



# Committee of the Whole

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**Meeting Date:** June 22, 2021  
**Submitted by:** Cindy Howard, General Manager Finance and Community Services/Treasurer  
**SUBJECT:** HOMELESS PREVENTION AND HOUSING PLAN MIDDLESEX COUNTY 2020 UPDATE AND PRIORITIES FOR 2021

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## **BACKGROUND:**

The Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan Middlesex County 2019 – 2024 was approved at the County Council Meeting on December 17, 2019. The approved plan incorporates strategies and actions to guide our work over the five year period from 2019-2024. Housing and homelessness are community issues and therefore this plan calls on all sectors to work together to build solutions and move them to action.

The Plan identified that the top five most pressing housing issues in Middlesex County are:

- Lack of affordable housing
- Lack of rental housing
- Long wait lists for mental health and/or addiction support services
- Lack of emergency housing
- Lack of income

The City of London is the provincially designated Service Manager as it relates to housing for the City of London and Middlesex County. Responsibilities for the housing Service Manager are laid out in the Housing Services Act, 2011, as well as in the associated agreement between the City of London and the Province of Ontario.

The City of London is responsible for administering community/social housing on behalf of the province, including the following:

- Housing Access Center
- Determining eligibility for community housing;
- Waitlist management;
- Administration of social housing subsidies, supplements;
- Program compliance;
- Supporting the long-term sustainability of all subsidized housing providers; and
- Policy and program development.

The responsibilities related to homelessness are delivered in the County through contracted service agreements with Middlesex County.

Actions related to Middlesex County, as they relate to the Service Manager responsibilities, can be found throughout the City of London's Housing Stability Plan. At the same time, there are also many functions and roles related to housing stability that reside within the County of Middlesex and local municipalities, such as planning, land management, and community engagement that support and inform related services and programs. The Middlesex Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan addresses the growing challenges of housing affordability and stability that present across the County in different ways.

This "Change Begins with Choice" Housing & Homeless Prevention update will provide 2020 highlights and priorities for 2021. On May 11, 2021 the Housing Stability for All Plan 2020 Update and Priorities for 2021 was presented to the City of London Community and Protective Services Committee.

## **ANALYSIS:**

This report on the Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan – Change Begins with Choice reflects updates in 2020 and priorities for 2021. Appendix A is the update for Homeless Prevention that will be submitted to the City of London as the designated Service Manager so that Middlesex data can be included with the Service Manager report to the Ontario Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH) as an annual update to the local homeless prevention and housing plan required under the Housing Services Act (HSA), 2011.

## **Homeless Prevention Initiatives, Achievements and Priorities 2020-2021:**

### **Vision identified in the Plan:**

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

### **Strategic Priorities identified in the Plan:**

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; and 4. Service Coordination.

The following information highlights how the County has and will continue to advocate for homeless prevention and at risk of homelessness supports in 2020- 2021.

## **2020 Updates:**

- Community Navigator pilot position was created and launched in September 2020. The Community Navigator Position is funded through Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) and operating under Middlesex County Library Services. The purpose of this position is to assist county residents in navigating all the available services and programs available to them, with a particular focus on Homelessness and Housing supports.

December 2020 – 48 households that were experiencing homelessness were offered supports to obtain and retain housing and 89 households that were at risk of becoming homeless remained housed with supports offered through the Community Navigator.

January – March 2021 – 119 households experiencing homelessness were offered supports to obtain and retain housing and 204 households that were at risk of becoming homeless remained housed with supports offered through the Community Navigator.

The Community Navigator has offered on line virtual workshops on Social Housing to community members and is proficient in the Residential Tenancy Act. Additional workshops: Rent Smart and how to navigate ODSP/CPP applications are scheduled for 2021 when the comprehensive libraries return to in person services. Presentations to lower tier councils around what the Community Navigator's role is have been delivered to four municipalities with four remaining.

