

Housing for All

Saint John Homelessness Strategy (2024 to 2027)

DRAFT



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HOUSING FOR ALL STRATEGY - IN BRIEF

Purpose

The Saint John Housing for All Strategy identifies our community's coordinated response to addressing homelessness over the next three years using a person-centered and human rights approach. This strategy advances our shared vision of every resident having a safe, supported, and sustainable home.

Outcomes

1. To provide safe community spaces for access by all residents, while supporting individuals as they access housing that meets their specific needs.
2. We will strive to make homelessness rare, brief and non-recurring.

Strategic Priorities

Strategic Objective 1: Coordination and Governance

Strategic Objective 2: Emergency Supports

Strategic Objective 3: Prevention, Education and Safety

Strategic Objective 4: Housing Supports

OVERVIEW

Hope is a home.

Housing is a basic human right, a fundamental building block of a healthy, inclusive, sustainable community. Home is the place where we extend our roots to build our lives, nurture ourselves and our loved ones, and engage in our community.

Canada is facing a housing, and a housing affordability crisis and Saint John is not immune to its effects. Across the country Canadians are struggling and the number of persons experiencing homelessness¹ is rising.

People experiencing homelessness in Saint John in 2024²

- 663 individuals in Saint John experienced homelessness for at least 1 day in the past year.
- Over the last two years the number of people who experienced chronic homelessness³ in Saint John has more than doubled to 344 individuals.
- There has been a 62% increase in the number of emergency shelter users in the past two years.
- 69% of people experiencing homelessness visited an Emergency Room in the last year on an average of 5 times.
- Over half of people (57%) experiencing homelessness interacted with Police an average of 15 times.
- In the first six months of 2024, the Saint John Fire Department has responded to almost 200 calls for service to encampments related to reports of smoke in the area, outside fires, and tent fires.

¹ There are many terms used to describe homelessness, such as homeless, unhoused, houselessness, housing insecurity. In this document, definitions are primarily used from the *Homeless Glossary for Communities* from Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy (April 2024). This Housing for All strategy refers interchangeably to 'people experiencing homelessness' or 'houselessness.' This person-centred approach emphasises the individual experiencing the crisis and recognizes that their identity cannot be solely defined by where they live.

² Data provided courtesy of the Saint John Human Development Council (SJHDC)

Sources: Saint John Point in Time Count, 2023 and 2021, and Homelessness Individual and Family Information System (HIFIS)

Visible homelessness is noticeable to the public and refers to situations where individuals are staying in shelters, or in unsheltered locations not intended for human habitation. More and more unhoused sites have been established all throughout the City, and they are often found in very unsafe locations, close to vulnerable populations (such as children in schools or daycares), can often become very unsightly and a risk to public health, and at worse become places where people living there experience tragic and untimely death due to fires, cold weather, drug use, and other preventable issues.

Hidden homelessness is also prevalent and refers to people staying temporarily with others without guarantee of continued residency (“couch surfing”) or people staying in short term rentals with no security of tenure, such as a motel. These individuals are often living in precarious situations that can change at a moment’s notice.

Homelessness affects the health of our community, impacting healthcare resources, crime and safety, and yields profound physical, mental, and emotional strains. However, despite these challenges, our community is working together to support people experiencing homelessness through prevention and diversion initiatives, collaborating on creative solutions, and exploring various housing opportunities to best meet our community’s needs.

There are a significant number of organizations and individuals already collaborating together to end homelessness. Saint John is very fortunate to have community agencies organizing emergency shelters, food banks and food security, drop-in service, outreach, harm reduction, education and skills development, data collection and analysis, crisis care, transitional housing, counselling, public safety, clean-ups, financial assistance, and a whole host of other much needed services, including the support of all three levels of government to address homelessness and support individuals experiencing it.

The purpose of this strategy is not to replace this important work; this three-year strategy is a collective action plan to further increase coordination and ultimately help move Saint John closer to a future state where homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring.

VISION

Every resident within the City of Saint John is entitled to a safe, supported, and sustainable home.

