Association of Municipalities of Ontario

Use of Housing Needs Assessments in Long-Term Planning

SHS

October 2025

SHS Policy

Contents

Acknowledgements

This study examining the use of Housing Needs Assessments in long-term infrastructure planning was undertaken on behalf of the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) as part of its administration of the Canada Community-Building Fund by SHS Inc.

This report is the result of a collaborative process and would not have been possible without the active involvement of AMO staff. We would like to thank the AMO team for their direction, input, and assistance throughout this study.

SHS

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Executive summary

Closing the Gap:
How Smarter Infrastructure Planning Can Unlock Housing Supply

The housing crisis in Ontario is not just a problem of land and approvals, it is a problem of **housing-enabling infrastructure**. Even when zoning, financing, and development capacity are in place, new housing cannot be built or occupied without the pipes, roads, and services that make communities work. This study examines how municipalities plan, fund, and deliver housing-enabling infrastructure and identifies the bottlenecks preventing housing from moving from plan to reality.

Our analysis is grounded in interviews with almost twenty municipalities across Ontario, representing a mix of urban, suburban, and rural contexts. These conversations provided critical on-the-ground insights into how housing and infrastructure planning intersect and where they collide.

Across jurisdictions, municipal staff emphasized that while political and public attention is focused on housing approvals, insufficient or delayed infrastructure remains one of the most significant barriers to delivering homes.

This report recommends municipalities across the province increase efforts to integrate Housing Needs Assessments into long-term planning for housing-enabling infrastructure, relying less on reactive implementation driven by development pressures.

From Needs to Actions:
Turning Housing Needs into Housing Supply

Meeting housing targets and enabling growth will require more than faster approvals and policy adjustments; it will require a fundamental shift in how municipalities plan and deliver infrastructure. This study recommends that, through the integration of Housing Needs Assessments into long-term infrastructure planning, municipalities:

1	**Inform infrastructure priorities based on housing need**	Use Housing Needs Assessment data to guide infrastructure investments toward areas and populations with the greatest need, ensuring resources are directed where they will have the greatest impact on housing delivery and community outcomes.
2	**Align the type and scale of infrastructure required with housing form**	Align Official Plan designations, zoning permissions, and servicing strategies with Housing Needs Assessment findings so that growth occurs in areas best suited for the needed housing types, supporting complete and well-serviced communities.
3	**Coordinate land use, infrastructure, and housing policy**	Plan infrastructure upgrades according to the specific requirements of different housing types identified in Housing Needs Assessments, reducing the risk of underbuilding critical infrastructure or services.
4	**Strengthen intergovernmental and interdepartmental coordination**	Use Housing Needs Assessment data as a shared foundation to align priorities across municipal departments and with other levels of government, improving coordination, funding advocacy, and infrastructure delivery timelines.
5	**Improve development review and incentive programs**	Direct incentives and streamlined approvals to developments that address identified housing gaps and align with existing or planned infrastructure capacity, maximizing both housing and infrastructure outcomes.
6	**Support long-term affordability goals**	Invest in servicing that unlocks land for affordable and attainable housing, reducing market pressures over time and fostering more inclusive, resilient communities.

Making the Federal Housing Needs Assessment Template Work Harder: Insights from Municipal Feedback on the Process

The federal Housing Needs Assessment template provides a consistent framework for collecting and reporting housing data, but feedback from municipalities revealed both strengths and opportunities for improvement.

Benefits for Municipalities

- **Provides a consistent framework** for Housing Needs Assessments across the province
- **Supports comprehensive thinking**, including across departments within municipalities
- Can be **useful for baseline comparisons** of housing data across municipalities

Limitations and Gaps

- Concerns from **data availability** in some municipalities
- Contributed to **capacity constraints for municipal staff**, particularly those in smaller communities
- **Format limitations for storytelling and local nuance** through the strict requirements to adhere to the template
- Currently contains **incomplete links between housing need and infrastructure** that could be expanded

Considerations for Future Iterations

- **Make the template more flexible and context-sensitive**
- **Improve data accessibility and integration**
- **Improve template approachability and visual aesthetic**
- **Strengthen the link to funding and implementation**

PART 1

Study Background

This Section

This section includes the following:

- Study Purpose
- Project Phasing
- Geographic Reach

Study Background

The existing housing crisis in Ontario is a multifaceted challenge that is a result of escalating housing demand and rapidly increasing housing costs. Compounding this crisis is significant housing-enabling infrastructure deficits in municipalities across the province.

