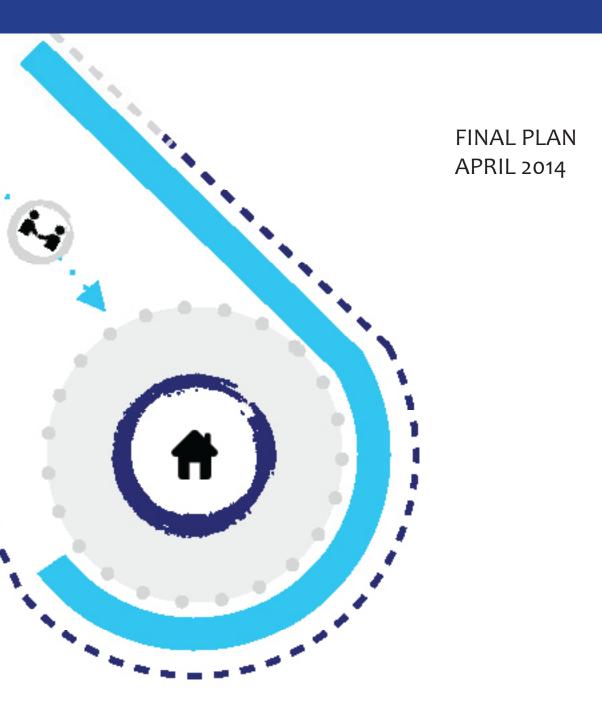
# Windsor Essex Housing and Homelessness Plan



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# INTRODUCTION

Housing is an important building block in a healthy and inclusive community. Access to affordable, adequate and suitable housing is a vital indicator of overall health and wellbeing. Delivery of housing and services related to housing is facilitated through an interconnected and coordinated system of public, non-profit and private partners. The City of Windsor, as the designated Service Manager for the Service Area which includes the City of Windsor, County of Essex and Municipality of Pelee Island, is responsible for the administration and funding of housing and homelessness programs in Windsor Essex as well as coordinating the provision of housing.

As the Service Manager, the City of Windsor is required to establish a ten-year Housing and Homelessness Plan. The purpose of this Plan is to provide a comprehensive approach to deliver a system of housing and homelessness service. Windsor Essex has long recognized the benefits of providing a full range of housing and has developed a number of strategic plans to address housing and homelessness issues in the community, including the 2004 and 2010 Windsor Essex Housing Analysis and Recommended Strategies (HARS) and the Community Plan for Homelessness.

The Windsor Essex Housing and Homelessness Plan builds on this previous work and identifies goals, objectives and strategies to improve access to safe, affordable, accessible and quality housing and support services for individuals and families in Windsor Essex. The Plan addresses the key aspects of housing from homelessness to affordable home ownership and focuses on housing stability,

"Home is not only safe, reasonable and affordable, but a place where you feel a sense of security and belonging. A place where you want to establish yourself and your family"

"A place where I feel safe and can call my own"

homelessness prevention and quick access to permanent housing (housing first) rather than emergency responses. The Plan also considers the housing and support needs of specific population groups, including persons with disabilities, Aboriginal people, immigrants, youth, seniors, and victims of domestic violence. In addition to identifying strategies to improve access to housing and supports, the Plan establishes a process to measure and report on progress toward meeting the goals. This will help ensure a coordinated system of service delivery and the most efficient use of limited resources.

"Home is the place I go at the end of the day. It's my shelter with my family"

While the City of Windsor has taken a leadership role in the development of the ten-year Housing and Homelessness Plan, this Plan is a community plan. It was developed in consultation with a wide range of stakeholders, including residents, housing providers and support service agencies, (over 78 organizations and 243 residents participated in the consultations) with extensive input from the Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy Advisory Committee, a group that represents a wide range of key community stakeholders. The implementation of the Plan will also involve a wide range of community partners, including stakeholders from the private, non-profit and public sectors.

"A place of rest, peace, and being safe, that is affordable"

Please see the Background Report for further details on the development of the Plan.

