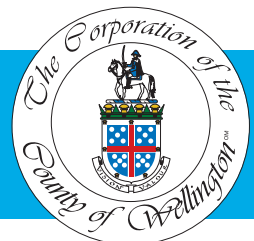


A Place to Call Home



2023 Annual Report

A 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Wellington-Guelph
Five Year Update (2020-2024)



Message from the Warden



On behalf of County Council, I am pleased to present the County of Wellington's 2023 Annual Report on the Housing and Homelessness Plan (HHP) - Five Year Update. This comprehensive report demonstrates the collective progress our community has made towards achieving our HHP objectives.

2023 was a year of continued challenges and progress, requiring cooperation and collaboration with the City of Guelph, our many community partners, and the County's dedicated Housing Services Division.

Despite mounting social and economic pressures, progress continued with the development of new supportive and transitional housing options that will provide housing and supports to some of our most vulnerable residents. Combined, the projects completed this year and those under development in 2024 will significantly expand housing options enhancing our ability to respond to the wide-ranging needs in our service area.

Across Ontario and in Wellington-Guelph, the need for affordable, appropriate housing has never been greater, and there is a lot of hard work ahead for our community to address this need. We must continue to work together to strengthen our efforts to make our community's vision a reality and ensure that everyone in Wellington County and the City of Guelph can find and maintain an appropriate, safe, and affordable place to call home.

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

Sincerely,
Andy Lennox, Warden, County of Wellington

2023 Housing and Homelessness Highlights

Renovations and construction completed on Supportive Housing Projects

Bellevue Permanent Supportive Housing for Youth, operated by Wyndham House re-opened their doors in May 2023. The site was expanded and transformed from a transitional congregate setting to offer private suites along with common areas for 8 youth between 16 and 25 years of age. Grace Gardens permanent supportive housing for adults, operated by Stepping Stone, opened in July 2023 and includes 32 bachelor suites, common areas and office spaces. Both the youth and adult permanent supportive housing programmes are staffed 24/7 and offer life-skills development, health, mental health and addictions supports on site in partnership with community service providers.

New Government-Funded Affordable Housing units for Seniors completed

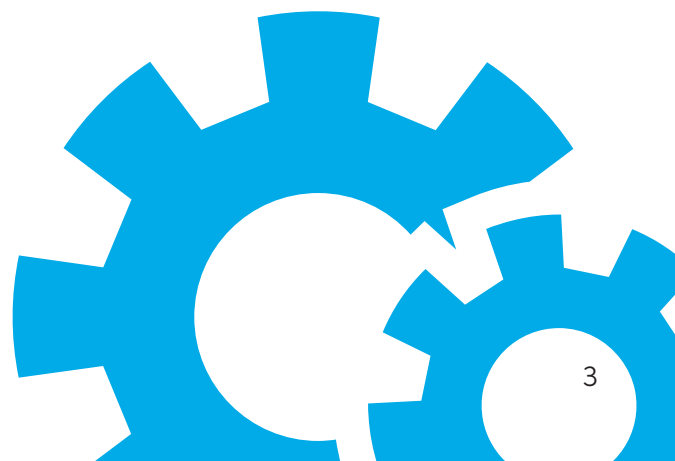
With the completion of the Silver Maple Seniors Community in Guelph there are 65 new government-funded affordable housing units available for seniors. Funding to develop the affordable units was provided to St. Joseph's Housing Corporation from the federal and provincial governments as well as contributions from the County of Wellington and the City of Guelph. St. Joseph's Housing Corporation operates non-profit seniors' residential accommodation, along with associated recreation, education, cultural activities, and other programs. A community event to celebrate the official opening of the Silver Maple Seniors Community was held in September 2023.

Indigenous Housing Outreach Worker Pilot expanded in 2023

In 2023, the Housing Services pilot in partnership with Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC) was expanded. A second Indigenous Housing Outreach Worker was added to respond to the demand for culturally safe and appropriate supports to better serve members of the Indigenous community in Wellington-Guelph who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness.

End of Mortgage Strategy approved by County Council

The County of Wellington is the only Service System Manager in Ontario with an approved End of Mortgage Strategy. There are three key components to the strategy that make up the agreements with publicly funded housing providers. The Service Manager Funding Agreement, which sets the relationship for the delivery of rent subsidies to residents; the Municipal Housing Project Facility Agreement, which focuses on delivering baselevel housing affordability through property tax relief, and the Municipal Capital Agreement, which provides funding to keep units in a good state of repair. Perhaps the most important and immediate impact of this agreement is to safeguard existing social housing in Wellington-Guelph.





Background

The County of Wellington is one of 47 designated Service System Managers for Social Services who deliver Housing Services, Ontario Works, and Children's Early Years services on behalf of the Province of Ontario for a specific geographic area. For the County, the geographic area includes the towns and townships of the County of Wellington and the City of Guelph.

Since the devolution of housing services by the Province of Ontario in 2001, Service System Managers have been responsible for administration, planning and have been the primary funder of community housing and homelessness prevention programmes.

Ontario is the only province in Canada where municipal levels of government have responsibility for the provision of housing services. Other provinces provide housing programmes that are fully funded by provincial or territorial governments with support from federal funding agencies.



Provincial Policy Direction

The Housing Services Act, 2011 (HSA 2011) sets basic provincial policy directions while giving Service System Managers greater flexibility and control in the planning and delivery of housing and homelessness services including social housing administration.

The Housing Services Act, 2011 requires Service System Managers to prepare local 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plans, in consultation with community and service providers, to address the current and future housing needs of individuals and families. They are also required to communicate community progress towards Housing and Homelessness Plan objectives to the province and the public on an annual basis.

In 2015 the County, in collaboration with the community, developed the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan entitled "A Place to Call Home". In 2019, the County undertook a 5-year update which reflects refined objectives that align with provincial policy directions and emerging community needs.

This document outlines the community's plan to address housing and homelessness locally, including housing affordability, coordination of support services, the promotion of human-centred and culturally appropriate service delivery models, housing stock revitalization, and ending chronic homelessness. This annual report is the fourth in a new reporting phase which began in 2020 and reflects progress made in 2023 on the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan – Five Year Update.

Responsibilities across all levels of Government:

Federal Government

The federal government has a crown agency in charge of the national approach to housing called the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). In 2017, CMHC released the National Housing Strategy which provides policies and programmes to help ensure that Canadians have access to affordable housing that meets their needs. Through the National Housing Strategy, the Government of Canada provides funding that supports local projects offering low-cost loans and grants to increase the development of affordable rental housing buildings. The federal government also provides funding for portable housing benefits such as the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit and rent supplements that support housing stability for low-income rental households. Additionally, the federal government provides Reaching Home funding to provide dedicated funding to support homelessness initiatives.

Provincial Government

Housing services are overseen in Ontario by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) which provides funding to support affordable housing initiatives, rent supplements and portable housing benefits. The Ministry also provides legislative oversight for social housing programming delivered by Service System Managers across the province. Finally, the provincial Homelessness Prevention Programme provides dedicated funds that support local initiatives to prevent and respond to homelessness.

Municipal Government

In Ontario, municipal governments have responsibilities related to housing such as funding social housing and housing stability programmes through the local area Service System Manager. Municipalities are also responsible for land use planning policy, zoning, and development approvals that must align with provincial legislation and policy directives. Through this planning system, municipalities are to provide for an appropriate range and mix of housing options and densities required to meet the social, health and economic well-being of the current and future residents of their community.