- Social Services Community Partner Network (SSCPN) was initiated and created by Social Services on December 1<sup>st</sup> 2020. The network has brought together different community agencies in a way that had not been done before. With the support from Social Services management, this network has been meeting on a monthly basis in order to share pertinent information related to community needs and to create space where community partners can share issues and/ or gaps that have or may impact our communities.
- Middlesex County continues to have a presence at the Social Housing Operational Advisory Committee. The Service Manager (City of London) shares updates on social housing and waiting list data, Ministry initiatives and upcoming funding housing supports.
- Social Services Relief Funding Phase 1 (\$36,825.86) and Phase 2 (\$346,306.74) received in 2020 and Phase 3 (\$431,818.02) received in 2021 through MMAH (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing) provided much needed funding for our homeless and at risk of becoming homeless population in the County. The “whatever it takes fund” has been able to support many low income and homeless individuals with rent arrears, rental deposits, mobile phones to connect to services, food programs, etc.

- CMHA Middlesex Housing Finder/ Social Worker funded through CHPI is an on-site weekly support to the County's homeless guests residing in emergency accommodation at a local motel. Counseling, Housing First supports and food insecurity remain a priority.
- CMHA Middlesex has partnered with OPP as part of the MCRT (Middlesex County Response Team). CMHA social workers "ride along" with OPP officers if an individual is in crisis due to a precarious situation or experiencing eviction trauma. Middlesex County Social Service Administration and/or the Middlesex County Library Community Navigator has responded and supported many homeless individuals that have been referred from the MCRT.
- The 2021 enumeration PiT (Point in Time) count on April 28<sup>th</sup> identified 47 youth and singles homeless in the Strathroy- Caradoc area. Connection to community supports through SSRF and CHPI funding have been established for these individuals.

### **2021 Priorities:**

- Continue to share funding opportunities with local community partners that support Affordable Housing and Homelessness Initiatives.
- Create a Coordinated Access Process for our homeless population in the County.
- Continue to monitor best practices and regulatory changes regarding housing and homelessness programs.
- On-going research into funding opportunities for creating housing stability and life stabilization through Provincial and Federal Government, Ontario Grants, United Way, MMAH and Trillium.
- Prepare business cases for review by City of London as designated provincial housing service manager and other levels of government for homeless prevention initiatives including a housing first strategy.

### **Housing, Achievements and Priorities 2020-2021:**

#### **Vision identified in the Plan:**

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

### **Strategic Priorities identified in the Plan:**

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; and 4. Service Coordination.

The following information highlights how the County has and will continue to advocate for housing supports in 2020- 2021.

### **2020 Updates:**

- On October 13, 2020 the City of London as the provincially designated housing service manager, provided a housing update to County Council.
- At the December 14, 2020 Council Meeting, the County of Middlesex Economic Development Strategy Update for 2021-2025 was presented.

This report identified the lack of housing options to accommodate growth. Stakeholders mentioned that the current housing infrastructure, both in terms of the current housing stock and limited housing options, affects growth. Single-family, detached homes primarily characterize the County. Housing supply in the County should allow for ageing in place to accommodate a growing senior population. Attracting immigrants, young professionals, and families mean that the County focuses on developing higher-density and affordable development, including starter homes and rental options.

In particular, Strategic Objective 2: Entice talented workers and entrepreneurs to relocate here by leveraging the pace of rural life and nearby urban, ties directly to housing. The example outcome could include more housing options for all income levels, including infill development in towns.

- In January 2021, Council was provided with an update from the Planning Department regarding population and housing projections.

The report noted that while Planning staff was reviewing the population forecasts and recent development activity that the County should, working with local municipalities, more closely monitor the residential land supply on an ongoing basis and consider any actions that may need to be undertaken to help ensure that sufficient supply continues to be available. This is especially important at this time, when housing affordability has increasingly become an issue within the County, and where ensuring that land is available for housing across the affordability spectrum is increasingly important.

