



HOUSING OUR FUTURE

Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing
and Homelessness Prevention Strategy



2021
ANNUAL REPORT

A Message from the Warden

Since its inception in 2014, Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy has guided the County of Simcoe in effective affordable housing creation across the region. By the end of 2021, the County had already created over 2,500 new affordable housing units through targeted strategies including rent supplements, housing allowances, secondary suites, homeownership down-payment assistance, and new affordable rental developments.

We know that the global COVID-19 pandemic has made life challenging for many, and has shone a spotlight on the social services and public housing sector. County Council, our staff and our member-municipalities are taking action and planning for the future to address this challenge.

From March 1, 2020, to February 28, 2022, the total number of Unique Clients Served by staying in an emergency shelter was 2,660. The County funds several initiatives to address the needs of the increased homeless population; this includes supporting the motel-based shelter model program to move individuals experiencing homelessness through the continuum of support to permanent housing. In 2021, the County of Simcoe provided support for 757 residents to remain in their homes or to secure housing

through Housing Retention Funding.

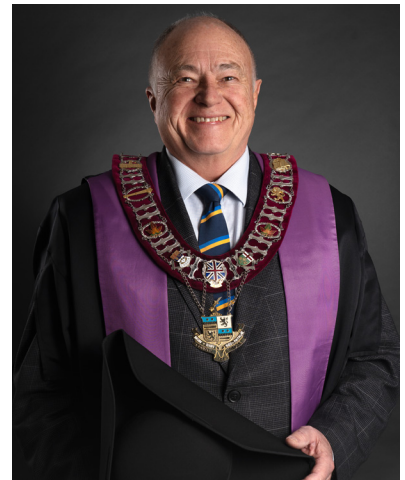
County Council is taking a collaborative and aggressive approach to addressing needs across the housing continuum by creating a balance of new capital builds and providing timely financial assistance through housing support programs. The County is on track to reach our minimum target of 2,685 new units by 2024, and from there will continue to seek opportunities to achieve as many new units as possible. We look forward to a number of new units in the years to come, including new affordable rental developments planned in Orillia, Bradford West Gwillimbury, and Barrie.

In 2021, the County of Simcoe was able to distribute nearly \$1.3 million in rent supplements and housing allowances throughout every municipality, including the separated cities of Barrie and Orillia. We know house prices and rental rates are rising, and we're working with partners across all sectors to plan for the future with impactful solutions.

Looking toward 2022, we will continue to move forward on new affordable rental developments in process, strengthen support for residents in all stages of the housing spectrum, and explore more innovative solutions to issues affecting housing throughout the County. County Council is determined to continue to identify

opportunities, and to continue leadership in the development of innovative solutions to ensure Simcoe County residents have a safe place to call home.

Sincerely,



A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "George Cornell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

George Cornell
Warden, County of Simcoe

Housing Our Future

2021 Annual Report

January 1, 2021 – December 31, 2021

Each year, under the Housing Services Act (2011), the County of Simcoe reports to the public and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) on progress made under its 10-year long-term affordable housing strategy, which took effect in January 2014.

The annual report tracks indicators according to the targets set under five strategic themes within the 10-year Strategy. It uses a Results-Based Accountability (RBA) framework to analyze program and service-delivery performance measures.





STRATEGIC THEME ONE

Strong Governance and Leadership

Desired outcome: Successful implementation of the Strategy, supported by working partnerships with the public and private sectors, and all levels of government.

Collaboration is the cornerstone of strong communities. The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee and County staff continue to work in partnership across all levels of government and with public, private, and not-for-profit sector partners to support the successful implementation of the Strategy.

The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee is comprised of six municipal representatives for the geographical areas of North, South, East and West Simcoe, and the cities of Barrie and Orillia. The Warden is an ex-officio member of the committee. Additionally, there are six non-municipal representatives from private, public, and non-profit

organizations, selected based on their expertise in the following sectors: building and development industry, health, homelessness prevention services, landlord/property management, mental health, and addictions care. The Committee is further supported by County staff from Social and Community Services and Planning departments.



