



# HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PLAN

2019 ANNUAL PROGRESS REPORT • THE COUNTY OF LAMBTON

# Introduction

The County of Lambton's *10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, 2014-2024*, frames the planning and delivery of housing and homelessness supports within the community. This plan is guided by the vision of "Housing First, Housing Right," and three strategic directions: Homelessness Prevention, Housing Stability and Sustainability. In keeping with the vision of the Social Services Division, "*to make opportunities available that enrich lives and build a thriving community*," this plan strives to provide a range of appropriate housing options, as well as programs and services that support the local housing continuum.

Recognizing that safe, stable and affordable housing is an important determinant of health and well-being, the County of Lambton is committed to ongoing and long-term planning that improves, enhances and maintains services that stabilize housing and prevent homelessness in a variety of circumstances. The County relies on strong, collaborative and innovative partnerships with dozens of local agencies working together to accomplish this vision.

## A Message from the Warden

On behalf of Lambton County Council, it is my pleasure to introduce the 2019 Progress Report on the County of Lambton's 10-year Housing & Homelessness Plan (2014-2023). This report reflects the collaborative efforts between County of Lambton staff and community partners to ensure every member of our community can realize their right to housing.

Affordable, suitable and adequate housing is both a fundamental social determinant of health and a necessity for our residents to thrive. We know housing affordability poses significant challenges to many in our community. Building upon the success of 2019, County Council will continue to make strategic investments in housing and homelessness strategies that move individuals and families along the housing continuum and into permanent affordable housing.

The County remains committed to leading the coordination of our local services and building upon vital community partnerships and integrated services outlined in this report. The achievements made to date would not have been possible without strong local partnerships, and the work ahead towards an evidence-informed, coordinated system will require these more than ever.

As you review this progress report, I trust you will be encouraged by the collaboration and work being accomplished in our community we work to make opportunities available that will enrich lives and build a thriving community.

Sincerely,  
Bill Weber  
Lambton County Warden



# Housing and Homelessness at a Glance 2019

## Housing Related Supports



**274 housing units** were assisted with **financial supports through legislated housing programs**

**931 households were living in rent-geared-to-income assisted units** in County owned units and Non-Profit/Co-op Providers



**35 households** were in receipt of a **portable housing benefit**



**599 individuals were on the social housing wait list**

44% increase from 2018

the wait list **increased by 36%** in the 2019 calendar year

**198**

households were placed in a social housing unit

**14%** decrease from 2018

## Supports for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness



**281 individuals** received a monthly **rent supplement**

to assist with housing stability

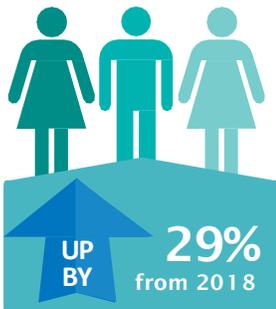
**25**

community agencies or programs were funded to address homelessness

**1,112 households** were assisted with rent or utility arrears to **prevent homelessness**

**969**

individuals were housed in emergency shelters



697 individuals experiencing homelessness were supported to find housing

# Strategic Direction 1: Homelessness Prevention

A total of \$3,226,288 in Provincial Funding was invested in local solutions to address homelessness. \$864,312 in Home for Good funding was dispersed to three programs to assist identified priority populations find stable housing. \$2,361,976 of Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funding supported local homelessness prevention programs and services to either assist individuals experiencing homelessness find and maintain housing or to assist individuals who are at-risk of homelessness remain housed.

The County of Lambton works along the entire range of housing to provide housing focused programs and supports for individuals from homelessness to home ownership.



## Housing First

Lambton County has adopted a Housing First Philosophy to support individuals experiencing homelessness

The Housing First Philosophy is a recovery oriented strategy aimed to quickly connect individuals experiencing homelessness to permanent housing without preconditions or barriers to entry, such as sobriety, treatment or service participation.

Housing First is:

- » A proven evidence based model for ending homelessness.
- » The most rigorously studied homelessness intervention.
- » More cost-effective than emergency services, shelters, hospitals or jails.
- » Provides critical housing stability.
- » Includes strategies like permanent supportive housing.



