



# HOUSING OUR FUTURE

Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing  
and Homelessness Prevention Strategy



**2023**  
ANNUAL REPORT

# A Message from the Warden

**A**s this will be the final annual report for the 2014-2024 Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy, it brings me great satisfaction as I to reflect on the achievements of the past decade. I'm happy to say that since this Strategy was launched, we did not just meet our goals, but we exceeded them, one year ahead of schedule!

We know that the world has changed dramatically since 2014, and housing has seen inflation and increased costs impact affordability. That is why I am so proud of our team at the County of Simcoe. We looked to the future, and through Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy, made promises to our community, promises that we kept. This team has worked relentlessly to build up affordable housing within our regional system.

Because of this, the County surpassed its affordable housing targets at the end of 2022 and continued building up even more affordable homes throughout the final year of our decade-long strategy.

As of the beginning of 2024, we are proud to report that the County of Simcoe has created a ten-year total of 3,250 new affordable housing spaces across the region.

We know that affordable



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

**Basil Clarke**

*Warden, County of Simcoe*

housing looks different to many people, and that's why our team created these spaces in a variety of ways: from basement apartments that allow seniors to stay in their homes while renting underused space in their home to a young family just starting out, to affordable housing developments like the mixed-use buildings we've built in Collingwood, Tay, and Wasaga Beach that can accommodate thousands of people for decades to come.

Given the success of these builds, we are currently building similar mixed-use developments in Orillia, Bradford West Gwillimbury, and Barrie. Innovative strategies have been used in motel conversion

projects and modular housing has been used to create homes that provide incredible support to those who live there. To ensure we were creating affordability when, where, and how we could, we did not just stop at building "brick-and-mortar" developments. We've also used a variety of rent subsidy programs to help those in need to get started on their next phase in life in the communities they already call home.

Each one of these 3,250 new affordable spaces is the start of a new story. It the story of a young mother who is raising her children in a new community where she can feel safe and secure. It is the story of a senior who has been struggling with increased costs and isn't ready to leave their home, but thanks to a new secondary suite, they can afford to continue living in the space that holds so many memories in the community they love. And it is the story of a person who falls under tough times and ultimately found a home at a transitional housing building where they could start a new life with stability, support, and safe, reliable housing.

These stories (and so many more just like them) do not stop here – they are just starting. Our Council and staff are committed to having an even stronger 10-year affordable housing strategy to present in the coming months that will continue building up the lives of our residents and starting new stories of homes, lives, and hope.

# Housing Our Future

2023 Annual Report

January 1, 2023 – December 31, 2023

The County of Simcoe must provide an annual report to the public and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) regarding its progress under the 10-year long-term affordable housing strategy, which came into effect in January 2014. This report is a requirement under the Housing Services Act (2011).

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



# STRATEGIC THEME ONE

## Strong Governance and Leadership

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

The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHA) has been working diligently to ensure strong governance and effective leadership for the implementation of the County's 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy.

The AHA Committee consists of six municipal representatives from North, South, East, and

West Simcoe, Barrie, and Orillia. Additionally, six non-municipal representatives from private, public, and non-profit organizations have been selected based on their expertise in various sectors, including building and development, health, homelessness prevention services, landlord/property management, mental health, and addictions

care. The County's Social and Community Services and Planning departments provide support to this committee, and the Warden serves as an ex-officio member.

Through ongoing research, discussion, and advocacy efforts, the AHA Committee is committed to achieving the goals of the County's Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy.



### The Affordable Housing Advisory Committee met quarterly to address various topics in 2023.

- Monitored local housing data, regional and municipal housing needs indicators, and service level data.
- Review of updates from the National Housing Council and Federal Housing Advocate.
- Received Homelessness Shelter Services updates.
- Guided planning and development of an updated 10-year affordable housing and homelessness prevention plan.
- Actively participated in community affordable housing surveys
- Oversaw the completion of a Housing Our Future: 2022 Annual Report.
- Discussed several topics such as built forms, attainable housing, coordinated access to homelessness services, and local municipal affordable housing strategies.