Service System Manager Role

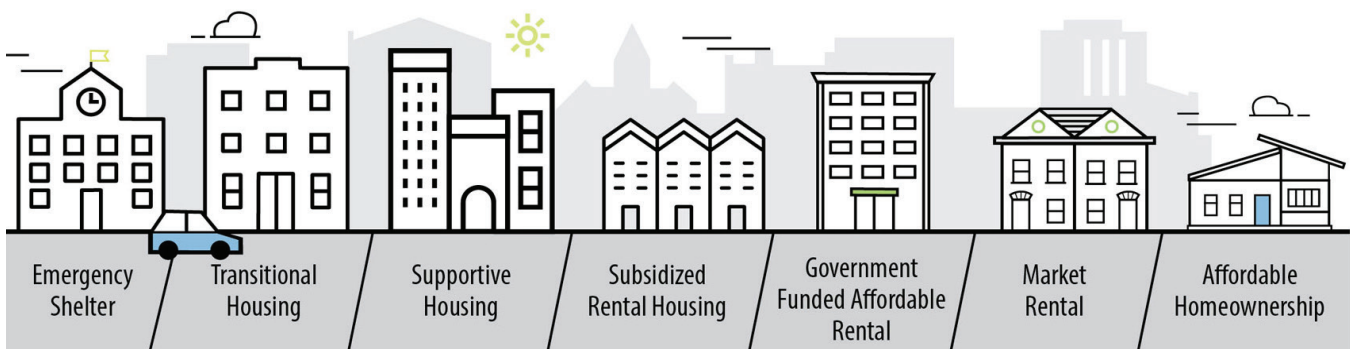
Responsibilities of Housing Services

In Ontario, Service System Managers act as the service delivery agents for federally and provincially funded social housing, government-funded affordable housing programmes as well as initiatives to prevent and respond to homelessness in their respective service areas. Service System Managers are responsible for carrying out their legislated responsibilities that include administration of Centralized Waiting Lists for social housing and access to subsidized and government-funded affordable housing. They also set local housing standards and eligibility criteria for various forms of housing assistance.

Additionally, Service System Managers are an important source of funding for local initiatives to create new and maintain existing government-funded affordable housing options in their communities. Service System Managers provide advice to developers,

planning departments (both upper and lower tier) and work with non-profits and co-operatives in support of initiatives to increase affordable housing options in their communities.

The Housing Services division is accountable to our communities and works to ensure that services funded by taxpayers are provided in a transparent manner that focuses on quality assurance and local priorities. By strengthening community partnerships, understanding sociodemographic factors and the complex housing needs of their communities, Service System Managers provide housing supports to achieve better outcomes for their clients. The work carried out by the Housing Services division and our partner organizations spans across the entire Housing Continuum. As illustrated below, it can be thought of as the range of housing options individuals may need over a lifetime.



Housing Continuum Wellington - Guelph

Most of the work of the Housing Services division focuses on the portion of the Housing Continuum from Emergency Shelters to Government-Funded Affordable Rental Housing.

2023 SNAPSHOT

Housing Services by the Numbers

Investment in Housing Stock

Housing Services invested just over \$30 million dollars in housing stock across Wellington-Guelph in 2023, a **4.6% decrease** from 2022. This small decrease is mainly due to projects being delayed and shifting into the 2024 budget.

Preserving Existing County of Wellington Housing Stock



\$1.9 million

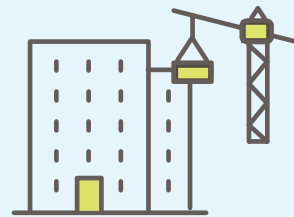
In Capital Projects and Retrofit Expenditures



\$8.7 million

In Maintenance and Upkeep Expenditures

Development of New Housing Stock



\$6.2 million

Committed Investments to New Builds in 2023

Investing in Not-for-Profit, Subsidized and Government Funded Affordable Housing



\$13 million

Invested to Support Operational and Capital Expenditures

Housing Services provided ongoing monthly rental assistance to a total of 3,907 low-income households in 2023 across Wellington-Guelph, a 4.4 % increase from 2022. Of these, 104 were paired with wrap-around supports in transitional or permanent supportive housing.

Subsidized Housing | 2,495 households

Tenants pay no more than 30% of their household income on rent.



1,189 County of Wellington owned units

1,112 Not-for-Profit units

194 Private Rental Market units

Government Funded Affordable Housing | 681 households

Tenants pay rental costs set at or below 80% of average market rent.



131 County of Wellington owned units (Wellington County only)

550 Not-for-Profit units

Rent Support Programmes | 627 households

Tenants receive various forms of annual financial assistance to increase housing affordability and stability.



279 Canada Ontario Housing Benefits (COHB) units

256 Rent Support units

92 Retirement Residence Subsidy units

Transitional and Supportive Housing | 104 households

Combines subsidized rental or time-limited housing with individualized supports for people with high needs related to physical or mental health, developmental disabilities or substance use.



Transitional Housing

39 Units 40 Units in development

Permanent Supportive Housing

65 Units 32 Units in development

Housing Services provided tenant supports and one-time housing stability financial assistance to a total of 1,596 low-income households in 2023, a 16.7% increase from 2022.

Tenant Supports in Subsidized Housing | 246 households

Individualized supports to increase housing stability based on tenant needs.



158 County of Wellington Community Support Worker supported units

88 Service Provider supported units

Housing Stability Programmes | 1,350 households supported

Outreach supports connect individuals at risk of or experiencing homelessness to housing supports while Diversion supports help households quickly find permanent housing to where possible. One-time financial assistance helps to maintain housing placements or remove barriers to accessing housing placements.

Street Outreach



151 Unique individuals supported

Diversion and Rapid Rehousing



179 Youth | 133 Adults
Diverted from emergency shelter

Housing Loss Prevention | 366 households



93 Households supported through utility arrears

273 Households supported through rental arrears

Programmes to Secure Permanent Housing | 521 households



372 First or last months rent

149 Other housing stability expenses (i.e. moving, appliances)

Homeless Serving System Supports

Emergency Shelters, an important part of our homeless serving system, provide necessary crisis response and housing-focused supports, including outreach and diversion, to adults, youth, and families experiencing, or at risk of, homelessness. In 2023, there has been a **40% increase in shelter usage** compared to 2022.



726 Unique Individuals using Emergency Shelters

113 Unique Individuals using Emergency Shelters per night on Average

40,967 Total number of Emergency Shelter Nights

By-Name List (BNL) Analysis for 2023



The **Wellington-Guelph By-Name List (BNL)** is a real-time, up-to-date list of all people experiencing homelessness in our community. With the BNL we are able to track how many people are coming into homelessness (inflow) and moving into housing (outflow). By identifying trends, we can target resources to reduce inflow and increase outflow into housing.

Monthly Average (Chronic*) BNL in 2023



19
Inflow

Individuals who are newly identified, returned from inactive or housing, calculated monthly.



149
Active

Individuals currently experiencing homelessness (includes inflow), calculated monthly.



16
Outflow

Individuals who have been housed or become inactive. Not counted in "active," calculated monthly.



Total Housing Placements (Chronic*) from the BNL in 2023

144

*Chronic refers to individuals who have been homeless for 6 months or more in the past year.



Strategic Achievements and Progress

The 2023 activities and achievements presented in this report are organized according to the eight strategic objectives of the Wellington-Guelph 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan– Five Year Update.

In each section the strategic objective is stated, followed by text that describes achievements and actions undertaken in 2023 that relate to the stated objective. The presentation of the activities and actions are grounded in our local context. Progress on these objectives is subject to local circumstances, broader economic and social pressures, and the availability of resources from all levels of government.

Every strategic objective has associated recommended activities from our Housing and Homelessness Plan. A numbered list of recommended activities for each strategic objective appears in each section followed by a visual representation of annual developments. Progress on the individual recommended activities is tracked across three broad

categories. First is the “Planning and Development” category and indicates that steps have been taken to begin planning but that the recommended activity is under development. The next category, “Underway and On Track” indicates that actions to carry out the recommended activity have begun and/or continues. The last category “Implemented/ Completed” indicates that the activities underway are progressing towards the intended completion of the recommended activity. Different colours correspond to advancements for each year.

The report ends with a two-page table that provides a high-level summary of outcomes, measures, targets and annual progress for each of the eight strategic objectives.

Objective 1

To help low-income households close the gap between their incomes and housing expenses.

The gap between expenses and available income continued to grow in 2023 as costs for accommodation and basic needs increased to levels well beyond the means of low-income households. Housing Services operates subsidized and government-funded affordable housing programmes and works with community partners to provide a range of food security supports to low-income households. The Housing Services division also oversees implementation of provincially and locally funded rent support programmes. The number of households receiving ongoing financial assistance across Wellington-Guelph has increased by nearly 5% in 2023.