The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee met to address several topics in 2021. Highlights include:

- Delivery of the Housing First Program
- Homelessness Shelter Services updates
- Hosting three Affordable Housing Virtual Forums in collaboration with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) on topics of funding and financing for affordable housing development, passive housing, and Housing First in partnership with Empower Simcoe
- Ongoing monitoring and reporting of local housing data, indicators of local housing needs, and service level data
- Regional analysis of Housing as a Right in housing and homelessness prevention strategies
- Research and discussion on various topics, including the effects of short-term rentals on affordable housing, and the viability of pre-approved building plans in lowering private development costs for homeowners

STRATEGIC THEME TWO

Achieve Affordable Housing Target

Desired outcome: Simcoe County residents have access to a minimum of 2,685 new affordable housing units by 2024.

To ensure that all residents have access to adequate, appropriate and affordable housing that will meet their needs Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy aims to promote, provide, and protect a range of affordable housing options across the County.

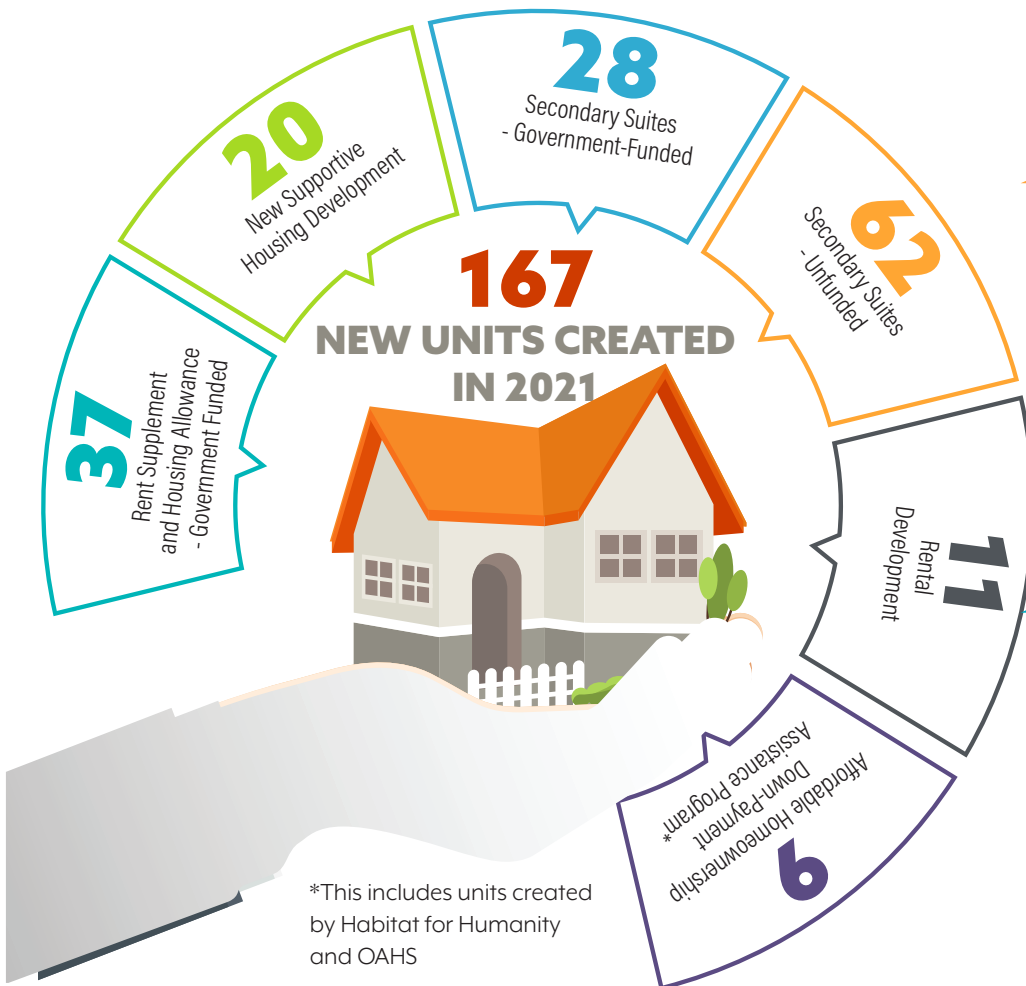
Through a combination of new development, rent supplements/ housing allowances, homeownership assistance, and the creation of secondary suites,

the County and its community partners have achieved the creation of 2,531 new units of affordable housing since 2014, including 167 new units in 2021.