## 10-Year Milestones and Achievements

### Accomplishments under Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy

#### Strong Governance and Leadership Successes:

- Establishment and Progressive Implementation Plans
- Innovative Housing Solutions
- Partnerships and Advocacy
- Community Engagement and Awareness
- Research and Policy Advocacy

Over the course of 10 years, the Affordable Housing Advisory Committee (AHAC) has demonstrated exceptional leadership, innovation, and partnership in implementing the housing strategy. Under the guidance of AHAC the County of Simcoe surpassed ambitious targets, explored creative solutions to increase affordable housing stock, and partnered with various stakeholders to facilitate knowledge sharing and financial support.

The committee developed and executed phased implementation

plans that translated the objectives of the Strategy into actionable recommendations. This led to the production of 1,017 new units by the end of 2017, surpassing its first phase target of 895 units. This success continued as the County exceeded its overall target of 2,685 new units by 2024, with a ten-year total of **3,250** units.

Innovative solutions to affordable housing creation included a municipal secondary suites program, a variety of rent subsidy programs, motel conversion projects, modular housing projects, and new development projects

tailored to families, seniors, and persons with disabilities.

Under AHAC the County also formed instrumental partnerships with local health integration networks, non-profit organizations, and government agencies, facilitating knowledge sharing, financial support, and the exploration of new housing models.

Overall, the AHA Committee's leadership, innovation, and partnership have been critical to addressing systemic barriers and promoting innovative housing solutions.

# STRATEGIC THEME TWO

## Achieve Affordable Housing Target

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

Since 2014, the County and its community partners have created 3,250 affordable housing units through new development, rent supplements/housing

allowances, homeownership assistance, and secondary suites. With a minimum target of 2,685 new units by 2024, the County achieved 121% of its target.

Unit Type	New Units Created in 2023	Total Units Created (2014-2023)
Rent Supplement and Housing Allowance - Government Funded	391	1,478
Affordable Homeownership Assistance Program* <small>This includes units created by Habitat for Humanity, and OAHS*</small>	4	141
Secondary Suites – Government-Funded	25	243
Secondary Suites – Unfunded	N/A**	804* **
New Affordable Rental Development	9	485
New Supportive Housing Development	46	99
<b>Total Units</b>	<b>475</b>	<b>3,250</b>

\*\* unfunded second suites not deemed affordable as of 2022 based on market survey. Previously a discount rate was applied to reflect affordability levels, e.g. 25% of units created deemed affordable based on data at the time.

### Units to Date

STAGE 1			
2014	2015	2016	2017
32	207	544	1,017

  

STAGE 2		
2018	2019	2020
1,288	1,873	2,364

  

STAGE 3		
2021	2022	2023
2,531	2,775	3,250





## 10-Year Milestones and Achievements

### Accomplishments under Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy

#### Strong Governance and Leadership Successes:

- **A Balanced Approach between Capital and Operating**
- **Diverse Housing Solutions**
- **Preventative Solutions and Diversion Programs**
- **A People-Centered Approach**

The County of Simcoe's balanced approach to affordable housing has led to the successful achievement of targets through the creation of new affordable housing units and programs to prevent homelessness. This approach worked effectively for several reasons, including the creation of diverse housing solutions, such as a mix of new affordable developments, secondary suites, renovations, homeownership downpayment assistance, and rent supplements.

Simcoe County Housing Corporation's (SCHC) new

development has been a major accomplishment in achieving affordable housing targets. The role of government-funded housing is essential in providing homes for County residents that will remain safe and affordable for generations to come.

At the same time the County has provided funding to both private and non-profit proponents over the past 10 years to create 148 new rental units, leveraging equity and investments from both sectors to increase the stock of affordable housing.

Programs that incentivize

affordable rental, including secondary suites funding, and rent supplements, help create immediate housing solutions to address urgent needs, within existing housing stock or available land use.

Diversion programs, like those addressing rental and utility arrears, urgent repairs, and accessibility modifications played a critical role in the overall strategy, providing immediate assistance to those at risk of eviction or housing loss, thereby preventing the additional emotional and financial costs associated with homelessness.

# Affordable Housing Program Delivery

The Strategy takes a balanced approach, using a combination of capital and operating programs to address affordable housing supply and demand. Through a suite of affordable housing programs, the County has been able to increase affordable housing stock across Simcoe County while addressing a variety of housing pressure points across the housing spectrum. Using a Results-Based-Accountability (RBA) Framework, the County can measure its performance accountability and track programs' successful implementation.

