

**ST. THOMAS-ELGIN**  
**HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PLAN**  
**2023 Progress Report**

**TAKING STOCK**  
**WORKING TOGETHER**



# Introduction

The City of St. Thomas, in its role as the Service Manager for St. Thomas and Elgin County, is responsible for delivering social and community services throughout the City and the County. These services are delivered by the St. Thomas-Elgin Social Services Department. As part of its mandate, the Department administers a range of housing and homelessness programs, including existing social housing, new affordable housing, rent supplements, housing allowances, portable housing benefits, home repair assistance, homeownership down-payment assistance, funding for emergency shelters and transitional housing, and other homelessness prevention programs including the Housing Stability Financial Assistance (formerly HeLP) program.



**558** units of City  
owned & managed housing



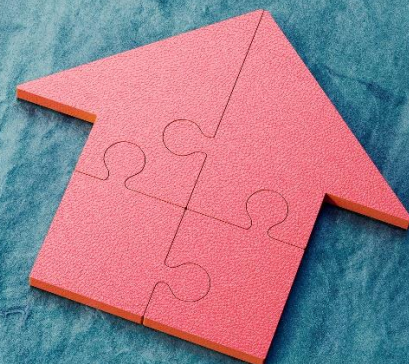
**512** units of rent  
geared to income  
housing

The St. Thomas-Elgin Social Services Department works in collaboration with existing housing providers, homelessness service providers, and other stakeholders and organizations in the community to help meet the housing and homelessness prevention needs of residents of St. Thomas and Elgin County.

In the past, the Department has undertaken numerous reports and studies about community housing and homeless needs and has worked with organizations to implement many of the key recommendations from those studies.

As required in the *Housing Services Act*, City of St. Thomas Council approved a 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan for St. Thomas and Elgin County in December 2013. The Plan was implemented on January 1, 2014. Service Managers are required in the *Act* to report annually to the public by June 30 on progress in achieving the recommendations in their Plans during the preceding year.

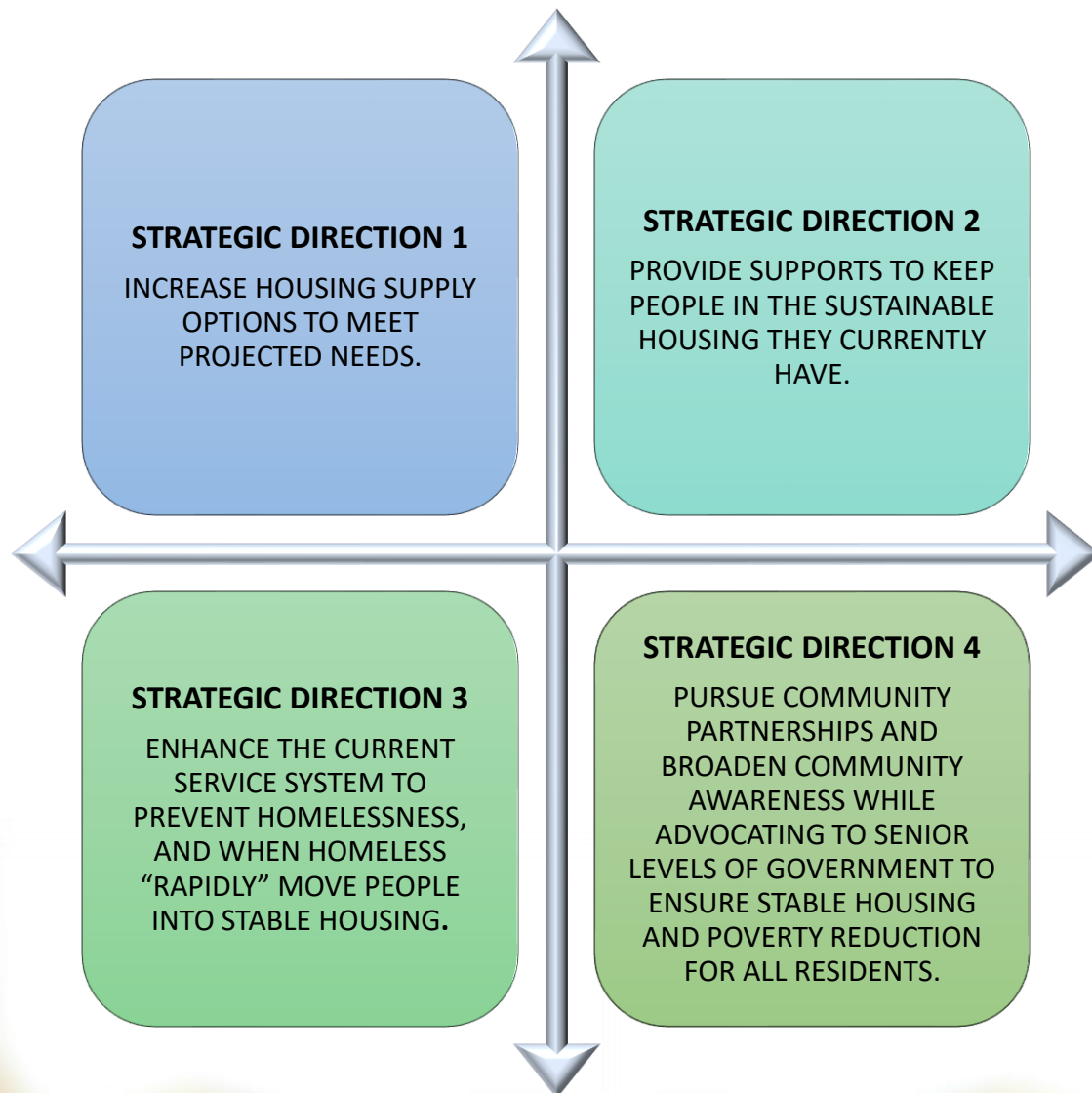
**This is the 2023 Progress Report for St. Thomas and Elgin County.**