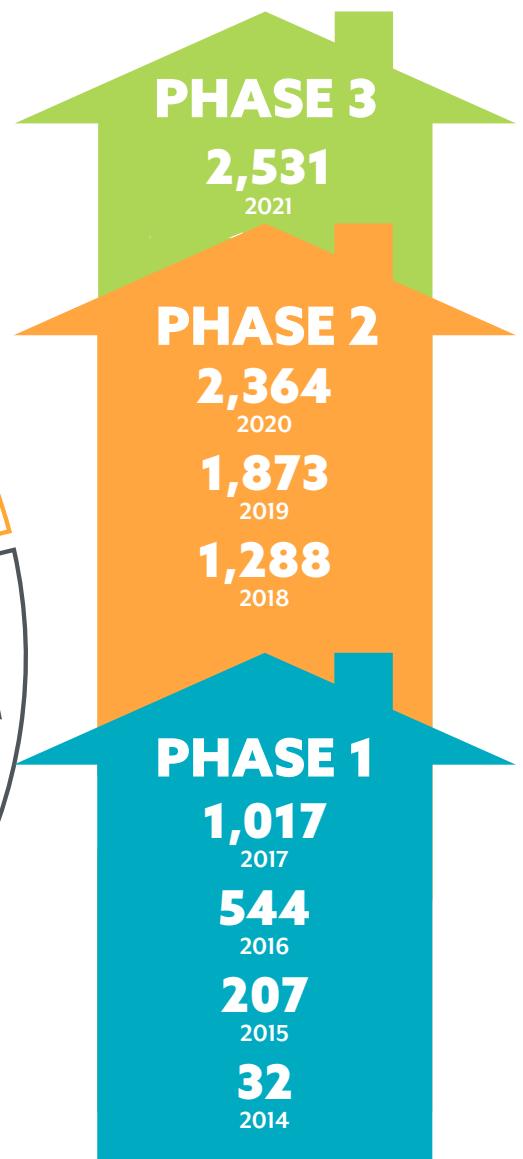
January 01, 2021, marked the start of the County's Implementation Strategy: Phase Three (2021-2024). The County, and its municipal, community, and private-sector partners have achieved 94% of the minimum target as of December 31, 2021.

The Covid-19 pandemic has intensified the need for continued

homelessness prevention, increased housing with supports, and more affordable housing options across the region. The County will continue to monitor local housing needs and leverage available funding and resources accordingly.



UNITS CREATED TO-DATE





Affordable Housing Program Delivery

The Strategy builds on initiatives proven to work in Simcoe County, which has led to innovative and effective program development and delivery. Using a Results-Based-Accountability (RBA) Framework, the County can measure its performance accountability and track programs' successful implementation. In combination, the following programs have worked to increase affordable housing stock across Simcoe County while addressing a variety of housing pressure points across the housing spectrum.

Rent Supplements

A rent supplement or housing allowance provides rental assistance for tenants who cannot afford a landlord's regular market rent. Rent supplements focus on supporting individuals and families with lower incomes and can bridge the gap between social assistance shelter rates and rent or provide a flat rate for lower-income working households.



This is such amazing and great news in a time of otherwise massive challenges and great fears. Thank you all again, so very much - the help of this financial extension and what it means for stability of our family, is an incredible gift.

S., Rent Supplement Recipient



HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

In 2021, the County distributed **\$1.29M** rent supplement/housing allowance subsidy dollars



HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?

- Together with community partners, County staff connected 99% of all referrals received* to an eligible affordable housing unit with rent subsidy support
- Throughout 2021, rent supplements assisted households in every municipality, including the cities of Barrie and Orillia

*Referrals are requested or accepted only in alignment with available funding.



IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?

