



Middlesex County Attainable Housing Review
**Report on Examination of Best
Practices in Housing Roles**

January 2023





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Introduction

Fundamental to creating healthy and inclusive communities is the availability of a variety of housing options to meet the differing needs of current and future residents. Similar to communities all across Ontario and Canada, Middlesex County is experiencing housing pressures due to changing demographics and market trends.

Access to a range of housing forms, including attainable, affordable, and accessible housing, is a priority in the communities of Middlesex County. In order to better understand the current supply and demand of housing across the County, and to develop strategies aimed at ensuring a broad array of housing options are available to meet the full spectrum of needs of residents in Middlesex, the County undertook an *Attainable Housing Review*.

The objectives of the review were to:

- Examine the needs across the entire housing continuum
- Identify gaps in the provision of housing
- Prepare a municipal strategy to meet current and future needs.

The project involved data collection and analysis on roles and responsibilities related to housing and best practices being used by comparator municipalities.





This included 28 interviews with 32 individuals including:

- CAO's from local municipalities within the County of Middlesex
- County of Middlesex Staff
- City of London senior Staff
- Representatives from the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)
- Representatives from the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA)
- Representatives from nine comparator municipalities (Service System Managers).

Interviews were conducted with nine Service System Managers to examine current roles and responsibilities of comparator municipalities to inform recommendations related to the roles and responsibilities in housing. Interviewees included the City of Hamilton, City of Windsor, County of Wellington, Dufferin County, Elgin County/City of St. Thomas, Grey County, Huron County, Lambton County and Oxford County.

The best practice structures, roles and responsibilities identified through the interviews are discussed within the best practices section of this report.



Roles and Responsibilities

Background

The Housing and Homelessness System in the Province of Ontario is complex and requires the participation of four levels of government, in addition to the not-for-profit and private sectors. Engagement of all parties is paramount to success in responding to needs and building a healthy housing continuum in communities across Ontario.

The following is a brief overview of the current roles and responsibilities in the system with further details about each area described below.

Current Roles and Responsibilities Housing & Homelessness System

Federal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • National housing strategy • Funder public, private and not-for-profit systems • Mortgage insurance 	Provincial <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • System steward, set overall vision • Establishes legislative and policy framework • 47 local Services Managers 	
Municipal – Service Manager – City of London <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service system management – system oversight (incl. compliance and reporting) for Service Manager jurisdiction • System planning and design – develops a ten-year local housing and homelessness plan • Designs and delivers services to people directly or through delivery partners • Policy development/oversight of housing development • Manage centralized waitlist • Sole shareholder of London and Middlesex Community Housing Corporation 	Municipal – Local Level – Middlesex C. and/or Local	
	Prescribed <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Integrate planning • Local policies and bylaws 	Optional <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • County provides homelessness program service delivery locally • Can support individual local systems • Can identify needs and opportunities in their communities • Can design and deliver services to people directly or through delivery partners • Can provide additional funding to enhance services

Federal – Government of Canada

The federal government has a National Housing Strategy under which funding is provided for both for housing and homelessness programs. Funding under the National Housing Strategy is generally available to applicants from any community. However, there are some specific programs such as the Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) which provides targeted funding to some of the larger cities/Regional governments although applicants from any community can apply. This funding can come in the form of forgivable loans and repayable loans at a reduced rate of interest. In addition, the federal government provides mortgage insurance.

Federal government contributions are largely for capital funding, with the exception of some homelessness funding programs. Funds are generally accessed through application processes undertaken by the private or not for profit housing proponent, unless otherwise directed to designated communities (large urban centres). The City of London, as a municipality is a designated community for some programs such as the Rapid Housing Initiative. Middlesex County and the area municipalities along with not for profit and private sector organizations are required to apply for funding, this is not administered to the County through the Service Manager.

Provincial – Government of Ontario

The Ontario provincial government is the only provincial jurisdiction in Canada that does not directly administer programs and as such is the steward of the housing and homelessness system, setting the overall vision, establishing legislative and policy frameworks and then designating the 47 Municipal Service System Managers to manage funding and program administration and oversight.