# THE PLAN

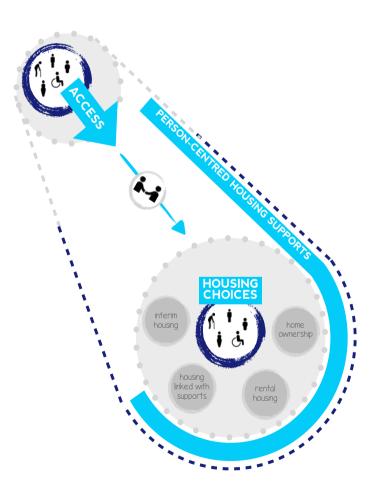
# **OUR VISION:**

Windsor Essex is an inclusive community where everyone has a safe, affordable, accessible, and quality home, and everyone lives where they can actively participate

1 Vision,
8 Guiding Principles,
7 Goals,
and 63 Strategies

# DESIRED HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS SYSTEM FOR WINDSOR ESSEX

We are using the following diagram to illustrate a simplified version of our desired housing and homelessness system.



From whatever point an individual or family accesses the system, they should move efficiently through coordinated **ACCESS** and be provided with housing and PERSON-CENTRED **SUPPORTS**, where needed. In cases where permanent housing is not immediately available, individuals experiencing absolute homelessness would be provided with INTERIM HOUSING to bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing, with the goal of having people move to permanent housing as quickly as possible. Some individuals with support needs may choose **HOUSING LINKED** WITH SUPPORTS. Others may reside in a variety of **RENTAL** and **OWNERSHIP HOUSING options** and receive supports in their home, unconnected to their housing. Some individuals and families simply need financial assistance to make their housing more affordable. In this case, they would reside in social or affordable housing or receive an ongoing subsidy to assist with their rent. Still others, (the largest portion of Windsor Essex residents) would simply navigate the housing options on their own and obtain their housing within the private rental or ownership housing markets.

# **PRINCIPLES**

The Windsor Essex 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan is built on these eight principles.

Housing First: Housing first is an approach where people, who are experiencing homelessness obtain and maintain permanent, affordable housing; and to assist those who are at-risk of homelessness to remain housed, that places the highest priority on keeping people or moving people into permanent housing as quickly as possible, and then providing the support necessary to maintain their housing.

Partnership Based: Housing and homelessness related services require strong partnerships, communication and collaboration between all orders of government, private, non-profit and cooperative housing providers, community support services and the people who require housing and homelessness related supports to build healthy, sustainable and inclusive neighbourhoods.

**Inclusive:** All persons have the right to equal treatment and protection from discriminatory practices that limit their housing opportunities. Local services, programs, initiatives and decision making will reflect the voices, experiences and input of people with lived experience of homelessness and risk of homelessness.

**Simple Process:** A process that is straightforward and understood by all people involved.

**Fiscally Responsible:** Funding will be administered for local initiatives that meet the intended purpose and outcomes of the consolidated program with due regard for economy, efficiency and effectiveness.

Locally Driven: Homelessness related services, programs and housing must be locally relevant and based on peoples' needs, research and best practices to provide opportunities to access affordable and safe housing, employment, support services and other community resources.

Outcome Focused: Initiatives are created with the outcomes for the person in need of services and are informed by the principles of Housing First, people centred and are monitored, evaluated and continuously improved to prevent, address and reduce homelessness.

**People Centred:** Housing programs, services and supports should be based on a "people-first" approach that focuses on positive results for individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or atrisk of homelessness.

# GOALS

There are seven key goals of the Windsor-Essex Housing and Homelessness Plan:

- Access Provide simple, coordinated and consistent access to programs, services and supports that act on what is important to the person receiving services
- 2. Person-Centred Housing Supports Have supports available when needed, to act on what is important to the person receiving services, to assist the person in succeeding in their preferred housing
- 3. **Interim Housing** Have temporary housing, meant to bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing, available where appropriate and where needed
- **4. Housing Linked with Supports** Have housing linked with a comprehensive and coordinated package of services and programs to assist a wide range of individuals with support needs in maintaining their housing
- **5. Rental Housing** Have a full range of rental housing that offers safe, accessible and quality accommodations
- **6. Ownership Housing** Have a full range of ownership housing that offers safe, accessible and quality accommodations
- **7. Monitoring, Reporting, and Evaluation** Measure and report on progress, evaluate success, and invest in continuous improvement of the housing and homelessness system

Accessing the right housing and services is complicated. There is a lack of awareness of available services and a lack of coordination among the services provided.

"Perception has a lot to do with it." (On trying to find accepting landlords)

"Less paper work! Less making people jump through hoops!"