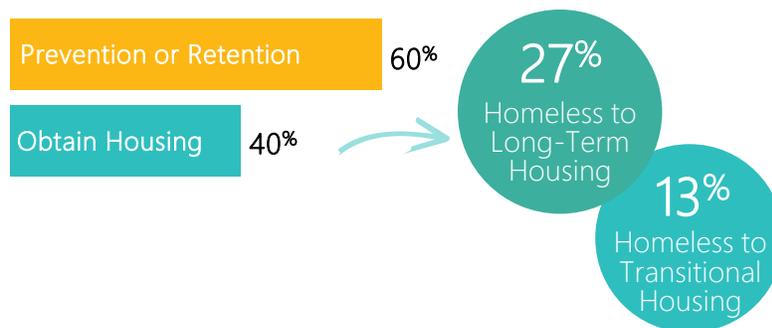
## Priority 1: Prevent Homelessness

The Community Connector Program, delivered through North Lambton Community Health Centre, assisted 183 individuals to navigate the system as a means to prevent homelessness. In 2019, the community connector program made 507 referrals to community agencies or service providers.

93% of survey respondents reported they would not have received the supports they needed without the community connectors.

In 2019, the County of Lambton Housing Services Community Support Workers assisted an average of 132 individuals on a monthly basis through the Housing Advocacy Program. The Community Support Workers have caseloads that consist of many hard to serve individuals with complex needs. At times, one file may require a large portion of a worker's time and resources which limits their ability to see others on their caseload. The statistics capture the number of individuals the worker is able to assist during the month.

Ontario Works caseworkers assisted 1,492 households in receipt of Ontario Works or Ontario Disability Support Program in obtaining or retaining sustainable housing to avoid homelessness through the issuance of a Municipal Residency Benefit. Caseworkers support individuals not only through financial assistance but also by advocating and/or mediating with landlords and various utility companies to reduce the risk of homelessness.

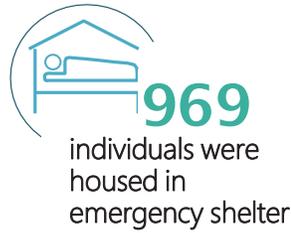


The Retirement Home Support Program (RHSP), offered through Lambton Elderly Outreach, supported an additional 36 low-income seniors at risk of homelessness to access supportive housing that is safe, equitable and sustainable. Without subsidies, these individuals would not have been able to afford or maintain housing at a retirement home. In 2019, the RHSP reached their 100<sup>th</sup> resident supported in the program since its inception.

## Priority 2: Reduce Homelessness

The Inn of the Good Shepherd continued to provide services and supports to vulnerable families and individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of becoming homeless.

The Inn of the Good Shepherd administers **6 core programs** to assist individuals or families experiencing homelessness



## Program Spotlight: 'Ohana Landing

'Ohana Landing was established in 2019 and is a 7 unit transitional housing complex, for youth 16-24. 'Ohana Landing was made possible through the Home for Good fund capital grant of \$980,000 which provides affordability payments in exchange for seven affordable, transitional, youth housing units. 12 youth in total have been residents of 'Ohana Landing.

Residents of 'Ohana Landing receive intensive supports through Sarnia-Lambton Rebound. Youth work closely with a Housing Support Worker to identify and work toward accomplishing self-guided goals and are connected to appropriate service providers to assist in reaching their goals. See 'Ohana Landing outcomes on page 7.

'ohana means family

landing

refers to a transition between where one has come and where they are going

*'Ohana Landing, established 2019*

## Community Supports



Individuals are connected with a **Housing Support Worker** to offer regular check-ins, connect to appropriate supports and help move toward life stabilization.

Programming requires **all youth** participate in an independent living group to learn life skills such as rent smart, budgeting, cooking and housekeeping skills.