The Provincial government is the primary funder of homelessness services in most communities; however, some municipalities do make significant contributions to provide an expanded service level.

Service System Manager

The City of London, as the designated service system manager under the *Housing Services Act* has responsibility for housing administration for community non-profits and co-ops transferred from the Provincial and Federal governments.

The Service Manager has these five key accountabilities:

1. System Planning:

System planning requires the Service Manager to have a local *Housing and Homelessness Plan* that articulates the needs of the community and identifies actions to address the growing and changing needs. Collaborating with partners on service delivery models and housing administration is an important aspect of planning to ensure services are integrated and provide cost effective and quality responses that also align with the provincial planning policy statement and other local plans.

2. Centralized Waiting List

Before 2001, individual housing providers kept their own wait lists for subsidized housing. In 2001, Service Managers took on responsibility for the management of a Centralized Wait List whether managed internally or through a third party.

3. New Housing Development:

Service Managers play a key role in supporting the development of new affordable housing projects whether developed and owned by the Service Manager, a local municipality, private sector developer or not-for-profit organization through support for new developments under provincial as well as federal programs. While they are not required to contribute funding, processes require comments from Service Managers to provincial staff even for federal funding administered directly by CMHC. Managing funding through the federal and provincial funding streams that support both capital and operating funds for new affordable units does rest with the Service Manager such as the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) and Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI). Additionally, the Service Manager has a role in supporting other stakeholders to develop housing which includes management of funding provided by the provincial government and any required reporting attached to that funding.

4. Asset Sustainability:

With the housing stock transferred by the province in 2001, the Service Manager is accountable for asset sustainability. This responsibility includes providing program administration and technical advisory support to externally owned community housing providers and co-operatives in addition to stock owned by the Service Manager. Legislation further prescribes a requirement to work with Housing Services Corporation in their role in the management of a consolidated insurance program and capital reserve management.

5. Supporting Housing Operations – Ensuring System Viability & Compliance:

This responsibility requires the Service Manager to provide oversight to the management of the housing operations including funding, compliance oversight for housing programs (both externally owned and operated and internally owned and operated including Local Housing Corporations such as London Middlesex Housing Corporation). Maintaining relationships with sector organizations such as the Ontario Non-Profit Housing Association (ONPHA) and Cooperative Housing Federation (CHF) also play a role in this function.

The City of London as the Service Manager for the City of London and Middlesex County has three distinct roles with respect to housing service providers:

Role 1: STEWARD of community-based housing providers

Role 2: CUSTODIAN of Service Manager owned buildings

Role 3: SHAREHOLDER of Local Housing Corporation portfolio of properties



Municipalities – Regional/County and Local/Area

Local municipal governments are prescribed to manage local integrated planning, policies and by laws and have the options to deliver and fund local programs. Middlesex County and local municipalities are each responsible for their respective *Planning Act* approvals process along with potentially providing incentives for new affordable housing development.

The City of London is the provincially designated Service Manager as it relates to housing for the City of London and Middlesex County. The responsibilities related to homelessness are delivered in the county through contracted service agreements with Middlesex County. The City of London provides an annual allocation to the County for homelessness prevention programs. This fiscal year base allocation may be adjusted if in year funding is received from the Province and additional allotments can be provided to meet homelessness prevention needs in the County. The costs of Housing Services are apportioned between the County and City based on a combination of a Weighted Assessment Basis and Actual Cost Basis.

The service agreements between the City of London and County of Middlesex include administrative oversight. London and the County Management Oversight Committee meets quarterly to discuss issues relating to the delivery of Housing Services and Homelessness Prevention. The City/County Liaison Committee meets to discuss joint advocacy initiatives.

Municipalities are the biggest financial contributors to existing community housing, although federal and provincial governments also provide some financial support. The County or local municipalities could play a role in getting partners together and facilitating conversations about applying for federal funds.