In 2022, the Housing Affordability Task Force released findings that Ontario needed to build at least 1.5 million homes by 2031 to meet growing demand (Ontario Housing Affordability Task Force, 2022). The province assigned the 50 largest and fastest-growing municipalities with housing targets to achieve this goal, in addition to a blanket 10% housing starts target across all other municipalities. To support this large-scale growth in housing supply across the province, **housing-enabling infrastructure** is required to be built.

In support of evidence-based decision making on infrastructure and housing investments, the Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada (HICC) released a Housing Needs Assessment template for municipalities across Canada. Communities are required to complete a Housing Needs Assessment to be eligible for federal funding. This tool aims to provide communities, developers, and all levels of government with data to enable decisions on the type and location of housing to build, the infrastructure needed to support community growth, and how the needs assessment will be used in long-term infrastructure planning.

Under the Canada Community-Building Fund in Ontario, a Housing Needs Assessment completed to the requirements of the federal template is encouraged for all municipalities but required for all single- and lower-tier municipalities with population of over 30,000 per the 2021 Census. AMO has prepared a map containing all the required and approved HNAs.

Currently, municipal plans anticipate infrastructure requirements based on existing and projected housing needs at typical levels of housing production. Rapid expansion in housing supply requires increased investment and coordination of housing-enabling infrastructure moving forward.

Study Purpose

This study examines how Ontario municipalities plan for ***housing-enabling infrastructure***, identifies key challenges, and explores how to more effectively use the Canada Community-Building Fund to support growth. This supports local planning and reinforces the need for a more substantial, predictable, long-term municipal infrastructure transfer.

This study aims to be a capacity-building tool to help Ontario municipalities integrate new federal HNAs into existing provincial reports and planning to support enhanced infrastructure project prioritization.

This study primarily seeks to address the following three research questions:

1. **a) What types of enabling infrastructure are needed to enable and preserve housing?**

   b) What factors are impacting the delivery of housing-enabling infrastructure?
2. **What kind of growth challenges are caused by infrastructure gaps?**
3. **How can a municipal Housing Needs Assessments be used to help effectively plan for infrastructure projects?**

How to Read This Report

Throughout this report, the **desk research findings** will be presented to provide context to the existing conditions and practices across Ontario, from publicly-accessible data and previous research. These findings will be augmented with **what we heard**, or qualitative data that was gathered, through interviews with municipal staff. Together, this research offers new insight into the existing and evolving practices municipalities are taking to consider housing needs within the planning of housing-enabling infrastructure. From this analysis, **key takeaways and recommendations** will be included for consideration for municipalities looking to integrate housing needs into plans for long-term infrastructure.

This colour scheme will be used throughout the report to indicate where the information was retrieved from.

Key Term: Housing-Enabling Infrastructure

Housing-enabling infrastructure is the infrastructure that directly or indirectly allows for either the construction of more housing units or the preservation of existing housing stock.

Housing-enabling infrastructure can include investments in roads and bridges, water and wastewater distribution and treatment, power distribution, and other assets that increase the capacity of the community to build more housing.

While this report focuses primarily on infrastructure that municipalities in Ontario are responsible for, other infrastructure, such as hospitals or schools, may be referenced.

Project Phasing

Background Research
Phase 1

Municipal Interviews
Phase 2

Qualitative Data Synthesis
Phase 3

Phase 1: Background Research

Background research on municipal infrastructure planning examined how housing needs are currently assessed and how municipalities are planning for housing-enabling infrastructure across Ontario. The review included publicly available documents such as Housing Needs Assessments, Servicing Master Plans, and Asset Management Plans to understand existing practices and ongoing efforts to align infrastructure with housing demand.

Additional research into other publications or research papers developed on the topic of infrastructure planning and funding and impacts of a lack of housing-enabling infrastructure were assessed to provide context for this study.