In 2023, Housing Services took action to secure additional funds locally so that households supported through expiring provincial rent supplement programmes would not be affected. The division supported tenants and landlords by sharing information about the transition, sending reminders, and holding meetings to listen and respond to concerns. In addition, Housing Services developed a new Rent Support programme in 2023 using municipal funds and the re-organization of the expiring provincial Housing Allowance Programme (HAP). There were 140 households supported in 2023 through this new rent support programme.

Housing Services was successful in its advocacy efforts to the province, through Ontario Municipal Social Services Association (OMSSA) and Housing Services Corporation (HSC), for the extension of the provincially funded Strong Communities Rent Supplement Programme beyond March 31, 2023. The County continued to support the delivery of the Canada Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB), a portable housing benefit which increases housing affordability for low-income households in the private rental market. In 2023, a total of 279 households received ongoing monthly support through COHB, an increase of 60% from 2022, made possible by continued COHB funding.

Low-income households require different types of supports to reduce the gap between rising housing costs and income. Growing financial pressures disproportionately affect low-income households and highlights the need for low-barrier access to nutritious food as food insecurity has increased across the country, the province and in our own communities.

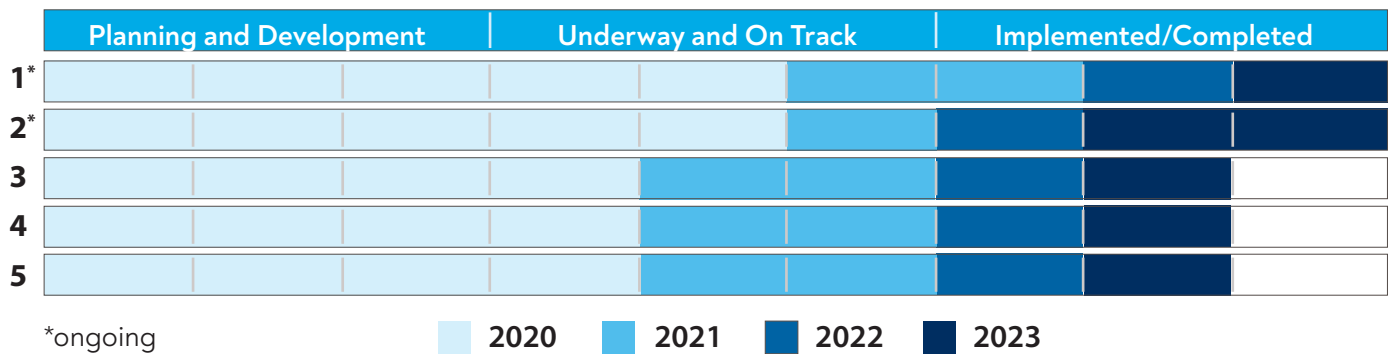
The Community Food Market programme continued operation at 8 County-owned buildings and expanded mid-year into the first Guelph Non-Profit Housing Corporation subsidized housing location. A collaboration with Hope House the Community Food Market programme takes place on a consistent schedule on site, making healthy food available to tenants once a month in a market-style format that increases dignity and reduces stigma for those experiencing food insecurity. The programme continues to be well-attended, receives positive feedback from tenants and promotes social connections and a sense of community.

In addition to regularly scheduled Community Food Markets, food security assistance is provided through the Centre Wellington Mobile Market. In September 2023 the mobile market was hosted at a County subsidized housing location in Fergus, providing easy access to free produce, hot prepared meals, and packaged goods to subsidized housing tenants.

Objective 1: Recommended Activities

1. Continue to seek additional funding from upper levels of government (e.g. National Housing Strategy) to expand rent support programmes.
2. Engage upper levels of government partners to extend existing rent support funding past their current expiry dates.
3. Continue to recruit and build relationships with private market landlords in order to facilitate new rent supplement units.
4. Continue to monitor best practices and regulatory changes regarding the delivery of rent supplement and portable housing benefit programmes, and update existing policies as needed.
5. Continue to support the work of the Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination.

Objective 1: Status of Strategic Actions



Objective 2

To provide a range of housing stability supports to assist with housing retention and homelessness prevention.

The need remains high for a range of supports that assist people to retain their housing and prevent homelessness. Supports range from financial assistance, health, mental health and addictions support services for vulnerable households struggling with tenancies, to upstream support plans for new tenants. Housing stability supports also includes activities and events that promote a sense of community and belonging among residents.

The Housing Stability team administers financial supports for rental and utility arrears programmes to prevent loss of housing and increase housing stability for low-income households that qualify. In 2023 there were a total of 366 households who received financial assistance for utility arrears or rental arrears, a 41% increase compared to 2022.

The Housing Services division also provides financial assistance through the Ontario Renovates Programme which offers grants of up to \$5,000 to low and moderate income homeowners to help pay for modifications, adaptations, and urgent repairs. In 2023, a total of 4 households received grants through the Ontario Renovates Programme.

Beyond financial assistance, Housing Services provides intensive supports to tenants in County-owned units struggling with a variety of issues impacting their tenancy. Community Support Workers, who are part of the Tenant Services Team, often work with and/or refer tenants they support to community service providers. While Community Support Workers assisted 159 households in 2023, it is important to note that there are not enough resources available across systems to meet the growing need for intensive supports including specialized and health supports.

In 2023, Housing Services piloted a new meeting table to provide housing retention supports through more intentional connections across Housing Stability and Tenant Services teams. Originally intended to support housing placements from our By-Name-List into County owned subsidized units, the meeting table has evolved to identify any household struggling with tenancy issues that can benefit from additional supports provided on a temporary basis.

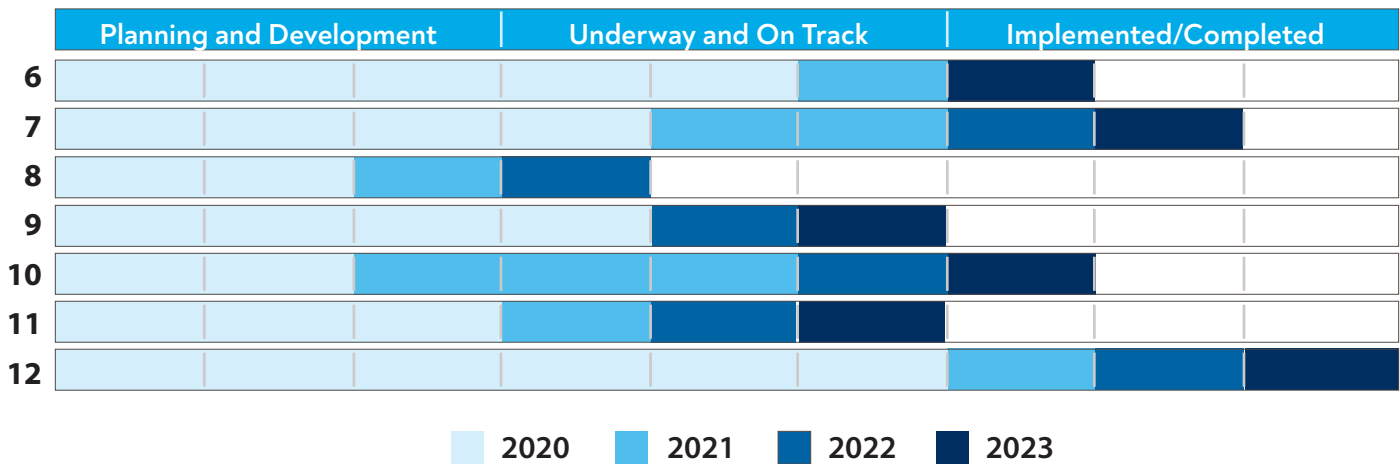
To foster a sense of pride and belonging, Tenant Services and Guelph-Non-Profit Housing Corporation staff held a number of community-building events, ranging from BBQs, clean-up days, to arranging for on-site workshops through police, victims' services, Community Living and more. These events and activities allow tenants to come together and get to know each other over food and learning opportunities. Encouraging a sense of community is known to promote housing stability and retention.

Housing Services is committed to expanding, refining and advocacy for additional supports, working in collaboration to deliver a vital and diverse range of services to support housing stability and contribute to homelessness prevention.