## Monitoring For Success

**Based on 2023 data a rating for each program has been assigned**

**Red** - Program requires review

**Yellow** - Program is being monitored for potential review

**Green** - Program is operating as intended

## Rent Supplements

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

### How Much Did We Do?

In 2023, the County distributed **\$1.4M** rent supplement/housing allowance subsidy dollars.

### How Well Did We Do It?

Throughout 2023, rent supplements assisted households in every municipality, including the cities of Barrie and Orillia.

### Is Anyone Better Off?

- **409** households were housed with new rent supplements in 2023
- **1,478** units have been made affordable with rent supplements since 2014
- **Rent supplements** continue to assist seniors, youth, low-income earners, Indigenous persons, survivors of human trafficking, and persons experiencing mental health or addiction challenges, persons experiencing chronic homelessness, and others in addressing systemic poverty barriers.

## The Story Behind the Data

In addition to rent supplements delivered by the County of Simcoe, the County partnered with Empower Simcoe to launch a new Community Rent Subsidy Program (CRSP) in 2023. The CRSP aims to prevent or end homelessness by enhancing access to suitable and affordable housing and homelessness services for vulnerable residents.

Community rent subsidies, ranging from \$600 to

\$1,000, are issued to support low- to moderate-acuity clients who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness in the region.

These deep rent subsidies help individuals secure and maintain permanent affordable housing.

Since its launch on September 1, 2023, more than 166 subsidies have been issued, with a program objective to serve 120 individuals, including families, annually.

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





## ■ Affordable Homeownership Down-Payment Assistance Program

The County of Simcoe offers the Homeownership Down-Payment Assistance Program to eligible individuals and families who intend to purchase a home. This program provides down-payment assistance in the form of a forgivable loan. By enabling individuals and families to move from rental accommodation to affordable homeownership, the program helps free up existing rental spaces, creating more rental opportunities for others.

### How Much Did We Do?

In 2023, the County distributed **\$130,790** in affordable homeownership down-payment supports.

### How Well Did We Do It?

- The homes purchased were within affordability limits. Clients were able to successfully buy homes below the maximum purchase price of **\$712,300**.

### Is Anyone Better Off?

- **4** households were housed with Affordable Homeownership Down-payment Assistance in 2023.
- **141** households have been housed with Affordable Homeownership Down-payment Assistance since 2014.

In 2023, a total of **\$418,311** was returned to the County of Simcoe’s Revolving Fund. This sustainability fund holds any down-payment assistance purchasers pay back for redistribution to future program participants.

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

## The Story Behind the Data

In 2023, the housing market in Ontario continued to face significant challenges due to high-interest rates and rising inflation. The economic pressures had a notable impact on home sales, making it difficult for many potential buyers, especially first-time buyers, to afford a home.

Since 2019, the Canadian government has offered a First-Time Home Buyer Incentive, a program designed to help low- and moderate-income individuals purchase their first home by providing interest-free

equity-based downpayment loans, thereby reducing the overall size of their mortgages. However, the challenges of limited housing availability, high prices, and a competitive market meant incomes to purchase well exceeded the income-levels of program participants.

**“I can’t thank you enough for all your help through the process and this program the County offers. If it wasn’t for the program, I’m not sure this would have been a possibility for our family. Thank you again.”**

K & B, Homeownership  
Down-payment Assistance Recipients

As a result, in March 2024, the federal government announced the program’s cancellation. Currently the County continues to offer funding to prospective homeowners who can qualify for financing, meet the program eligibility criteria, and successfully negotiate a purchase.



## ■ Affordable Second Suites and Urgent Home Repairs and Accessibility Modifications

Secondary suites improve the range of options available to single individuals, ageing couples, and single-parent households by addressing housing pressure points through the development of new one- and two-bedroom affordable rental units. Funding of up to \$30,000 per unit is available for property owners to create secondary suites. Ensuring the sustainability of existing housing stock, funding of up to \$15,000 is also available for homeowners requiring urgent home repairs or accessibility modifications to stay housed. Examples of eligible repair projects include mould remediation, plumbing or septic repairs, and roofing or structural repairs. Examples of accessibility modifications include the installation of ramps, handrails, or chair and bath lifts.