This phase provided the foundational context for understanding how municipalities are addressing housing needs and the role of infrastructure in supporting these needs.

Phase 2: Municipal Interviews

Interviews with staff from single- and lower-tier municipalities captured the on-the-ground realities with planning housing-enabling infrastructure in municipalities across the province. Municipal staff included in these interviews represented staff from housing, public works, finance, engineering, and planning departments. The municipalities selected for the interviews varied in size, geography, and urban/rural context, providing diverse perspectives on the infrastructure challenges across the province.

The lines of inquiry for these interviews included the following themes:

- **Local housing needs.** Municipalities were encouraged to discuss their understanding of local housing demand and gaps in housing supply, based on their completed Housing Needs Assessments.
- **Existing condition of housing-enabling infrastructure.** Municipal staff provided a local context for infrastructure development in their community and outlined existing and potential future gaps in housing-enabling infrastructure.
- **Housing Needs Assessments in long-term planning.** Municipal staff were asked how they currently incorporate housing needs into their housing-enabling infrastructure planning.
- **Coordinating local housing needs with infrastructure.** Any measures to coordinate housing needs internally or, if applicable, with an upper-tier municipality, were explored.

Phase 3: Qualitative Data Synthesis

The final phase involved synthesizing the qualitative data collected from the background research and municipal interviews. This synthesis helped identify key themes, challenges, and opportunities for municipalities in planning and delivering housing-enabling infrastructure. The analysis incorporated insights from the interviews, which highlighted practical, on-the-ground experiences and perspectives, as well as data from the background research, which offered a broader context for understanding the policy and planning landscape. The findings from both phases were integrated to inform the recommendations and conclusions presented in this report.

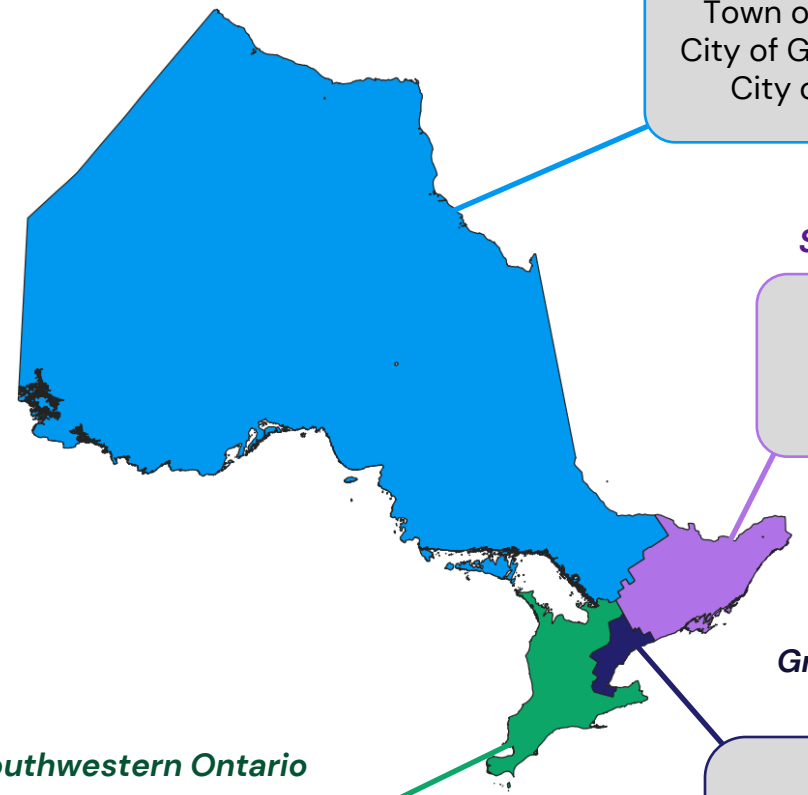
By integrating both the background research and the insights gained from municipal interviews, this report aims to provide a comprehensive overview of the challenges municipalities face in planning housing-enabling infrastructure. The synthesis of these data sources highlights the critical gaps in current infrastructure planning and offers practical recommendations to help municipalities better align housing development with the necessary infrastructure to support it.

