

Metro Vancouver Affordable Housing Strategy

Approved November 30, 2007



metro
vancouver



Housing Affordability in Metro Vancouver

While the majority of households across Metro Vancouver have access to housing that is in good condition, appropriate in size and affordable in relation to their income, for an estimated one-third of the region's households, finding housing to rent or own that is affordable is a problem.

In looking at the housing needs across the region, it is clear that there are a number of critical housing challenges which must be addressed. They include:

- ❖ On-going demand pressures for both affordable ownership and rental housing;
- ❖ On-going tight rental market conditions;
- ❖ Limited new purpose-built rental housing construction;
- ❖ Loss of existing affordable rental housing stock;
- ❖ Diminished access to entry-level ownership opportunities;
- ❖ Growing disparities between owners and renters; and,
- ❖ An increasing incidence and duration in homelessness across the region.

This Strategy recognizes that regional and municipal governments are limited in the actions that they can take. It also recognizes that a successful response to the housing needs across Metro Vancouver requires action across all levels of government.

At the municipal level, local governments have a role to play in providing affordable housing through the land use regulation system as well as through the use of municipal assets. Similarly, at the regional level, modest gains are possible through intensifying the use of existing GVHC assets as well as through Metro Vancouver's role in supporting the work of the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness. The Regional Growth Strategy also has a key role to play with the policies and actions taken by the region as a whole shaping housing affordability over the longer term.

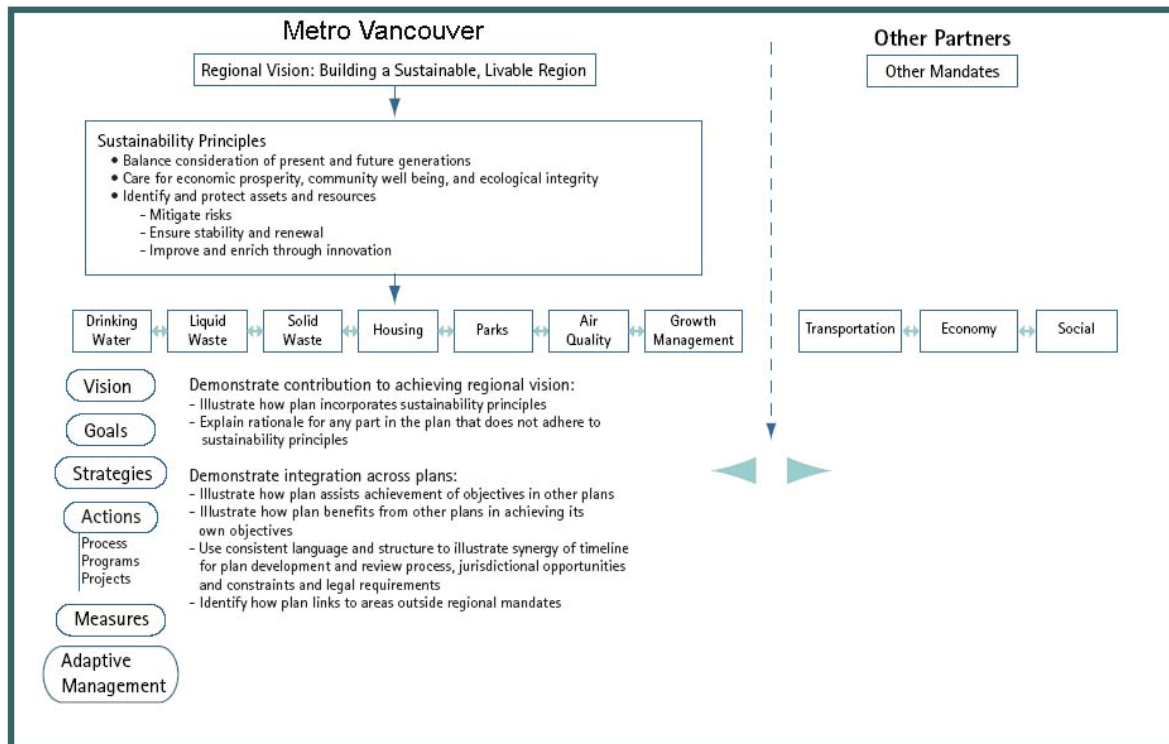
Indicators of Housing Need Across Metro Vancouver	
Renter households in core housing need <small>CMHC 2001</small>	82,460
Renter households in core need and spending 50% or more on their housing <small>CMHC 2001</small>	35,220
Number of people living on the streets or staying in emergency shelters <small>Homeless Count 2005</small>	2,174
Incidence of core housing need among senior led renter households <small>Vancouver CMA</small>	45%
Incidence of core housing need among single person renter households <small>Vancouver CMA</small>	50%
Incidence of core housing need among Aboriginal renter households <small>Vancouver CMA</small>	43%
Incidence of core housing need among new immigrant renter households <small>Vancouver CMA</small>	37%
Source: CMHC Canadian Housing Observer, 2006	