- 37 households were housed with new rent supplements in 2021
- 882 units have been made affordable with rent supplements since 2014
- Rent supplements continue to assist seniors, youth, low-income earners, Indigenous persons, survivors of human trafficking, and persons experiencing mental health or addiction challenges, persons experiencing chronic homelessness, and others in addressing systemic poverty barriers

Affordable Homeownership Down-Payment Assistance Program

Through its Homeownership Down-Payment Assistance Program, the County of Simcoe provides eligible individuals and families with down-payment assistance towards purchasing a home (in the form of a forgivable loan). Enabling individuals and families to move out of rental accommodation and into affordable homeownership increases rental opportunities for others by freeing up existing rental space for a new tenant to move in.



HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

In 2021, the County distributed **\$377,200** in affordable homeownership down-payment supports.



HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?

Homes purchased were within affordability limits, clients were able to successfully purchase homes below the maximum purchase price of **\$494,600**



Thank you for supporting and encouraging me to make my dream [of homeownership] come true. Thank you!

T., Homeownership
Down-Payment Assistance Recipient



IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?

- 9 households were housed with Affordable Homeownership Down-payment Assistance in 2021
- 135 households have been housed with Affordable Homeownership Down-payment Assistance since 2014

In 2021, a total of **\$667,290** was returned to the County of Simcoe's Revolving Fund. This sustainability fund holds any down-payment assistance that purchasers pay back, for redistribution to future program participants. .



Affordable Second Suites and Urgent Home Repairs and Accessibility Modifications

Secondary suites help address housing pressure points through the development of new one- and two-bedroom affordable rental units, improving the range of options available to single individuals, ageing couples, and single-parent households. Funding of up to \$30,000 per unit is available for property owners to create secondary suites.

Funding of up to \$15,000 is also available for homeowners requiring urgent home repairs or accessibility modifications to stay housed.

Examples of eligible repair projects include mould remediation, plumbing or septic repairs, and roofing or structural repairs. Examples of accessibility modifications include the installation of ramps, handrails, or chair and bath lifts.



HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

In 2021, the County of Simcoe allocated **\$847,854** under its Municipal Secondary Suites funding program.



HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?

- 26 eligible households proceeded with a County-funded Secondary Suites application
- 16 were approved for funding
- 10 were waitlisted, and will receive the next available funding



HOW MUCH DID WE DO?

The County also distributed **\$330,000** of federal and provincial Secondary Suites funding, and an additional **\$204,176** in Urgent Home Repairs, through the Ontario Renovates Program.



HOW WELL DID WE DO IT?

- 28 eligible households proceeded with a Secondary Suites Application, funded through the Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI)
- 20 were approved for funding in 2021
- 8 are approved to received funding in 2022



IS ANYONE BETTER OFF?

- 28 new secondary suites were completed in 2021, with government funding.
- 197 new secondary suites have been created with government funding since the onset of the Strategy in 2014.
- 20 units were supported with urgent home repairs or accessibility modifications in 2021
- 324 units have been supported with urgent home repairs or accessibility since 2014



Thank you. You have been very helpful and made my daily life so much easier. I am so grateful.

B, Accessibility Modifications Funding Recipient



New Rental Development HOW MUCH DID WE DO?



Little Ave, Barrie

The County supported Barrie Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corporation with engineering guidance throughout the construction as well as rent supplements for 11 new units being offered to seniors which opened in mid-2021.

its doors in August 2021, creating 20 self-contained units of supportive housing and 40 new shelter beds for men, women, and families, plus a 5- bedroom youth wing on a 2.4-acre property in Orillia.

Bradford to develop a mixed family and seniors building, including a County Social and Community Services office and program space on the ground floor in partnership with the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury.