# Vision

St. Thomas and Elgin County recognize the importance of having affordable, adequate and appropriate housing for its residents. In co-operation with not-for-profit and private-sector partners in the community, and with support from federal and provincial levels of governments, St. Thomas and Elgin County will work towards meeting the housing and support needs of the community, with the elimination of long-term homelessness as a key goal.



# STRATEGIC DIRECTION 1

Increase housing supply options to meet projected need

## Regeneration of City-owned Property

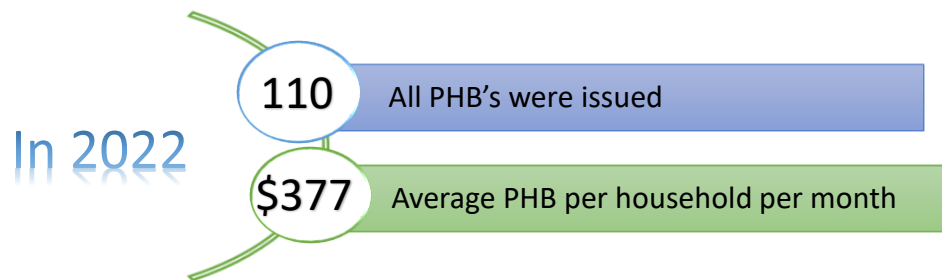
In 2022, through a partnership with the City, Indwell – Hope and Homes operated 16 self contained micro unit apartments of supportive housing for vulnerable people experiencing chronic homelessness, high acuity and high hospital recidivism. The units, named Railway City Lofts, are located above the City's transit building at 614 Talbot St.



The City's partnership with Indwell – Hope and Homes includes building an additional 45 units of supportive and affordable housing at 16 Queen St. Construction began in 2021, continued throughout 2022 and will be ready for occupancy in early 2023.

## Municipal Support

In October of 2021, Council approved increasing the number of Portable Housing Benefits (PHB) from 60 to a maximum of 110 to support St. Thomas-Elgin households on the Centralized Housing Waitlist to achieve housing affordability in their current rental unit as an alternative to waiting to move into an RGI unit. In 2022, all 110 PHB's were issued and the average PHB per household was \$377 per month.



In addition, and as a result of working in partnership with the City, The INN, which is a housing focussed 40 bed emergency shelter, opened its doors at its new 24/7 location in January of 2022.



