

REPORT TO COUNTY COUNCIL

2023 Annual Progress Report – 10-Year Shelter Plan

To: Warden and Members of County Council

From: Director of Human Services

RECOMMENDATION

1. That County Council approve the 2023 Annual Progress Report of the 10-Year Shelter Plan, as provided in Attachment 1 and as outlined in Report HS 2024-01.

REPORT HIGHLIGHTS

- Service Managers are required to develop a 10-Year Housing Plan to identify objectives and targets related to housing and homelessness, as well as actions proposed to meet those objectives.
- This report serves as the County's Annual Progress Report, including details with respect to the specific actions that were taken in 2023 towards the goals and objectives of the current 10-Year Shelter Plan.

IMPLEMENTATION POINTS

Following Council's review of the Annual Report, a copy will be posted on the County's website and provided to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH), in accordance with the *Housing Services Act, 2011*.

Financial Impact

There are no financial impacts associated with the approval of the 2023 Annual Progress Report of the 10-Year Shelter Plan.

Communications




This report provides details with respect to the annual progress report that is required in accordance with the *Housing Services Act, 2011*. In light of this, details contained in this report have been shared with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) and will be made available to the public and local municipalities upon approval.

2023-2026 STRATEGIC PLAN

Oxford County Council approved the **2023-2026 Strategic Plan** on September 13, 2023. The Plan outlines 39 goals across three strategic pillars that advance Council’s vision of “Working together for a healthy, vibrant, and sustainable future.” These pillars are: (1) *Promoting community vitality*, (2) *Enhancing environmental sustainability*, and (3) *Fostering progressive government*.

The recommendation in this report supports the following strategic goals.

Strategic Plan Pillars and Goals

PILLAR 1	PILLAR 2	PILLAR 3
		
Promoting community vitality	Enhancing environmental sustainability	Fostering progressive government
<p>Goal 1.1 – 100% Housed Goal 1.3 – Community health, safety and well-being</p>		<p>Goal 3.1 – Continuous improvement and results-driven solutions Goal 3.2 – Collaborate with our partners and communities</p>

See: [Oxford County 2023-2026 Strategic Plan](#)

DISCUSSION

Background

In accordance with the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, Municipal Service Managers are required to develop a 10-Year Plan to identify objectives and targets related to housing and homelessness, as well as actions proposed to meet those objectives. Housing and Homelessness (Shelter) Plans play a critical function in setting out how Service Managers address housing and homelessness locally, including housing affordability, coordination of homelessness and related support services and efforts towards ending chronic homelessness. To demonstrate the progress towards the targets and objectives of the Plan, Service Managers are required to complete annual reports for Council’s approval.

On June 10, 2015, County Council approved the current 10-Year Shelter Plan, as presented in Report [HS 2015-07](#). This Plan sets a long-term vision, as well as targets and strategies to promote housing stability across the shelter continuum. As required under the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, a five-year review of the Shelter Plan was also completed in December 2019. The five-year review highlighted changes in local demographics, needs associated with housing and homelessness, as well as the progress that had been achieved to date. This review also identified five projected outcomes and strategies for 2020 to 2024, as follows:

1. Increase affordable rental housing supply.
2. Preserve and optimize existing housing stock.
3. Reduce chronic homelessness.
4. Increase housing with related supports.
5. Increase rent supplement units in the community.

As the term of the current 10-Year Plan is set to expire, County Council authorized staff to proceed with the development of a new Plan in July 2023 (Report [HS 2023-11](#)). Since that time, staff have been working with a consultant to develop new actions and goals related to housing and homelessness, considering feedback that was received from the Public and various community partners during the extensive public consultation sessions that commenced in November 2023. With the consultation component of the new Plan coming to an end, staff will be providing Council with a more comprehensive update at a future meeting in March 2024.

Comments

Progress of the 10-Year Shelter Plan is regularly monitored by staff to ensure recommendations remain relevant to community needs and align with the County’s strategic priorities. The following summary demonstrates action in the five strategic directives of the current 10-Year Shelter Plan for the entirety of 2023. Further details are provided in Attachment 1 of this report.