- On May 11, 2021 the Housing Stability for All Plan 2020 Update and Priorities for 2021 was presented to the City of London Community and Protective Services Committee. Updates and Priorities related to Middlesex County, as they relate to the Service Manager responsibilities, can be found throughout the City of London's Housing Stability Plan.  
[C 4 - CW Info - May 25 - London HSAP May 11](#)
- Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) is a jointly funded federal-provincial housing benefit program that was launched in April 2020. This program is administered by the City of London with Middlesex County providing referrals directly to the City of London Housing Services. The purpose of this program is to increase the affordability of rental housing by providing an income-tested, portable housing benefit payment directly to eligible housing in housing need. In 2020 six Middlesex County residents were referred and then granted COHB. In 2021, two Middlesex County residents were referred and granted COHB.
- The County shared Affordable Housing funding opportunities with local community partners that support Affordable Housing and Homelessness Initiatives and Lower Tier Municipalities. Example: London Community Foundation – Affordable Housing Fund and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI) to help address urgent housing needs of vulnerable Canadians by rapidly creating new affordable housing.
- The City of London and Middlesex County jointly sent a letter to the Honourable Steve Clark, Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing calling on the Province of Ontario to expand and enhance investments for affordable housing.

## **2021 Priorities**

- Continue to monitor best practices and regulatory changes regarding housing and homelessness programs.
- The County will continue to seek additional funding from upper levels of government (e.g. National Housing Strategy) for increased investments in housing and homelessness programs to improve economic stability and community vitality in our community. The last affordable housing unit built and supported by the service manager in the County was completed in 2018 (approved for funding in 2016).
- Advocate for program investments like COHB, as they assist in strengthening the affordability in our community and improve housing stability for low income households.

In 2020 COHB helped over 300 households in London and Middlesex obtain an average monthly supplement of approximately \$550 and created stability for those households for the next 8-9 years. In 2021, based on averages and the work and analysis that the Ministry has done, they anticipated that London and Middlesex could only support approximately 35 – 45 households through COHB. The Housing Access Centre started accepting referrals March 1st, 2021 and fully allocated the funding by March 2nd, 2021. COHB referrals are now on pause - it was a very quick turn-around which speaks to the great need in our community.

- Continue to work with the City of London and obtain clarity on the role of the provincially designated service manager for supporting and advancing social and affordable housing opportunities in the County of Middlesex.
- Connect with Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) to obtain housing data that will allow for more detailed and informed analysis on the local housing market.
- Work in partnership with local municipalities to facilitate housing opportunities including:
  - Strategically targeting housing investments in alignment with Community Improvement Plans, Official Plans and Economic Development activities.
  - Exploring enabling zoning and/or alternative development standards to promote affordability including 'as of right' Additional Residential Units (ARUs).
  - Exploring policies and practices to encourage a diversity of housing stock.
  - Creating an inventory of public land/assets and brownfield properties.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan Middlesex County 2019 – 2024 identified that the cost of implementing the plan will require the County to work with the City of London as the Service Manager and to pursue external funding sources and partnership opportunities where available.

The Provincial CHPI allocation for 2021-2022 (April to March) is \$119,682.

## ALIGNMENT WITH STRATEGIC FOCUS:

This report aligns with the following Strategic Focus, Goals, or Objectives:

Strategic Focus	Goals	Objectives
Cultivating Community Vitality	Advance a diverse, healthy, and engaged community across Middlesex County	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Promote and support community wellness</li><li>• Innovate social and community services</li><li>• Attract, retain, and engage youth in our community</li></ul>
Strengthening Our Economy	Encourage a diverse and robust economic base throughout the county	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Create an environment that enables the attraction and retention of businesses, talent, and investments</li><li>• Support the development and prosperity of downtown core areas in Middlesex County</li></ul>
Promoting Service Excellence	Innovate and transform municipal service delivery	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Anticipate and align municipal service delivery to emerging needs and expectations</li><li>• Engage, educate and inform residents, businesses, and visitors of county services and community activities</li><li>• Strengthen our advocacy and lobbying efforts with other government bodies</li><li>• Collaborate with strategic partners to leverage available resources and opportunities</li><li>• Build organizational capacity and capabilities</li></ul>