# 1 Access

There are currently many places within the community for individuals and families experiencing or at risk of homelessness or with housing issues to turn to. Residents and their service providers are not necessarily aware of what's available, or where to turn, and the services aren't necessarily available where or when they need them. There is also a lack of coordination and information sharing among service providers, leading to clients having to apply to multiple agencies and some people falling through the cracks. No matter who someone comes into contact with, they must be efficiently connected with appropriate services.

This has led to the need to coordinate access to the system to ensure it is clear, simple and easy to engage. Effective access will include making information on what housing options and services are readily available and where to go for help. It also includes making sure people being discharged from hospitals or correctional facilities have appropriate housing to go to and supports in place. A common referral and intake process and information sharing are also important to improve simplicity for the users of the system.

# Goal 1: Provide simple, coordinated and consistent access to programs, services and supports that act on what is important to the person receiving services

## **Strategies:**

- 2014 2015 1.1 Establish a single phone number and website for housing help that includes an after-hours housing crisis line
- 2014 2015 1.2 Develop and maintain an education strategy for trusted access points, housing providers, and support service providers
- 2014 2015 1.3 Ensure awareness of available services
- 2014 2015

  1.4 Establish an effective referral and follow-up process among housing and service providers that is linked to a common intake and assessment process
- 2014 2015

  1.5 Implement coordinated access and common assessment for individuals experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness with triaging to appropriate services, including interim housing where required
  - 1.6 Dialogue with the Erie St. Clair Local Health Integration Network (LHIN) and LHIN funded organizations to investigate opportunities to expand coordinated access to health funded housing and supports
  - 1.7 Implement a common application process for social housing, Ontario Works, and childcare subsidies
  - 1.8 Establish an amalgamated communication and information sharing platform
  - 1.9 Develop a practice of coordinated discharge planning from institutional facilities
  - 1.10 Support efforts to reduce transportation barriers that currently exist in the system and efforts to increase and improve transportation options

Strategies marked with 2014 - 2015 are targeted for completion by the end of 2015

# 2 PERSON-CENTRED HOUSING SUPPORTS

Housing supports are limited and are not always appropriate for what the person needs

Housing is not the only necessary ingredient for many individuals and families to successfully gain or maintain housing. Supports are a key component of the housing first approach. They allow the individual or family to deal with any issues that might lead to problems with housing. Supports may mean financial assistance to help maintain housing, or they may mean social or health related supports. Limited supports are available in the community, and they often have waiting lists and eligibility limitations. They are not always flexible enough to respond to individual needs. Services should offer flexibility and choice for individuals accessing them and intensity will vary depending on needs. Providing person-centred housing supports sometimes means having the services go to the individual where necessary, rather than requiring them to come to the service.

"We need to know what services and supports are out there!"

# Goal 2: Have supports available when needed, to act on what is important to the person receiving services, to assist the person in succeeding in their preferred housing

# **Strategies:**

- 2.1 Refine and disseminate information on the changes to the Housing 2014 - 2015 Stability Plan which offers financial assistance for housing stability and homelessness prevention 2.2 Refine the services funded through the Community Homelessness 2014 - 2015 Prevention Initiative to better align with the strategies in the Plan 2.3 Enhance housing support worker roles to provide support, using a 2014 - 2015 person-directed approach, to individuals with moderately complex challenges 2.4 Develop and implement a Housing First intensive support initiative 2014 - 2015 for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness and/or who have the highest needs. 2.5 Dialogue and collaborate with health sector and community 2014 - 2015 stakeholders to increase the number of people receiving a coordinated package of supports to maintain their housing and optimal health 2.6 Increase the number of trusteeships available to individuals 2014 - 2015 voluntarily seeking a trustee 2.7 Identify and expand the services and supports available in different languages to meet the unique needs of newcomers and Francophones as well as those who are vision or hearing impaired
  - 2.8 Expand the number of Aboriginal support workers to meet the unique needs of Aboriginal individuals

and those with literacy issues

2.9 Develop formalized relationships among housing and service providers, and with other sectors, by establishing protocols, agreements, information sharing, and collaboration opportunities to ensure coordinated supports

# Interim housing options in Windsor Essex are not available for some population groups and do not always provide enough support to help people find and maintain permanent housing as quickly as

possible

"I've been self-sufficient all my life. I never expected to be here."