Middlesex County faces many challenges supporting those experiencing homelessness as the area covered by Middlesex County is vast with limited transportation between communities resulting in services having to include outreach or transportation supports. In addition, there is a crossover of services to some degree between the City of London and Middlesex County as many services are not provided in the County due to limited financial supports.

Municipalities are the biggest contributors to existing community housing with support from federal and provincial governments.

The City of London as a municipality has initiated some new responses to housing and homelessness initiatives through additional taxes levied on the city's tax base.

Community Housing Providers

Community Housing providers have the responsibility to operate and sustain not for profit housing programs in addition to managing the housing asset as defined under funding agreements over time. The specific agreements varying by provider, and articulate the reporting requirements with respect to funding provisions.

In 2019, the Ontario government released the Community Housing Renewal Strategy outlining the government's intentions to stabilize and grow the community housing sector. New regulations under the *Housing Services Act 2011* came into effect on July 1, 2022 that will have implications for Service Managers and providers. The changes were intended to create a streamlined framework for Service Managers and Housing Providers to support continuation of community housing; modernize accountability approaches by broadening types of housing assistance to be counted towards legislated required service levels; and require Service Managers to have an access system for housing assistance.

Over the past several years operating agreements and mortgage agreements have been expiring for housing providers, providing the opportunity for them to make decision regarding the future of their organizations. The new regulatory framework provides direction regarding any new service agreements between the Service Manager and the Community Housing Provider regarding funding provisions to support continuation or expansion/reduction of rent-geared-to-income housing units in each building.

Private Sector

The private sector can take on a variety of roles to support a healthy housing continuum in communities. Traditionally they have been responsible for the development of ownership housing, and the development and management of purpose-built rental housing. In addition, they act as developer in the creation of supportive housing in addition to temporary or emergency housing solutions such as transitional housing and emergency shelters.

In recent years several for profit private sector organizations have created innovative approaches to support the affordable housing system including supporting land trusts or land banks, creating charitable arms of their business to assist with development costs and donated services. Private sector developers have also accessed a variety of Service Manager administered as well as federally administered housing program funding and financing to create new rental housing with a range of affordability.

Best Practices to Address Housing Affordability

Housing Options

A wide-range of housing options have been explored provincially, nationally and internationally to tackle housing affordability.

Micro-homes/Modular Homes

Modular homes have become more common on the west coast of Canada (and are starting to become more common in Ontario), where homes are built in a factory and assembly is completed on site. Modular homes offer homes without the stress and additional costs associated with constructing on site and seasonal limitations. Homes can be constructed much faster, offer an environmentally friendly home building option, and offer some cost effectiveness at wide scale construction.

Shipping container homes offer similar benefits to modular homes. Shipping containers are retrofitted from conventional shipping containers used for cross country shipping, to create tiny homes or offices. Containers can be stacked in a row to create multi-level and multi-purpose residences for all household types.

Several modular home producers have made significant strides in establishing modular homes across Canada and are now being deployed across Ontario to respond largely to urgent needs for emergency shelters, transitional and supportive housing.

In Middlesex County, in January 2022, the Lucan Town Council approved moving forward with an innovative modular project. The development includes one, four story residential apartment building with fifty-eight units; and one, four-story mixed-use building with thirty-two residential apartment units, as well as a commercial unit facing Lucan's Main Street. These units are being constructed offsite at a factory to be installed onsite, reducing the construction timelines for both structures.

Link to Building a Shipping Container Home in Canada:

[Building a Shipping Container Home in Canada – A Complete Guide](#) | [Container Home Hub](#)

Secondary or Garden Suites

Secondary or Garden suites are a commonly known option to add additional dwelling units as part of an existing residence. These units are self-contained, independently accessible units. These units can be a basement or attic units, space over a garage, or a smaller, detached home on a single-family home property. This offers the opportunity to provide affordable housing for smaller households.

Municipalities across Ontario, like Toronto, are offering programs for home owners to receive funding up to \$50,000 to create secondary suites on their property to tackle the affordability crisis. Secondary suites offer a way to leverage existing market stock as the County continues to encourage smaller, more affordable and attainable housing.