## RECOMMENDATION:

That the Homeless Prevention and Housing Plan – Change Begins with Choice, 2020 update and priorities for 2021 be received for information; and

That *Appendix A* be approved and sent to the Service Manager to be included in the Service Manager's submission to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

Attachment



**APPENDIX A: HOMELESS PREVENTION UPDATE 2020**

**Strategic Priority 1: Temporary Housing Options**

**Goal:** Decrease in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Strategic Initiatives	Key Measures	Achievements
Work with community partners to identify, explore and develop innovative ideas.	Temporary housing options explored and/or implemented	<p>Developed partnerships with local motels for temporary emergency accommodations. Funding through Provincial Social Service Relief Fund (SSRF). Partnerships began in 2020 and are still in place.</p> <p>Other than a Domestic Violence Against Woman (DVAW) emergency shelter, there are no emergency shelters in Middlesex and limited temporary/transitional housing solutions for vulnerable individuals (youth &amp; male). Therefore, the partnerships with local hotels during COVID-19 have been very beneficial.</p>
Identify and share best practices in temporary housing.	Best practices identified and implemented	<p>Ensure wraparound supports are in place to achieve sustainability for renters: CMHA housing finder in place to support homeless guests accessing the local motel. This initiative was funded by SSRF.</p> <p>Middlesex County Library Community Navigator provides guidance and coaching with accessing local resources and supports in looking for housing for homeless individuals.</p> <p>Community Navigator and Social Services Department worked with displaced residents when an Affordable Housing apartment building in the County displaced 15 units. Partnerships established with Victim Services.</p>

## Strategic Priority 2: Housing Retention

**Goal:** Increase in the number of individuals who secure and retain housing.

Strategic Initiatives	Key Measures	Achievements
Build a plan and strategy around Housing First Model.	100% completion of Housing First plan and strategy	Community Navigator and/or Social Services Staff sit on a number of panels and committees, such as the Middlesex Situation Table (MST), Middlesex County Social Services and Community Partners Network (MCSSCPN), Strathroy Caradoc Homelessness Action Coalition, and London Community Advocate's Network. Connections with these partnerships allow the Community Navigator and/or Social Services staff to be aware of any new program changes, and to be able to continue to offer services and housing access to the community.
Explore the use of innovative programs to encourage inclusive access to rental properties, i.e. Rent Smart.	Partnerships developed with landlords	Community Navigator and CMHA housing finder have established relationships with landlords while exploring market rent housing for homeless individuals.  Proficiency in the Residential Tenancy Act and Social Housing has been useful.
Explore the use of innovative programs to encourage inclusive access to rental properties, i.e. Rent Smart.	Programs implemented	Community Navigator offers virtual information sessions on social housing, applying for OSDP/CPP and assists with navigating requests i.e. birth certificate.  Rent Smart training will be completed when training becomes available.
Work with community partners to identify and explore innovative ideas, i.e. Housing Access Centre, London Middlesex Community Housing, City of London.	Innovative initiatives implemented	Social Services Community Partner Network (SSCPN) was created to explore community gaps related to homelessness and community needs. Information sharing at the meetings has increased awareness and community partner engagement.  A good working relationship has been established between the City of London Housing Access Centre and the Middlesex County Community Navigator.  Attendance at the Social Housing Operational Advisory Committee (SHOAC) has increased awareness of rural social housing needs.