### How Much Did We Do?

- In 2023, the County of Simcoe allocated
- **\$650,000** towards its Municipal Secondary Suites funding program.
- The County allocated an additional **\$250,000** in Urgent Home Repairs or Accessibility Modifications, through the Ontario Renovates Program.

### How Well Did We Do It?

- **40** eligible households proceeded with a County-funded Secondary Suites application.
- **40** were approved for funding.
- **0** were waitlisted

### Is Anyone Better Off?

- **25** new secondary suites were completed in 2023, with government funding.
- **243** new secondary suites have been created with government funding since the onset of the Strategy in 2014.
- **16** units were supported with urgent home repairs or accessibility modifications in 2023.
- **362** units have been supported with urgent home repairs or accessibility since 2014.

**“Huge, huge, huge thank you for helping us again. I’m already sleeping a little better knowing we have [it].” [Funding supported construction of an accessibility ramp]**

S., Urgent Home Repairs  
Funding Recipient

## **New Affordable Rental Development** **How Much Did We Do?**



### **Orillia**

The **130**-unit building is receiving finishing touches and occupancy has begun. Ontario Works office at this location is open to public and EarlyON and the Childcare Centre – operated by West Ridge Early Education Centre, are expected to open their doors later this spring.

### **Bradford West-Gwillimbury**

The **50**-unit building is on time and is anticipated to be finished later this year. The application process for incoming tenancy is not yet open. Once available, updates and information on the application process for this building will be posted on BWG Development – Simcoe County.



### **Barrie - Rose Street Development**

The proposed **215**-unit affordable housing and community and social services hub at 20 Rose Street is in the final stages of preliminary design in preparation for planning application submissions to the City of Barrie for development approvals.

# STRATEGIC THEME THREE

## Protect Existing Public Assets

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

### Protecting Existing Stock

The County of Simcoe continues to invest in preserving the public, non-profit and co-operative housing stock created between the 1970s and the 1990s. These units make up much of the community housing stock in

Simcoe County. To ensure the longevity of these units within the local housing system, the County continues to invest in capital repairs and building improvements to increase accessibility and energy efficiency.



In 2023, The County of Simcoe invested **\$1.4M** on capital repairs for existing Simcoe County Housing Corporation (SCHC) units.



Through its Non-Profit Provider Capital Repair Loan process, the County provided **\$2M** to assist mandated social housing providers with urgent capital repairs.

### How Well Did We Do It?

- **3,609** units of mandated social/community housing remain in the social housing portfolio\*
- **248** former social housing units remain in affordable housing inventory.

Out of the original **4,113** units in the social housing portfolio, currently **87%** remain in the mandated social housing portfolio.

\* This includes properties owned by the Simcoe County Housing Corporation, as well as non-profit providers.



### Maintaining Affordability upon End-of-Operating Agreements

Non-Profit and Co-operative social housing providers are required to operate as community housing until their government-funded mortgage ends, at which time they can exit the community housing system.

To encourage and support providers to remain in the community housing system to continue providing affordable housing units after their mortgage ends, Service Managers may enter post-mortgage service or exit

agreements.

The County is committed to working with housing providers towards the goal of preserving the availability of affordable units in their projects as mortgages reach maturity.

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

As of December 31, 2023, the total number of applicants on the Centralized Waitlist was **4,696** a decrease of **3.7%** over the waitlist reported in 2022.

### Applicants on the waitlist include:

- Seniors: **1,953** (40%)
- Adults with no dependents: **1,626** (35%)
- Households with dependents: **1,210** (25%)

In 2023, staff processed 2,208 new applications



## Canada Ontario Housing Benefit

### Total amount allocated towards COHB Rent Supplement \$1.16M

The COHB is a monthly portable housing benefit program designed to assist eligible households with housing costs. It provides a financial subsidy directly to households, aiming to enhance housing affordability and stability within the private rental market. The benefit amount varies based on the average local market rent.

Specifically, the COHB covers the difference between 30% of the household's income and the average market rent in the area.