# 3 INTERIM HOUSING

Even with a full range of housing and support service options in the community, interim housing, including emergency shelters and transitional housing units, will still be required in Windsor Essex. Individuals and families will experience unforeseen circumstances that will require emergency services and immediate access to accommodation. There are currently no emergency shelters for families and no interim housing in the County of Essex. While the overall philosophy of this Plan is a housing first approach there are also some population groups and circumstances where transitional housing is appropriate. For example, it is appropriate for youth in the County of Essex who are willing to move to the City for permanent housing later, but based on their current circumstances, wish to stay in the County for the time-being. Likewise, interim housing was identified as a need for Aboriginal families, for example in the case of reunification of families. So, interim housing facilities will still be required in the community. While there are currently interim housing options for youth and Aboriginal families, these are limited and do not fully address the need.

# Goal 3: Have temporary housing, meant to bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing, available where appropriate and where needed

## **Strategies:**

## 2014 - 2015

3.1 Pilot an initiative where social housing units would be re-targeted to accommodation with an interim affordable rent for families, with the intention that the family would be able to stay in the unit on a permanent basis if eligible

This is a housing first approach where the family would be provided with what hopefully would be permanent housing. For administrative purposes only, the units would be deemed as interim housing. Only in situations where the family didn't qualify for social housing would they later move to other permanent housing

- 2014 2015 3.2 Right-size the shelter system, including beds for victims of domestic violence, by conducting an assessment of demand for shelter beds and adding and reducing beds where warranted
- 2014 2015 3.3 Re-evaluate the funding formula for emergency shelters to better achieve the strategies in the Plan
- 2014 2015 3.4 Review shelter policies and amend where required, to ensure policies are not supporting housing instability and inappropriate housing choices
  - 3.5 Improve the accessibility of interim housing where required
  - 3.6 Expand the supply of interim housing in the County of Essex by using the existing rental housing stock
- **2014 2015** 3.7 Evaluate the need for interim housing for youth, and expand supply if appropriate
- 2014 2015 3.8 Evaluate the need for interim housing for Aboriginal families, and expand supply of transitional housing if appropriate

# 4 Housing with Supports<sup>1</sup>

Individuals in housing with supports (formerly referred to as domiciliary hostels) do not have all the supports they need

"It's difficult to give up your own space and independence."

For some individuals who need supports to maintain their housing, it may be in the form of housing linked with supports (as opposed to having the supports brought in as required, but not affiliated with their housing). Currently, individuals living in housing with supports (formerly referred to as domiciliary hostels) often do not have access to a full range of supports to meet their needs, including housing supports, quality of life supports, as well as mental health and addictions services. Also, there isn't consistent accountability for the level of services provided. Further, some individuals are placed in housing with related supports, where it may not be the most appropriate option. Other supportive housing options have long waiting lists and individuals who could otherwise transition to independent living in the community are not adequately supported to make those transitions where desired. It is very important that individuals in housing linked with supports have access to seamless supports to assist them to maintain their housing.

**Housing integrated with supports** refers to situations where the housing provider also offers the supports (housing with supports funded through CHPI is one example of housing integrated with supports but Community Living organizations would be another example).

**Housing linked with supports** refers to situations where the housing and supports are connected, but the supports are provided by a party that differs from the housing provider.

This goal refers to housing with supports in its generic use and not specifically housing with supports that are funded through CHPI.

Goal 4: Have housing linked with a comprehensive and coordinated package of services and programs to assist a wide range of individuals with support needs in maintaining their housing

## **Strategies:**

- 4.1 Expand the supply of housing with supports, which may be housing integrated with supports or housing linked with supports.
- 4.2 Implement coordinated access and common assessment to housing with supports funded through the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)
- 2014 2015 4.3 Develop interdisciplinary team roles to support individuals living in housing with supports funded through CHPI including:
  - o housing supports
  - o quality of life programming
  - o staff training and capacity building, and
  - o monitoring of services provided
  - 4.4 Establish partnerships with LHIN funded mental health and addictions organization(s) to offer mental health and addictions supports to individuals living in housing with supports funded through CHPI
  - 4.5 Establish partnerships with educational institutions for community placements in housing with supports funded through CHPI
- **2014 2015** 4.6 Conduct a review of policies and practices related to housing with supports funded through CHPI
- 2014 2015 4.7 Implement and establish consistent accountability for standards for housing with supports funded by CHPI to be developed by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing (MMAH)
- **2014 2015** 4.8 Re-evaluate per diem rates for housing with supports funded through CHPI

<sup>1</sup> This strategy refers to housing with supports in its generic use and not specifically housing with supports that are funded through CHPI.

