term care placement⁸.

However, waitlists reflect expressed demand within a constrained system, not total need. Huron County has a lower proportion of seniors living in long-term care than national averages, which suggests suppressed demand rather than lower underlying need.

When national prevalence rates of long-term care use among seniors are applied to Huron County's senior population, the implied requirement for long-term care beds exceeds current capacity by approximately 586 beds⁹. This comparison indicates that existing waitlists likely understate the true scale of unmet long-term care need, as many seniors remain in inappropriate or precarious settings while waiting or are diverted informally to family or community care.

Current Gap in Supportive Housing for Seniors

This report does not estimate gaps in private retirement homes, as supply in this sector generally adjusts to meet demand among seniors who are able to pay market rates. Instead, analysis focuses on supportive housing, where affordability, funding constraints, and service intensity limit the market's ability to respond without public intervention.

Two approaches were used to estimate unmet need for supportive housing for seniors. The first is based on potential diversion from long-term care waitlists. Research indicates that 20% to 50% of individuals on long-term care waitlists could potentially be supported safely and cost-effectively in the community if appropriate housing and services were available¹⁰. Applying this range to Huron County's

⁸ Based on Ontario Ministry of Long-Term Care Client Profile Database (CPRO), April 2025, as cited at: <https://www.oltca.com/about-long-term-care/the-data/>

⁹ Statistics Canada, 2011 Census and Canadian Community Health Survey 2005-2009 accessed at: <https://www150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/82-003-x/2018005/article/54966/tbl/tbl02-eng.htm>

¹⁰ Canadian Research Network for Care in the Community, In Focus Fact Sheet, the Balance of Care, <https://www.torontomu.ca/content/dam/crncc/knowledge/infocus/factsheets/InFocusBoCNovember2009FINAL.pdf>

estimated long-term care waitlist suggests a current unmet need for approximately 68 to 170 supportive housing units.

The second approach is a national prevalence-based approach. Using national data on the proportion of seniors by age group living in seniors care residences (excluding long-term care), and the proportion of seniors requiring non-market or below-market housing, the estimated current demand for supportive housing in Huron County is approximately 98 seniors.

Taken together, these methods suggest that unmet need for supportive housing likely falls within 68 to 170, even under conservative assumptions.

Projected Future Long Term Care Needs for Seniors

Population projections indicate significant growth in the senior population, particularly among older age cohorts with higher care needs. Based on projected age-specific growth, demand for long-term care beds in Huron County could increase by approximately 307 beds by 2036.

Recognizing ongoing efforts to support seniors in their homes and in community-based supportive housing, it is reasonable to assume that some demand can be shifted away from institutional care. Under this assumption, the additional long-term care need could be reduced to approximately 271 beds by 2036¹¹.

These projections assume continued investment in home and community care and should be revisited as service capacity and models evolve.

Projected Future Supportive Housing Needs for Seniors

Applying the same national prevalence-based methodology used for current need, and accounting for projected growth in the senior population, demand for supportive housing for seniors in Huron County is expected to increase by approximately 64 additional units by 2036.

Planning Implications

Planning for seniors must recognize the full continuum of housing and care options, not long-term care alone.

¹¹ Based on methodology applied by the Conference Board of Canada to estimate long term care demand, <https://www.conferenceboard.ca/product/sizing-up-the-challenge-meeting-the-demand-for-long-term-care-in-canada/>

Key considerations include:

- Recognizing that long-term care waitlists understate true need due to constrained supply
- Expanding supportive housing to help seniors remain in the community longer

Supportive housing for seniors should be treated as a strategic investment alongside long-term care and home-based services.

Housing for People who have Experienced Homelessness

Housing for people who have experienced homelessness refers to housing solutions paired with the level of support required to achieve and maintain housing stability. Housing needs within this population vary significantly based on acuity, duration of homelessness, and the presence of mental health, substance use, physical health, or other complex needs.

Effective housing responses typically include a mix of:

- **Permanent supportive housing**, with on-site or mobile supports for individuals with high or very high needs
- **Housing with intensive supports and rental assistance**, including social housing or market housing paired with rent supplements along with intensive supports, such as a Housing First program
- **Re-housing with light supports**, for individuals with lower acuity needs who can stabilize with short-term assistance.

Housing interventions for people who have experienced homelessness are most effective when delivered early and paired with appropriate supports, with a strong focus on preventing transitions into chronic homelessness.

