



Community Services / Residential Services Homes



Service Delivery Promise

The Community Services Department includes the delivery of the Residential Services Homes Program, investments in affordable housing and the oversight of County Homelessness Programs.

The Residential Services Homes program provides financial assistance to County residents who require residential care and assistance with daily living activities. This program is supported by the Province through the City of Windsor's Human and Health Services department as part of the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP). This program is a discretionary service for the County of Essex.

Effective April 1, 2024, the County of Essex gained oversight of the County Homelessness Programs which include the Essex County Homelessness Hub, the County Emergency Shelter Program and the County Outreach Worker. These programs are funded through the Homelessness Prevention Program (HPP) funding allocation received by the City of Windsor, our Regional Consolidated Service Manager.

Level of Service Statement

The Residential Services Homes Program is provided through purchase of service agreements with ten (10) rest and retirement homes throughout Essex County. In 2024, the program provided financial assistance to subsidize an average of 230 beds in these contracted homes.

Quality is measured through the completion of yearly inspections by County staff who assess the homes' compliance with the Residential Services Homes Standards. Staff visit the homes regularly on a scheduled and unscheduled basis to monitor compliance and quality of care.

Opportunities, Challenges and Risks for 2025

Ongoing Financial Pressures for Residential Services Homes

Inflation rates and cost of living increases will continue to have a significant impact on Residential Services Homes Providers. In addition, providers have indicated that the minimum wage increases, as well as pay increases necessary to remain competitive and retain healthcare staff have resulted in significant financial pressures. Further, Residential Services Homes are expected to continue following various congregate setting COVID-19 protocols while experiencing outbreaks without additional funding to offset these additional costs.

Some Residential Services Homes Providers have indicated having great difficulty maintaining their financial viability in the absence of a funding increase. Other providers, those who are designated Registered Retirement Homes, have decreased the number of subsidized beds in their homes to be able to increase their private pay beds in order to be financially viable.

Lack of Capacity with Current Residential Services Homes Providers

The majority of the Residential Services Homes Providers are at full capacity and unable to absorb additional subsidies. This poses a significant risk: if any of the homes need to cease their operations, there are few options to relocate subsidized residents. In August 2024, the County issued a Request for Information to seek potential new providers to address this risk. The County did not receive any responses from interested parties. County Administration continues to proactively seek new opportunities with existing providers and new potential partners.

County Homelessness Programs

Effective April 1st, 2024, the County entered into a funding agreement with the Regional Consolidated Service Manager, the City of Windsor, and received funding to administer County Homelessness Programs - more specifically, the County Emergency Shelter Program, the County Outreach Worker and the Essex County Homelessness Hub. These programs are delivered by Family Services Windsor-Essex through a funding agreement with the County and the County provides administrative oversight.

With the homelessness needs rising regionally, there is a risk that the funding required to deliver these programs will need to increase to meet service demands. County Administration continues to advocate with the Regional Consolidated Service Manager and upper levels of government to receive additional funding to meet County resident needs.

Regional Affordable Housing Strategy

In 2025, the County will continue to be a partner in the design and development of the Regional Affordable Housing Strategy. A consulting firm has been engaged and County staff have been working collaboratively with City of Windsor staff to help guide the work and to ensure that the needs of all municipalities in the County are being addressed through the development of the strategy. The consultants are expected to be completed their work in early 2025 and County staff will continue their collaboration with City of Windsor staff to implement the recommendations supported by County Council.

Affordable Housing Projects

County staff have been involved in the development of two affordable housing projects located in the county. Augustine Villas, located in Kingsville, has completed the construction of 6 affordable housing units. After experiencing construction delays, it is anticipated that occupancy will occur in early 2025.

In addition, The Bridge (Bridges of Erie Shores) will be expanding their tiny house community to include 38 homes over the next two years. During the 2024 budget deliberations, County Council approved a \$2 million capital investment to be drawn from the Social Housing Repair and Renewal reserve. One million dollars was allocated in 2024 and the remainder will be allocated in 2025. This previously approved recommendation allows County Council to make a capital investment to support a much-needed housing project.