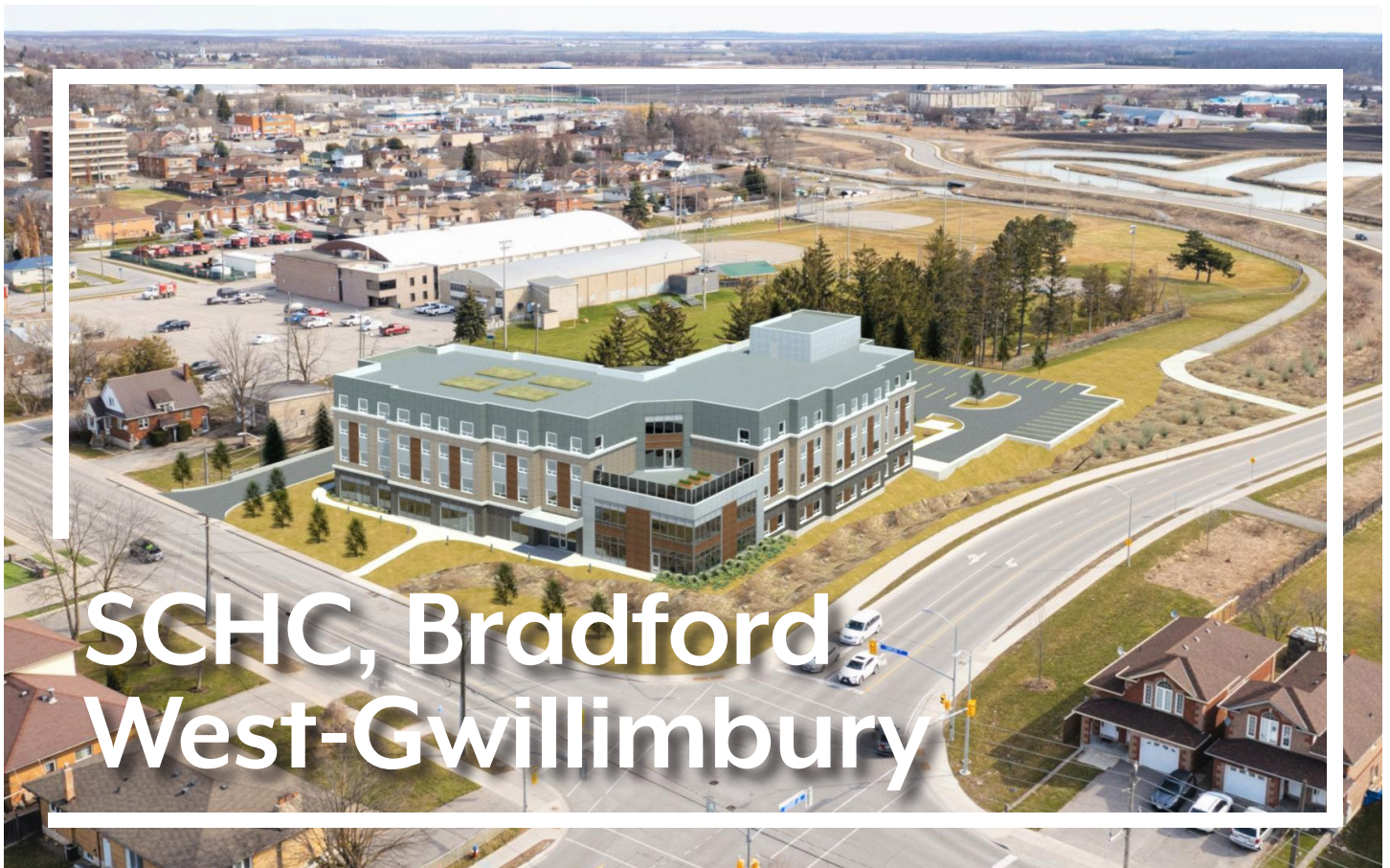
The location at the corner of Simcoe Road and Marshview Boulevard was selected for good connectivity to transit and pedestrian walkways. Future residents of the building will be within walking distance to the Town's future civic plaza, downtown commercial amenities, elementary schools, ample green space and parks, and the GO station.

Building Hope, Orillia

The Building Hope Project by The Lighthouse opened

Simcoe County Housing Corporation (SCHC), Bradford West-Gwillimbury
County Council approved a **\$28.4M** project in

The Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury donated the two-acre site and waived development application fees.





Orillia Groundbreaking

Orillia Groundbreaking

The County Council-approved affordable housing and social and community services hub development in the City of Orillia broke ground in the Fall of 2021. The new building will provide 130 units of affordable housing.

After public consultation, we heard the value of neighbourhood preservation, and made improvements to the building design and landscaping plan to enhance compatibility.

The two-year development project is expected to be completed spring 2024.

Barrie Acquisition

County Council approved the acquisition of a 4.7 acre site in Barrie for the development of a mix of affordable and social housing, Ontario Works, Children Services office space, and potentially other social and community supportive uses.