For recipients of social assistance, the COHB bridges the gap between the shelter allowance and the household's rent and utilities costs. Administered by the Province of

Ontario, the benefit undergoes an annual review. Households can use COHB funding to pay rent at their current address or explore new housing options anywhere in Ontario. Notably, households cannot simultaneously receive COHB and Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) housing or any other housing benefit.

## 10-Year Milestones and Achievements

### Accomplishments under Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy

#### Protect Existing Public Assets Successes:

- **Capital Repairs Program**
- **Capital Investments**
- **Environmental Sustainability**
- **Service System Management**

From 2014 to 2024, the County of Simcoe adeptly preserved its community housing, ensuring 87% remained within the stock, by addressing aging infrastructure and expiring agreements with innovative financing, collaborative working relationships with housing providers and implementation of regulatory updates. Significant

investments in maintenance and environmentally efficient upgrades like water-saving renovations and energy-efficient constructions highlighted the commitment to sustainability. This strategic approach not only secured affordable housing but also underscored the importance of environmental stewardship in

promoting community well-being and reducing operational costs. Additionally, the County facilitated the transition of housing providers to post-mortgage operations, maintaining the affordability and quality of housing while fostering community well-being and environmental stewardship through sustainable practices.

# STRATEGIC THEME FOUR

## Planning for the Public Good

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

### A Collective Approach

Since the onset of the Strategy in 2014, a Municipal Liaison Group (MLG) continues to meet quarterly to share best practices for promoting and incentivising affordable housing development, highlight local projects, and discuss policy changes. The group is comprised of local-municipal planners from each member municipality, plus the cities of Barrie and Orillia, and is hosted by County staff in the Planning and Social Housing departments. 2023 Topics of Discussion include:

- Affordable Housing Advisory Committee Updates
- 10-Year Strategy Development
- Attainable Supply Action Plan (ASAP)
- County Planning Updates
- Municipal Planning Updates
- Municipal Affordable Housing Strategies
- Provincial Policy Statement 2023
- Housing Accelerator Fund
- Temporary Emergency Shelter Solutions
- Permitting Processes Roundtable Discussion
- Bill 23, More Homes, Built Faster
- Accessory Dwelling Units (ADUs) and Short-Term Rental (STR) Regulation
- Review Housing Our Future: 2022 Annual Report
- Collingwood Affordable Housing Task Force Presentation – Affordable Housing Toolkit
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) Funding Initiatives and Call for Proposal (CFP)

## 10-Year Milestones and Achievements

### Accomplishments under Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy

#### Planning for the Public Good Successes:

- **Adoption of strategic planning and financial tools county-wide.**
- **Establishment of Community Improvement Plans.**
- **Promotion and regulation of secondary suites.**
- **Launch of new transit lines, improving county-wide accessibility.**
- **Implementation of affordable housing incentives, fostering development.**
- **Development and sharing of best practices for affordable housing across municipalities.**

From 2014 to 2024, the County of Simcoe, in partnership with 18 municipalities, including Barrie and Orillia, made significant strides in affordable housing and transportation. The Municipal Liaison Group fostered collaboration on legislative updates,

strategic planning, and community improvement, leading to the adoption of new planning and financial tools, the establishment of Community Improvement Plans, and the promotion of secondary suites. During the same period, the County opened six transit routes,

joining communities across the region. These efforts underscored a unified approach to increase affordable housing supply and enhance community infrastructure, reflecting a commitment to community well-being and accessibility.



# STRATEGIC THEME FIVE

## Create an Integrated Service Model for Housing and Supports

**Desired outcome:** People experiencing homelessness obtain and retain housing.

Throughout 2023, the post pandemic economy saw a steady increase in inflation-driven increases to the cost of food, shelter, personal care items, utilities and more. Those most deeply impacted by the rapidly rising cost-of-living are the individuals and households already facing barriers of poverty, food insecurity, homelessness, or compounding factors related to mental health and addictions challenges.

The County of Simcoe and its community

partners continue to plan and deliver the system of homelessness supports and services for those in need.

Planning and funding reflect alignment with federal and provincial policy, and include such funded domains as Homeless Shelters, a Regionalized Housing First Program delivered through Empower Simcoe, Domiciliary Care, Supportive Transitional Housing, Community Hubs, and Rent Retention.

