

Dear Mayor Guthrie and Members of Guelph City Council,

Re: Final Housing Affordability Strategy

As the Executive Director of Hopewell Support Services, I am writing to express our enthusiastic support for the City of Guelph’s 2024 Housing Affordability Strategy. This forward-thinking plan is a vital step toward addressing the housing crisis in our community. I urge the city to explicitly address the unique housing challenges faced by individuals with developmental disabilities—an often-overlooked group that urgently needs our collective attention.

Addressing a Critical Gap in Housing

Across Ontario, over 28,000 individuals with developmental disabilities are waiting for supportive housing, including group homes and other tailored living arrangements. The demand has surged by 42% in just four years (2019–2023), underscoring a growing crisis. Locally, Hopewell’s waitlist reflects the same urgency:

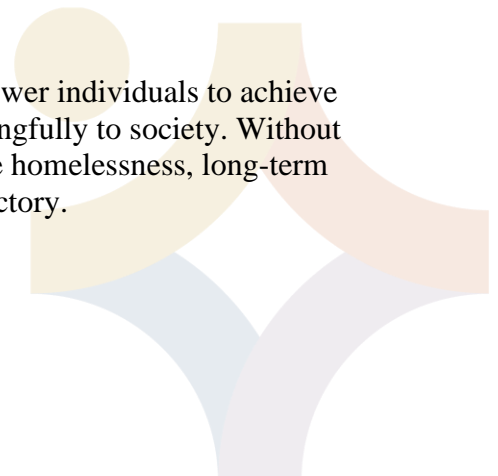
- 120 adults are waiting for supports.
- 104 children are seeking access to vital services.
- We are currently providing full-time respite supports to three individuals, without our supports they would face homelessness or hospitalization.

Moreover, Guelph lacks housing specifically designed for children with developmental disabilities who require supportive environments. Families often must send their children to other regions for care, creating emotional and logistical burdens that ripple through our community.

Hopewell’s Legacy of Care

For over 40 years, Hopewell Support Services has been a cornerstone of this community, supporting more than 130 individuals across seven homes in Guelph. Our collaboration with the Ministry of Children, Community and Social Services reflects a longstanding reputation for excellence in care and fiscal responsibility.

Our mission goes beyond providing a safe place to live—we empower individuals to achieve independence, integrate into the community, and contribute meaningfully to society. Without organizations like Hopewell, many of these individuals would face homelessness, long-term hospitalization, or exploitation. Together, we can change this trajectory.





Recommendations for Action

While the Housing Affordability Strategy emphasizes facilitation and acceleration of market-affordable housing, achieving deeply affordable and supportive housing requires collaboration between the city, county, community organizations, and provincial funding partners. To ensure the strategy addresses the full spectrum of needs, we recommend:

1. **Explicit Inclusion of Accessible Housing:** Integrate accessible designs and supports into affordable housing initiatives, prioritizing individuals with developmental disabilities.
2. **Advocacy for Provincial Funding:** Strengthen the city's advocacy efforts for provincial funding targeted at housing for individuals with developmental disabilities. The city can work with organizations like Hopewell to amplify these calls for support.
3. **Strategic Partnerships:** Leverage the expertise of organizations like Hopewell in designing and managing supportive housing tailored to the developmental disability community.
4. **Long-term Planning:** Embed disability-focused solutions into sustainable housing strategies to address the evolving needs of aging populations and other demographic shifts.
5. **Proximity to Community Services:** Prioritize locations near public transit, healthcare, and community amenities to promote independence and reduce isolation.

A Call to Action

The Housing Affordability Strategy presents an opportunity for Guelph to lead by example in creating an inclusive, compassionate city. By addressing the housing needs of individuals with developmental disabilities, we not only eliminate barriers but also strengthen our community as a whole.

Hopewell Support Services is eager to partner with the city to bring these goals to life. Please don't hesitate to contact me at jjohnston@hopewellsupport.ca or 519-993-0335 to discuss how we can collaborate to ensure every member of our community has a safe, welcoming place to call home.

Thank you for your leadership and your commitment to tackling Guelph's housing challenges head-on.

Warm regards,

Jessica Johnston
Executive Director
Hopewell Support Services