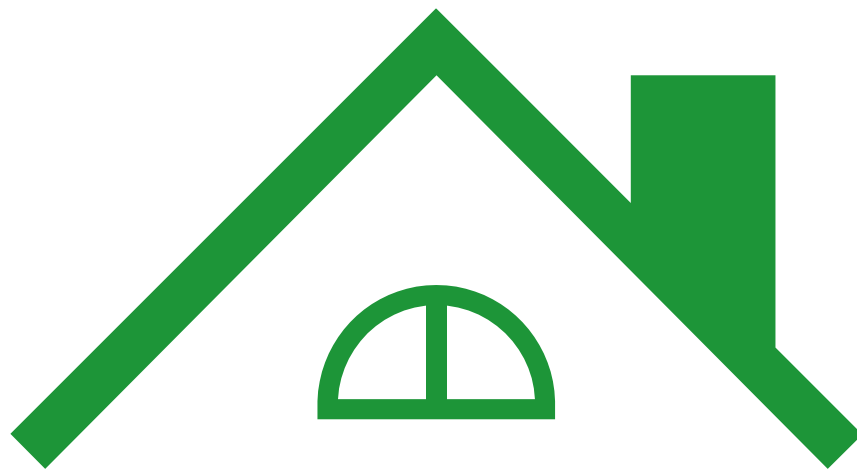




Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan: 2019 - 2024



CHANGE
BEGINS WITH
CHOICE

2024 Update

Middlesex County Housing and Homelessness Plan – Update for 2024

HOUSING

Vision

Every Middlesex County resident has opportunity to access the type of housing they need in their community.

Strategic Priorities

The vision will be achieved by focusing on four strategic priorities in the area of housing. These are:

1. Affordability
2. Range of Housing Options
3. Housing Supports
4. Service Coordination

Strategic Priority 1: Affordability

- The Middlesex Housing Attainable Review Final Report was completed and released in July 2023. The review aimed to: assess needs across the full housing continuum; identify gaps in housing provision; and develop a municipal strategy to address both current and future housing demands. The project included comprehensive data collection and analysis on existing housing strategies, local housing data, roles and responsibilities, and best practices from other municipalities. It also featured robust engagement with community members and partner organizations. In 2024, the County began further work to assess the housing needs of its residents.
- Middlesex County demonstrated leadership in Ontario by actively supporting local municipalities in their applications to the CMHC Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). This support included hiring a consultant to assist with initiative development and conducting a County-wide housing needs assessment. County staff also directly prepared or supported local municipal staff in completing their HAF applications. Notably, several Middlesex County municipalities—despite being non-urban—were among the few of their kind to submit applications. In 2024, four of those municipalities were approved for HAF funding.

Strategic Priority 2: Range of Housing Options

- Building on the findings from the *Attainable Housing Review*, the County initiated work in 2024 to address identified gaps along the housing continuum and implement corresponding strategies.
- In 2024, the Municipality of Strathroy-Caradoc, through its Non-Profit Housing Corporation, completed development of 37 new housing units, including several designated as affordable housing.
- In the Municipality of Middlesex Centre, construction progressed on the first phase of the *Design for Happiness* project—an innovative 69-unit residential development.
- Across the County, housing projects of varying scales and forms are underway to help meet the diverse needs of current and future residents. These developments range from smaller infill projects and accessory dwelling units to larger subdivisions and residential communities. The variety of housing initiatives reflects both the geographic diversity of the County and the commitment of local municipalities and partners to supporting a broad spectrum of housing options.
- Middlesex County participated in a housing working group in partnership with the United Way. The committee identified supportive housing as the most critical need within the region.