## Outcomes

### Identified Goals at Intake:

- Employment
- Life Stabilization
- Post Secondary Education
- Mental Health and Addiction Supports

### Current Status:

- 8 are receiving mental health supports
- 1 is receiving addictions supports
- 1 had obtained employment
- 3 are pursuing education opportunities

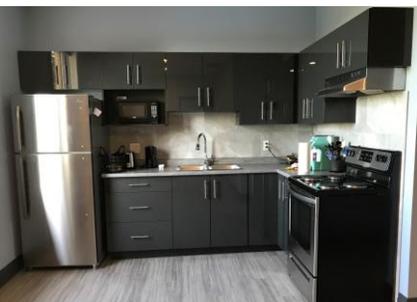
**1 recently received a college certificate**  
**1 is currently receiving academic upgrading**  
**1 has been accepted for Fall 2020 Semester**

## Kim's Story

Kim is 21 from Aamjiwnaang Chi'Naaknigewin. At a very young age, Kim lost both of her parents due to substance abuse and addiction issues. Raised by extended family, she has a history with childhood trauma and abuse and became homeless in her teenage years.

Upon opening, Kim moved into a transitional housing unit at 'Ohana Landing. Through these accommodations, she found safe and affordable housing while she began moving toward life stabilization.

Currently, Kim is enrolled in School Within a College (SWAC) at Lambton College and plans to attend Lambton College upon graduation from SWAC. Kim receives intensive life stabilization supports from the Lambton Circles program. In addition, through various community supports, Kim has been connected to trauma recovery programs, such as Red Path and receives ongoing supports toward her path to sobriety and has been able to remain connected to her cultural community.



# Strategic Direction 2: Housing Stability

## Priority 1: Increase Affordable Housing

The County of Lambton's Housing Services department provides housing assistance to over 2,300 residents within Lambton County. The Housing Services department also provides property management for 830 units owned by the Corporation. In the County there are 10 Non-Profit housing providers with a total of 405 units.

### The Portable Housing Benefit

Administered by the County of Lambton, the Portable Housing Benefit provides applicants with the ability to choose rental units that are close to their supports and amenities. Having this flexibility expands housing choices and offers the opportunity of affordable housing options where none existing before.



households received the standard Portable Housing Benefit



households received the Special Priority Policy Portable Housing Benefit

Housing Services administers legislated housing programs for vulnerable populations. The County of Lambton has 1 household currently in receipt of Anti-Human Trafficking Community Support Funding. Support services for these individuals are provided by the Sexual Assault Survivors Centre Sarnia-Lambton.

Homeownership Program provided \$101,300 to assist 6 households purchase affordable homes by providing down payment assistance in the form of a forgivable loan.

Vision '74 Inc. completed construction of a 36 unit apartment building. 19 of these apartments are affordable housing units.

A collaborative program between Housing Services and Canadian Mental Health Association, Lambton-Kent provided 40 individuals with a housing allowance and appropriate supports to maintain successful tenancies.

The Housing Services Department has continued to work with the Ontario Aboriginal Housing Support Services Corporation (OAHSSC) regarding the creation of off-reserve affordable housing units. County Council supported staff recommendations to partner with the OAHSSC for the creation of 20 off-reserve affordable housing units. It is anticipated construction will start in 2020.

## Priority 2: Increase Supportive Housing

### PERMANENT SUPPORTIVE HOUSING IS THE SOLUTION

Permanent Supportive Housing is a Housing First strategy that ends chronic homelessness and increases housing stability through non-time-limited affordable housing assistance with:

- » Mental health supports;
- » Alcohol and drug treatment;
- » Counseling; and
- » Voluntary supportive services.



The Domiciliary Hostel Program provided supportive housing to 38 vulnerable adults with limited financial resources who require supervision and support with the activities of daily living.

The County of Lambton operates two Adult Enrichment Centres (AECs) to address the psychological, social, cultural and spiritual needs of seniors in care. These supports assist individuals remain in their home for a longer duration of time. 122 individuals received supports through the Adult Day Program.

The Homemakers Services Program provided vital supports to 39 individuals at risk of losing their tenancy to maintain a quality of life and prevent housing loss or homelessness.

The Supportive Housing Program led by the Canadian Mental Health Association, Lambton-Kent (CMHA), provided 37 individuals, coping with mental health and/or addictions, with stable housing and wrap-around supports. Pages 10 and 11 share the story of John and his path to finding permanent housing.



**45 individuals**  
have been supported  
through the program to date

100% have moved along the housing  
continuum *into a Private Market Rental*



**94%** of individuals reported an increase in  
**housing stability, safety and affordability**

The average  
number of  
emergency  
room visits

**decreased  
by  
108 visits**



## Meet *John...*

*\*Names have been changed for confidentiality of the clients.*

### *The Story of John...*

John suffered from debilitating and complex mental health challenges in addition to a history of substance abuse.