Objective 2: Recommended Activities

6. Adopt and implement an Eviction Prevention Strategy which provides an integrated range of services to prevent those at imminent risk of eviction from becoming homeless. Work with other housing providers in delivering a coordinated approach to eviction prevention.
7. Hold education workshops for front line staff working for community organizations (social services, health care, education, child welfare, housing providers, etc.) to share information about available housing stability programmes, tenant rights and responsibilities, social housing application process, reasons for vacancies, etc.
8. Work with Local Immigration Partnership to advocate for better housing options for refugees and newcomers.
9. Create additional educational resources for renter households (e.g., renter’s toolkit, RentSmart courses).
10. Strengthen pre-offer process to identify housing readiness and support needs and facilitate referrals to appropriate community services.
11. Continue to foster community building activities within social housing buildings which enhance relationships among neighbours and decrease conflicts.
12. Continue to assist individuals that are at risk of homelessness or homeless with supports and services to prevent eviction and increase housing stability.

Objective 2: Status of Strategic Actions



Objective 3

To offer a comprehensive range of supportive housing options for residents with complex needs due to aging, disabilities, mental health issues and addictions.

The Wellington-Guelph community has a strong history of successful advocacy for the development of new supportive housing programmes. The completion of two permanent supportive housing projects in 2023 is the outcome of this advocacy work. With these new units available in 2023 the number of supportive housing units has more than doubled since 2022. However, with a lack of clear pathways for stable consistent operational funds, there remains a strong need for continued advocacy to fill this gap as well as for additional and specialized services to address the growing complexity of needs in our community.

Wyndham House re-opened their permanent supportive housing project for youth 16 to 25 years old in May 2023. The project, located on Bellevue Street in Guelph underwent extensive renovation work to create a deliberate environment to best support the youth in our community. Two years after the renovations began the site is now in operation and home for 8 youth, with eight spacious bedrooms each with a private bathroom. The Bellevue site also includes a shared kitchen, shared laundry, a common living room, as well as meeting rooms. Bellevue is staffed 24/7 and provides supports that range from life skills to assistance with mental illnesses. Funding to cover the costs of renovations was provided through federal, provincial, and municipal funds as well as through local United Way. A ribbon cutting was held on May 4 2023, to officially open Bellevue and was well attended by local community and elected officials.

Grace Gardens, is a permanent supportive housing program, located at the former Parkview Model on Woolwich Street in Guelph, which opened its doors in July 2023. Operated by Stepping Stone, Grace Gardens provides housing with wrap-around supports for adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Each of the 32 bachelor units are furnished with a bed, kitchenette, a private bathroom and a sitting area. Grace Garden is staffed 24/7, has common areas, a community kitchen as well as office space and consultation rooms on site where staff and residents can meet. The transformation of Grace Gardens took funding from multiple levels of government, all made possible through successful collaboration on funding applications by community partners, service providers and Housing Services.

Recognizing the limitations of existing funding for operations, Housing Services and community partners identified the need for enhanced mental health and addictions supports in both youth and adult supportive housing projects. In 2023, Housing Services received, through a one-time grant from Ontario Health West, \$255,000 to fund enhanced mental health and addiction supports. These funds were used by Wyndham House to hire additional front-line staff at their transitional and supportive housing programmes to have two staff on-site at all times. The funds were also used by Stepping Stone to hire a Registered Nurse (part-time) and Clinical Manager to deliver and oversee health care services, primarily at the 24/7 Silvercreek Temporary Accommodation Site in Guelph.

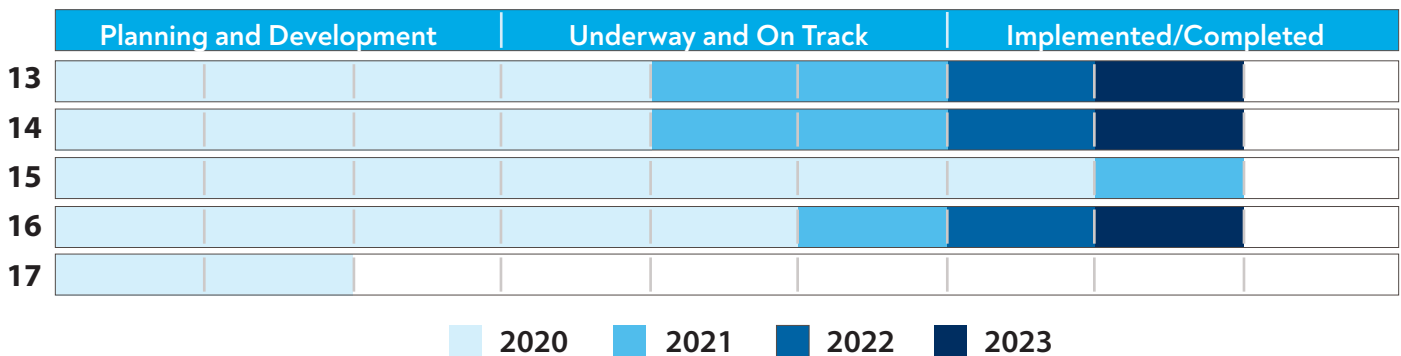
The Acute Intervention Programme (AIP) pilot came to conclusion in 2023 due to a lack of funding. AIP was delivered in partnership with Stonehenge Therapeutic Community, initially piloted in 2020 then expanded in 2021, it was developed to provide dedicated supports to tenants with complex needs who experience housing instability. With its conclusion, Stonehenge took the lead to put a support plan in place for all tenants who were part of the programme when it ended. The process included making referrals internally to other Stonehenge supports as well as referrals to other service providers.

The end of AIP does leave a gap to fill as there remain significant unmet needs in our community. The County’s Tenant Services team has found it difficult to find alternate referrals/supports that are quick to engage other than through our own internal staffing. We continue to advocate to health partners for tenants through case conferences, risk tables and existing community partnerships to secure additional supports. Housing Services and Guelph-Non-Profit Housing Corporation continue to work with Stonehenge and other community partners for opportunities to work together to increase the range of services needed in Wellington-Guelph.

Objective 3: Recommended Activities

- 13. Continue to support Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, Association of Municipalities of Ontario and other advocacy efforts to upper levels of government regarding the need for a range of supportive housing options, including permanent units that offer 24/7 on-site supports.
- 14. Work with the Ontario Health Team to develop a plan for leveraging resources from upper levels of government to develop permanent supportive housing units.
- 15. Bring together community partners to explore opportunities to expedite access to mental health assessment and counselling supports and services for vulnerable tenants when a tenancy is in immediate jeopardy.
- 16. Continue to partner with the Ontario Health Team, Stonehenge Therapeutic Community, and Canadian Mental Health Association to provide rent supplements and Intensive Case Management Support to individuals with complex needs.
- 17. In partnership with Wellington-Guelph Women In Crisis, explore the feasibility of establishing a second stage housing programme for survivors of family violence and human trafficking.

Objective 3: Status of Strategic Actions



Objective 4

To increase the supply and mix of affordable housing options for low to moderate-income households.

The County plays a crucial role in expanding the availability of government-funded affordable housing in Wellington-Guelph. Through advocacy and collaborative work with community partners, the Housing Services division seeks to make meaningful increases in the compliment of affordable housing options available in our community.

Local municipal capital contributions to the development of government-funded affordable housing plays a critical role in the development of new affordable housing stock. The County's annual contribution in municipal funds to the County's affordable housing reserve was \$1.1 million. These funds will be used for future development of government-funded affordable housing options in Wellington County. Through a number of municipal, provincial and federal programmes the County was able to commit over \$6.2 million in funding towards the development of new government-funded affordable housing projects in Wellington-Guelph in 2023. Housing Services continued work in collaboration with the County's Economic Development team on strategies that support the development of a range of housing options to meet the diverse needs of the community.

Housing Services continued work with the Poverty Task Force on the YIMBY (Yes In My Back Yard) campaign in 2023. The Yes In My Back Yard campaign shares myth busting and educational messages that promote understanding, compassion and helps build community. The YIMBY campaign promotes positive messaging throughout Wellington-Guelph to support the development of diverse housing options and new projects as they are entering the pipeline – in particular, the new permanent supportive housing and transitional supportive housing projects.