The Regional Role and Links to Other Regional Plans

This Strategy represents an important part of the Sustainable Region Initiative and forms an integral part of the overall SRI Planning Framework. Within the context of the SRI Framework, housing affordability is recognized as an integral part of the regions broader economic and social sustainability objectives.

This Strategy builds on the Region’s current role which includes:

- The direct delivery of affordable housing through the Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation (GVHC) which provides homes for 3,500 families and seniors with low to moderate incomes across the region; and,
- The development of policies and initiatives to address region-wide housing issues with the Metro Vancouver Affordable Housing Strategy and the Regional Growth Strategy representing two important management plans for the region.



Sustainable Region Initiative—Framework for Regional Mandates

Key Goals and Objectives:

The following set out the key directions which provide the foundation for this Strategy.

Goal 1 Increase the supply and diversity of modest cost housing

Objectives Increase the supply of affordable housing at key points along the housing continuum including:

- Entry-level ownership opportunities
- Market and low end of market rental housing
- Non-market housing; and,
- Emergency and transitional/supportive housing

Identify partnership opportunities to allow low income families and individuals to advance along the housing continuum

Goal 2 Eliminate homelessness across the region

Objectives Enhance the continuum of housing and supports for those who are homeless

Improve the affordability of rental accommodation for low income renters as a means of preventing economic eviction and homelessness

Goal 3 Meet the needs of low income renters


Objectives Expand the supply of affordable rental housing

Maintain the viability of the existing rental housing stock

Key Strategies:

While the success of this Strategy depends on the actions of others including support from senior levels of government, the actions set out in this Strategy focus on strategies which can be adopted at the regional and municipal levels to support an expanded range of choices at key points along the housing continuum including:

- **Fiscal actions** designed to improve the economics of housing production and/or create a source of equity for generating additional affordable housing units. This could include the use of municipal assets or financial incentives to leverage funds from other sources to expand the supply of affordable housing.
- **Regulatory actions** which rely on the regional and municipal planning and development control processes to encourage an increase in the supply and diversity of housing at key points along the continuum thereby helping to provide an expanded range of housing choices and increased affordability over the longer term.
- **Education and advocacy** designed to build community awareness and support for affordable housing and to advocate for solutions to respond to needs which are not currently being met through existing government programs.
- **Direct service provision** through the Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation with a focus on creating an expanded range of choice for renter households with low to moderate incomes who are unable to find suitable and appropriate housing in their communities and who are in need of subsidized housing. Direct service provision could also include services and supports to assist those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

	GOAL	1	Increase the supply and diversity of modest cost housing
STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Fiscal actions designed to improve the economics of housing production and provide incentives to leverage funds from other sources as a means of increasing the supply of affordable housing. ✓ Regulatory actions which rely on the regional and municipal planning and development control processes to encourage an increase in the supply and diversity of housing at key points along the housing continuum. ✓ Education and advocacy designed to build community awareness and support for affordable housing and to advocate for solutions to respond to needs which are not currently being met through existing government programs. 		