Supportive Housing

Stepping Stone, a not-for-profit organization serving the City of Guelph and Wellington County supports individuals and families experiencing homelessness to step forward on a path toward securing permanent housing. Supported financially through contributions from the federal government, County and City, Stepping Stone began renovations to a motel in the City of Guelph in February 2022 and will provide permanent supportive housing for 32 individuals experiencing homelessness. The project is scheduled to open in February 2023.

The City of St. Thomas is collaborating with Indwell, an experienced not-for-profit supportive housing provider with housing units across Ontario. The City contributed the land for the new housing, one is space above a transit building and land for two new buildings all targeted for a mix of income levels and needs. Indwell has the capacity as an organization to leverage additional financial resources through assets they own and a private philanthropic arm within their organization.

Structures, Roles & Responsibilities

Community Land Trusts

Community Land Trusts (CLT) are a private, non-profit organization that owns land on behalf of a community, promoting housing affordability and sustainable development and mitigating inequities in homeownership, providing the opportunity for home ownership for low to medium income households. A community land trust separates the land from the physical home structure. The land is held in trust by the corporation, and provides households with the opportunity for home ownership by selling the home as an individual entity from the land. By detaching itself from the cost of the land the CLT is able to maintain housing affordability to households who are unable to afford market homes. CLTs are common place in the United States, where 160 CLTs are currently operating today. Many land trusts also lease their land for rental housing.

The Canadian Network Community Land Trust (CNCLT) have created a pan-Canadian community to support the success and growth of CLT models throughout Canada. Of the most prominent CLT's in Canada, the Community Land Trust (CHF BC) non-profit society serves as a real estate development arm of the Co-op Housing Federation of B.C. The group is responsible for over 20 CLT's across B.C. In 2022, the group purchased the largest residential space in its history, saving 425 homes in Burnaby from private sector investors. The group works alongside different levels of government and non-profits to secure affordable housing for residents. Ninety-five percent (95%) of all non-profit housing co-ops are members of CHF BC, accounting for 14,266 co-op homes across the province.

In response to soaring home prices, residents in Toronto's Parkdale community created the Parkdale Neighbourhood Land Trust to protect the land from private sector developers. In 2021, the group received 81 single family homes donated to the group and YWCA to provide permanent affordable rental housing to its residents. The land trust has also purchased two rental buildings with support from the city of Toronto. The group is currently working with the City and community organizations to leverage resources and maintain public housing units.

Land Banks

Land banks are non-profit organizations created to acquire, hold, manage, and sometimes redevelop property in order to return these properties to productive use to meet community goals, such as increasing affordable housing or stabilizing property values. Many land banks are involved with land for a short period of time until the land is transferred to a long-term owner.

Land banks can play a number of different roles depending on a community's development goals, including:

- (a) providing a mechanism for assembling parcels of tax-delinquent or abandoned properties for redevelopment;
- (b) acquiring and holding strategically valuable properties until the community can develop them as affordable housing, these can be donated by private citizens, government or not-for profit and charitable organizations, and;
- (c) acquiring properties to convert to other uses such as retail, parks, or open space for flood mitigation. In addition to acquiring and holding land, land banks can maintain, rehabilitate, demolish, and lease or sell property.

Land banks are most commonly established in communities or neighbourhoods where there are declining housing prices and inventory of tax-delinquent properties that the community wants to repurpose or in high-cost areas where availability of affordable land is scarce and they can serve as a vehicle for holding land purchased strategically for future affordable housing development.

Since 2008, in the United States, there are 150 land banks have been established in 20 states by leveraging the property tax foreclosure system.