The demolition of the existing aged structures on site has been completed in preparation for the proposed development.

STRATEGIC THEME THREE

Protect Existing Public Assets

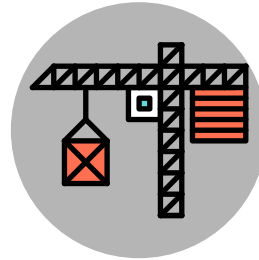
Desired outcome: 85% of existing social housing units in the County remain part of the housing stock.

Protecting Existing Stock

Much of the public, non-profit and co-operative housing stock was developed between the 1970's and the 1990's. The County of Simcoe continues to invest in preserving these existing housing assets and seek out opportunities to access funding for capital repairs and building improvements to increase accessibility and energy efficiency.



In 2021, The County invested **\$1.9M** on capital repairs for existing Simcoe County Housing Corporation (SCHC) units



Through its **Non-Profit Provider Capital Repair Loan process**, the County provided **\$1.6M** to assist mandated social housing providers with urgent capital repairs.

Maintaining Affordability upon End-of-Operating Agreements

Non-Profit and Co-operative social housing providers have mortgages on their buildings. Some housing providers have already reached the end of their mortgages. New regulations under the Housing Services Act will be introduced in 2022 governing the process for Service Managers to enter into post-mortgage service agreements. The County will continue to work with housing providers towards the goal of preserving the availability of affordable units in their projects.

Of the original 4,113 units in the social housing portfolio in 2014:

- **92% remain in the historical social housing system – 3,806 units**
- **99% of the original 4,113 units continue to remain as affordable housing in the community**

Centralized Wait List: Rent-Geared-to-Income Housing

As of December 31, 2021, the total number of applicants on the Centralized Waitlist was 4,664, an increase of 2.6% over the waitlist reported in 2020. Applicants on the waitlist, include:

- **Seniors: 20%**
- **Adults with no dependents: 52%**
- **Households with dependents: 28%**

In 2021, staff processed 1,606 new applications. Since 2020, changes in wait times, excluding special priority applicants, have increased 10.4% for seniors, 9.3% for households with no dependents, and have decreased 11.8% for households with dependents.

The decrease in wait times for households with dependants can be attributed partially to the opening of the Simcoe County Housing Corporation's (SCHC) Zoo Park Road building, and the re-opening and expansion of Barrie Municipal Non-Profit's Little Avenue building. These two locations housed several clients from the Centralized Waitlist, including singles and households with dependants.



Decreases in wait times can also be attributed to an increase in cancellations of applications by clients who chose to not pursue their application.

Increases in wait times occur because of two main factors— economic changes and community composition changes, such as fluctuations in population.

While the seniors' waiting list has increased, this can be partially attributed to applicants' aging-in-place on the waiting list and adding seniors' housing to their selections to eventually be housed within a seniors' complex.

2021 Centralized Waitlist data shows continued demand for social and affordable housing. A focus on one-bedroom units and the use of rent supplements/ housing allowances provides a balanced approach toward meeting residents' needs across the County. The waiting list for one-bedroom units continues to increase, especially in the City of Barrie.



STRATEGIC THEME FOUR

Planning for the Public Good

Desired outcome: All municipalities adopt planning, financial and policy tools highlighted in the strategy to facilitate and promote affordable housing development and transportation modes across the county.

Planning for the Future

A Municipal Liaison Group meets quarterly to discuss ways to improve affordable housing outcomes at the local municipal level and share best practices for promoting and incentivizing affordable housing development. Topics discussed include:

- Affordable Housing Advisory Committee Updates
- Community Benefits Charges
- County of Simcoe's Affordable Housing and Homelessness Strategy: Implementation Plan Phase 3 (2021-2023)
- Development Charges Updates
- Local Affordable Housing Task Forces
- Local Zoning By-law Amendments for Affordable Housing
- Minister's Zoning Orders and Affordable Housing Development
- Multi-Residential Unit Tracking
- Official Plan Updates
- Pre-Approved Building Plan Research in Partnership with Local Chief Building Officials
- Community Improvement Plans
- Rapid Housing Initiative
- Review of Second Suites Discount Rate
- Creation of Third Units on residential lots