ACTIONS

Metro Vancouver Actions

- 1.1 As part of the Regional Growth Strategy, Metro Vancouver will set targets for the number of new affordable housing units required by 2016.
- 1.2 Require as part of the Regional Growth Strategy that municipalities develop housing action plans or the equivalent which set out specific strategies and objectives for meeting established targets including actions such as:
 - Amending existing bylaws to permit increased density in areas appropriate for affordable ownership and rental housing.
 - Incorporating smaller more affordable housing design into neighbourhood planning including suites, smaller lots, coach houses, row houses, townhouses as well as higher density developments.
 - Adopting inclusionary housing policies or density bonus provisions as a means of securing additional affordable rental or ownership housing stock.
 - Reducing parking requirements for all housing located in areas with good access to public transit.
 - Identifying City-owned sites which are appropriate for affordable housing and which could be leased at or below market value to non-profit housing organizations.
 - Consideration of property tax exemptions or property tax forgiveness for 10 to 20 years to encourage new rental housing construction.
 - Identifying sites suitable for affordable housing in neighbourhood and area planning processes.

Metro Vancouver Actions (continued)

- 1.3 Examine the feasibility of adopting a region-wide inclusionary housing policy which takes into account regional differences as well as constraints related to the overall project economics.
- 1.4 Design and deliver a community outreach initiative to demonstrate the benefits and opportunities of promoting increased density and diversity to create modest cost housing.
- 1.5 Identify sites across the region which are owned or controlled by Metro Vancouver which are suitable for the development of affordable housing and make these sites available at or below market value.

Municipal Actions

- 1.6 Develop Official Community Plans, Regional Context Statements and housing action plans or their equivalent which demonstrate the actions taken to increase the supply and diversity of affordable housing at key points along the housing continuum.

Proposed Provincial Actions

- 1.7 Make funding available to support the development and implementation of housing action plans at the municipal level.
- 1.8 Subject to suitability and fit from a community and neighbourhood planning perspective, make Provincially-owned land available to support the development of affordable housing.

Proposed Federal Actions

- 1.9 Respond to the call from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) for the development of a National Affordable Housing Strategy.
- 1.10 Subject to suitability and fit from a community and neighbourhood planning perspective, make Federally-owned land available to support the development of affordable housing.

Proposed Actions for the Greater Vancouver Transportation Authority (GVTA)

- 1.11 Expand the opportunities for the development of affordable housing around major transit nodes and under-utilized sites.



GOAL

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Eliminate homelessness across the Region

STRATEGIES

- ✓ **Education and advocacy** designed to draw attention to the need for emergency shelters and transitional/supportive housing to respond to the needs of those who are homeless as well as advocating for access to affordable housing, adequate income and appropriate services and supports in order to prevent others from falling into homelessness.
- ✓ **Fiscal actions** designed to provide an expanded range of housing and supports for those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness as well as funding for the direct delivery of services or supports.
- ✓ **Direct service provision** including the provision of services and supports to assist those who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

ACTIONS

Metro Vancouver Actions

- 2.1. Continue to support the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness.
- 2.2. Promote support for emergency shelters and transitional/ supportive housing across the region through community education and advocacy.
- 2.3. Advocate for increased funding from senior levels of government for the provision of 5,000 new supportive and transitional housing units across the region over the next 10 years.
- 2.4. Advocate for senior levels of government to ensure that appropriate services and supports are in place to help families and individuals who are homeless gain access to permanent stable housing.

Municipal Actions

- 2.5. Develop Official Community Plans, Regional Context Statements and housing action plans or their equivalents which demonstrate the specific actions taken to address homelessness.

Proposed Provincial Actions

- 2.6. Continue to provide funding for outreach services to connect those who are homeless to income, health and other supports as well as make funding available to increase the inventory of supportive/transitional housing units across the region.
- 2.7. Ensure that emergency shelters have access to sufficient funding and resources to move people from homelessness to permanent housing.
- 2.8. Through the Vancouver Coastal Health Authority and Fraser Health Authority develop a region-wide Mental Health and Addictions Strategy.

Proposed Provincial Actions (continued)

- 2.9. Development of a Provincial rent assistance program for low income single, non-senior households in core housing need who currently do not receive housing assistance under other programs.
- 2.10. Increase the shelter component of income assistance to reflect the cost of housing in Metro Vancouver.
- 2.11. Regularly up-date provincial rent assistance programs to take into account inflation as well as to reflect local housing needs and market conditions.