In December 2021, the Canadian federal government announced close to \$3.3 million in funding will be provided to 16 successful submissions under the National Housing Strategy (NHS) Demonstrations Initiative. The NHS Demonstrations Initiative highlights solutions that support the National Housing Strategy priority areas and population groups. These solutions aim to spur awareness, knowledge and scaling of promising practices, strategies, programs, policies and technologies. The 2021 open call competition targeted one specific area of high potential impact – Community Land Trusts (CLTs) and Land Assembly solutions that may ensure greater availability and access to land for affordable housing. The 16 successful submissions each received funding from \$100,000 to \$250,000.

The selected projects provide a diverse portfolio of CLT/Land assembly solutions addressing the specific needs of NHS population groups such as Indigenous population groups, women and children fleeing domestic violence, people labeled with a disability or mental illness, people experiencing homelessness, and Northerners. A link to these initiatives can be found at [National Housing Strategy Demonstrations Initiative | CMHC \(cmhc-schl.gc.ca\)](https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/nhs-demonstrations-initiative)

Making municipally-owned land available for the creation of affordable and attainable housing

While municipalities are not classified as land banks, there have been many examples of municipalities making land available for the creation of affordable and attainable housing. Recent examples include:

- Town of Woolwich (an area municipality located in the Region of Waterloo) issued a proposal call for a parcel of land that can support a small apartment building, with the requirement to commit the land use for affordable rental housing
- The Town of Goderich made a parcel of land available to the County of Huron to build a mixed affordable and supportive housing rental development
- The County of Oxford had land transferred to them by a local faith organization and then the County issued a proposal call for seniors housing (both affordable and market) to be developed on the land
- The Town of Halton Hills issuing an expression of interest to make available town land for an affordable housing development at no cost for the land (and the Town pre-zoning the land)
- The City of St. Catharines issued an expression of interest for a parcel of city-owned land for a mix of affordable and market housing
- The City of Barrie is collaborating with six local faith organizations to provide preliminary design and financial feasibility work for affordable housing to be potentially created on six church sites
- The Municipality of Chatham Kent offered a small municipally owned site through an expression of interest in order to create new affordable housing
- And there are many other examples of larger cities offering municipal land for affordable housing, sometimes transferring ownership of the land and other situations offering a long term 99-year lease of the land.

Planning

Housing Master Infrastructure Planning

Municipalities across Ontario are investing in long-term plans to guide the development of affordable housing initiatives to meet their community needs. The plans outline comprehensive strategies to leverage existing lands and resources to meet increasing demands for housing.

A *Housing Master Plan* allows a municipality or Service Manager jurisdiction to identify and assess available land including property owned by the Local Housing Corporation or not-for-profit housing providers for its suitability for regeneration or development. The development of a *Master Plan* takes a portfolio approach to infrastructure development, similar to master plans traditionally target for water/waste water infrastructure planning.

Housing Master Plan potential outcomes:

1. Build new affordable rental housing units and temporary accommodations through a strategic approach
2. Catalyze new development by working with private and non-profit developers and other partners
3. Create and manage financing and investment strategies in collaboration with the Service Manager, local municipalities, provincial and federal government; and
4. Influence incentive programs and tools



Establishing a long-term plan provides:

- Opportunity to define long term strategy as part of ten-year *Housing and Homelessness Plan* and align with *Corporate Strategic Plans*
- Based on defined need, establishes a set of priorities for housing development
 - Balance between emergency and long-term housing priorities
 - Define relationships – roles and responsibilities, private, not-for-profit, area municipalities, Service Manager, Local Housing Corporation
 - Identify opportunities for the greatest impact / return on investment including:
 - Informed by past development experiences
 - Funding mechanisms and levels for not-for-profit vs. private sector development
 - Leverage municipal/local housing corporation assets – expedite sites for regeneration and new development opportunities
 - Strategies to enhance turnover in social housing units
 - Enhanced supports to Housing Providers for regeneration aligned with State of Good Repair assessments
 - Speak to incentives and approach as critical elements of a development master plan
 - Surplus land (i.e., Municipal, schools) could be contributed for non-profit organizations
 - Reduction in development costs building on owned land, maximizing resources for planning and development on a portfolio basis vs. a one-off project focus
- Integrates planning and funding with Health (Ontario Health Teams/Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care), Boards of Education, area municipalities
 - capital and operational funding
 - alignment of planning and commitments

In 2017, the Region of Waterloo introduced their 20-year *Housing Master Plan* to create approximately 600 affordable housing units in 65 communities. The *Plan* is intended to alleviate the stresses of affordable housing demands and the aging existing housing stock while leveraging existing housing communities. In this way, the *Plan* is a comprehensive cost-effective strategy tailored addresses the needs of the specific financial limitations and community characteristics to meet the affordable housing challenges.