Geographic Reach

The interviews undertaken for this study covered four distinct regions of Ontario: Northern Ontario, Southwestern Ontario, Southeastern Ontario, and the Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area (GTHA).

Each region presents unique housing and infrastructure challenges:

- Northern Ontario deals with vast distances and dispersed populations
- Southwestern and Southeastern Ontario balance rural development with growing urban centers
- The GTHA faces complex demands due to rapid urban growth and high-density developments



Northern Ontario

Town of Gravenhurst
City of Greater Sudbury
City of North Bay

Southeastern Ontario

City of Belleville
City of Ottawa
City of Peterborough
City of Quinte West

Greater Toronto and Hamilton Area

City of Barrie
City of Brampton
Town of East Gwillimbury
Town of Georgina
Town of Halton Hills
City of Hamilton

Southwestern Ontario

City of Cambridge
City of London
City of Niagara Falls
City of Windsor

PART 2

Understanding Housing Demand and Infrastructure Gaps

This Section

This section includes the following:

- Housing pressures across Ontario
- Classes of housing-enabling infrastructure
- Types of infrastructure development
- Housing-enabling infrastructure pressures
- Housing-enabling infrastructure costs
- Housing-enabling infrastructure funding

This section aims to address the following key research question:

1. a) What types of enabling infrastructure are needed to enable and preserve housing?

   b) What factors are impacting the delivery of housing-enabling infrastructure?

Understanding Housing Demand and Infrastructure Gaps

Ontario is facing a housing crisis, marked by a growing gap between housing demand and supply and the escalation of housing prices across the province. To meet the demands of an increasing population, it is estimated that national housing starts must nearly double to between 430,000 and 480,000 units per year until 2035 (CMHC, 2025). This is well above the projected rate of 250,000 annual new housing units across Canada. These estimates noted that Ontario requires 134,220 annual additional housing starts during this period beyond the business-as-usual scenario to restore affordability. This shortfall is driving both the demand for housing and significant pressures on municipalities to find solutions.

In response to previous CMHC studies in 2022, the Province of Ontario set housing targets, aiming to construct 1.5 million new homes by 2031 to alleviate the housing shortage (Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2022). To meet this aggressive goal, the province acknowledges that addressing the infrastructure needs to support these new homes will be just as critical to ensuring their successful delivery. Housing-enabling infrastructure is key to facilitating new development, ensuring that these new homes are adequately supported with the necessary services.

Housing Pressures across Ontario

Housing demand and affordability pressures are shifting across Ontario. Below is a summary of the background research and municipal interviews conducted to assess housing trends in Ontario municipalities.

What We Know

- **Population and housing demand:** Ontario's population is projected to grow significantly by 2051, increasing housing demand, outpacing current housing construction efforts, and leading to a shortage of available housing.
- **Affordability challenges:** Escalating competition for existing homes has led to rising home prices and rents, exacerbating affordability issues and creating challenges for households.
- **Shifting housing preferences:** The COVID-19 pandemic accelerated the movement of households from urban to suburban/rural areas, driving competition and increasing house prices in these regions.
- **Changing household composition:** High homeownership costs are a contributing factor in shifts in household compositions; smaller household sizes, with more one- and two-person households, are becoming more common as many have opted to rent in smaller units.
- **Rental housing demand:** The surge in renter households is partly fueled by unaffordable homeownership options, but municipalities lack sufficient rental housing stock.
- **Missing middle density housing:** Many communities across Ontario currently lack a diversity of housing types throughout their housing stock. This middle density housing, such as multiplexes and townhouses, offer more housing options for established neighbourhoods.