Proposed Federal Actions

- 2.12 Continue to provide funding to address homelessness including make additional funding available to increase the inventory of supportive/transitional housing across the region.
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GOAL	3	Meet the needs of low income renters
STRATEGIES	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Fiscal actions designed to improve the economics of housing production including working with the Province to advocate for changes in the Federal tax treatment of rental housing as a means of encouraging new rental housing supply. ✓ Regulatory actions which rely on the regional and municipal planning and development control processes to encourage an increase in the supply of affordable rental housing as well as strategies to maintain the viability of the existing rental housing stock. ✓ Direct service provision through the work of the Greater Vancouver Housing Corporation (GVHC) with a focus on creating an expanded range of choice for renter households with low to moderate incomes who are unable to find suitable and appropriate housing in their communities and who are in need of subsidized housing. 	

ACTIONS

Metro Vancouver Actions

- 3.1 Increase the GVHC portfolio by 100 units per year through densification of existing properties and the management of units acquired through municipal processes, with this target being reviewed and increased should senior government funding for new housing supply programs become available.
- 3.2 Develop a strategy to assist municipalities in the management of properties acquired through municipal processes.
- 3.3 Develop partnerships to explore opportunities to build economic independence and self reliance for families currently living in housing managed by GVHC including potential opportunities to promote access to entry-level ownership opportunities.
- 3.4 Establish and manage a Regional Affordable Housing Trust Fund.
- 3.5 Waive development cost charges for non-profit rental housing, supportive housing and other forms of rental housing where affordability is secured for a minimum of 20 years.
- 3.6 Revise the method of calculating regional development cost charges to account for variations in size with the purpose of reducing costs for smaller units and lots.
- 3.7 Require that municipalities adopt measures to prevent the loss of existing rental housing stock including strata conversion policies, replacement policies for loss of rental housing stock and legalization of secondary suites.

Municipal Actions

- 3.8 Develop Official Community Plans, Regional Context Statements and housing action plans or their equivalent which demonstrate the actions taken to expand the supply of affordable rental housing as well as preserve and maintain the existing stock.

Proposed Provincial Actions

- 3.9 Provide access to on-going stable funding for new affordable housing initiatives including a housing supply program for low income families and seniors.
- 3.10 Amend the Local Government Act to provide municipalities with the ability to collect a development cost levy for the purpose of creating affordable rental housing.
- 3.11 Amend the Local Government Act and GVS&DD Act to permit regional development cost charges to be waived for non-profit rental housing, supportive housing and affordable housing that is secured for a minimum of 20 years.

Proposed Federal Actions

- 3.12 Work with the Provincial government and other housing partners to develop a low income tax credit to stimulate the construction of new affordable rental housing.
- 3.13 Make funding available to increase the supply of affordable housing to meet the needs of Canadian households including low income families and seniors.
- 3.14 Reduce or eliminate taxes which act as a disincentive for new rental housing construction and/or which reduce affordability.
- 3.15 Make enhancement to the Rental Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) to improve access to these programs for high cost urban areas, including Metro Vancouver.
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Moving Toward Solutions – Key Implementation Strategies

This section focuses on the specific strategies, actions, and performance measures which can be adopted at the regional and municipal levels to support the key goals and objectives set out in this Strategy.

GOAL 1 – INCREASE THE SUPPLY AND DIVERSITY OF MODEST COST HOUSING					
	Regulatory Tools and Approaches		Fiscal Actions	Education/ Advocacy	Direct Service/Other Provisions
REGIONAL ACTIONS	Regional Growth Strategy	Regional Context Statement			
Set targets for the number of new affordable housing units required by 2016	✓				
Require that municipalities develop housing actions plans or their equivalent which set out specific strategies for meeting the established targets	✓				
Examine the feasibility of adopting a region-wide inclusionary housing policy	✓				
Design and deliver a community outreach initiative to demonstrate the benefits and opportunities of increased density and diversity				✓	
Identify sites across the region which are suitable for the development of affordable housing and make them available at or below market value			✓		
MUNICIPAL ACTIONS	Municipal Tools/ Policies	Regional Context Statements			
Amend existing by-laws to permit increased density in areas appropriate for affordable ownership and rental housing	✓	✓			
Incorporate smaller more affordable housing design into neighbourhood planning	✓	✓		✓	
Adopt inclusionary housing policies or density bonus provisions as a means of securing additional affordable rental or ownership housing stock	✓	✓			
Reduce parking requirements for all housing located in areas with good access to public transit	✓	✓			
Identify City-owned sites which are appropriate for affordable housing and which can be leased at or below market value to non-profit housing organizations	✓	✓	✓		
Consider property tax exemptions or property tax forgiveness for 10 to 20 years to encourage new rental housing construction	✓	✓	✓		