Since 2005, the Housing Services division as Service System Manager, has supported the development of 494 units of government-funded affordable housing. In 2023, a total of 105 new affordable housing units were completed, including 65 affordable units for seniors, 8 supportive housing units for youth and 32 supportive housing units for adults. An additional 40 transitional housing units and 32 supportive housing units remain in the development phase in 2023, with expected completion in 2024. The Government-Funded Affordable Housing Development graphic on page 21 provides a timeline of the development of various housing projects since 2005.

The St. Joseph's Silver Maple Seniors Community project was completed in 2023 with the official opening held in late September. The Silver Maple project has a total of 115 units, including 28 townhomes, and 87 units in a seven-storey apartment building. Through an affordable housing agreement with the County, there are 65 (government-funded) affordable units, with rents set at 80% or less of the average market rent. The County also provides ongoing monthly rent supplements, stacking financial supports to make a portion of these units "deeply affordable". The completion of construction at Silver Maple Supports represents a significant addition in the availability of government-funded affordable housing for seniors on limited income and a unique opportunity to expand housing options located within a senior's community.

The County also supports moderate income households to enter the housing market and become homeowners. The County of Wellington Revolving Loan Fund supports households who meet eligibility criteria to purchase

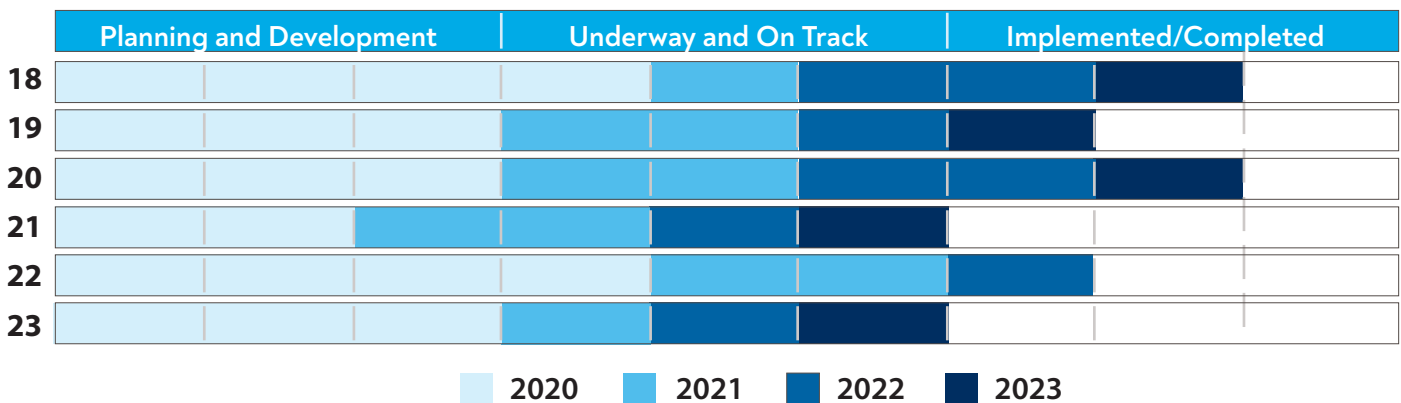
their first home with a forgivable down-payment loan. In 2023 the amount of the downpayment loan was increased to a maximum of \$40,000 from the previous limit of \$20,000. The programme helped two households enter the housing market with the purchase of their first home in 2023. Since the Homeownership Programme began in 2007, Housing Services has helped 134 households in the Wellington-Guelph service area to get into the home ownership market.

Housing Programmes team met regularly with community members and agencies interested in developing affordable housing to provide feedback on projects. Affordable Housing Workshops were held in 2022 and will be hosted again in Fall 2024.

Objective 4: Recommended Activities

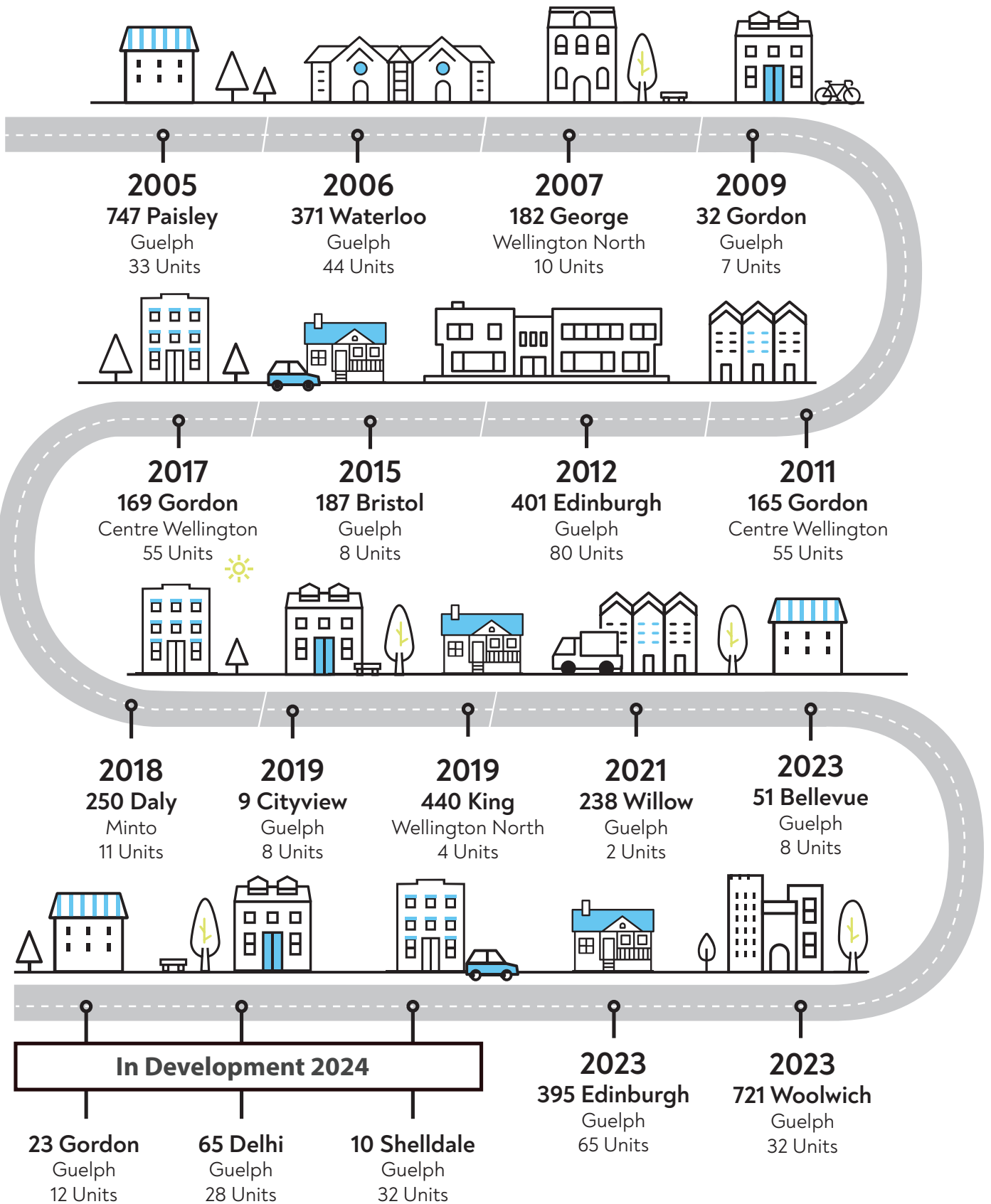
- 18. Continue to support Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, Association of Municipalities of Ontario and other advocacy efforts to upper levels of government regarding the need for more funding to support the development of new permanent affordable rental housing units, including options for additional subsidies to reduce rents to rent geared to income levels.
 - Exploring inclusionary zoning and/or alternative development standards to promote affordability.
 - Creating an inventory of public land/assets and brownfield properties.
- 19. Leverage funding from upper levels of government to increase homeownership opportunities for moderate-income households (i.e. 40th-60th income percentile).
- 20. Continue to collaborate with area municipalities on:
 - Strategically targeting housing investments in alignment with area-led Community Improvement Projects, Official Plans and Economic Development activities.
- 21. Continue to collaborate with other Social Services Divisions and County Departments on development opportunities (e.g., housing and child care development partnerships).
- 22. Expand affordable housing resources for developers online.
- 23. To continue to facilitate housing conversations within the rural context.