Municipal Spotlight – Zoning By-Law Amendments for Affordable Housing Creation Town of Innisfil

In June 2021, the Town of Innisfil amended its Zoning By-Law to allow up to two accessory dwelling units (ADUs) on certain properties (the Town's policies for one ADU on properties have been in place since 2014). In the preparation of the new policies, an online survey was undertaken, which showed overall support

for the creation of more accessory dwelling units in Innisfil to promote housing affordability. To help residents with building an ADU on their property, Innisfil has prepared an ADU Homeowners Guide and hosted an ADU Public Information Session in partnership with the County of Simcoe. Thus far, there are not any properties with two ADUs in Innisfil, but since 2014, a total of nearly 100 ADUs have been registered, with 40 of those occurring in 2020 and 2021.

City of Barrie

The City of Barrie passed amendments to its Zoning By-law on October 4, 2021, with the goal of making it easier to build more affordable housing options within the City. Removing minimum dwelling unit size requirements will allow for smaller, more affordable units as-of-right, including micro-suites and tiny homes. Changes to the standards for non-conforming buildings will support the creation of small-scale assisted living facilities within existing dwellings. Lastly, new permissions for accessory residential uses in the City's Institutional zone make it possible to add affordable housing units on lands throughout the City, such as places of worship and community service facilities. Visit www.barrie.ca/affordablehousing to learn more.

Building Complete Communities - Local Official Plans

Under the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, the County of Simcoe is the Approval Authority for all local municipal Official Plans. Municipalities must update their Official Plans every 10 years to ensure alignment with provincial and regional (County) plans, and consistency with provincial policy statements issued by the Minister, including the requirement for affordable housing targets.

All member municipalities have initiated an Official Plan Update and are at varying stages of completion. As of December 31, 2021, five local official plans had been approved by the County.





Building Complete Communities - Transit

Providing residents with reliable and cost-efficient transportation between major urban hubs and local transit services within the County facilitates access to essential services, employment, and education and increases access to affordable housing options. The LINX transit system was launched in 2017 and committed to opening six new public transportation routes by 2021. Route 6, Midland to Orillia opened in August 2021, and LINX Transit saw an increase of 8.2% in ridership from 2020.

ROUTE (RETURN TRIP)	PROJECTED OPENING	STATUS
Midland-Penetanguishene-Barrie	Summer 2018	Opened
Wasaga Beach-Stayner-Barrie	August 2019	Opened
Orillia-Oro Medonte-Barrie	August 2019	Opened
Collingwood-Wasaga Beach	August 2019	Opened
Alliston-Bradford West Gwillimbury	August 2020	Opened
Midland-Orillia	August 2021	Opened

STRATEGIC THEME FIVE

Create an Integrated Service Model for Housing and Supports

Desired outcome: People experiencing homelessness obtain and retain housing.

Since the 10-year Strategy was developed, the landscape of homelessness has changed, with inflows into homelessness being driven by economic and social factors directly related to the the COVID-19 pandemic and the serious shortage of affordable housing. The effects of COVID-19 have profoundly impacted all County residents, especially those already facing the barriers of poverty, food insecurity, homelessness, or compounding factors related to mental health and addictions. Support for those in urgent need is an ongoing priority as the County of Simcoe and its community partners continues to quickly plan and deliver emergency relief funding and connect residents to essential resources, services, and support programs.

Planning and funding reflect alignment with federal and provincial policy, and funding

guidelines, include such funded domains as Homeless Shelters, a Regionalized Housing First Program, Domiciliary Care, Supportive Transitional Housing, Community Hubs, and Rent Retention.

89,518

nights spent in emergency shelters by combined households

132

households assisted with transitional housing

144

individuals supported by the County of Simcoe's Domiciliary Care Program

29

individuals supported by the Seniors at Home Program

11

households assisted with Rapid Re-Housing

131

households assisted with Housing First

Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)

HIFIS is an information system provided by the Government of Canada's Employment and Social Development Canada department and is a community-level data collection and case management information system. At a local level, HIFIS increases understanding about homelessness challenges in Simcoe County. This information improves planning for services and initiatives. Data from HIFIS also assists service providers with case management; helping front-line staff provide coordinated services and reduce duplication for HIFIS clients.