In the spirit of the right to adequate housing articulated in the 1948 United Nations' Universal Declaration of Human Rights, The City of Saint John wishes for its residents to live in security, peace, and dignity, regardless of the home's permanence.

The City of Saint John's goal is to provide safe community spaces for access by all its residents, while supporting individuals as they access housing that meets their specific needs.

ALIGNMENT

The *Housing for All Strategy* outlines how Saint John will provide support to people experiencing homelessness. This will be accomplished in partnership with all levels of government, local organizations and stakeholders, and generous community members, through compassionate, informed, and innovative ways to provide dignified housing options and a wide variety of social supports. A 'Housing for All' approach also focuses on the unhoused having temporary housing, as permanent housing options are being implemented.

This strategy is aligned with Common Council's priority *BELONG* as well as Council's catalytic advocacy efforts related to affordable housing, including the City of Saint John *Affordable Housing Action Plan*. The *Housing for All Strategy* is also informed by and aligns with the *New Brunswick Housing Strategy 2019-2029* and *Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy*.

SUMMARY OF ACTION PLAN

See APPENDIX B for abbreviations.

Many of the actions in this strategy are already taking place, and collectively all the actions will result in transitioning more people experiencing homelessness into permanent housing, greater coordination of services, providing additional places to sleep, reducing unhoused sites scattered throughout the city, and several pilot projects that could be used in other communities if successful in Saint John. Organizations listed as *Lead* or *Partners* in the Action Plan have committed to help support that specific action in this Strategy. The Action Plan will serve as our community’s three-year work plan on supporting our unhoused population.

Strategic Objective 1: Coordination and Governance

#	Action	Deliverable	Lead	Partners	Time frame
1	Service Agreements	Service Agreements will be created between Government and front-line agencies or service providers to provide supports to people experiencing homelessness.	GNB	Front Line Agencies, CITY	2024 and Ongoing
2	Legislation	The City will draft enabling by-laws and policies for the implementation of this strategy	CITY		Beginning Q4 2024
3	Relocation and decommissioning	The City in collaboration with the Province of New Brunswick will create a program for the respectful and dignified relocation of individuals sleeping rough in red and yellow zones. The program will also coordinate the restoration of an encampment area to its natural and clean state	CITY, GNB	Front Line Agencies, CITY	Beginning Q2 2025
4	Compliance	The City will review By-Law Enforcement Officer(s) resources and where necessary recommend additional resources to support the implementation of the Housing for All Strategy, subject to budget approval	CITY	GNB	Beginning Q4 2024

5	Mapping	Mapping tools will be used to identify the locations of all unhoused sites so supports can be offered.	CITY, Front Line Agencies	CITY	Q4 2024
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Strategic Objective 2: Emergency Supports

#	Action	Deliverable	Lead	Partners	Time frame
6	Unhoused Sites (supported sites with structures)	Saint John in collaboration with the Province of New Brunswick will implement supported unhoused site(s) program for pilot sites for up to twenty-five (25) individuals per location.	CITY, GNB	Front Line Agencies	Beginning Q4 2024
7	Foundation Centre - Homelessness HUB	The Province of New Brunswick will establish and operate a HUB for individuals experiencing homelessness where they can access a variety of services in the city.	GNB, Outflow Ministry	CITY, Front Line Agencies	Q2 2024
8	Out of the Cold Shelter	The Province of New Brunswick will open an Out of the Cold Shelter in Saint John annually between December and March/April to provide emergency housing for people sleeping rough.	GNB	Front Line Agencies	Q4 Annually
9	Increased Shelter Beds	The Number of Emergency Shelter Beds in the City will be permanently increased and adjusted based on future demand with considerations being given to accessibility and other factors such as older adults and families.	GNB	CITY, Front Line Agencies	Beginning Q3 2024
10	Unsheltered Sites(Tent Sites)	As a pilot, the City working with the Province of New Brunswick will identify permitted areas where the unhoused can erect tents within the City limits and establish appropriate policies and processes <u>The program will identify:</u> Green Zones where Unhoused Sites (structured)	CITY	GNB, Front Line Agencies	Q3 2024