### **Rent Supplement Programs**

In St. Thomas-Elgin, rent supplements are provided under four Provincially funded programs to assist low income households in achieving housing affordability in rental units that meet their needs:



In total, 151 households were served by these programs in 2022. The average rent supplement per month was approximately \$250.

### **Assistance to Community Groups**

During 2022, the City provided assistance and support to community groups in St. Thomas- Elgin to assist with initiatives aimed at increasing affordable housing and housing stability options.

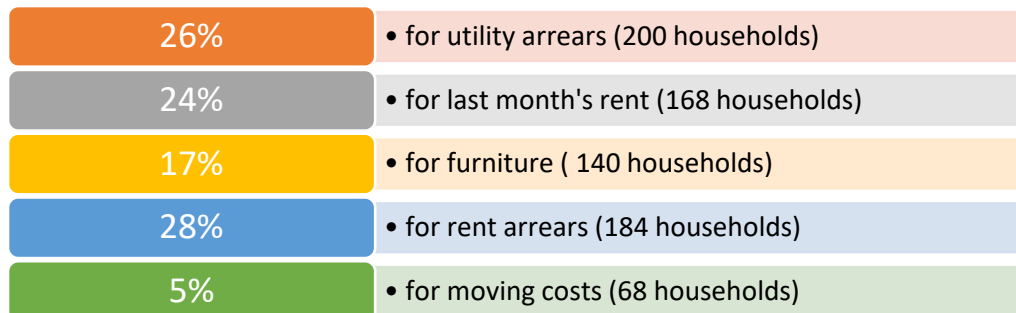


## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 2

Provide supports to keep people in the sustainable housing they currently have

### Homelessness Prevention

In total, \$484,658 in Housing Stability Financial Assistance (formerly HeLP) and Social Services Relief funding was allocated and issued to assist 760 low-income households with homelessness prevention supports.



### Home Repair Program

\$20,900 from the IAH Home Repair Program helped 3 homeowners and one multi-residential landlord pay for new roofs (1), furnace replacement (1) and accessibility (1).

### Enhancing Tenant Capacity and Eviction Prevention

The Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool (SPDAT) continued to be an effective means to individualize supports and matching to resources for tenants to increase their prospect of having successful tenancies.

In addition, the City Housing staff proactively worked with tenants, and participated in Coordinated Access and the Situation Table Emergency Case Conferencing as needed.



## STRATEGIC DIRECTION 3

Enhance the current service system to prevent homelessness, and when homeless, “rapidly” move people into stable housing

### Youth Homelessness Protocol

87 youth accessed services through the Youth Homelessness Protocol in 2022.

23%	• 16-18 years old
63%	• Experienced a family breakdown
36%	• Couch surfing
5%	• Experienced eviction
54%	• Spent one or more nights in respite or shelter
40%	• Exited Housing Based Case Management
97%	• Connected with a YWCA Housing Based Case Manager or Youth in Transition Worker

### The INN (formerly The Inn Out of the Cold)

Throughout 2022, the emergency shelter operated in its new 24/7 location. 217 unique people experiencing homelessness were served at The INN which represents an increase of **62** individuals from the previous year.

**Total # of bed nights**  
**12,364**



The supports provided included: basic needs, emergency shelter, and matching to community resources, including housing.

- The average stay was 39 nights, an increase of 14 nights from the previous year.
- 36% of guests were women, a decrease of 12% from the previous year.
- 8% of guests were youth (ages 16 to 24), a decrease of 3% from the previous year.
- 23% of women and 36% of men stayed 1 to 10 nights total.





## Client-Centred Supportive Housing

\$514,000 in HPP funding helped agencies provide client-centred supportive housing as follows:

YWCA Residence	• 17 beds
Harmony House	• 6 beds
Horizon House	• 3 beds
Fairwinds	• 3 beds
Unity House	• 3 beds
Second Story	• 6 beds
CMHATVAMHS	• Up to 60 people for residential care home program

### **In addition, in 2022:**

- CMHA continued to employ a Housing and Homelessness System Navigator to collaborate in partnership with the INN to meet with people experiencing homelessness 1:1 to work on housing plans.
- CMHATVAMHS and the YWCA operated a total of 10 crisis beds serving as temporary emergency shelter for individuals applying for transitional and/or supportive housing services and moved individuals from those beds into appropriate housing when it became available.
- Family Central operated 6 supportive affordable housing units, provided Monday to Friday day time drop in and food security services to vulnerable people, and 10 winter emergency shelter beds.
- Our local Coordinated Access System met monthly to match people experiencing homelessness identified on the By Name List to housing resources based on willingness, need and priority. The By Name List is a list of names of people in our community actively experiencing homelessness.