10-Year Shelter Plan: Summary of 2023 Progress

Project Outcomes and Strategies (2020-2024)	2023 Progress
1. Increase affordable rental housing supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Construction commenced on the affordable housing project located at 785 Southwood Way, Woodstock, consisting of 52 rental units (including 29 at affordable rental rates). • Development approvals commenced for the affordable housing project located at 175 Springbank Road North, Woodstock, consisting of 45 rental units (including 23 at affordable rental rates). • Occupancy was issued for the 18-unit affordable housing project located at 31 Victoria Street, Tillsonburg. • Discussions commenced for two prospective affordable housing projects in the Township of Zorra and Town of Tillsonburg, in support of the Master Housing Strategy.

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Planning approvals were initiated for a prospective project in the Town of Tillsonburg. • One Habitat for Humanity home ownership unit was completed in the Town of Tillsonburg. • The County Second Unit Program was updated to reflect current market conditions, and a total of 8 applications were approved.
<p>2. Preserve and optimize existing housing stock</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All existing rent-geared-to-income units were maintained under the County and non-profit/cooperative portfolios. • Building Condition Assessments (BCAs) were completed for various non-profit and cooperative housing providers. • County staff provided support and expertise to non-profit/cooperative housing providers with capital projects and RFP processes, as needed. • The County expended funds under the Repair Program to support critical repairs for a number of housing providers and a total of 8 households.
<p>3. Reduce chronic homelessness</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The 24/7 Emergency Shelter System in Woodstock was fully implemented, and an additional 25 spaces were approved. • The Out of the Cold Shelter in Tillsonburg opened, providing shelter for those experiencing homelessness starting from November 1, 2023. • Additional hotel spaces continued to be available for overnight shelter purposes. • A total of \$1.7 million from the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) was expended on various supports and services for those at risk of or experiencing homelessness. • The County, along with community partners, increased the hours of the Mobile Health Outreach Bus (MHOB) and the frequency of attending known encampments. • Established a Core Encampment Response Team in collaboration with City of Woodstock and many Community Partners. • Through Report HS 2023-17, Council authorized staff to proceed with the development of a Homelessness Response Strategy to support strategic decision-making and investment of resources to address the current pressures in the homelessness system. • 39 individuals from the By Name List were housed in transitional or permanent housing. • Created a Navigator position within the County to work with those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. • Increased participation of community partners in the by-name list and coordinated access system.

4. Increase housing with related supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Increased the number of supportive housing units that are available and supported the creation of 7 transitional housing beds. • The County entered into arrangements with community partners for the provision of housing individuals from the By Name List into housing with supports.
5. Increase rent supplement units in the community	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A total of 52 households received a rent supplement and 49 households received a portable housing benefit through the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB).

While the annual targets continue to be met, staff note that rising interest rates, construction costs and overall well-being challenges continue to have an impact on how the County addresses housing and homelessness and the feasibility of affordable housing projects. In light of this, staff continue to explore alternative measures to increase housing supply and stability throughout the County. Many of these measures will be further explored through the new 10-Year Shelter Plan, which is expected to be brought forward to Council by mid-2024.

It should also be noted that as the homeownership program continues to be unsuccessful due to rising purchase prices and interest rates, staff are working with MMAH to determine alternative eligibility parameters, or use of program funds.

CONCLUSIONS

The 2023 Annual Progress Report includes details with respect to the action that has been taken towards the goals and objectives of the current 10-Year Shelter Plan.

Despite the progress towards increasing the supply of purpose-built rental housing, as well as capacity building within the homelessness and housing stability service system, there are still challenges in relation to rising costs and limited supply of affordable rental and ownership housing options, and an ongoing need for a range of housing supports. Staff continue to explore alternative measures to improve the existing system, understanding that there is not a 'one size fits all' solution to address current housing needs.

SIGNATURES

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Original signed by

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Departmental approval:

Original signed by

Kelly Black
Director of Human Services

Approved for submission:

Original signed by

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ATTACHMENT

Attachment 1 – 2023 Annual Progress Report on the 10 Year Shelter Plan, February 28, 2024