What We Heard

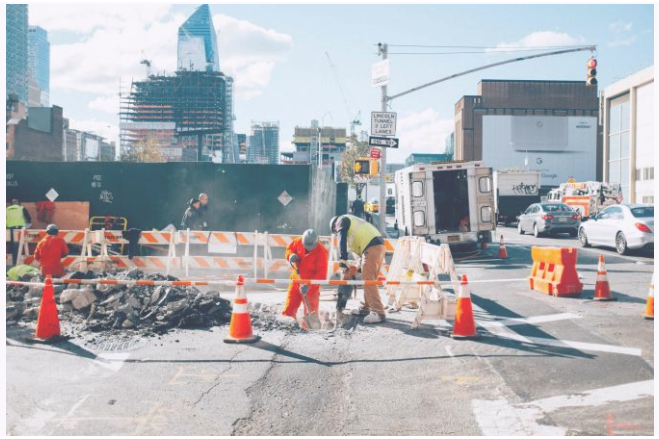
- **Rapid growth in demand outpacing supply:** Many municipalities noted that recent growth in population and housing demand has not been met with sufficient housing construction. Specifically, the municipalities interviewed noted a lack of development of housing that would be considered affordable (i.e., housings costs that are less than 30% of the household income) to the average household.
- **Shortage of family-sized and affordable rental units:** While the purpose-built rental stock has not grown sufficiently to meet the growing demand for this tenure across the board, the demand for family-sized units was particularly glaring. Affordable rental housing, including units with three or more beds, have not been built enough to keep pace with the growth of renter households.
- **Increase in people experiencing homelessness:** The unaffordability of housing has led to municipalities across the province, large and small, facing dramatic increases in the number of people experiencing homelessness.
- **Aging housing stock:** Many communities have older housing stock, particularly older apartment buildings, which can be less energy-efficient, less accessible, and more costly to maintain, exacerbating affordability challenges for low-income households.

Classes of Housing-Enabling Infrastructure

Housing-enabling infrastructure is essential for supporting residential development and ensuring the quality of life for communities within those developments. It encompasses a range of infrastructure that must be in place before, during, and after housing construction to accommodate growing populations.

This study breaks down housing-enabling infrastructure into three key classes: ***local infrastructure***, ***community infrastructure***, and ***district infrastructure***. These classes have been adapted from existing literature on the topic (CUI, 2024).

Each of these categories of infrastructure is critical to meeting the housing targets set by the province, as new housing cannot be built or occupied without sufficient infrastructure in place. It should be noted that other essential infrastructure, such as healthcare and education, are not included in these classes as they are not directly funded by municipalities.



Key Concept: Housing-Enabling Infrastructure Classes

Local Infrastructure, on-site infrastructure, is the critical infrastructure that enables housing to be built.

- This includes infrastructure located directly on-site, including sidewalks, curbs, streetlighting, and water and wastewater lines to the property line.

Community Infrastructure, or neighbourhood infrastructure, encourages the increase in housing supply through enabling complete communities and increases the capacity of existing infrastructure.

- This includes collector roads, trunk watermains and wastewater infrastructure, schools, recreational facilities, emergency response vehicles, parks, libraries, and traffic controls.

District Infrastructure, or municipality-wide infrastructure, enables the increase of housing supply through the development of new residential areas.

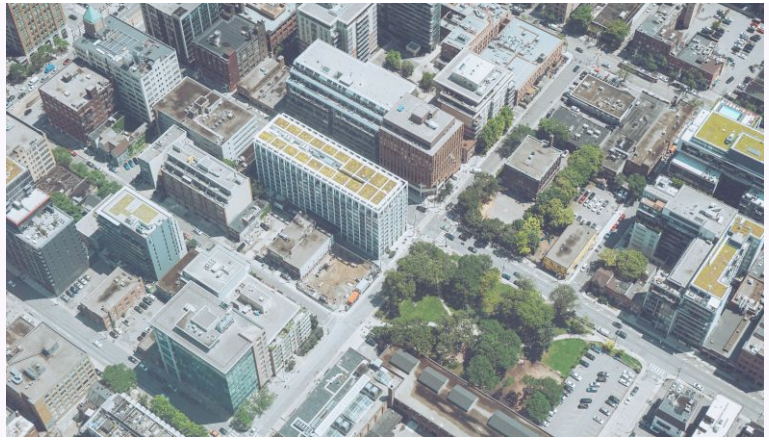
- This includes major roadways, water and wastewater treatment plants, public transit, and solid waste disposal and recycling facilities.

Types of Infrastructure Development

Infrastructure demands and the means to address them are impacted significantly by the context of the community and the type of development. Types of development differ in the context in which the development is occurring. These types are ***greenfield development***, ***redevelopment and intensification***, and ***high-density intensification***.