## Women's Homelessness

The Women & Family Housing Stability Advisory Group has had a productive year in 2022. The committee is in the final stages of creating a community plan (expected launch - September 2023) to address women-led family homelessness within St. Thomas-Elgin. With the goal of accelerating systemic change for women-led household and families, advocacy has been a priority in moving the needle to end women-led family homelessness. A literature review has been completed, community surveys distributed, and committee trainings on Gender Based Violence has taken place. This committee built new partnerships and worked with a gendered based lens to support women and families within our community.

A 'Lived Experience' sub committee was formed to guide this project. This group of 6 women have been instrumental in informing the project and affirms the notion of 'nothing for us, without us'.

On June 13, 2022, 65 community members from across Elgin County came together to hear a gender-based report on local and global data highlighting women-led families' experiences of homelessness from Tracy Flaherty-Willmott, Associate Director at OrgCode Consulting, Inc. Recommendations, and conclusions were shared to guide the community in making informed decisions on the creation and implementation of the future women-led family homelessness community plan.

These are the recommendations mapping the road ahead:

1.	Increase homelessness screening for all households accessing services and supports.
2.	Always screen for safety and have a clear workflow of what to do if there are concerns.
3.	Ensure the long-term housing plan incorporates family goals, key indicators, outcomes and impacts.
4.	Enhance prevention and diversion services for families seeking shelter and housing services.
5.	Enhance availability of family homelessness response.
6.	Continue enhancing affordable, supportive and transitional housing options for families.

## Built For Zero-Canada

Built for Zero-Canada is an ambitious national change effort helping a core group of leading communities to end chronic and Veteran homelessness. In 2021, St. Thomas-Elgin became a Built For Zero-Canada community. In 2022, through using best practices St. Thomas-Elgin was recognized for achieving a Quality By Name List and Coordinated Access System.



## **STRATEGIC DIRECTION 4**

**Pursue community partnerships and broaden community awareness while advocating to senior levels of government to ensure stable housing and poverty reduction for all residents**

### **Committees**

Throughout 2022, the Housing Stability Alliance met bi-monthly as an advisory group and to share information.

The West Elgin Housing Stability Coalition continued meeting to assess and advocate for the housing and homelessness needs of West Elgin.

Other committees including Access to Affordable Housing, Coordinated Access, Youth Homelessness Protocol, and Taking Action on Women's and Family Homelessness met on a regular basis. The committees consist of a wide range of community partners including members from CMHA, CCHC, YWCA, The INN, Fresh Start, Poverty Coalition, United Way, Drug and Alcohol Strategy, Residential Care Homes and others.

### **Housing Focused Street Outreach**

In 2022, the Housing Focused Street Outreach Team, which was established in 2021 as a partnership between St. Thomas-Elgin Social Services and CMHATVAMHS, supported approximately 160 unique people.

### **Provincial Activities**

City staff have continued their ongoing involvement with the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing regarding existing service provisions and future opportunities for increasing affordable housing stock. In addition, City membership in OMSSA and City Staff's active participation in OMSSA discussions at various levels of government has contributed to OMSSA's lobbying efforts with MMAH.

### **Poverty Coalition**

The Elgin St. Thomas Coalition to End Poverty has continued to work closely with three main priority groups: Housing, Economic Security and Food Security. Throughout 2022, the Poverty Coalition worked collaboratively to address urgent needs throughout the pandemic such as access to food and food security. As a result a sub working group, The Food Providers Network, was formed and continues to focus specifically on food related needs in our community.

[www.povertycoalition.ca](http://www.povertycoalition.ca)

*REPORT END*