Objective 4: Status of Strategic Actions



Government-Funded Affordable Housing Development

The Housing Services Division has supported the development of 494 units of housing since 2005.



Objective 5

End chronic homelessness.

Economic, social and health system factors along with rising rental costs and low vacancy rates all contributed to the ongoing housing crisis in 2023 experienced in Wellington-Guelph and across the province. Of particular concern in 2023, was the increase in families experiencing housing instability and asylum claimants needing emergency shelter options in our community. Throughout 2023, additional resources were deployed to respond to increasing demands across the homeless serving system.

Our community's ongoing commitment to end chronic homelessness requires sustained focus on prevention services including housing stability programme supports (see objective 2), outreach, diversion and rapid rehousing services, strong crisis response supports, as well as dedicated resources to support transitions into and retention of both new and established housing placements.

Outreach, diversion, and rapid-rehousing services represent an important focus in the prevention and reduction of homelessness in Wellington-Guelph. Diversion and rapid-rehousing supports assist households at risk of or newly experiencing homelessness to quickly find appropriate housing solutions and avoid entering into the emergency shelter system. In 2023, a total of 312 youth and adult households were supported by dedicated diversion and rapid rehousing services, a 32% increase compared to 2022.

A second outreach worker with Stepping Stone transitioned from a pilot to a permanently funded position in 2023. Outreach workers connected with 151 unique individuals in 2023, supporting those who are unsheltered or temporarily sheltered, with initial and ongoing connections to housing services. Outreach workers coordinated closely with municipal by-law and outreach workers from health, mental health, and addiction community partners to meet and support some of our most vulnerable community members.

There was an unprecedented increase in demand for emergency shelter services in 2023. To respond to the increased needs, the number of emergency shelter beds available nearly doubled. As of December 31, 2023 there are a total of 146 emergency shelter beds available. The majority of new spaces were added in November when two emergency shelter locations for families experiencing homelessness opened.

There was also a 40% increase in the number of unique individuals who stayed in emergency shelters in 2023. The number individuals in family households using emergency shelters in 2023 rose to 55 families with a total of 161 family members, nearly double the number in 2022. The average number of individuals using emergency shelter on a given night, rose by 43% in 2023 (n=113) compared to the average of 79 individuals in 2022.

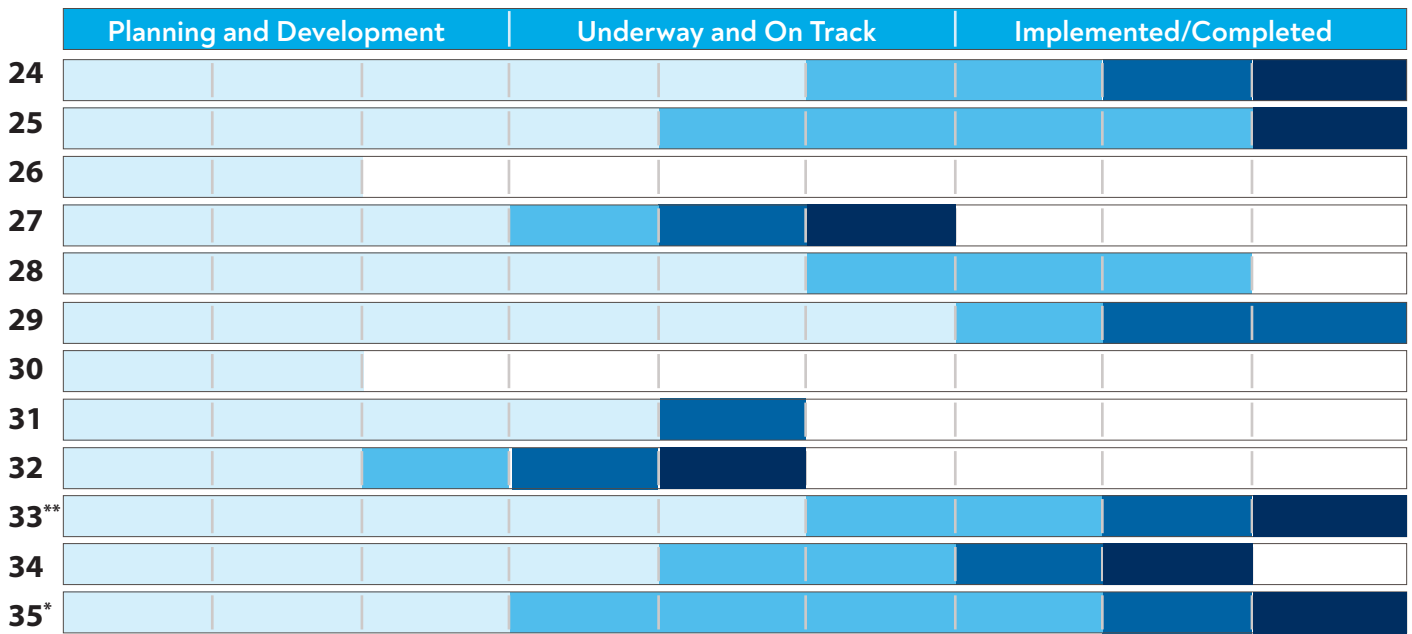
System pressures in 2023 were not limited to increased need for emergency shelter as there was also a corresponding increase in the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness. In spite of these pressures, there was a total of 144 housing placements from the By-Name List in 2023.

Housing Services and community partner staff participated in several community capacity building activities together, including Learning Sessions arranged through Built For Zero. These virtual and in-person sessions provided an opportunity to strengthen our connections across agencies and with other communities committed to ending homelessness. This capacity building work contributed to ensuring that our community is implementing best practices, evidence informed process and programming that support our efforts and will continue to have an impact in our community.

Objective 5: Recommended Activities

- 24.** Continue efforts to improve the Coordinated Entry System using the By-Name List and System Scorecards provided by the 20K Homes Campaign to drive monthly reductions in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness.
- 25.** Explore the feasibility of a Street Outreach Programme.
- 26.** Conduct a fidelity assessment of the Housing First Programme and explore opportunities to expand the Programme including leveraging peer support for the Programme.
- 27.** Establish a process to create a coordinated care plan as part of Coordinate Entry System for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.
- 28.** Continue to collaborate with community partners to conduct homeless enumeration every two years.
- 29.** Establish a Housing Locator position with service providers to design a Landlord Engagement Strategy to enhance and create new landlord partnerships.
- 30.** Collaborate with the Upper Grand District School Board and Wellington Catholic District School Board on introducing homelessness curriculum into the schools.
- 31.** Continue to support the work of the Rural Youth Homelessness Committee and the new Rural Emphasis campaign to raise awareness of youth homelessness in rural Wellington.
- 32.** Collaborate with institutions on strategies to improve discharge planning processes.
- 33.** Implementation of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System across all of the Housing Stability service providers to enhance service delivery.
- 34.** Seek further opportunities to intentionally pair Provincial, Federal and Municipal initiatives.
- 35.** Continue to advocate for increased funding through the renewed Homelessness Partnering Strategy to strengthen our local response to chronic homelessness.

Objective 5: Status of Strategic Actions



*ongoing

** completed

2020 2021 2022 2023

Objective 6

To promote client-centred, coordinated access to the housing and homelessness system.

Coordinated Entry System is a shared and standardized method for connecting people experiencing homelessness to the resources available and is now a requirement of Reaching Home, Canada's Homelessness Strategy. Having an effective Coordinated Entry System streamlines access to housing and supports for individuals and families experiencing and/or at risk of homelessness.

During 2023 the County continued working with our Door Agencies to improve our Coordinated Entry System, achieving all new elements on the System Scorecards provided by Built For Zero - Canada. To improve coordinated access for Veterans, Housing Services worked with our Improvement Advisor to establish a baseline for a Wellington-Guelph Veterans By-Name List in 2023.

Locally, the Housing Stability team provided ongoing support and training for Door Agency staff to ensure a consistent approach is implemented across all community partner agencies and respond to concerns and trouble-shoots solutions as needed. The Housing Services division continued to lead the Housing Stability Working Group which is comprised of the Housing Stability Team members and Door Agency community partner staff. The group meets monthly to strengthen coordinated access to supports, reviewing the needs of individuals and families on the By-Name List to collaboratively then developing and putting into place responsive supports before people have found permanent housing placements.