John had been precariously housed, but from time to time, managed to secure options through employment, peers and family.

In addition, John had been dismissed from his place of employment impacting both his financial and housing stability.



John was admitted into the Bluewater Health Mental-Health Inpatient (MH-IP) ward after disclosing thoughts of self-harm and suicidal ideations, placing himself at risk of harm toward himself and/or others. Upon discharge from the MH-IP ward, John was homeless and was in need of obtaining new accommodations and supports to manage his mental health stability. John was referred to the Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA).

Emergency Shelter solutions offered though CMHA assisted John to secure temporary shelter with a peer, as a time limited option. A CMHA Case Manager continued to support him by locating and securing affordable accommodations, and within two months, CMHA had assisted John to obtain housing and receive a rental supplement through the Supportive Housing Program.

### *John One Year Later...*

Since being rehoused John has been linked to psychotherapy support, case management and crisis support through CMHA. In addition he was supported by CMHA to secure financial stability through the Ontario Disability Support Program.

From obtaining appropriate housing, John reported increased safety and security in his independent rental unit and has been able to begin his new and independent life, and to address the complexity of mental health and begin to heal.

# Program Spotlight: The Mental Health and Social Services Team

The Mental Health and Social Services Team (MHASST) was launched in partnership with the Canadian Mental Health Association, Lambton-Kent. Working collaboratively, an integrated team provides vulnerable individuals with services and supports to address complex needs. The MHASST provides brief services to adults (16 and over) in receipt of Ontario Works funding or in receipt of rent-geared-to-income assisted housing. The team is comprised of an employee from the Social Services Division who is paired with two CMHA mental health professionals with experience in assessment and the treatment of mental health and/or addictions.