		<p>will be located</p> <p>Yellow Zones where erecting a tent is permitted at certain times of the year</p> <p>Red Zones where unsheltered structures of any kind are not permitted and removal will be enforced</p>		
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Strategic Objective 3: Prevention, Education and Safety

#	Action	Deliverable	Lead	Partners	Time frame
11	Site Cleanup Service	Saint John will implement a cleanup program to assist residents of occupied unsheltered sites by offering garbage collection as appropriate	CITY	GNB, Front Line Agencies	Ongoing
12	Non-Emergent Calls	Identify a means for the public to communicate concerns or questions regarding unsheltered sites or homelessness, and educate the public on this means of communication	CITY, Police		Q2 2025
13	By Names List	The By-Name List (BNL) is a real-time list of all people known to be experiencing homelessness in Saint John. A Point in time count will be run annually to provide current information regarding people experiencing homelessness in Saint John	HIPSJ	Front Line Agencies, GNB	Annual
14	Data Collection and Sharing	Increase the amount of relevant real-time data to support the implementation of the housing for all strategy	HIPSJ	Front Line Agencies, GNB	Ongoing
15	Information Campaigns	Saint John will communicate to the public accurate information regarding homelessness, harm reduction, mental health and addictions, housing, and other related content.	CITY	GNB, Front Line Agencies,	Annual
16	Sharps Containers	The City will install additional sharps containers and front-line agencies will make portable sharps containers available to clients	CITY, Avenue B	GNB	Q2 2025

17	Site Visitation	Front Line Agencies and Saint John Fire will make routine visits to sites to provide information and supports to those residing there	Front Line Agencies	Saint John Fire	Ongoing
18	Site Health Services	Public Health and other health services will visit sites as identified by the outreach team(s) to provide needed health services.	Frontline agencies / GNB		Q2 2025 and ongoing
19	Update Municipal Emergency Management Plan	Saint John EMO will update the Municipal Emergency Management Plan to clarify resources to support unhoused individuals during an emergency	CITY	GNB, Front Line Agencies	Q1 2025
20	Staff Training	Select city staff and service providers will be offered trauma informed training, and some staff will be offered harm reduction training on handling of sharps, emergency use of Naloxone (Narcan), and harm reduction	CITY, Front Line Agencies	Avenue B	Q4 2025 and ongoing
21	Community based projects	Additional funding for new innovative community-based projects will be sought to prevent and reduce homelessness in alignment with the National Housing Strategy	HDC	GoC, GNB, Front Line Agencies	2024 and ongoing

Strategic Objective 4: Housing Supports

#	Action	Deliverable	Lead	Partners	Time frame
22	Transitional Housing Options	A new transitional housing project will be established to house 25 individuals	GNB	CITY, Front Line Agencies	Q4 2024
23	Public Housing	The Province of New Brunswick will construct new public Housing in Saint John	GNB	CITY	Beginning 2025
24	Supportive Housing Options	The Province of New Brunswick, Frontline Agencies and City will collaborate on potential supportive housing options	GNB, Frontline agencies	CITY	Q3 and ongoing
25	Use of Sea Cans	Decommission at the appropriate time the Exmouth / Waterloo Streets unhoused site and relocate residents and sea cans	Kaleidoscope	HDC, CITY	Evaluated bi-annually

26	Coordinated Access	Front Line Agencies and Partners will use the Coordinated Access System which is a process through which individuals and families experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness, are provided access to housing and support services, based on a standardized intake procedure, assessment of need, and matching and referral to housing	HIPSJ, HDC	Front line agencies	Ongoing
27	Rent Supplements	Additional Rent supplements will be sought from Government funding partners by using the By-Name List.	HDC, GoC	Front Line Agencies	2024 and ongoing
28	Skills Development for Housing	New programs will be offered to assist people experiencing homelessness with developing life skills to move forward through the housing spectrum based on their individual needs.	Front Line Agencies	GNB	2024 and ongoing

IMPLEMENTATION CONSIDERATIONS

It is important to note that the *Housing for All Strategy* is a living document; it will continue to develop and change in response to our community’s needs and based on lessons learned from implementing the various actions. It is important to recognize that this three-year strategy will not completely solve the issue of homelessness, nor is it designed to. Rather, this strategy is the next series of steps we are taking as a community to address homelessness over the next three years using a person-centered and human rights approach.