In 2023, case conferences were integrated into the housing placement process for individuals on the BNL exiting homelessness into subsidized housing units as a local priority on the Centralized Waiting List. The new case conference process provides an opportunity for Housing Services to work with external service provider agencies to identify needs and develop support plans for the first 6 months of tenancy. The case conference process is targeted towards those households on the By-Name List but is also available to other households on the Centralized Waiting List as part of the housing placement process when it is identified that the household can benefit from these supports.

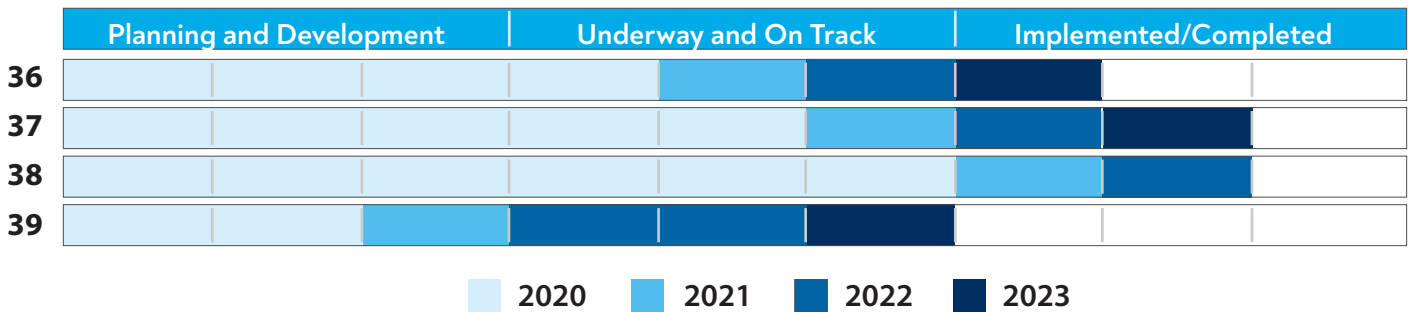
The County is also taking steps internally to improve coordinated access to services through ongoing work in 2023, towards a shared delivery model of homelessness prevention services across Housing Services and Ontario Works divisions. The help desk role stationed in our Guelph office reception area, has improved our ability to meaningfully engage with "walk-in" clients seeking supports. By having staff who are cross trained and knowledgeable about Housing Services programmes and Ontario Works supports, we are better able to provide responsive services and can connect people to services through warm transfers daily.

Housing Services division worked more closely with the Royal City Mission located in downtown Guelph, establishing a pilot that allowed Housing Stability staff members to meet with clients on-site, removing barriers and increasing access to supports for clients who otherwise may not receive supports. Housing Services provided training and support for the use of the Homelessness Individual and Families Information System database to improve tracking and recording of their services.

Objective 6: Recommended Activities

- 36. Continue to support Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, Association of Municipalities of Ontario and other advocacy efforts to remove legislative barriers and administrative burdens that are obstacles to furthering service integration at the local level.
- 37. Continue efforts to further improve coordinated access to the housing and homelessness system.
- 38. Continue efforts to modernize housing policies and practices (e.g. on-line application process, annual updates to the centralized waiting list, mobile rent payments, etc.).
- 39. Continue to expand and streamline the process between divisions by integrating intake and having common communication, reporting and services in place to provide better outcomes for people.

Objective 6: Status of Strategic Actions



Objective 7

To support the sustainability of the existing social and affordable housing stock.

The Housing Services division upholds a strong commitment to maintaining existing subsidized and government-funded affordable housing stock across Wellington-Guelph. These units represent an important community infrastructure and an essential component in our ability to provide safe and affordable housing options to low-income households.

Over \$24.8 million was invested in maintenance, capital projects and operational expenditures costs in subsidized and government funded affordable housing in 2023. This includes \$1.9 million to cover costs of capital projects and retrofits and, over \$8.7 million was invested in maintenance and upkeep in County owned subsidized and government-funded housing stock. This also includes the allocation of \$13 million in 2023 to support the upkeep of subsidized housing stock owned by publicly funded housing providers. These funds are used to help preserve Housing Provider owned subsidized housing stock, by covering costs for operational expenditures and the completion of capital repair projects of various sizes.

Separately, an additional \$16.5 million in funding from other levels of government was secured in 2023 to pay for capital repairs and upgrades needed in County-owned (\$12 million) and Guelph Non-Profit Housing Corporation (\$4.5 million) social housing stock over the next 3-years. This funding for capital repairs will impact over 1,773 units of subsidized housing in Wellington-Guelph.

In addition to investments into maintenance and capital repairs, the Housing Services division engaged in planning for sustainable/energy reduction projects to enhance and modernize our housing stock. Planned investments include consideration of projects such as completing window and door replacements to more energy efficient specifications, improved attic insulation and ventilation, replacing aging systems with high efficiency boilers and air make-up replacements, roof system replacement and accessibility upgrades.

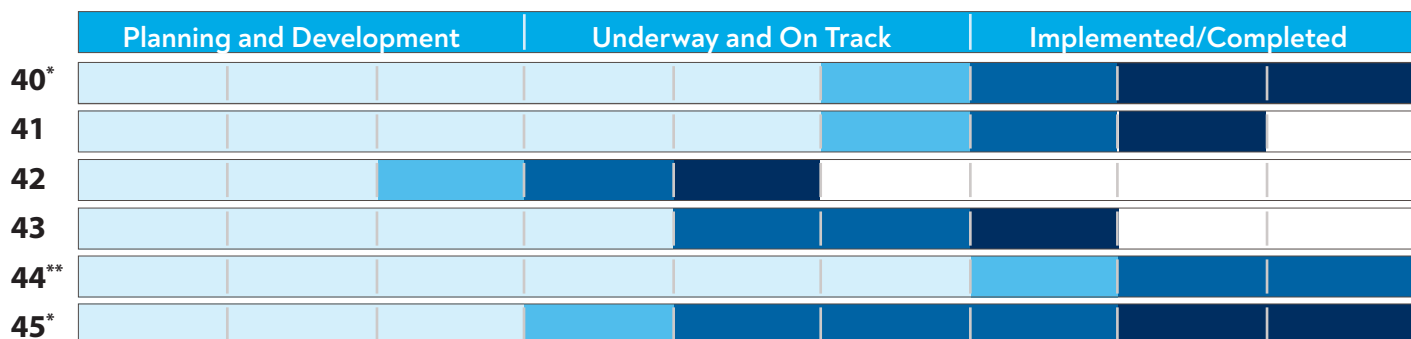
Housing Programmes staff finalized and received approval from Council on an End of Mortgage strategy for publicly supported housing providers of subsidized and government-funded affordable housing. The goal of the End of Mortgage Strategy is to provide a simplified process that supports renewed partnerships with housing providers once their mortgages end to maintain our community's stock of subsidized and government-funded affordable housing stock.

Housing Services also carry out activities to support capacity building among publicly supported housing providers of subsidized housing units. In November 2023 the Housing Programmes team held a session attended by housing provider Boards and sector groups to discuss opportunities and education surrounding regulatory changes, funding opportunities and community development. The team supported housing providers with on-site visits to identify concerns, support operational best practices and stabilize projects in difficulty.

Objective 7: Recommended Activities

- 40. Continue to leverage funding from upper levels of government to address safety and structural repairs, climate change, environmental sustainability, and accessibility needs.
- 41. Continue to support Ontario Municipal Social Services Association, Association of Municipalities of Ontario and other advocacy efforts to remove outdated Service Level Standards that measure only a portion of the possible tools and approaches to improve housing availability and affordability, limiting flexibility and innovation.
- 42. Develop a business case for regenerating the County’s public housing stock, which takes into consideration selling off single/semi-detached units and reinvesting the proceeds in new development opportunities, or site densification options.
- 43. Continue to support non-profit housing corporations and co-operatives in the delivery and potential development of social and affordable housing (e.g., education workshops, sharing of best practices and operating policies and procedures, support for the development of funding proposals and business cases, joint tendering opportunities, common list of approved vendors, etc.).
- 44. Continue to work with our local federal housing providers to try and maintain their involvement in social and affordable housing after their mortgages expire.
- 45. Develop a funding strategy between local provincial reformed housing providers and the County of Wellington to ensure that the providers thrive in our community by maintaining existing and developing new high quality and stable long term social and affordable housing.