In 2019, Regional Municipality of Peel approved a *Housing Master Plan* taking a portfolio approach to housing with 31 development opportunities on Region of Peel owned land and Peel Housing Corporation sites. The plan allocated in principle, \$1 billion envelope with a confirmed contribution of 1/3 Peel Region, 1/3 CMHC National Housing Strategy and a target of 1/3 from the provincial government under various programs. As of August 2020, four projects are well underway totaling approximately 480 affordable housing units in major and over 150 shelter beds in the Region. In total, the Region has received \$672.8 million in total have been secured, \$276.4 from the Government of Canada, to create 2,240 affordable housing units and shelter beds by 2028. The *Master Plan* represents one of the largest investments in affordable housing investments from the Government of Canada in Peel Region.

In June 2022, Niagara Region finalized a *Housing Master Plan* identifying the opportunity for redevelopment of 20 existing sites on by Niagara Region Housing along with 51 sites of private non-profit and co-operative service providers. New development was identified by local municipalities and the Region on 34 sites adding that the potential for new development is greater than the demand for units. Approval was received to move to this portfolio approach and to explore options for financing for redevelopment and the preparation of a multi-year capital plan.

On December 15, 2022 Oxford County released a Master Housing Strategy committing the County to a long-term plan for addressing the housing supply shortage. The strategy primarily focuses on housing for households in the moderate-income range and those in core housing need. The plan includes a commitment to adding a minimum of 50 new affordable units per year, maintaining an inventory of “shovel ready” affordable housing sties so the County is ready to respond to federal and provincial funding opportunities. The strategy puts forward ten viable housing projects along with preliminary housing concept plans and financial analysis for each. In addition they have exempted affordable housing projects from County planning fees.

Many other jurisdictions, either Service Manager areas or geographic areas (such as the recent Eastern Ontario Wardens Caucus request for proposal) are exploring opportunities to shift to a portfolio-based approach to development.

Integrated Housing and Homelessness Planning

The *Housing Services Act* requires the Service Manager to have a ten-year *Housing and Homelessness Plan* to meet the requirements established in regulations. This plan identifies the needs across the Service Manager jurisdiction as well as objectives and actions to be taken to address the issues. These plans were required for 2014 with a five-year renewal required in 2019. The current plans expire in most communities in 2024.

The City of London *Housing and Homelessness Plan* highlights alignment of strategies and actions with the City of London and Middlesex County as they relate to the Service Manager. The City of London's plan also includes the Middlesex County's *Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan*. The Middlesex *Plan* provides strategies and actions that are tailored to Middlesex County, but must be read in conjunction with the City of London's *Housing Stability Action Plan*. The County refers to the *Housing and Homelessness Plan* when updating key documents such as the *County Strategic Plan*, *Community Safety and Well Being Plan*, *Economic Strategic Plan* and *Official Plan*.

In many neighbouring jurisdictions the Service Manager and municipalities have a shared plan, even in areas where the largest urban area such as St. Thomas, is the designated Service Manager. In some communities such as the City of Sarnia and Lambton County they have established a *Memorandum of Understanding* related to housing and homelessness to ensure clarity about roles and responsibilities and priorities.

In the County of Dufferin, they have taken steps to align their *Housing and Homelessness Plan* with their economic development plans and *Community Safety and Wellbeing Plans* to ensure that all systems are interconnected and planning to address the lack of housing affordability is acknowledged as an underlying root cause of many community challenges and therefore part of their solution planning.