# 5 RENTAL HOUSING

Rental housing is a key component of the housing system. With the high vacancy rates in the City of Windsor, there is not a need for additional rental stock in the City, but simply more subsidies to improve affordability for low and moderate income renters. In the County of Essex, however, there is a lack of rental housing options. Rental housing that is affordable to many low income households is often in poor condition. For those seeking social housing, there is a limited supply of one-bedroom units and large units for families, as well as modified/accessible units for persons with disabilities. There are also policies that are hindering timely access to social housing for some individuals.

"A place that provides comfort and security in addition to just being a 'basic' means of shelter."

Safe, accessible and good quality rental

housing options

Windsor Essex

are not available in

all communities in

# Goal 5: Have a full range of rental housing that offers safe, accessible and quality accommodations

# **Strategies:**

- 2014 5.1 Review social housing policies to identify2015 opportunities to remove barriers to accessing social housing
  - 5.2 Regularly monitor the condition of the social housing portfolio and actively pursue funding to assist with energy efficiency and capital repairs

- 5.3 Conduct a rationalization assessment of the Windsor Essex social housing stock beginning with Windsor Essex Community Housing Corporation portfolio
- 5.4 Conduct an analysis of options and plan for ongoing viability and prevention of loss of social housing as operating agreements expire
- 5.5 Increase the number of households provided with rental assistance. This may include housing allowances, rent supplements, or head leases within private rental buildings to address the social housing waiting list
- 5.6 Increase the supply of rental housing in the County. This may include incentives to support the development of private market and non-profit development of affordable housing through funding from municipalities and senior levels of government
- 5.7 Target new development projects under affordable housing programs to meet specified needs, monitor changes in demographics and needs, and adjust targeting as required
- 2014 2015 5.8 In complying with legislative requirements for secondary suites, encourage and support flexible policies for community-wide inclusivity of secondary suites as an affordable rental housing alternative
  - 5.9 Investigate opportunities to be more active in bringing rental units into compliance that do not meet standards
  - 5.10 Review financial assistance for multi-residential rental housing repair to determine opportunities for improved take-up of funding
  - 5.11 Move towards equalizing the residential and multi-residential tax rates for projects with a certain percentage of affordable units to enhance the affordability of the existing rental stock
- **2014 2015** 5.12 Review income eligibility requirements for financial assistance for homeowner renovation and repair

# **6 OWNERSHIP HOUSING**

Home ownership remains relatively affordable although house prices are increasing Home ownership is a desirable option for many households. To meet housing needs, the housing must be safe, affordable, in good condition and be accessible where required. Average house prices in Windsor Essex remain affordable, although these are increasing and the supply of lower-priced homes is diminishing. However, some moderate income households are finding it a challenge to save for a down payment, thus preventing them from moving from rental to home ownership.

"A place where family and friends come together. Where you feel safe. A place where everyone is welcome. A sanctuary."

# Goal 6: Have a full range of ownership housing that offers safe, accessible and quality accommodations

### Strategies:

- 6.1 Increase home ownership opportunities for renters by refining home ownership assistance initiatives
- 6.2 Provide supports, including education and outreach, for home ownership opportunities to social housing tenants
- 6.3 As part of (a) neighbourhood improvement initiative(s), identify areas in a community where home ownership and renovation assistance would be available to residents
- 6.4 Investigate social investment financing initiatives to support home ownership
- 6.5 Continue collaboration with community organizations offering home ownership assistance, such as Habitat for Humanity
- 6.6 Develop policies, and engage the building community, to support the creation of new barrier free housing
- 6.7 Make financial assistance available for accessibility renovations and repair to existing housing on an ongoing basis
- 6.8 Develop and implement an education strategy for Windsor Essex residents about available services and financial assistance to support people in maintaining their housing

# 7 IMPLEMENTATION, MONITORING, REPORTING, EVALUATION AND CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT

29 of the 63 strategies in the Plan are a priority for the first two years. Please see the Background Report for target timelines for the other strategies, and a preliminary list of stakeholders who will be involved in implementation priority

Effectively taking action to address housing and homelessness issues requires reliable, meaningful information, and analysis of that information, to measure progress and success and better inform system planning. It also allows the system to provide more effective supports.