## Desired Outcomes

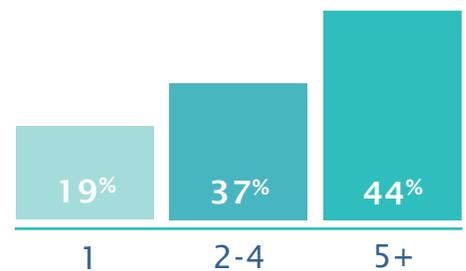


## Intake Status

### Presenting Issues



### Number of Presenting Issues

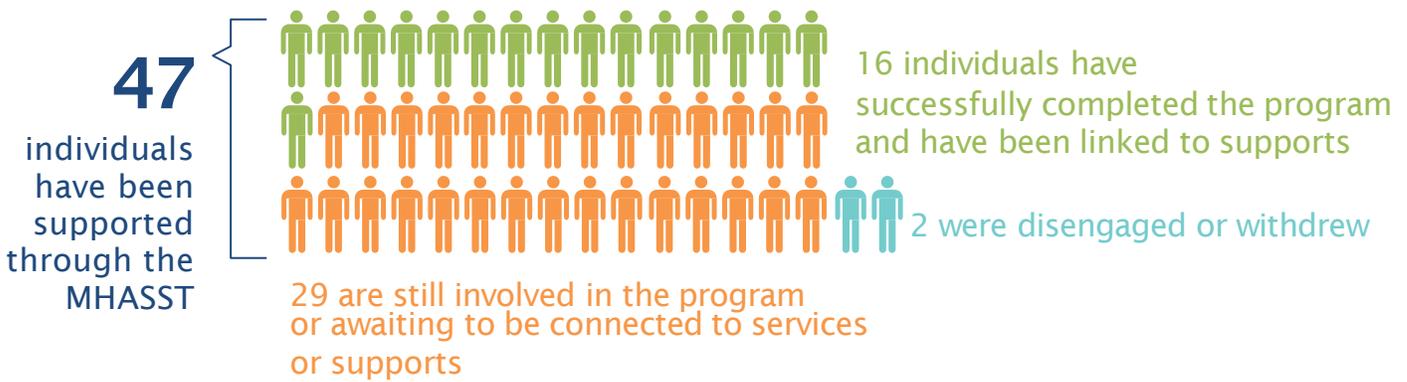


### Housing History (6 months prior to intake)



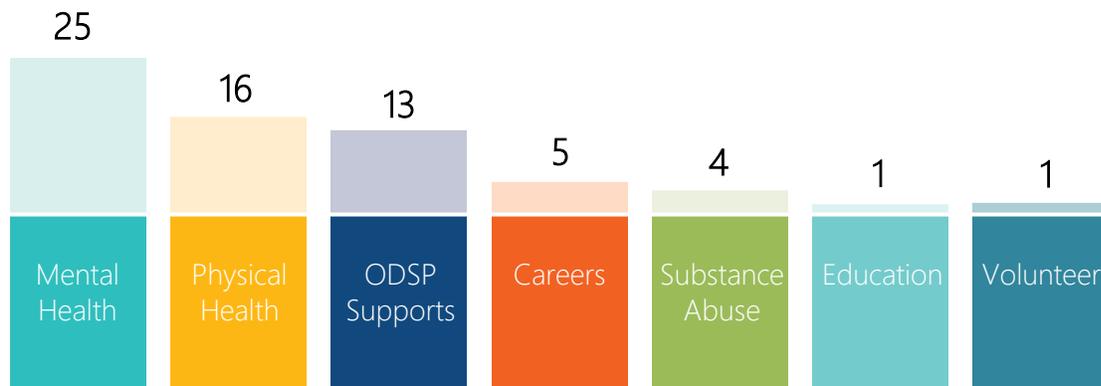
22% indicated they were at risk of homelessness

## MHASST Status



## Client Connections

Participants were connected to 8 internal CMHA programs and 22 community programs or supports:



Number of Participants by Category

## Housing Outcomes

100% have either **improved** or **maintained** their living status



80% of those experiencing homelessness moved forward on the housing continuum

40% moved into a private market rental unit

# Jack and Jill

## Jack's Story

Prior to the program, Jack was diagnosed with depressive disorder with disrupted sleep, poor appetite and suicidal idealization. Jack had frequent hospital visits due to suicidal idealization and attempts. Jack was referred to the program by his Ontario Works Caseworker for assistance with his ODSP application and to received mental health supports related to childhood trauma.

## Program Involvement

Jack was accepted into the program in September 2019 and received numerous supports from the MHASST team:

Referred to the Youth Job Connect Program

Community Care Assistance for Life Skills

ODSP Application Support

Tenancy supports and education



## Outcomes

- Jack maintains part-time employment with two local employers.
- In February Jack was deemed disabled and granted ODSP.
- Jack was linked to a CMHA Case Manager and he relies on the support of his case manager when having thoughts of suicide. This has reduced his hospital visits.
- Jack completed a RGI Housing application and was referred to the CMHA Housing Subsidy Program.
- Jack maintained stable housing for the duration of the program.

# were supported by the MHASST

## Jill's Story

In 2008, Jill was diagnosed with paranoid schizophrenia. Jill moved to Sarnia without accommodations, mental health supports, community connections or primary care. Jill was referred to the program by her Community Support Worker to receive housing supports and appropriate community supports.

## Program Involvement

Jill was accepted into the program September 2019. She received numerous supports from the MHASST and was connected to several community agencies for appropriate supports:

- Linked to a CMHA Case Manager for ongoing support.
- Linked to the Wellness Centre and the YMCA.
- Referred to Community Care Assistant for community engagement

## Outcomes

- Jill completed the program in December 2019.
- Jill was accepted into CMHA Case Management for ongoing supports and the CMHA Subsidy Program.
- Connected with Rapid Family Physicians for primary care.
- Supported to seek psychiatric supports.
- She was able to secure safe, affordable housing. Her Community Support Worker assisted with securing funding to furnish her apartment.

*\*Names have been changed for confidentiality of the clients.*

# Strategic Direction 3: Sustainability

## Priority 1: Increase new housing stock and maintain or preserve existing housing assets.

County Council supported a 10-Year Capital Asset Management and Funding Plan to address the aging social housing stock. In 2019, \$4M in capital dollars was spent addressing building components including substructure, shell, common area interiors, services (mechanical, electrical, plumbing, HVAC), site work and unit interiors.

\$323,188 was administered to assist 18 households make household repairs or improve accessibility in their homes through the Lambton Renovates Program.