Strategic Priority 3: Housing Supports

- The Community Navigator continued to play a key role in assisting residents with accessing housing-related programs, including the Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) and other supports aimed at housing stability and overall life stabilization. In 2024, 11 COHB applications were submitted on behalf of County residents—all of which were approved, achieving a 100% success rate. Efforts in 2024 were primarily focused on individuals who were already housed or had secured housing.
- Recognizing the increasing demand for support over the past two years, a second Community Navigator position was added in 2024. This new role focuses specifically on assisting individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness, providing direct support with housing applications and connections to services.
- County Council and Senior Administration have continued to actively engage with Provincial Ministries and local MPPs to raise awareness of housing and homelessness challenges in Middlesex County. These advocacy efforts emphasize the region's rapid growth, existing service gaps, and the need for increased funding to support the strategic goals outlined in the *County of Middlesex Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan*.

- Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) opened two transitional housing spaces at its Strathroy Youth Centre in 2024. These new spaces address a critical gap in youth housing supports within the County. Middlesex County Social Services supports this initiative through Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) funding.
- Middlesex County staff regularly participated in the Social Housing Operational Advisory Committee meetings.

Strategic Priority 4: Service Coordination

- The County continues to hold regular meetings with community agencies and partners to better understand the pressures and challenges faced by organizations supporting individuals who are unsheltered or at risk of becoming unsheltered.
- The Middlesex Homeless Action Committee (MHAC) met regularly throughout 2024. The committee includes representatives from housing support services, police services, the Community Navigator program, County staff, community agencies, and local residents. MHAC was established to advocate for increased access to subsidized and affordable housing and to raise public awareness about homelessness in Middlesex County. In 2024, MHAC supported local fundraising initiatives related to homelessness and actively advocated for expanded services. The committee also completed a needs assessment of services and supports across the County, identifying affordable and supportive housing as critical to meeting the needs of those at risk of or experiencing homelessness.
- The County continued its implementation of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS). Access to the system is currently held by the Manager of Social Services and the Community Navigator. In 2024, CMHA Thames Valley Addiction and Mental Health Services (TVAMHS) and Youth Opportunities Unlimited (YOU) – Strathroy were also onboarded, enhancing collaborative data collection and service coordination.
- Middlesex County is represented at the Middlesex Situation Table (MST) by the Community Navigators and the Manager of Social Services. MST brings together a diverse group of service providers for weekly meetings aimed at mobilizing short-term, immediate supports for individuals experiencing Acutely Elevated Risk (AER). Many of the cases presented at MST involve individuals facing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

2024 Key Achievements:

- Continued Success of the Community Navigator:
The Community Navigator has been essential in helping residents access

housing programs, this role has been key in stabilizing housing situations and connecting individuals with necessary resources.

- **Creation of a Second Community Navigator Position:**
To address increasing demand, a second Community Navigator position was added in 2024. This role focuses on supporting individuals and families at risk of or experiencing homelessness, providing direct assistance with housing applications and services.
- **Advancements in Understanding Housing Needs:**
In 2024, the County made significant strides in assessing housing needs through data analysis and community engagement. This helped identify gaps in housing provision and informed strategies to meet both current and future demands.
- **Strong Partnerships through the Middlesex Accommodation Program:**
The Middlesex Accommodation Program continued to thrive in 2024 due to strong partnerships with local agencies and municipalities. This collaborative effort has been crucial in securing housing solutions for individuals at risk of homelessness.
- **Support of Youth Transitional Housing at YOU – Strathroy:**
The County continued supporting two transitional housing spaces at YOU – Strathroy in 2024, providing a safe environment for youth transitioning to independent living. The County's funding through the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) ensured the continued success of this initiative.

HOMELESS PREVENTION

Vision

Every Middlesex County resident has opportunity to access the type of housing they need in their community.