**80,368**

nights spent in emergency shelters by combined households

**132**

households assisted with transitional housing

**144**

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

**29**

individuals supported by the Seniors at Home Program

**206**

households assisted with Housing First

### Eviction Prevention

Eviction Prevention Housing retention programs are a key resource in preventing eviction into homelessness.

Every circumstance is unique and is assessed on a case-by-case basis to determine the right combination of interventions/assistance to support success. A combined maximum of \$2000.00 for singles/couples and \$4000.00 for families in a 24-month period may be available for one or more of the interventions – First or Last Month's Rent, Moving Expenses, Rental/Utility Arrears.

Requests for housing retention supports come through three main channels: Ontario Works, Ontario Disability Support Program, and low-income residents not receiving social assistance.

### How Much Did We Do?

A total of **\$534,635** was issued through the Housing Retention Program in 2023.

### How Well Did We Do It?

- **820** Last Month's Rent Requests
- **625** First Month's Rent Requests
- **33** Rental Arrears
- **461** Moving/Storage Requests
- **278** Utilities Arrears

### Is Anyone Better Off?

County staff processed **3,056** requests for Housing Retention in 2023:

- **40%** of requests were from Ontario Works recipients
- **38%** were requests from Ontario Disability Support Program recipients
- **22%** were requests received from Non-Social Assistance applicants
- **1,647** households qualified for supports and were assisted with funding for housing retention to aid households in paying rent and utility arrears, preventing eviction.

## Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)

HIFIS is an information system provided by the Government of Canada's Employment and Social Development Canada department and is a community-level data collection and case management information system.

At a local level, HIFIS increases understanding about homelessness challenges in Simcoe County.

This information improves planning for services and initiatives. Data from HIFIS also

assists service providers with case management; helping front-line staff provide coordinated services and reduce duplication for HIFIS clients.

More information about HIFIS is available at [simcoe.ca/hifis](https://simcoe.ca/hifis).

## Recognized by Built for Zero

The County of Simcoe has made significant strides in addressing chronic homelessness, earning recognition from the Built for Zero Canada campaign for its efforts. By maintaining accurate data, the County has enhanced its response system to homelessness. The County transitioned from an Excel-based By-Name List (BNL) to the Homelessness Individuals

and Families Information System (HIFIS), successfully meeting all the criteria required to reconfirm their Quality By-Name List. This includes achieving a perfect score on the By-Name List Scorecard and submitting three months of reliable data on chronic homelessness.

As of December 2023, the County set a new baseline with

837 individuals reported as actively experiencing chronic homelessness. This effort is crucial for tracking reductions and informs the County's improvement projects, optimizes its coordinated access systems, and supports advocacy for necessary resources, moving the County closer to its goal of eliminating chronic homelessness.

## Expanded Access to Open Data

In October 2023, the County introduced [open.simcoe.ca](https://open.simcoe.ca), a new online data portal to support the County's 10-point Homelessness Prevention Strategy and further assist people in need in our communities.

The online portal helps inform strategies that

support homelessness prevention and shelter efforts by tracking real-time data on shelter usage and other trends across the region.

The 2021 federal census data tool supports similar goals and can be accessed by the public at [open.simcoe.ca](https://open.simcoe.ca).

## Housing that Helps

Supportive housing is a combination of subsidized housing with intensive and trauma-informed co-ordinated services to help people struggling with chronic physical and mental health issues. On-site supports assist people who are experiencing difficulties to maintain stable housing and receive appropriate health care and other community supports.

### 77 Tiffin Street – Supportive Housing

In Spring 2023, the County of Simcoe opened a new multi-residential, three-storey building in Barrie with **14 supportive housing units**. Project funding was made possible with **\$2.5 million** from the province's Social Services Relief Fund (SSRF) and additional municipal funding. The building features an elevator for easy access and mobility for residents with physical disabilities. The units are designed to assist individuals with mental health and addiction issues, disabilities, and those experiencing homelessness. The Elizabeth Fry Society and Busby Centre provide housing support.