Habitat Handyman, a partnership with Habitat for Humanity, completed 139 home repairs for 129 households. The completion of these repairs assisted homeowners to maintain their homes and increase their housing stability.

County Council has supported staff recommendations for the creation of affordable housing development through the Investment in Affordable Housing Program (2014 Extension), Social Infrastructure Fund, Home for Good and County contributions. In 2019, this added an additional 26 affordable housing units for a total of 74 units built since 2018. Support services are available in a number of these units.

Lambton Builds provided 11 Ontario Works clients the opportunity to work alongside Habitat for Humanity staff to learn basic construction skills, while enhancing their sense of community. Page 21 shares Sarah's story and the positive outcome from her experience with Lambton Builds.



# Sarah's *story*

Sarah is a full-time single mother of three children. She was a recipient of Ontario Works for over three years with little employment experience. Through case planning, Sarah's caseworker referred her to Lambton Builds. Sarah volunteered with Lambton Builds to give back to her community, learn new skills, find employment and to receive on-site training in the field of construction. Sarah completed four weeks of Lambton Builds.

In the Spring of 2019, Sarah successfully obtained full time employment in the field of construction and was able to move toward self-sufficiency. Sarah closed her Ontario Works file in August 2019. At a six month follow up, post Lambton Builds, Sarah reported she was still employed.

*"I wanted to volunteer to give back to the community and do more with my skills and find employment in this field. I am very proud of the work I have been able to do in the programs offered through Ontario Works, and I know this experience will make a difference for me and my family."*



## Priority 2: Enhance the Housing and Homelessness Sector

In collaboration with community partners and persons with lived experience, Lambton Public Health (LPH) developed a Community Drug and Alcohol Strategy. LPH also completed a situational assessment in our community that is highlighted in the report titled *A Report on Substance Use and Harms in Lambton County (Fall 2019)*.

As housing is recognized as a fundamental condition for health, LPH continued to provide outreach and education to vulnerable individuals within the community:

- LPH staff provided 81 flu immunizations during two outreach flu clinics at the Inn of the Good Shepherd.
- The Student Nutrition Program supported food costs for 38 school-based programs that fed 8,195 students every day.

Lambton Public Health staff provided outreach at Mobile Markets in 2019:

- Dental Hygienists and Dental Assistants provided dental education, resources, and supplies (toothbrushes, floss, etc.)
- Public Health Inspectors provided food safety information.
- Public Health Nurses provided general health information, resources, and referrals to community agencies.

Representatives from the County of Lambton continue to have an active role in the Ontario Municipal Social Services Association and the Housing Services Corporation through the Service Manager Housing and Homelessness Network meetings. These groups advocate for enhancements to the Housing and Homelessness sector.



In 2019, the Lambton County Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee (LCHHAC) was convened by the County of Lambton to inform the design, implementation and the oversight of the homeless service system of care for persons experiencing a housing or homelessness crisis in Lambton County.

The mission of the LCHHAC is to implement and guide housing and support services for families and individuals who experience or are at great risk of homelessness throughout Lambton County.

The Housing and Homelessness Transportation program, led by the Canadian Red Cross, Sarnia-Lambton (CRC) aims to increase reliable and safe transportation to individuals experiencing homelessness or are at imminent risk of homelessness. Through collaborative efforts, CRC works with 29 local service providers to provide transportation to necessary services and supports that assist individuals obtain or retain housing. CRC provided 1,813 trips for 331 individuals in 2019.

## Claire's *story*

Claire had stable housing for over 8 years, and though her accommodations were affordable, her home environment had become increasingly unhealthy and unsafe to remain residing in her unit. Claire was needing emergency housing supports to find new accommodations as quickly as possible.

She was referred to LIFT from the Emergency Housing Coordinator at CMHA. Through the LIFT program, Claire was provided ongoing support as she regularly met with her caseworker, viewed apartments and worked with landlords.

### Claire Today...

Through various community supports, Claire was able to obtain a private market rental unit of her own. Her new accommodations are safe, healthy, stable and permanent. In addition, her accommodations are specific to her needs and in close proximity to her family and social supports. Claire continues to receive supports from the LIFT program for her medical and food security trips as she adjusts to her new community and transitions along the Housing Continuum.

