



## Administrative Report

**To:** Warden MacDonald and Members of Essex County Council

**From:** David Sundin, BA (Hons), LL.B., Director, Legislative and Legal Services/County Solicitor

**Date:** Wednesday, June 4, 2025

**Subject:** Affordable Housing Strategy Update and Housing Needs Assessment Presentation

**Report #:** 2025-0604-LLS-R27-DMS

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### Purpose

The purpose of this Administrative Report (the "**Report**") is to provide County Council with an update on the status of the Regional Affordable Housing Strategy ("**RAHS**") and to provide Council with the completed County specific Housing Needs Assessment ("**HNA**").

### Background

Since in or about 2021 the County has been working towards developing a Regional Affordable Housing Strategy with the City of Windsor. Specifically, on August 11, 2021, County Council, as part of a larger Resolution, resolved in part as follows:

...

*THAT Essex County Council request Windsor City Council to support the immediate commencement of discussions on the development of a Regional Affordable Housing Strategy, including funding responsibilities...*

On August 10, 2022, in Report # 2022-0810-LCS-R17, Mary Birch, the County's former Clerk and Director of Legislative and Community Services, provided County Council with the following update regarding the status the RAHS:

*Discussions have commenced regarding plans to move forward with a Regional Affordable Housing Strategy. Kirk Whittal, Executive Director of Housing and Children's Services attended the July 22<sup>nd</sup>, 2022 Regional CAO's meeting and proposed the formation of a Working Group with representatives from all*

*municipalities within the region. It is proposed that the services of a consultant would be sought to assist with the study which would look at best practices for municipalities wishing to increase their affordable housing supply. There was an allocation in the 2022 County Budget approved for the purpose of moving forward on an Affordable Housing Strategy.*

SHS Consulting Inc. was ultimately retained to complete the RAHS, with the City and County both participating in and sharing the costs for same.

In launching the consultations required for completion of the RAHS, the City and County jointly published a letter, which included the following language that explained the need for the RAHS and what it was hoped the RAHS would accomplish:

*This Regional Affordable Housing Strategy will include an action plan which will identify and outline the priorities necessary for the City of Windsor and each local municipality in the County of Essex to meet their specific social and affordable housing needs.*

*Additionally, it will assist in the development of housing solutions across the housing continuum, while incorporating funding responsibilities and considerations for the planning and/or development of housing.*

*SHS Consulting Inc., has been retained to work with the City of Windsor and the County of Essex, to develop our Regional Affordable Housing Strategy and associated action plan.*

*We anticipate that the plan will involve our Region working together to engage in partnerships with private and non-profit sector housing providers, community groups, and senior levels of government to investigate and advance options for the ownership, operation, and development of affordable and attainable housing.*

*Both of our Councils recognize that there is a housing crisis, with too many people being priced out of the housing and rental market within the Windsor-Essex County Region.*

*We are confident that our respective municipal governments, with the help of our professional consultant, will come up with solutions that will result in more affordable and attainable housing options in all of our communities and neighbourhoods, with a particular focus on those households that have the greatest housing needs. As part of the development of the*

*strategy and plan, we will be honing in on how our Region can build housing quicker and in a more cost-effective manner than is currently the case.*

As part of the RAHS, SHS Consulting Inc. has, among other things, developed the County specific HNA attached to this Report as **Appendix A**, and which will be reviewed in more detail in a presentation by SHS Consulting Inc. to County Council.

## **Discussion**

The HNA is being presented to County Council for its consideration in advance of County Council being asked to approve the HNA.

It is important for the County to have an HNA in place in order to apply and qualify for a variety of federal funding programs. Meanwhile, the City, as the Regional Service Manager, is required by certain provincial legislation, including the *Housing Services Act, 2011*, to have an HNA with respect to both the City and the County.

As per the HNA attached to this Report as **Appendix A**, SHS Consulting Inc. has prepared an HNA for the County as a whole, but also includes profiles for each of the County's constituent local municipalities.

The attached HNA has incorporated a number of key takeaways, based on input received from residents, stakeholders, community representatives, and members of Council, and a detailed analysis of various demographic, economic, and social housing metrics, as well as emerging trends and forecasts. Affordability tables have been developed to highlight the scope and extent of the housing affordability issues being faced by County residents, and detailed municipal tables have been provided to identify the actual number of households in need of affordable housing.

As part of the RAHS process, an appendix has also been included for County Council and each of the local municipal Councils, entitled "What We Heard Focus Group Summaries". These summaries contain important information that provides a deeper analysis as to some of the causes, challenges, and barriers that impact housing needs and housing affordability in the County.

It is expected that the more fulsome RAHS will be finalized in the coming months. However, in order to comply with federal funding requirements, County Administration decided to present the HNA to County Council now for its review, consideration, and approval.

**Financial Implications**

While there are no immediate financial implications resulting from the approval of the HNA itself, the implementation of the resulting recommendations may require future funding. The County has alluded to the need for resources during its 2025 annual budgeting process, however, specific allocations have been deferred pending the finalization of the HNA. Any specific funding requirements arising from the plan’s action items will be brought forward to Council either through the annual budget process or by way of individual Council reports as needs are identified.

**Consultations**

In preparing this Report, consultations were held with:

- Jeanie Diamond-Francis, Manager, Community Services
- Larry Silani, Consultant, MillerSilani Inc.
- SHS Consulting Inc.

**Strategic Plan Alignment**

<b>Working as Team Essex County</b>	<b>Growing as Leaders in Public Service Excellence</b>	<b>Building a Regional Powerhouse</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> Scaling Sustainable Services through Innovation <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Focusing “Team Essex County” for Results <input type="checkbox"/> Advocating for Essex County’s Fair Share	<input type="checkbox"/> Being an Employer with Impact <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> A Government Working for the People <input type="checkbox"/> Promoting Transparency and Awareness	<input type="checkbox"/> Providing Reliable Infrastructure for Partners <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Supporting Dynamic and Thriving Communities Across the County <input type="checkbox"/> Harmonizing Action for Growth <input type="checkbox"/> Advancing Truth and Reconciliation

**Recommendation**

That Essex County Council receive Report Number 2025-0604-LLS-R27-DMS, Regional Affordable Housing Strategy Update and Housing Needs

Assessment as information and approve the Housing Needs Assessment appended to this Report.

## Approvals

Respectfully Submitted,

*David M. Sundin*

David Sundin, BA (Hons), LL.B., Director, Legislative and Legal Services/County Solicitor

Concurred With,

*Justin Lammers*

Acting Chief Administrative Officer

<b>Appendix</b>	<b>Title</b>
A	County of Essex Housing Needs Assessment