Shared Ownership & Communication – Service Manager & Municipalities

Collaboration and clear communication are key success factors in delivering affordable housing. Creating affordable housing is challenging in many ways, community acceptance and understanding, availability of land, cost of construction, sustainable options, quality operations and management. The issue and solutions are complex and require a collaborative community response, including all levels of government and the broader community.

In order to work most effectively together clear communication, participation and clear roles and responsibilities are required. In Ontario the *Housing Services Act* outlines the roles and responsibilities of the 47 designated Services Managers. The provincial government is the steward of the housing system, setting the overall vision, establishing the legislative and policy framework while the designated Service Manager has the responsibility for the service system management and system oversight including planning, design and management of allocated funding. In order to ensure effective responses, it is important for the Service Manager and the local municipalities in their jurisdiction to have clear communication and be actively engaged in the planning processes to identify needs and responses. Several comparator municipalities interviewed during the *Attainable Housing Review* engagement process noted a key factor in their success in moving projects forward was a result of activities taken to ensure good lines of communication – committees or action teams made up of senior leaders was the most common approach, to ensure diverse perspectives were heard and communities felt they had a voice in priority setting and funding allocation decisions. A second approach commonly used across Ontario has been the creation of subcommittees of Council, some included Council members while others included representation from key stakeholder groups including community members.

The complexity of the Service Manager – Municipality roles is a challenge for Middlesex County as the County is not the Service Manager, City of London as the Service Manager for all municipalities in the jurisdiction including Middlesex County and the eight area municipalities, in addition to the City of London. Engagement of all municipalities and clear communication between all parties is an important part of collaboration to ensure all parties are working together to address a common shared vision.

Programs & Services

Homelessness and Housing Help Hub

The global COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated affordable housing and homelessness in communities across the country. In response, the City of Windsor opened the Homelessness and Housing Help Hub (H4), a site providing services to those experiencing homelessness and connections to community support agencies and basic medical care. Since opening in April 2020, the facility continues to provide services and supports to citizens experiencing homelessness, but is limited in its ability to provide long-term care and support to clients. In 2022, council approved a motion for administration to find a more permanent location for the Hub to continue to offer its services.

Housing Advisor or Facilitator Role

One of the challenges for municipalities, particularly those who are not the Service Manager, is defining their role and how best to support the creation of affordable housing. One such practice is for local municipalities to have designated staff roles, to work closely with municipal partners, the private and not-for-profit sector including charitable organizations and community members to bring together partnerships, available land and innovative approaches to this complex issue. The Housing Advisor or Facilitator role is a lead acting on behalf of a larger organization such as the County and can be a joint role with area municipalities to address a shared objective and priorities. Having a dedicated role allows that individual to focus on capacity building, ongoing information sharing and communication and building partnerships. This role can also support communication campaigns such as Huron County's "Be Part of the Solution" campaign that uses a variety of platforms such as social media and websites to engage the broader community and provide tools and messaging to assist with addressing NIMBYism.

The Town of Halton Hills, who is not a service manager, created a half time position in the planning department to focus on facilitation with the community to support the creation of new affordable housing.

Municipal Contributions

City of Guelph committed to a \$1 million municipal funding commitment to support affordable housing development projects, recognizing a gap in both provincial and federal contributions to make not-for-profit projects viable.

In working with the Service Manager (County of Wellington) they established a joint process for the issuance of Requests for Proposal for new developments, leveraging expertise with both organizations, looking to build capacity and understanding about local need and viability of projects.

Portable Housing Benefits

A portable housing benefit is a monthly subsidy provided to a low-income household to assist with housing costs. Unlike other forms of housing assistance, the benefit is tied to the household and not a physical housing unit, allowing the benefit to move with the household to any rental unit. This allows more flexibility to choose where they live to be closer to family, social support networks, schools and employment opportunities. This benefit is provided to households on a municipal centralized housing waiting list for rent-geared-to-income (RGI) housing and allows them to receive the benefit and come off the waiting list.