GOAL 1 – INCREASE THE SUPPLY AND DIVERSITY OF MODEST COST HOUSING					
	Regulatory Tools and Approaches		Fiscal Actions	Education/ Advocacy	Direct Service/Other Provisions
MUNICIPAL ACTIONS	Municipal Tools/ Policies	Regional Context Statements			
Identify sites which are suitable for affordable housing in neighbourhood and area planning processes	✓	✓			
Develop Official Community Plans, Regional Context Statements and housing action plans or their equivalent which demonstrate the actions taken to increase the supply and diversity of affordable housing at key points along the housing continuum	✓	✓			

GOAL 1 – PERFORMANCE MEASURES			
GOAL 1 – INCREASE THE SUPPLY AND DIVERSITY OF MODEST COST HOUSING			
Measures	Target	Data Source	Reporting Period
The number of new purpose built rental housing units added	Year over year improvement	CMHC	Annual
Number of units created through innovative strategies and approaches adopted at the municipal level to facilitate an expanded range of housing choices and increased supply of affordable units	Year over year improvement	Housing Action Plans/Survey of Municipalities	Annual
The number of new subsidized units added	Year over year improvement	BC Housing	Annual
The number of entry-level ownership opportunities created that are affordable to households with incomes at or below 120% of the median income for the region	Year over year improvement	To be determined	Annual
The number of renter households in core housing need	Improvement over reporting period	CMHC/ Census data	Every 5 years

GOAL 2 – ELIMINATE HOMELESSNESS ACROSS THE REGION					
	Regulatory Tools and Approaches		Fiscal Actions	Education/ Advocacy	Direct Service/Other Provisions
REGIONAL ACTIONS	Regional Growth Strategy	Regional Context Statement			
Continue to support the Regional Steering Committee on Homelessness				✓	
Promote support for emergency shelters and transitional/supportive housing across the region				✓	
Advocate for increased funding from senior levels of government for the provision of 5,000 new supportive and transitional housing units across the region over the next 10 years				✓	
Advocate for senior levels of government to ensure that appropriate services and supports are in place to help families and individuals who are homeless gain access to permanent stable housing				✓	
MUNICIPAL ACTIONS	Municipal Tools/ Policies	Regional Context Statement			
Develop Official Community Plans, Regional Context Statements and housing action plans or their equivalent which demonstrate the specific actions taken to address homelessness	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓

GOAL 2 – PERFORMANCE MEASURES				
GOAL 2 – ELIMINATE HOMELESSNESS ACROSS THE REGION				
Measures	Target	Data Source	Reporting Period	
The number of households spending 50% or more of their income on housing	Improvement over reporting period	CMHC/ Census data	Every 5 years	
The number of people living on the streets or staying in emergency shelters	Improvement over reporting period	Homeless Count	As new data is available	
The number of new transitional and supportive housing units created	Year over year improvement	BC Housing	Annual	

GOAL 3 – MEET THE NEEDS OF LOW INCOME RENTERS					
	Regulatory Tools and Approaches		Fiscal Actions	Education/ Advocacy	Direct Service/Other Provisions
REGIONAL ACTIONS	GVS&DD	Regional Context Statement			
Increase the GVHC portfolio by 100 units per year through densification of existing properties and the management of units acquired through municipal processes					✓
Develop a strategy to assist municipalities in the management of properties acquired through municipal processes					✓
Develop partnerships to explore opportunities to build economic independence and self reliance for families currently living in housing managed by GVHC including potential opportunities to promote access to entry-level ownership					✓
Establish and manage an Regional Affordable Housing Trust Fund			✓		
Waive development cost charges for non-profit rental housing, supportive housing and other forms of rental housing where affordability is secured for a minimum of 20 years	✓		✓		
Revise the method of calculating regional development cost charges to account for variations in size with the purpose of reducing costs for smaller units and lots	✓				
Require that municipalities adopt measures to prevent the loss of existing rental housing stock		✓			
MUNICIPAL ACTIONS	Municipal Tools/ Policies	Regional Context Statement			
Adopt measures to prevent the loss of existing rental housing stock including strata conversion policies, replacement policies for loss of rental housing stock and policies for the legalization of secondary suites	✓	✓			
Develop Official Community Plans, Regional Context Statements and housing action plans or their equivalent which demonstrate the specific actions taken to expand the supply of affordable rental housing as well as preserve and maintain the existing stock		✓			