Current Housing Gap

As of March 31, 2025, there were 139 active households on Huron County's By-Name List, including 129 households experiencing chronic homelessness. The acuity profile of households on the By-Name List indicates high levels of need:

- 53% had high acuity
- 39% had medium acuity
- 5% had low acuity
- 5% did not yet have a completed acuity assessment.

Based on current acuity levels, permanently ending homelessness for these households would require a range of housing and support interventions, including, approximately:

- 7 households requiring very high-intensity permanent supportive housing
- 119 households requiring housing with intensive supports and rental assistance/social housing
- 12 households requiring re-housing supports paired with affordable housing.

These figures reflect the current visible need among households actively known to the homelessness system and do not capture individuals or families experiencing hidden homelessness.

Projected Future Housing Needs to Address Homelessness

Local Trend-Based Projection

Future housing needs related to homelessness are driven by ongoing inflows and outflows from the By-Name List. Based on current trends, Huron County's By-Name List could grow to approximately 440 active households by 2035, with an estimated 1,300 new households experiencing homelessness at some point over the 10-year period.

Given the current profile of homelessness in Huron County, where most households experience chronic homelessness and present with medium to high acuity, the vast majority are expected to require a housing intervention to permanently end their homelessness.

The total number of housing units or support spaces required depends heavily on timing and sequencing. Earlier delivery of housing results in greater turnover, allowing the same units or spaces to serve more households over time.

Assuming:

- a lead time before the first units or spaces become available, and
- a steady addition of new units or support spaces over the planning period,

it is estimated that addressing homelessness over the next 10 years could require approximately:

- 17 very high-intensity permanent supportive housing units, and
- 600 housing spaces with intensive supports and rental assistance

These estimates assume no major change in inflow patterns or acuity levels.

AMO Provincial Scenario Alignment

The Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) recently released updated provincial projections indicating that homelessness is expected to increase under all modeled economic conditions through 2035¹². The report identifies three scenarios:

- Economic upturn: homelessness reaches 1.57 times current levels
- Steady economic conditions: homelessness reaches 2.04 times current levels
- Economic downturn: homelessness reaches 3.6 times current levels.

In Huron County, 226 households experienced homelessness over 2024/25. Based on recent local trends, this could increase to approximately 590 households by 2035, or about 2.6 times the current annual level. This local trajectory is above AMO's steady-economy scenario, but below the downturn scenario, suggesting a moderate-to-high growth path if current conditions and system performance persist.

These figures should be interpreted as planning estimates. Actual outcomes will depend on economic conditions and the strength of local prevention, early intervention, and housing supply and support investments.

Impact of Prevention and Early Intervention

Housing needs related to homelessness are highly sensitive to prevention performance. If fewer households enter chronic homelessness, overall housing requirements decline significantly.

For example:

- A 15% reduction in new chronic homelessness could reduce requirements to approximately 15 very high-intensity permanent supportive housing units and 540 intensive support spaces.
- A larger reduction in chronic homelessness (by 25%) could further reduce requirements to approximately 14 very high-intensity permanent supportive housing units and 500 intensive support spaces.

These scenarios highlight the importance of upstream prevention, rapid re-housing, and early intervention, which can reduce both the intensity and scale of housing required over time.

Planning Implications

¹² Donaldson, J., Kandyba, L., Wang, D. (2026). Municipalities Under Pressure One Year Later: An Update on the Human and Financial Cost of Ontario's Homelessness Crisis. HelpSeeker

Housing for people who have experienced homelessness requires timely, coordinated, and sustained investment.

Key considerations include:

- Prioritizing early delivery of permanent housing to maximize system turnover and impact
- Matching housing types to acuity levels, rather than relying on a single model
- Establishing permanent supportive housing for households with very high needs and intensive supports along with rental assistance for households with high needs
- Strengthening prevention and early intervention to reduce chronic homelessness
- Coordinating housing delivery with health, mental health, and social supports

Addressing homelessness effectively will require both housing supply and prevention.

Cross-Cutting Planning Implications

Across the special housing projections in this report, several consistent planning implications emerge.