Strategic Priorities

The vision will be achieved by focusing on four strategic priorities in the area of homelessness. These are:

1. Temporary Housing Options
2. Housing Retention
3. Supports
4. Service Coordination

Strategic Priority 1: Temporary Housing Options

- The Middlesex Accommodations Program (MAP) was formalized with HPP funding. In 2024, the program expanded from 9 to 11 rooms to better meet the needs of the County. The program supported 77 individuals from 62 households, bringing the total number of individuals served since its inception to over 210. Thanks to the ongoing collaboration between the Middlesex County Social Services Department, CMHA TVAMHS, and Community Navigators, the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness was significantly reduced. Collaborative efforts with local agencies such as WRRC, YOU-Strathroy, 37 Frank Street, and other community partners allowed for the sharing of best practices and resources.
- The partnership between Middlesex London Paramedic Services (MLPS) and the Middlesex Accommodations Program highlighted the growing need for Community Paramedicine within the County. In response, the Middlesex Paramedic Outreach Program was developed to support individuals accessing the accommodations program at a local motel, as well as those utilizing the Women's Rural Resource Centre's (WRRC) services. This program offered health assessments, medication checks, educational sessions, and referrals to additional medical resources in the County.

Strategic Priority 2: Housing Retention

- The Community Navigators continued to play a crucial role in supporting residents with applications for housing programs, Canada-Ontario Housing Benefits (COHB), and other housing and life stabilization resources. In 2024, the Community Navigator successfully submitted 11 COHB applications for County residents, achieving a 100% approval rate. The County's focus in 2024 shifted toward supporting individuals who were already housed or had secured housing.
- Improved communication between London Middlesex Community Housing and Middlesex County further helped individuals maintain their LMCH units.
- Through HPP funding allocations, the County provided rent relief, utility cost assistance, last month's rent, and food security programs, benefiting over 250 individuals and families in need.

Strategic Priority 3: Supports

- The Middlesex County Social Services and Community Partners network has continued to facilitate the sharing of information about housing resources and support services for individuals facing homelessness. This collaborative effort has been key in diverting and assisting people from becoming homeless. Twenty-four unique agencies attend regular meetings or receive updates through meeting minutes.
- The Middlesex Community Navigators developed strong relationships across all communities within the County, providing resources, support, and assistance with housing applications. In 2024, a second Community Navigator was added to the program. Together, the Community Navigators assisted 244 households experiencing homelessness in obtaining and retaining housing, while also supporting 743 households at risk of homelessness in staying housed.
- The Middlesex County Homelessness Action Committee continued its advocacy and collaboration of services work in 2024. The committee's goal is to coordinate efforts, advocate for resources, and share information on the needs of individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness. The committee worked on the items identified through a needs assessment, identifying affordable and supportive housing as the highest priority, along with food security, community education, renter and landlord education, and life skills for individuals facing significant barriers.
- The County's Social Services Department actively applies for all available funding through provincial, federal, and other sources.

Strategic Priority 4: Service Coordination

- The County continues to explore innovative and strategic approaches to optimize the use of Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) funding. The Social Services Department regularly consults with Ontario Works caseworkers,

community partners, and individuals to ensure the right services and support are provided.

- The County also works to raise awareness of the increasing homeless population and those at risk through council reports, presentations, and community discussions.
- The County implemented the Homeless Individuals and Family Information System (HIFIS). In 2023, discussions were initiated with CMHA TVAMHS, YOU-Strathroy, and WRRC to bring these organizations onboard. By 2024, two organizations were successfully integrated with HIFIS.

2024 Key Achievements:

- **Expansion of the Middlesex Accommodations Program (MAP):** In 2024, the program expanded from 9 to 11 rooms, successfully supporting 77 individuals from 62 households, contributing to a total of over 210 individuals served since its inception.
- **Successful Housing Benefit Applications:** The Community Navigator submitted 11 Canada-Ontario Housing Benefits (COHB) applications for residents in 2024, achieving a 100% approval rate, with a focus on individuals who were already housed or had secured housing.
- **Strengthened Community Support Networks:** The collaboration between Middlesex County, CMHA TVAMHS, Community Navigators, and local agencies like WRRC and YOU-Strathroy led to effective sharing of best practices and resources, significantly reducing homelessness and supporting at-risk populations.
- **Middlesex Paramedic Outreach Program:** The Paramedic Outreach Program provided essential health services, including assessments and medication checks, to individuals accessing temporary housing through the Middlesex Accommodations Program and WRRC.