The strategy represents a shared and collective vision of the direction we are heading. To be effective it is critical that all stakeholders delivering on the actions are all rowing in the same direction and working collaboratively.

Equally important is the commitment of proper resources from all levels of Government, each according to their proper role and responsibilities. Without sufficient resources, and especially the construction of new transitional housing units and more affordable

housing, Saint John will continue to witness a further proliferation of encampments and people experiencing homelessness.

However, Saint John is fortunate to be home to so many outstanding organizations and individuals who day in and day out work on the front lines, and behind the scenes to address the issues of homelessness and support the people experiencing it. But continuing to work together with compassion, innovation, and dedication, Saint John can become a place where homelessness is rare, brief and non-recurring.

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APPENDIX A - STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

These organizations have provided invaluable feedback related to homelessness in Saint John and their input was used to draft this strategy. Many of the organizations listed are also direct and active contributors to the development of the action plan and have committed to assisting in the successful delivery of the overall strategy.

Organization	Department
Avenue B	
Centre for Youth Care	
City of Saint John	General Counsel Office
City of Saint John	Growth and Community Services
City of Saint John	Public Safety Committee
City of Saint John	Public Works and Transportation
City of Saint John	Saint John Fire Department
City of Saint John	Strategic Services
City of Saint John	Utilities and Infrastructure
Coverdale Centre for Women	
EY	
Fresh Start Services for Women Inc.	
Government of New Brunswick	Social Development
Government of New Brunswick	Public Health
Horizon Health Network	
Housing New Brunswick Corporation	
Human Development Council	
Kaleidoscope Social Impact	
Mobile Mental Health	
Outflow Ministry	
Saint John Police Force	
[Police] Chief's Community Action Group Roundtable	
Saint John Transit	
Salvation Army	
Stone Church	
Teen Resource Centre	

APPENDIX B: GLOSSARY AND DEFINITIONS

GLOSSARY

City	City of Saint John – including its various departments
Front Line Agencies	Non-Governmental Organizations directly funded by the Government to provide services directly to people experiencing homelessness.
GNB	Government of New Brunswick – including its various departments
GoC	Government of Canada
HDC	Human Development Council
HIPSJ	Homelessness Information Partnership Saint John
Kaleidoscope	Kaleidoscope Social Impact
Police	Saint John Police Force

DEFINITIONS

By-Name List (BNL)	The By-Name List (BNL) is a real-time list of all people known to be experiencing homelessness in the Saint John area.
Chronic Homelessness	Refers to persistent homelessness where people have been homeless for 180 days or more at some point over the course of a year (not necessarily consecutive days); and/or recurrent episodes of homelessness over three years that total at least 18 months.
Homelessness	The state of an individual or family who does not have a permanent address or residence, and does not have the immediate prospect, means, and ability of acquiring it. In general, homelessness includes people staying in unsheltered locations, in shelters or somewhere temporarily because they do not have the resources to secure their own permanent housing. People experiencing homelessness often transition between locations, as most people who sleep outside are likely to access shelter at some point.
Point in Time (PiT) Count	One of the best methods of determining progress is through the use of Point-In-Time (PiT) Counts. Alternatively referred to as “Street Counts,” “Homeless Counts” or “Street Needs Assessments” PiT Counts are a measure of the number of homeless people on a specific day (hence the point in time reference).
Homelessness Individual and Family Information System (HIFIS)	The Homelessness Individual and Family Information System (HIFIS) is a real-time list of all people known to be experiencing homelessness in the community.