- The County should use the projections to establish targets for each special housing area, identify responsible parties and supporting partners, and track progress through an annual dashboard (such as units created/preserved, households supported, waitlists, diversion outcomes, and accessibility retrofits).
- For populations requiring ongoing supports (developmental services, supportive housing for mental health/substance use, seniors supportive housing), unit creation must be paired with sustainable funding for staffing, clinical/community supports, and service coordination.
- Needs will be met through a mix of new purpose-built units, preservation/renewal, scattered-site and congregate options (where appropriate), and income-based supports (e.g., portable benefits, rent supplements). No single tool can address the full set of projected needs.
- Expanding supportive housing and assisted living services can safely divert a portion of demand from long-term care while better aligning with seniors' preferences to remain in the community.
- Accessible and universal design should be treated as a standard component of new housing development, given the scale of mobility-related need and the expected growth in older adult populations.

Appendix 3: Relevant Insights for the Housing and Homelessness Plan from the Population and Housing Projections Study



Population and Housing Growth

Population and household projections prepared for the County of Huron in 2023 by Watson & Associates show that Huron County is entering a period of population and household growth that represents a shift from historic trends. Under the recommended medium-growth scenario, the population is projected to increase by approximately 12,200 residents between 2026 and 2036, reaching roughly 82,600 people by 2036. This reflects an average annual growth rate of 1.6%, substantially higher than the County's long-term historical growth rate.

The number of households is anticipated to increase by 3,800 between 2026 and 2036, or roughly 380 households per year. This rate of household growth is approximately three times higher than historic levels. These projections show the amount of new housing needed to meet housing demand in the community.

Aging Population

Population aging is the most significant demographic trend shaping future housing need in Huron County. The number of residents aged 75 and over is projected to increase by approximately 50% (4,427 residents), increasing from 13% of the population in 2026 to 17% by 2036. This age group is forecast to grow at the fastest rate of any cohort over the 10-year period.

As the population ages, natural population increase is expected to decline, increasing the County's reliance on net migration to sustain growth. These dynamics have important implications for housing and homelessness planning. Older adults are more likely to live alone, have fixed or declining incomes, and experience mobility or health challenges that increase vulnerability to housing instability. Without sufficient affordable, accessible, and supportive housing options, demographic aging alone is expected to increase demand for homelessness prevention, supportive housing, and system navigation supports, even in the absence of broader economic shocks. Watson & Associates also notes "Huron County is also anticipated to accommodate a growing share of young adults and new families seeking competitively priced home ownership and rental opportunities".

Increasing Affordability Pressures and Shifting Housing Demand to Medium- and High- Density and Rental Options

Housing demand in Huron County is projected to shift gradually toward medium- and high-density forms, including townhouses and apartments. Over the 10-year period

from 2026 to 2036, approximately half of new housing development is expected to be medium- (25.4%) or high- (26.7%) density.

While market-driven development will deliver a greater range of built forms, these forms do not inherently produce housing that is affordable to lower-income households or appropriate for people with support needs or accessibility modifications. Purpose-built rental housing, deeply affordable units, and non-market housing will require deliberate policy and investment to ensure that new supply contributes to housing stability and homelessness prevention.

With housing affordability concerns increasing across Ontario, demand for primary (purpose-built) rental housing in Huron County is expected to continue to grow. Meeting the County's future housing needs will require a meaningful expansion of the rental housing supply to support housing stability and affordability. Watson & Associates forecasts an increase of approximately 1,374 rental units between 2026 and 2036. If this growth were to be met entirely through new development, rental housing would account for roughly 36% of all new residential construction. The share of renter households in the County is projected to increase from 22.7% in 2026 to 24.3% by 2036.

Migration-Driven Growth and Housing Vulnerability

Future population growth in Huron County is expected to be driven mainly by people moving from elsewhere in Ontario. While past growth was largely among older adults, future migration is expected to include more working-age adults and families. This increases competition for housing, particularly affordable rental units and ownership options priced within ranges affordable to local incomes.

Migration-driven growth places upward pressure on housing costs, reduces rental availability, and increases the risk of displacement for lower-income households. Together, these pressures raise the likelihood of housing instability and homelessness, especially for people with fixed incomes, health challenges, or unstable employment.

Implications for the Housing and Homelessness Plan

The population and housing projections indicate that continued growth, aging, and migration will place increasing pressure on Huron County's housing system. In the absence of coordinated action, these trends are expected to contribute to tighter rental markets, rising housing costs, and increased risk of housing instability.