Proposed 2025 Budget Plan

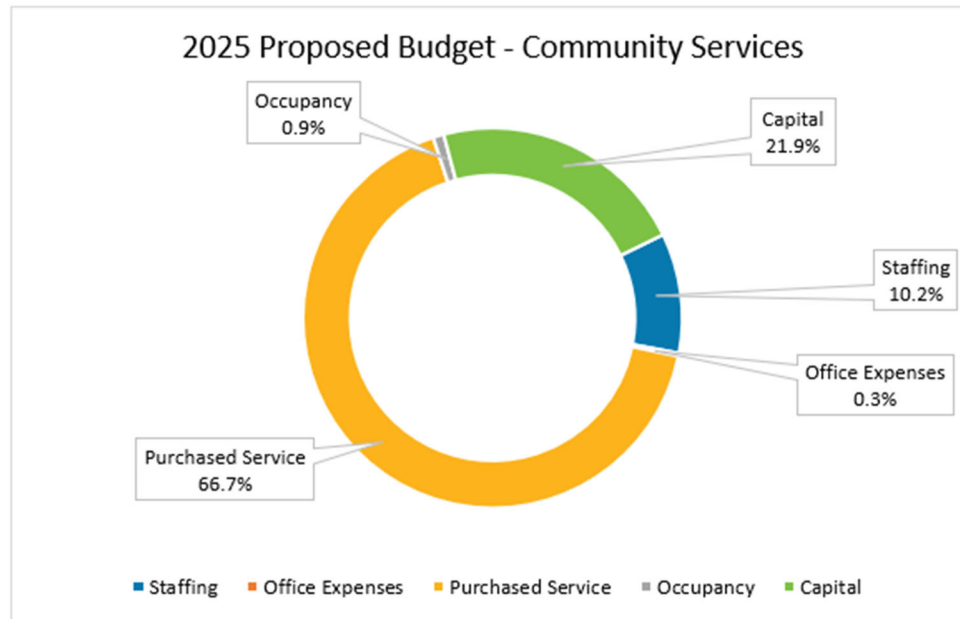
The proposed 2025 Budget recognizes significant growth experienced by the Community Services department, which will continue with the delivery of the County Homelessness Programs and the development of the Regional Affordable Housing Strategy.

In addition, the proposed 2025 Budget reflects the 20-year operational funding commitment that was previously approved by County Council to support The Bridge's 12 supportive housing units. The commitment includes a \$48,000 annual contribution to this project which started in 2022.

The proposed 2025 budget also includes expenditures and offsetting revenue for the delivery of the County Homelessness Programs.

Funding from the Social Housing Repair and Renewal capital reserve is designated for the \$1 million investment in The Bridge's 38-unit housing project.

The graph on the following page illustrates the key areas of proposed 2025 Budget spending in Community Services / Residential Services Homes.



Overall, the proposed 2025 Budget for Community Services / Residential Services Homes, net of recoveries, totals \$762,680 (an increase of \$0 (0%) over the 2024 Budget of \$762,680).

Alignment with Strategic Plan Initiatives

Advocating for Essex County’s Fair Share

County Administration’s efforts to secure its own funding to deliver homelessness programs in the county was a result of the County “Advocating for Essex County’s Fair Share”. In addition, County Administration continues to seek dedicated funding from upper levels of government to address the unique housing and homelessness needs of the rural communities in the County of Essex.

A Government Working for the People

With the continuation of the Essex County Homelessness Hub and the other homelessness programs, the County of Essex is ensuring that the needs of its most vulnerable residents are addressed. Further, with investments in affordable housing and the Residential Services Homes Program, the County of Essex is providing housing options to low income residents who wouldn’t be able to afford other types of housing available in county communities.