GOAL 3 – PERFORMANCE MEASURES

GOAL 3 – MEET THE NEEDS OF LOW INCOME RENTERS

Measures	Target	Data Source	Reporting Period
The number of new GVHC units created through densification of existing properties and the management of units acquired through municipal processes	Annual increase of 100 units per year	GVHC	Annual
The net new supply of affordable rental housing created through municipal processes as well as through senior government supply programs	Year over year improvement	To be determined	Annual
The number of households on the waiting list for subsidized housing.	Year over year improvement	BC Housing	Annual

Adaptive Management

Housing affordability is influenced by a broad range of social and economic forces including interest rates, inflation and income growth. It can also be affected by the decisions of senior levels of government related to taxation, immigration, the provision of housing assistance and other policies which make up part of the social safety net.

The policy alternatives identified in this Strategy, to the extent that they are adopted can provide some improvement in affordability within Metro Vancouver as well as an expanded range of choice at key points on the continuum. However, there is no single solution to the challenges that exist with the successful implementation of this Strategy being dependent on innovative partnerships and approaches across all levels of government as well as collaboration with the private and non-profit sectors.

Glossary

Affordable Housing: Affordable housing is defined as housing that should not cost more than 30 per cent of a household's gross income regardless of whether they are living in market or non-market housing.

Assisted Living: Assisted living units are self contained apartments for seniors or people with disabilities who need some support but who do not need 24 hour facility care.

Co-operative Housing: A housing development where residents or members own and manage the building. Each member has one vote and members work together to keep their housing well-managed and affordable.

Core Housing Need: Core housing need is a measure of housing need in Canada. Core housing need reports on the number of households in a community who unable to find housing that is suitable in size, in good repair and affordable without spending 30 per cent or more of their income on housing.

Emergency Shelters: Emergency shelters provide single or shared bedrooms or dormitory type sleeping arrangements with varying levels of support to individuals. Emergency shelters play an important role in responding to homelessness but are not a long-term solution.

Housing Action Plans: Identify specific objectives and actions for increasing housing supply, diversity, and affordability at the municipal level.

Housing Continuum: The housing continuum provides an important organizing framework for understanding housing needs and housing choices. In most cases the housing continuum can include emergency shelters, transitional/supportive housing, social housing, assisted living, market rental housing and ownership housing.

Inclusionary Housing Policies: Inclusionary housing policies means that all developments over a certain size would be required to dedicate a percentage of new units as affordable housing.

Non-Market Housing refers to government-assisted housing which was built through one of a number of government-funded programs. This housing is typically managed by the non-profit or co-op housing sectors. Most non-market housing receives an operating subsidy.

Non-Profit Housing: Non-profit housing is housing that is owned and operated by non-profit housing providers. This housing is typically built through government funded housing supply programs.

Private Market Housing: The private rental market provides the majority of low cost housing. This can include purpose-built rental housing as well as housing supplied through the secondary rental market including basement apartments as well as rented condo stock.

Social Housing: Social housing refers to housing built under Federal, Federal/ Provincial or Provincial housing programs and is designed to accommodate households with low to moderate incomes in core housing need. Social housing includes public housing as well as non-profit and co-op housing.

Supportive Housing: Supportive housing is housing which includes on-going supports and services to assist those who can not live independently. There is no time limit on the length of stay for supportive housing.

Transitional Housing: Transitional housing also referred to as second stage housing can include a stay of anywhere between 30 days to two or three years. Transitional housing provides access to services and supports needed to help individuals improve their situation and is viewed as an interim step on the housing continuum.