Each development type presents unique pressures on municipalities, which are compounded by the unique nature of each municipality due to geographic, historical, and cultural contexts.

Feedback from municipal staff on the challenges of providing housing-enabling infrastructure for each development type is outlined in Section 3 of this report.



Key Concept: Infrastructure Development Types

- **Greenfield Development:** Greenfield development occurs in areas that are not currently serviced. This type of development typically requires all classes of infrastructure to support housing.

- **Redevelopment and Intensification:** Neighbourhoods and municipalities may be redeveloped to increase the density of existing residential areas. Intensification is often supported by existing, legacy infrastructure in place. To enable housing through intensification, infrastructure may require retrofitting, capacity expansion, upgrades, and in some cases, the development of new plants and infrastructure altogether.

- **High-Density Intensification:** Development through high-density intensification often occurs through Transit-oriented Development (TOD). These areas are often termed “major transit station areas”, or MSTAs, and may require major infrastructure investments in rapid-transit lines and stations.

Housing-Enabling Infrastructure Pressures

Housing-enabling infrastructure pressures exist in a variety of forms across the province. Below is a summary of the background research and municipal interviews conducted to assess current and future challenges with the state of municipal housing-enabling infrastructure in Ontario municipalities.

What We Know

- **Housing-enabling infrastructure classes:** Housing-enabling infrastructure can be grouped into three categories: local infrastructure, community infrastructure, and district infrastructure (CUI, 2024).
- **Inaction creates bottlenecks:** Even housing projects with land, funding, and approvals can be stalled due to inadequate infrastructure, delaying construction and limiting municipal ability to address housing shortages. District infrastructure is often the bottleneck to housing supply, as these projects are the most expensive and complex, requiring multi-level government coordination and private sector involvement (CUI, 2024).
- **Infrastructure delays impact housing delivery:** Delays or underinvestment in infrastructure can slow delivery of all types of housing, worsening affordability challenges and hindering progress toward provincial housing targets.
- **Infrastructure development types:** Infrastructure pressures vary by development type:, greenfield development, redevelopment and intensification, and high-density intensification. The ability to meet infrastructure needs is further shaped by the unique geographic, historical, and cultural context of each municipality.

What We Heard

- **Aging infrastructure in older neighbourhoods:** Many municipalities struggle with aging water and wastewater infrastructure, which are costly to replace before intensification can occur.
- **High cost of greenfield servicing:** Expanding into new areas often requires high upfront capital costs for treatment plants, brand new utilities. and road upgrades, placing burdens on municipal budgets.
- **Servicing capacity constraints for intensification:** Infill and redevelopment projects are often limited by existing infrastructure, such as lower fire flow capacity and combined sewer systems, that cannot handle increased density.
- **Timing and coordination gaps:** Housing construction may proceed faster than the surrounding infrastructure (e.g., sidewalks, transit, street lighting), leaving incomplete communities for residents moving in.
- **Funding limitations and reliance on grants:** Many municipalities depend heavily on unpredictable provincial/federal funding programs; the application process is time-consuming and competitive, and Development Charges alone cannot keep up with infrastructure needs.
- **Balancing new growth with maintenance backlogs:** Municipalities face pressure to fund both new infrastructure for growth and rehabilitation of existing assets with limited budgets, creating trade-offs that can slow housing delivery.

Housing-Enabling Infrastructure Costs and Funding

There is a gap between the cost of building housing-enabling infrastructure, and the revenues municipalities generate in own-source revenue. As a result, municipalities rely on a variety of funding sources to finance key infrastructure projects and growth, including ***property taxes and user fees***, ***Development Charges (DCs)***, and ***federal and provincial grants***.

Infrastructure Costs

Municipalities are planning for more than $250 billion in capital expenditures over the next decade to support housing, address aging assets, and adapt to climate change, with around $100 billion of that investment being connected to growth.

While municipalities own and manage more infrastructure than the other two levels of government combined, they have the fewest resources and tools to fund capital needs, and significant investment is needed (AMO, 2024).