To support housing stability, the County and local municipalities will need to actively enable the delivery of a broader range of market housing, with particular emphasis on purpose-built rental and affordable ownership and rental options aligned with local incomes. This includes ensuring an adequate supply of appropriately zoned and serviced land, facilitating higher-density and rental-oriented development in appropriate locations, and reducing regulatory, servicing, and approval barriers that can limit the feasibility of rental construction. Strengthening the market's ability to deliver rental and affordable housing is a critical component of preventing housing instability and reducing future pressure on homelessness-serving systems.

Appendix 4: Legislative and Policy Context



Housing Services Act Requirements

Under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, Service Managers must develop a 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan that:

- assesses current and future housing needs,
- sets objectives, targets, and measures, and
- explains how progress will be monitored.

The Plan must also address the housing needs of victims of domestic violence and people with disabilities, and reflect the Act's matters of provincial interest, including positive outcomes, coordination with community services, a range of housing options, accountability, and environmental sustainability.

Policy Statement: Service Manager Housing and Homelessness Plans (2016)

Plans must be consistent with the provincial *Policy Statement: Service Manager Housing and Homelessness Plans*. The Policy Statement requires that Service Manager Plans:

- Strengthen accountability and outcomes by showing a coordinated local housing and homelessness system, setting local targets, engaging the public and people with lived experience, and reporting on progress.
- Advance the goal of ending homelessness, using local enumeration data, Housing First principles, and strategies tailored to chronic homelessness, youth, Indigenous peoples, and people transitioning from provincially funded systems.
- Improve coordination across human services, including with Ontario Health Regions, to enhance access to housing, prevention, and supports.
- Engage and collaborate with Indigenous organizations and communities and support access to culturally appropriate housing and services.
- Address a broad range of community needs, including people with disabilities, survivors of domestic violence, seniors, youth, newcomers, and other locally identified groups.
- Support non-profit and co-operative housing providers through engagement, capacity building, and long-term sustainability strategies.
- Leverage the private market and align with provincial land-use planning frameworks to support a full range and mix of housing options.

- Promote environmental sustainability and climate resilience within social and affordable housing.

This Policy Statement is the core provincial direction with which all Housing and Homelessness Plans must be consistent.

Ministry's Guidance for Amended Plans and 2025 Priorities

In the Minister's August 2025 letter to Service Managers and accompanying Question and Answers, the Minister encouraged Service Managers to reflect several current provincial priorities in their updated Plans, including:

- Supporting municipalities with assigned housing targets
- Promoting modular/factory-built homes and innovative technologies to increase supply
- Increasing the supply of non-market housing to help meet Ontario's National Housing Strategy target of 19,660 rent-assisted units by 2027–28
- Encouraging mixed-income housing to support provider sustainability
- Developing strategies to prevent homelessness, including alternatives to encampments and access to appropriate short- and long-term housing
- Using By-Name Lists to match people experiencing homelessness to services and supports
- Integrating supportive housing initiatives across systems, including coordination with Homelessness and Addiction Recovery Treatment (HART) Hubs
- Implementing the Service Agreement framework to protect community housing stock and rent-geared-to-income units as providers reach the end of their original obligations
- Advancing strategic approaches that support movement along the housing continuum, supported by data collection, sharing and reporting
- Addressing collaboration with Ontario Health Regions (replacing Local Health Integration Networks)
- Reflecting a coordinated approach with Ontario's land use planning framework, including the Provincial Planning Statement, 2024 (PPS 2024), particularly around ensuring an appropriate range and mix of housing options

Huron County's 2014–2024 Housing & Homelessness Plan

In 2014, the County of Huron adopted *A Long-Term Affordable Housing and Homelessness Plan for the County of Huron (2014–2024)*, the community's first comprehensive strategy to strengthen the local housing system and prevent and address homelessness. The plan was formally reviewed and updated in 2019 to reflect emerging needs, system changes, and provincial requirements.

The 2014–2024 Plan identified nine strategic areas for action:

1. Establish a Framework to Provide Leadership, Governance and Advocacy
2. Expand Access to Affordable Housing, Including Housing with Supports
3. Improve Data Collection and Reporting
4. Develop an Emergency Service System Oriented Towards Ending Homelessness
5. Increase Targeted Efforts to Prevent Homelessness
6. Improve Service Coordination
7. Use Municipal Planning Tools to Facilitate Affordable Housing Development
8. Preserve and Improve the Existing Social Housing Portfolio
9. Establish a People-Centred System of Housing and Homelessness Supports

These priorities laid the foundation for a decade of growth in affordable housing supply, system coordination, and data-informed planning. Much of the progress achieved between 2014 and 2024 reflects direct advancement of these nine areas. The following section summarizes key accomplishments and the evolution of the housing and homelessness system over the past ten years.

