



## SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION

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| REPORT TO:        | WARDEN AND LAMBTON COUNTY COUNCIL                                                         |
| DEPARTMENT:       | HOUSING SERVICES                                                                          |
| PREPARED BY:      | Melisa Johnson, Manager                                                                   |
| REVIEWED BY:      | Melissa Fitzpatrick, General Manager<br>Stéphane Thiffeault, Chief Administrative Officer |
| MEETING DATE:     | September 3, 2025                                                                         |
| INFORMATION ITEM: | Affordable Housing Update                                                                 |

### **BACKGROUND**

Lambton County Council, at its meeting on June 4, 2025, received an update regarding the affordable housing work underway.

This report is to provide Council with a further update on this work.

### **DISCUSSION**

Staff have been working to advance the goal of having more homes built faster in the community given the urgency of the affordable housing crisis. Below is a brief update on several initiatives that are currently underway.

#### **Affordable Housing Reserve**

No update.

#### **Supportive and Affordable Housing Strategic Development Plan Update**

The Supportive and Affordable Housing Strategic Development Plan (“**Plan**”), a multi-year portfolio-scale strategic development plan prepared by Flourish Affordable Housing Communities (“**Flourish**”) was endorsed by Council in February 2024, which allows resources to be focused in a strategic manner. An update to this Plan was presented to Council at the June 2025 meeting.

This Plan has been used to guide future supportive and affordable housing developments including the Kathleen Avenue, George Street, and Cathcart Boulevard developments identified below.

### Affordable Housing Seed Funding Program

No update.

### Indwell Partnership

A partnership was formed with Indwell Community Homes (“**Indwell**”) through a public procurement process with the goal of planning, constructing and eventually operating between 150 and 300 supportive housing units in Lambton. A report titled *Indwell Community Homes Update* provided an update on the nine goals established through the partnership and was presented at the June 2025 Council meeting.

In addition, Indwell and the County have formed a partnership under the recently announced HART Hub, to provide supportive housing utilizing 12 units in the County’s existing community housing stock. Pending confirmation of provincial budget allocations, it is anticipated that these units will be operational in early fall 2025.

### Indwell Land Transfer – George Street

In June 2025, the transfer of the vacant parking lot adjacent to the George Street EMS Station was completed. The transfer requires Indwell to move forward with the development and construction of supportive units in a timely manner and to operate the same for a minimum number of years. Pre-development work is currently underway, including submission of the Pre-Application Consultation to the City of Sarnia, advancing multiple studies such as environmental and traffic impact assessments, as well as preliminary project design work. The Minor Variance Application is expected to be submitted to the City of Sarnia for consideration.

### New Construction – Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services

The 40-unit apartment building is currently under construction at 940 Confederation Street in Sarnia by Ontario Aboriginal Housing Services (“**OAHS**”). This project was made possible by the transfer of the land from the County of Lambton (on terms similar to the transfer to Indwell discussed above) and is expected to be complete in December of 2025.

This project contains 16 one-bedroom, 16 two-bedroom, and 8 three-bedroom units including 8 accessible units. Support and programming space will also be available on site with the Sarnia-Lambton Native Friendship Centre expecting to relocate to the facility.

OAHS is currently accepting applications through the rental housing page on the OAHS website.

### New Construction – New units in existing buildings

No additional update.

### New Construction – Maxwell Park Place

Work continues to advance on site at Maxwell Park Place. The 24 units, including six March of Dimes supported units, are expected to be completed this fall. Rent up plans have been established for these units.

### New Construction – Kathleen Avenue

The contractor selected for this project is S.E.M. Construction Limited (“**S.E.M.**”), a local contractor based out of London. Work on site is advancing on schedule with occupancy of this 50-unit building expected in the fall of 2026.

A detailed report regarding the Kathleen Avenue project is included separately in the Council agenda.

### Property Acquisition – Cathcart Boulevard

The County took possession of the St. Bartholomew’s Church property on Cathcart Blvd on April 25, 2025. Demolition work is complete, and an architect has been selected for this project with contract negotiations currently underway. The goal is to develop a shovel-ready project to ensure the County is well-positioned to seek upper-level government funding when it becomes available.

The Cathcart Blvd property was one of the properties included in the Plan. The recommendation in the Plan is for a four-story building containing 107 units plus building amenity space. The Plan recommends this location would be ideal for supportive housing, including both the standard and enhanced program models utilized by Indwell.

A community consultation plan is being prepared to gather the community’s input on the recommendations brought forward in the Plan.

The former rectory building was not included in the demolition and project plan for this site. The plan is to utilize it during construction to reduce construction costs and once complete staff will seek Council direction regarding opportunities for this property. Until construction begins, staff have identified an opportunity to use this property to support families in need of short-term accommodation while they work to secure long-term permanent housing. Utilizing this property will ensure that the physical asset condition does not deteriorate due to vacancy providing optimized opportunities for use upon project completion.

### Additional Dwelling Unit Incentive Program

The Additional Dwelling Unit Incentive Program Pilot was implemented in 2024 utilizing provincial funding. Uptake for this program was slow with funding provided to one household to date.

## Advocacy

Funding is required from all levels of government to continue advancing the creation of new affordable and/or supportive housing in the community. This includes capital dollars from both the Provincial and Federal government as well as operating dollars from the province. Advocacy work is ongoing to secure the required investments from other levels of government.

## **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There is no impact to the levy.

## **CONSULTATIONS**

Consultations have taken place with the Chief Administrative Officer; General Manager, Social Services; County Solicitor/Deputy Clerk; and Manager, Procurement and Projects.

## **STRATEGIC PLAN**

Providing safe affordable housing is in keeping with the County's Mission to promote an enhanced quality of life through the provision of responsive and efficient services accomplished by working with municipal and community partners.

The activities of the Division support the Community Development Area of Effort #3 in the County of Lambton's Strategic Plan, specifically:

- Strengthening the County's advocacy and lobbying efforts with other levels of government to raise the profile of the County and its needs to secure improved senior government supports, funding, grants, and other resources to meet emerging infrastructure and service needs;
- Consulting with the community and stakeholders on ways to increase housing options and affordability, and innovative programs and initiatives that focus on poverty reduction and promote social belonging;
- Supporting the development of a variety of affordable housing to meet demand;
- Implementing, monitoring and updating community health and wellness-related plans and priorities, including, but not limited to, the *Housing and Homelessness Plan*, *Community Safety & Well-Being Plan*, the Long-Term Care division's mission, vision, and values, *Age Friendly Community Planning* framework, Lambton Public Health's strategic priorities, *Lambton Drug & Alcohol Strategy*, *Lambton EMS Master Plan*, and *Child Care and Early Years 5-Year Service System Plan*; and
- Advocating for, and supporting access to, mental health and addiction services.

## **CONCLUSION**

The County of Lambton Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020 - 2024 sets a strategic direction for housing and homelessness work. Adding to the affordable housing stock is a key component of this plan. There is much progress being made towards this goal; however, funding from other levels of government will be required. Adding additional affordable housing units in the County is a priority with all avenues being explored.