Growth is not the only infrastructure pressure that municipalities across the province face. In 2021, the Financial Accountability Office estimated that the cost to bring existing municipal assets to a state of good repair was approximately $52 billion (Financial Accountability Office, Municipal Infrastructure, 2021). Municipalities have worked hard to make significant progress in the way that existing infrastructure assets are managed. The pressure to support growth cannot undermine the sound long-term management of existing assets.

Infrastructure Funding

Each of the funding sources previously mentioned comes with their own limitations. Property taxes do not grow in line with inflation or economic growth, limiting the ability for municipalities to fund capital projects through this source alone. Recent pressures to reduce DCs to lower homebuilding costs have raised concerns about the ability of municipalities to fund necessary infrastructure expansions. Unlike with the CCBF, most grants often come with specific conditions, may not be sufficient to cover the full costs of major infrastructure projects, and may be included within short-term, competitive programs that are not conducive with long-term planning.

The bulk of investment for this critical, province-wide infrastructure comes directly from municipalities. For every $1 invested in infrastructure there is up to $6 return on investment, which significantly benefits the province and all Ontarians. Despite these benefits, contributions from provincial and federal governments have not kept pace with the true costs of building, which have grown by an estimated 70% in the past 10 years (AMO, 2024).

Key Concept: Infrastructure Funding Sources

- **Property Taxes and User Fees:** Property taxes and user fees are the largest revenue source for Ontario municipalities (AMO, 2017). These revenues are primarily used to fund operation and maintenance of existing infrastructure.
- **Development Charges (DCs):** Development charges are fees levied on new developments to recover some of the costs associated with growth-related infrastructure, such as roads, water and wastewater systems, and parks.
- **Grants from Upper Levels of Government:** Municipalities receive grants from provincial and federal governments to support infrastructure development.

Understanding Housing Demand and Infrastructure Gaps: Key Takeaways

What types of enabling infrastructure are needed to enable and preserve housing?

Infrastructure Required at All Scales to Enable Housing

Housing-enabling infrastructure is essential at every level, from individual lots to entire regional infrastructure, to support new residential development and ensure complete, livable communities.

- Local infrastructure must be in place to enable construction and occupancy of housing units.
- Community infrastructure supports increased density and quality of life, but often lags behind development approvals.
- District infrastructure enables long-term growth and is critical for unlocking new housing supply, though it requires significant funding, coordination, and time to deliver.
- Together, all three infrastructure classes must be planned and funded in alignment with housing targets to prevent delays, enable sustainable growth, and build complete communities.

Unique Pressures for Development Settings

Different types of housing development face unique pressures based on the infrastructure needs of each.

- Greenfield development requires entirely new infrastructure systems, which can be costly and challenging, especially when servicing environmentally protected or geographically difficult lands.
- Redevelopment and intensification rely on existing infrastructure, which often needs upgrades to support denser populations, especially in older urban centers with outdated systems.
- High-density intensification, particularly in transit-oriented areas, requires specialized infrastructure investments in rapid transit and supporting services.

Infrastructure Gaps Create Bottlenecks

Without adequate housing-enabling infrastructure, housing development can be stalled until upgrades are made.

- Even when housing developments are planned and approved, they may be stalled or delayed due to insufficient infrastructure.
- Particularly at the district infrastructure level, such as roadways, transit systems, and water treatment facilities, municipalities face significant pressures.
- Many of these infrastructure systems are complex and costly to develop, requiring intergovernmental coordination.
- Without adequate investment in these areas, housing projects cannot proceed as planned, slowing down the delivery of new homes and increasing competition for existing housing stock.

Understanding Housing Demand and Infrastructure Gaps: Key Takeaways

What factors are impacting the delivery of housing-enabling infrastructure?

Increasing Housing and Infrastructure Demand

Ontario is experiencing a growing housing crisis, driven by a population increase and insufficient housing supply.

- According to CMHC projections, the province will need 1.85 million new homes by 2030 to meet demand, yet current construction rates fall short.
- This rising housing demand is compounded by the escalating costs of homeownership, leading to a greater need for rental housing.
- However, municipalities are struggling to provide the necessary infrastructure to support these developments, which creates a bottleneck in housing supply.