More information is available at simcoe.ca/hifis

TOTAL COMPLETE	NEW IN 2021	% INCREASE FROM 2020
14,280 total client files	2,366 new files completed in 2021	20%
233 active HIFIS users	113 new users joined in 2021	-13%
32 total agencies	1 new agency joined in 2021	3%
64 total training sessions completed	23 virtual training sessions since June 2021	56%
36 HIFIS reports available to HIFIS users	1 new report released in 2021	3%
2,641 HIFIS Help Desk requests/support		

Improving Incidence on Data and Scope | Enumeration 2021

March 2021, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) required Service Managers (SMs) across Ontario to have an operational By-Name List (BNL) and complete a homeless enumeration by December 31, 2021.

Initially scheduled for November 17 – 23, 2021, the Simcoe County Homelessness Enumeration was rescheduled to January 2022 due to a surge in COVID-19 cases.

Conducted from January 23 – 25, 2022, the Simcoe County Homelessness Enumeration results demonstrate the highest count of people experiencing homelessness to date. Preliminary analysis indicates a few factors contributing to the high count, including greater need in the community, method of data collection and participation by agencies and survey interviewers experienced in the enumeration process.

COUNTS FOR PREVIOUS ENUMERATIONS	2016	2018	2020	2022
Number of completed survey	292	488	377	441
Number of people counted experiencing homelessness	292	697	563	722

Twenty individuals were added to the By Name List, resulting in a list comprising more than 500 people. Findings from the enumeration will be shared broadly through the County of Simcoe, the Regional Enumeration Advisory Committee (REAC) and the Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness (SCATEH).

Additional information can be found at simcoe.ca/enumeration and scateh.com/enumeration

Project Spotlight – Building Hope

The Building Hope Project by The Lighthouse opened its doors in August 2021, creating 20 self-contained units of supportive housing and 40 new shelter beds for men and women, plus a 5-bedroom youth wing on a 2.4-acre property at 75 Queen Street East, Orillia. The project was funded through an extensive community fundraising campaign by the Building Hope team, together with contributions from the federal and provincial governments as well as the County of Simcoe and the City of Orillia.

27 people used the supportive housing services in 2021.

Due to the Covid-19 pandemic, emergency shelter operations were transitioned to a motel model of sheltering in March 2020 to ensure that public health guidelines and directives could be met. The Lighthouse was able to resume shelter operations due to the physical design and layout of their new shelter facility at the end of August, 2021, serving 167 participants to the end of December, 2021.





MOVING FORWARD IN HOUSING OUR FUTURE

During the third and final phase of Our Community 10 Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy, the County and its community partners will continue to progress towards achieving the targets under the Strategy, maximizing available funding while continuing to explore opportunities including the creation of supportive housing, and a system of coordinated access for homelessness supports.

In 2022, work will begin on an updated Local Needs Assessment and development of a successor plan to the current Strategy. This work will be informed by working with local service partners as well as community consultation and participation. It is anticipated that a successor strategy will go to Council in late 2023 for approval.

The County and its community partners are actively working to

address the many challenges facing residents that have resulted from the COVID-19 pandemic through implementation of programs and services. Regulatory changes under the Housing Services Act will result in review of income and asset limits for social housing, potential changes to the centralized wait list for rent geared to income assistance, as well as developing an approach for working with housing providers as their operating agreements come to an end, to preserve affordability in the social housing system.

Most emergency shelter operations are anticipated to return to their pre-pandemic facilities as public health guidelines allow. In turn the system of homelessness services and supports will be reviewed to identify opportunities for system change and to respond to the

complex and increased needs highlighted throughout the pandemic.

Following the release of the Ontario Affordable Housing Task Force Report in February 2022, the Province will be considering the recommendations aimed at creating 1.5 million homes over the next ten years. Planning tools to facilitate both market and affordable housing supply at the local level will continue to remain a focus.

While significant progress is being made to achieve the targets under Our Community Ten Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy, the Strategy's vision of adequate, appropriate, and affordable housing for all Simcoe County residents is one which will require ongoing investments, policies, programs, and collaboration to fulfill.



simcoe.ca