*\*Names have been changed for confidentiality of the individual.*

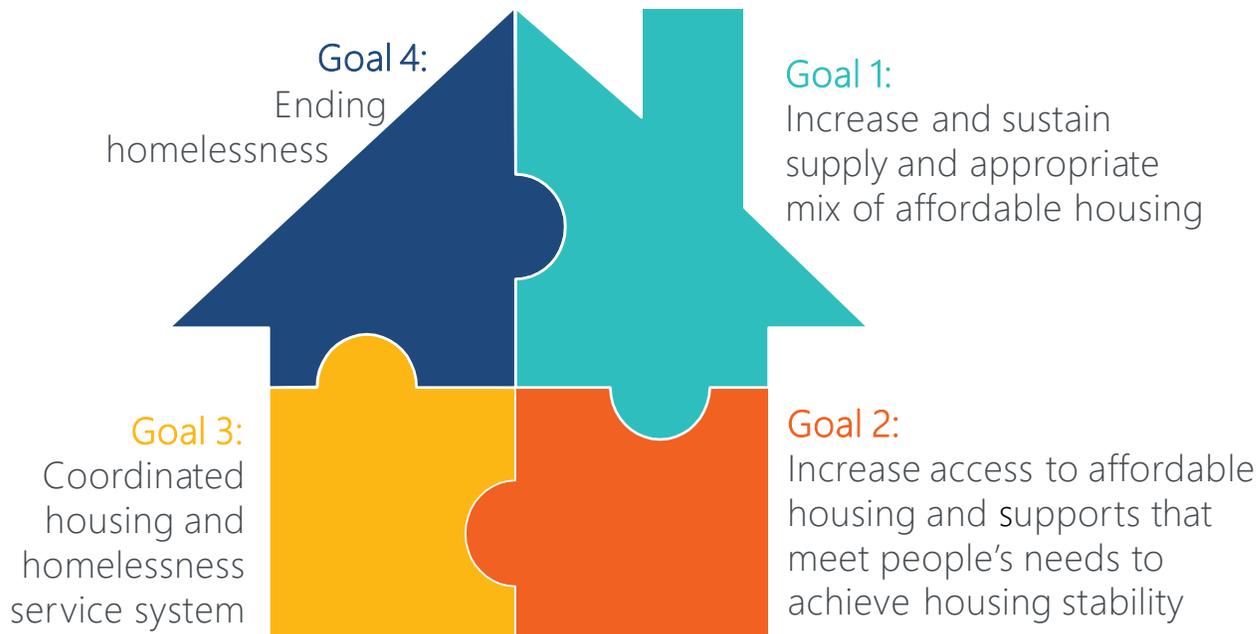
# Moving Forward into 2020

Throughout 2019, in accordance with direction from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, Vink Consulting was hired to refresh the County of Lambton's 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan at the 5-year mark. This update provided the opportunity to base planning and the delivery of services based on the shifting community needs. The County of Lambton worked with community partners, Indigenous communities, internal staff and the community at large to assist in the update.

The recommendations presented in the revised plan will assist the Social Services Division to ensure that the department remains responsive to local issues and trends through the implementation of strategies that will break down silos and re-align resources to address chronic and episodic homelessness, and to coordinate homelessness services within Lambton County. Through extensive research and community consultation, the following goals have been identified for Lambton County's housing and homelessness sector.

## Vision:

*Every person has an affordable, suitable and adequate home.*



Thank you to the Lambton County Housing and Homelessness Advisory Committee, which has representation from the following organizations:

Bluewater Health  
Canadian Mental Health Association - Lambton-Kent  
Canadian Red Cross Sarnia-Lambton Branch  
Community Legal Assistance Sarnia  
County of Lambton  
John Howard Society of Sarnia Lambton  
Lambton Elderly Outreach  
North Lambton Community Health Centre  
Ontario Provincial Police - Lambton County  
River City Vineyard  
Salvation Army Sarnia  
Sarnia-Lambton Children's Aid Society  
Sarnia-Lambton Native Friendship Centre  
Sarnia-Lambton Ontario Health Team  
Sarnia-Lambton Rebound  
Sarnia Police Service  
The Inn of the Good Shepherd  
The Women's Interval Home of Sarnia-Lambton



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