Objective 7: Status of Strategic Actions



*ongoing

**NOTE – Objective 7, Strategic Action 44 was completed in 2021.



Objective 8

To foster access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples.

Housing Services division remains committed to the ongoing work needed to connect with, develop and strengthen relationships with Indigenous community members and service providers.

In early 2023 a second Indigenous Housing Outreach Worker was hired, expanding the County's partnership with Southwest Ontario Aboriginal Health Access Centre (SOAHAC). The Indigenous Housing Outreach Workers use a strengths-based and wholistic approach to support Indigenous clients who are at risk of or experiencing homelessness, are in crisis or, require additional support to obtain and retain safe, affordable, and permanent housing. This role has demonstrated encouraging results, contributing to preventative actions and early interventions that increase housing stability and improve access to culturally safe and appropriate services.

To further support and develop this partnership, Housing Stability staff and SOAHAC staff met monthly in 2023 to review caseloads, identify barriers and potential solutions, discuss client situations, concerns, and to select new referrals connected to the By-Name List. Indigenous Housing Outreach Workers continue to be stationed at Hope House but occupied a new space there in 2023.

The newly opened permanent supportive housing project at Grace Gardens, operated by Stepping Stone, has a number of units dedicate to Indigenous community members who need housing with wrap around supports. The intention of having these dedicated units is to support the provision of culturally safe and appropriate supports through partnering with Indigenous-led service providers.

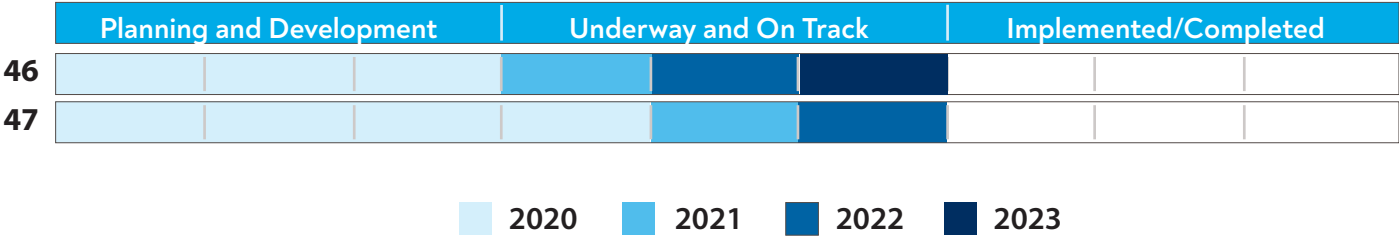
Early stages of planning for the Health and Housing Symposium in late 2023 identified the need for a strong focus on our local Indigenous community. The decision was made to dedicate a minimum of 10% of seats at the symposium for Indigenous community members and service providers, and to include Indigenous speakers as an integral part of the Symposium.

The County recognizes there remains much work to be done on the road ahead. Yet, there is a sense of optimism that by continuing to reach out, to engage and connect with Indigenous community members and service providers, we will expand the availability of culturally appropriate and safe services for Indigenous community members in Wellington-Guelph.

Objective 8: Recommended Activities

46. Strengthen relationships with Indigenous organizations and communities in our service delivery area.
47. Coordinate with Indigenous community and partners to support access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples in our service delivery area.

Objective 8: Status of Strategic Actions



2023 Annual Report on Objectives and Annual Progress/ Achievement

The following two pages include tables providing a high-level summary of outcomes, measures, targets and annual progress for each of the eight strategic objectives.

Outcomes	Measures	Targets	Annual Progress/Achievement
Objective 1: To help low-income households close the gap between their incomes and housing expenses			
Improved access to rent supports that help improve housing affordability for low-income households.	Number of households that receive rent supports per year.	By 2024, 400 households receive rent supports per year.	In 2023, 627 households received rent supports. We are on track to meet targets.
Objective 2: To provide a range of housing stability supports to assist with housing retention and homelessness prevention			
Improved access to supports and resources for tenants and landlords to stabilize housing and reduce evictions and evictions.	Number of households at risk of homelessness that are stabilized (includes eviction prevention services, and assistance with rental and energy arrears) per year.	By 2024, 75% of households who received a subsidy and/or supports have retained their housing at 6 months follow up.	In 2023, 95% of households who received a subsidy and/or supports had retained their housing at six months follow up. We are on track to meet targets.
Objective 3: To offer a comprehensive range of supportive housing options for residents with complex needs due to aging, disabilities, mental health issues and addictions			
Increased access to supportive housing options that help people to successfully live independently.	Number of households that receive housing support services through the Service Manager per year.	By 2024, there has been a 5% increase in the number of households that receive support services through the Service Manager.	In 2023, 435 households received support services and 72 units of supportive and transitional housing were in development. We are on track to meet targets.
Objective 4: To increase the supply and mix of affordable housing options for low to moderate income households			
Increased number of households who are living in affordable housing options.	Number of households in affordable housing per year.	By 2024, there has been a 5% increase in the number of affordable housing units. Increasing number of first time homeownership grants and Ontario Renovates programme participation.	In 2023, 65 new affordable housing units for seniors became available. Two new homeownership down payment loans were issued and four households supported by Ontario Renovates in 2023. We are on track to meet targets.

Outcomes	Measures	Targets	Annual Progress/ Achievement
Objective 5: To end chronic homelessness			
People experiencing chronic homelessness find and maintain housing	Reductions in the number of people actively experiencing chronic homelessness	By 2024, Guelph Wellington will reach the third key reduction indicator in the 20KHomes Campaign: Getting Close to Functional Zero Chronic Homelessness	In 2023, Wellington-Guelph By-Name List (BNL) has remained below baseline. We are on track to meet targets.
Objective 6: To promote client-centred, coordinated access to the housing and homelessness system			
People are able to access the housing and homelessness support services they need in a timely and efficient manner	Number of activities undertaken to improve coordinated access and customer service (i.e., training, policies, phones, positions, etc.)	By 2024, Social Services reception and intake is fully integrated	In 2023, Housing Services continued to support activities to strengthen integrated service delivery. We are on track to meet targets.
Objective 7: To support the sustainability of the existing social and affordable housing stock			
Improved viability of existing RGI units and social housing assets beyond their original operating and mortgage agreements	Number of households in RGI and affordable housing units	By 2024, the Housing Services Division and local housing providers are collectively continuing to maintain service level standards	In 2023, the County continued to maintain service level standards. We are on track to meet targets.
Objective 8: To foster access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples			
Improved access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples	Number of engagement activities and resources initiated to deepen understanding of Indigenous housing and homelessness experience in Wellington Guelph	By 2024, the Housing Services Division and community housing partners are engaged in the development of a meaningful process that supports Indigenous participation in the housing and homelessness initiatives in our community.	In 2023, Housing Services continued to build partnerships with local Indigenous organizations. Crow Shield Lodge led the Indigenous Perspectives Circle in early 2023. A second Indigenous Housing Outreach Worker was hired in 2023, expanding our partnership with SOAHAC. We are on track to meet targets.

Acknowledgements

We would like to thank Warden Andy Lennox, the County of Wellington Council, and the Social Services Committee both past and present, for their ongoing support in taking steps needed towards the objectives in our Housing and Homelessness Plan and our community's vision for everyone to find and maintain a safe and affordable place to call home.

We must also recognize Housing Services and community partner staff for their dedication and hard work supporting our tenants and clients which include some of our community's most vulnerable citizens. Our collective work takes place in an ever-shifting environment of social, economic, health and housing challenges. By continuing to work together we will continue to support the community's most vulnerable and work towards housing stabilization.

Communication:

The County of Wellington will distribute the 2023 Annual Report to the community through presentations at local community tables, through posting on the County's website and sharing directly with participating stakeholders. This report will also be sent to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as part of the County's commitment to report annually on our progress toward goals and targets established by the community on the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan – 5 year update.