## Weber House, Midland

Funded by \$3.6 million in federal/provincial funds, a large donation from a private foundation, county development charges rebates and contributions from the four north Simcoe municipalities

of Tiny, Tay, Midland and Penetanguishene, this **32-unit supportive housing project** by Shelter Now in Midland opened its doors in December 2023. The project provides

bachelor, one- and two-bedroom accommodation to residents who have been homeless. Support is provided through Waypoint, CMHA, Wendat, and Shelter Now.



## 20 Rose Street – Supportive Rapid Rehousing Project, Barrie

Between May 2023 and September 2023, the modular structure at 20 Rose Street, which operated as a temporary emergency shelter during the winter, underwent a transformation, serving as a temporary supportive rapid rehousing project. Operated by Redwood Park Communities, this program assisted 22 individuals. Here is a breakdown of the outcomes:

- **15** individuals successfully transitioned into permanent housing.
- **3** individuals currently reside in temporary housing arrangements, receiving ongoing support from Redwood Park Communities to secure permanent housing.
- **4** individuals voluntarily exited the program due to various circumstances, including returning to life on the streets.

Notably, a six-month post-housing placement support system is in place for all those who found housing through this program. In preparation for the construction of the Simcoe County Housing Corporation (SCHC) affordable housing development at the same location, the modular structure will be relocated and re-purposed in 2024.





## 10-Year Milestones and Achievements

### Accomplishments under Our Community 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy

#### Create an Integrated Service Model for Housing and Supports Successes:

- Homelessness Enumeration
- Coordinated Access
- Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS)
- Emphasis on People-Centered Solutions
- Supportive Housing Projects and Community Hubs
- Effective COVID-19 Pandemic Response Strategy
- Partnerships and Funding

Simcoe County is actively progressing towards its goal of helping individuals and families experiencing homelessness to secure and maintain stable housing through thoughtful and innovative approaches. Key to this progress is the establishment of a coordinated access system and detailed homelessness enumeration, which streamline the process for accessing housing services and provide essential data to guide future actions. The adoption of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) has significantly enhanced case management and service coordination, leading to more effective and efficient service delivery.

The County champions a people-centered approach, with a strong emphasis on the housing-first principle. The strategy prioritizes

securing stable housing for individuals as a primary step in addressing broader challenges such as employment and mental health. Programs like the Regional Housing First Program are an example of collaborative and supportive solutions.

Other achievements under the 10-year strategy include the creation of supportive housing projects and community hubs, such as Lucy's Place, The Lighthouse, Aquarius House, Barbara Weider House, Weber House, and the Tiffin Street Supportive Housing Project. These initiatives provide not only housing but also a wide range of support services, from mental health care to job assistance, reflecting a comprehensive approach to preventing homelessness.

During delivery of the strategy, challenges related to housing affordability, employment, and

mental health were intensified by the COVID-19 pandemic. The County quickly adapted its services to meet urgent needs, including providing emergency relief funding and access to essential resources. The response emphasized the importance of adaptability and innovation in housing and support services.

Partnerships and the alignment of funding with federal and provincial priorities have been crucial in expanding services to meet evolving needs. While efforts to end homelessness in Simcoe County are ongoing, community strategies and programs continue to make meaningful progress in guiding individuals and families towards stability and well-being, displaying a steadfast commitment by the County and its partners to positive, people-focused solutions.

# MOVING FORWARD IN HOUSING OUR FUTURE

The County of Simcoe is working on a draft strategy to succeed its current 10-year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy. This new strategy will include an updated Local Needs Assessment, public consultation, and a document review of all applicable policies and sector best practices.

From April to July 2023, the County of Simcoe invited over 150 organizations and individuals from various sectors, including Indigenous representatives, community service providers, community advocates, major employers, elected officials, and affordable housing program participants, to share their perspectives on housing challenges and opportunities.

An online survey was promoted countywide, inviting public comment on current local housing needs, attitudes towards housing targets and resource allocation, and perceived barriers to housing and cost-of-living challenges to enable better integration of human services. The results of these community engagement activities are posted online at [www.simcoe.ca/housing](http://www.simcoe.ca/housing) and will inform the development of the new strategy.

The County of Simcoe understands the urgent need for more affordable housing and is committed to building on data-informed decision-making to actively target local needs and increase the availability and diversity of affordable housing types and tenures for County residents.





[simcoe.ca](http://simcoe.ca)