# Goal 7: Measure and report on progress, evaluate success, and invest in continuous improvement of the housing and homelessness system

## **Strategies:**

- 2014 2015 7.1 The Housing Advisory Committee, a Committee of City of Windsor Council, will be responsible for championing the implementation of the Plan and for evaluating and monitoring progress towards meeting the goals and strategies of the Plan.
- 2014 2015 7.2 As the Service Manager, the City of Windsor will establish an implementation committee that will report to a committee of Windsor City Council to develop and recommend a work plan that identifies how each goal and strategy will be implemented, including actions and timelines; develop and recommend outcome measurement indicators to assess the progress in meeting the goals and implementation strategies and; develop and recommend outcome measurement indicators for key strategies in the Plan.
- 7.3 As the Service Manager, the City of Windsor will undertake an initiative to: engage in ongoing monitoring and reporting, including publishing an annual report card and semi-annual homelessness management information system reports once implemented and; ensure quarterly and annual reporting on municipally, provincially, and federally prescribed performance measures and; identify opportunities for continuous improvement of the housing and homelessness services on an annual basis.
  - 7.4 Expand partnerships with educational institutions, including to provide community placements for person-centred housing support and research and evalution.
  - 7.5 Review the Plan in five years and revise strategies and targets as appropriate.
  - 7.6 Develop a process and allocate resources for ongoing value-based training and professional development of staff and volunteers in the housing and homelessness system to ensure adherence to the person-centred principle.
- 2014 2015
  7.7 Develop a change management strategy to support stakeholders in embracing the principles and strategies of the Plan, ensuring awareness of changes in the housing and homelessness system, better service and resource coordination, and appropriate allocation of resources.
  - 7.8 Pursue opportunities to leverage existing community resources and advocate for funding and to be able to deliver on the strategies in the Plan.

# We can't achieve our goals

alone!

While Windsor-Essex housing and homelessness stakeholders will take responsibility for the implementation of the strategies in the Plan, some of the strategies require support and resources from others, namely senior levels of government and the health sector. The Windsor Essex community has unique needs and has long been a strong advocate for block funding from senior governments for housing and homelessness. The community acknowledges the steps that senior governments have taken thus far to transition to block funding, and urges continued progress to block funding for all housing and homelessness initiatives.

# **CONCLUDING COMMENTS**

The 10-year Plan is a collaborative and community-based effort. Collectively the strategies in this Plan provide guidelines and an overall approach for creating a system of housing and homelessness that puts people at the centre, moves people into permanent housing quickly, provides the supports they need, and facilitates a range of housing choices to meet people's preferences.

However, the Plan is just the beginning.

Next is implementation. A single point of accountability for implementation is required, and the City of Windsor will take on this role.

The City's role will not be to implement the actions in the Plan on its own, but its role will include facilitating discussions of stakeholders and brokering partnerships. Implementation of the Plan will require collective efforts from all housing and homelessness stakeholders. It will also require strategic allocation of limited resources. As a next step, an implementation plan will be developed that outlines key actions required to see the strategies in the Plan come to fruition.

# **ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS**

This Plan could not have been prepared without the dedicated assistance of the Long-term Affordable Housing Strategy Advisory Committee members and City of Windsor Staff, and the contribution from each of the community stakeholders and residents who provided valuable input into this document. We thank everyone who has taken part in the creation of this Plan.

# Prepared by:



# **APPENDIX: PLAN AT A GLANCE**

VISION	PRINCIPLES		GOALS	
		1	ACCESS	Provide simple, coordinated and consistent access to programs, services and supports that act on what is important to the person receiving services
	Housing First People Centred	2	PERSON CENTRED HOUSING SUPPORTS	Have supports available when needed, to act on what is important to the person receiving services, to assist the person in succeeding in their preferred housing
Windsor Essex is an inclusive community	Partnership Based	3	INTERIM HOUSING	Have temporary housing, meant to bridge the gap between homelessness and permanent housing, available where appropriate and where needed
where everyone has a safe, affordable, accessible and quality home and lives where they can actively	Locally Driven Inclusive	4	HOUSING LINKED WITH SUPPORTS	Have housing linked with a comprehensive and coordinated package of services and programs to assist a wide range of individuals with support needs in maintaining their housing
participate.	Fiscally Responsible Outcome Focused	6	RENTAL HOUSING	Have a full range of rental housing that offers safe, accessible and quality accommodations
	Simple Process	6	OWNERSHIP HOUSING	Have a full range of ownership housing that offers safe, accessible and quality accommodations
		7	MONITORING, REPORTING, & EVALUATION	Measure and report on progress, evaluate success, and invest in continuous improvement of the housing and homelessness system