Progress Since the 2014–2024 Housing & Homelessness Plan

Over the last decade, Huron County has transformed its housing and homelessness system. What began as a small set of disconnected programs is now a coordinated, data-driven, community-wide system that brings together municipal services, non-profits, health providers, and justice partners. The progress achieved between 2014 and 2024 laid essential foundations for the next stage of system development.

System Evolution and Strengthened Infrastructure

A decade of work has built a more coherent and integrated homelessness-serving system. Key structural advances include:

- Establishment of a Housing & Homelessness Steering Committee and a Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee, creating a governance backbone for cross-sector planning and decision-making.
- Creation of new roles, including the Homelessness Programs Supervisor, Housing Services Supervisor, Homelessness Programs Coordinator, Housing Stability Worker, and Housing Liaison, that expanded the County's internal capacity to lead system change and deliver services.
- Full implementation of a Coordinated Access System, including a By-Name List launched in 2022, standardized assessment, prioritization policies, and a recurring Coordinated Access Case Conferencing Table that coordinates supports and housing matches.
- Growth in interagency collaboration, with engagement from CMHA Huron Perth and Thames Valley, Huron OPP, Huron Perth Public Health, United Way Huron, Huron Women's Shelter, Huron Turning Point Residence, Safe Homes for Youth, paramedic services, and municipal partners.

This foundation marks a shift from program-level responses to a coordinated system focused on equitable access, fairness, and shared accountability for results.

Expanded Housing Options and New Developments

Over the past decade, Huron County expanded its affordable and supportive housing portfolio:

- New community housing developments, including:
 - Bennett Street (Goderich): two triplexes; four net new units.
 - Sanders Street (Exeter): 20 new affordable units completed in 2024.
 - Gibbons Street (Goderich): 40-unit development underway.
- \$7.9 million received from the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI), the Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF), and the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) for the investment in the three new community housing developments.
- Ongoing annual capital improvements and a robust preventative maintenance program helping sustain 470 community housing units (415 RGI, 55 affordable) in very good condition.

- 606 households housed in Huron’s social housing portfolio over 10 years.

These investments, supported by municipal tools such as Community Improvement Plans, have expanded supply, improved quality, and enhanced long-term viability of the affordable housing stock.

Enhanced Homelessness Prevention and Housing Stability Supports

New and strengthened programs over the decade have broadened Huron County’s prevention and stabilization capacity:

- Launch of the Huron Heart to Home Housing Stability Team, offering individualized supports, landlord mediation, financial literacy skills, and re-housing supports.
- Expansion of outreach, including a Housing Outreach Worker (2015).
- Introduction of the Bridge Housing Program (2024), delivered with CMHA, using a dispersed supportive housing model to transition people from homelessness into safe, temporary units with wraparound supports.
- Development of youth-specific prevention partnerships, including a 2024 collaboration with Huron-Perth Children’s Aid Society.

Together, these programs have strengthened the County’s ability to support people at risk earlier, respond more effectively to complex needs, and shorten pathways from homelessness to housing.

Data-Driven Planning and Increased Transparency

The County has significantly improved its ability to measure homelessness, identify trends, and evaluate system performance:

- Two homelessness enumerations (2018 and 2021) that provided early baselines for understanding local homelessness.
- The introduction of the By-Name List in 2022 enables real-time monitoring of inflow, outflow, and actively homeless households and improved tracking of outcomes.
- Monthly Housing & Homelessness Share-Outs that publicly report active homelessness, demographics, and trends.
- Increased integration of data into system coordination, prioritization, and policy planning.

These improvements have shifted decision-making toward real-time, evidence-based approaches consistent with best practices across Canada.

Strengthened Community Capacity Through Partnerships

A major accomplishment of the last decade is the depth and consistency of interagency collaboration. Huron County now regularly convenes:

- The Housing & Homelessness Advisory Committee
- The Coordinated Access Case Conferencing Table
- Cross-sector partners including health, mental health and addictions, gender-based violence, child welfare, youth services, justice, municipal planning, and social assistance.

These partnerships have improved care coordination, facilitated smoother referrals, and fostered a shared community responsibility for homelessness prevention and housing stability.