**Strategic Priority 3: Supports**

**Goal:** Increase in the availability access to services and supports for individuals at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Strategic Initiatives	Key Measures	Achievements
Create an inventory of services to share with the community for better system navigation.	100% completion of an inventory of services	<p>Community Resource Lists have been created and are available through the Middlesex County Library and Social Services.</p> <p>Community Navigator promotes services at community tables and has information packages available to handout to homeless guests staying at the local motels.</p>
Advocate for additional support services across the County.	Advocacy activities and additional support services secured	<p>Middlesex County Library Board’s Community Navigator position started September 2020. Relationships are being formed with community partners throughout Middlesex County to discuss gaps related to housing needs, homeless prevention and community referrals/supports.</p> <p>Through CHPI funding a pilot project with CMHA created a Housing Finder position to assist homeless guests at the motel find and secure housing and offer counselling supports if/when necessary.</p> <p>CMHA is also is working with OPP with “ride along’ Middlesex County Response Team (MCRT). CMHA Social workers ride along to support individuals that are experiencing trauma through eviction, mental health episodes and chronic homelessness.</p>

#### Strategic Priority 4: Service Coordination

**Goal:** Increase in the availability access to services and supports for individuals at-risk of or experiencing homelessness.

Strategic Initiatives	Key Measures	Achievements
Continue to allocate CHPI funding to meet identified community need.	Individuals experiencing homelessness who obtain and retain housing and individuals at risk of experiencing homelessness who remain housed	CMHA pilot project in place until December 31 <sup>st</sup> 2021.  Continue to offer CHPI supports to individuals in receipt of social assistance and non-social assistance recipients in the communities. This includes payment of first and last month's rent, ancillary costs, deposit for utilities, arrears for unpaid rent and/or utility arrears.  Social Services Relief Fund also allowed for support for food banks, medical transportation, PPE, food and other emergency basic needs.  # of People accessing Basic Needs: Food Banks (690), Food Cards (89), Meals Served (9,197)  The Community Navigator has been able to serve 252 County residents and has provided 475 services.
Conduct a homeless prevention enumeration event every two years.	Enumeration events implemented, individuals surveyed through the event and community partners that participate	Enumeration count conducted on April 28 <sup>th</sup> 2021. PiT count 47 homeless youth and singles. Three agencies in Strathroy assisted in capturing information.
Create an awareness campaign about homelessness.	# of individuals reached through the campaign	Community Navigator took part in the Coldest Day of the Year event in Strathroy 2021.  Community Navigator has a Website established along with social media presence.  Brochures describing the Community Navigator have been prepared for distribution.

Strategic Initiatives	Key Measures	Achievements
		Presentations to local councils on CHPI funding and the impact it makes on our most vulnerable community members
Look for funding opportunities that support community need.	Funding opportunities identified and secured	<p>On-going research into funding opportunities through United Way, London Community Foundation, Grant Ontario, Libro, Trillium grants and CFDC grants/loans to support housing and homelessness projects/programs in the community. Presentations and meetings have already started with a number of funding organizations.</p> <p>On-going research is underway into what initiatives and programs other municipalities are creating to support homelessness in their communities.</p>
Continue to support and be involved with community tables.	Community tables supported/involved with	In December 2020, the Middlesex Social Services and Community Partners Network (MCSSPN) was initiated and created by Social Services. This network has brought together different community agencies in a way that had not been done before. With the support of Social Service management, this network has been meeting on a monthly basis in order to share pertinent information related to community needs and to create a space where the community partners can share issues and/or gaps that have or may impact our communities.
Ensure that the diverse needs in our communities are being considered.	Individuals served through the programs	<p>Community tables consist of a diverse group of agencies that support all members of the community.</p> <p>Inclusion and Diversity is a priority when community partners participate at community tables.</p> <p>Outreach to professional supports have been implemented for our most vulnerable individuals in the County.</p>
Identify and leverage opportunities to work with community partners.	Partnerships or collaborations established and partners engaged	Social Services is usually the first stop when people are needing assistance with life stabilization supports and resources. Creating partnerships with community partners through the MCSSPN, MST, SHOAC, MCCS tables promotes increased community awareness and engagement.