Funding Challenges and Increased Demand

Municipalities are facing funding shortfalls due to reliance on limited revenue sources like property taxes and development charges (DCs), which are not growing in line with infrastructure needs.

- The gap between the costs of infrastructure and the available funds exacerbates the pressure on municipalities to meet housing demands.
- Innovative financing solutions, such as public-private partnerships and tax increment financing, may be explored but are not always sufficient to address the full scale of the challenge.
- Additional, long-term, predictable, and substantial federal and provincial municipal infrastructure transfer is required.

Long-Term Pressure on Affordability

The inability to meet infrastructure needs in line with growing housing demand has long-term consequences for housing affordability.

- As infrastructure bottlenecks slow down the pace of new housing development, the existing housing market becomes increasingly competitive, driving up prices and rents.
- This cycle further exacerbates the affordability crisis, particularly for lower- and middle-income households.
- Infrastructure delays not only affect the immediate availability of housing but also contribute to the systemic affordability challenges that Ontario is facing.

PART 3

Municipal Infrastructure Planning Practices

This Section

This section includes the following:

- Infrastructure Planning Strategies
- Municipal Infrastructure Pressures

This section aims to address the following key research question:

2. What kind of growth challenges are caused by infrastructure gaps?

Municipal Infrastructure Planning Practices

Infrastructure Planning Strategies

In Ontario, municipalities are responsible for managing and planning infrastructure development to meet the needs of their changing populations. Effective infrastructure planning is essential to support housing development and ensure that the required services are available in key locations at the appropriate time. Municipalities rely on a combination of planning tools and strategies to guide this infrastructure planning, including ***Official Plans*** (OPs), ***Asset Management Plans*** (AMPs), *and* ***Servicing Master Plans*** (SMPs) and ***Infrastructure Master Plans*** (IMPs).

Together, these planning tools enable municipalities to take a proactive approach to infrastructure development, ensuring that growth is supported by the appropriate services. OPs are crucial for identifying areas of growth, setting priorities for development, and ensuring that infrastructure needs are integrated with housing development strategies. AMPs focus on the long-term sustainability of infrastructure by assessing the condition, capacity, and lifecycle of municipal assets. These plans, along with master plans that specifically identify the need for specific infrastructure, help municipalities understand where existing infrastructure can accommodate new growth and where upgrades or expansions are necessary to meet the demands of additional housing.

However, despite these planning frameworks, municipalities often face significant challenges in aligning infrastructure needs with housing development.

Key Concept: Infrastructure Planning Strategies

In Ontario, the following municipal policies and strategies inform the planning of housing-enabling infrastructure:

- **Official Plans:** Official Plans are long-term strategic documents required by the *Planning Act, 1990*, that guide land use and development in municipalities, ensuring alignment with projected growth and community needs.
- **Asset Management Plans (AMPs):** AMPs are required by Ontario's *Municipal Asset Management Planning Regulation (O. Reg. 588/17)* to assess and plan the maintenance, repair, and replacement of infrastructure assets, ensuring sustainability and forecasting future needs.
- **Master Plans:** Servicing Master Plans (SMPs) and Infrastructure Master Plans (IMPs) are planning documents that guide the development and expansion of core infrastructure systems, such as water, wastewater, and stormwater systems, while ensuring coordination within a municipality. These plans integrate land-use planning, environmental assessment principles, and projected growth, investments, identifying necessary infrastructure capacity, and determining the timing and funding of projects to support both current and future development.

Municipal Infrastructure Challenges

Despite these comprehensive planning tools, municipalities often face challenges in aligning infrastructure investments with housing development based on the specific housing needs in their community. In practice, infrastructure planning may be reactive rather than proactive, meaning upgrades and new developments are triggered only when specific projects or developments are proposed, rather than being completed in advance to meet future demand.

The following section explores the specific challenges municipalities face in planning and delivering housing-enabling infrastructure within the three distinct development contexts: *greenfield development*, *redevelopment and intensification*, and *high-density intensification*. It highlights how municipalities navigate the complexities of each infrastructure class within these types of development while striving to meet local housing demand and growth projections.

The insights included in this section were collected through conversations with municipal staff. Discussions with planning, housing, public works, and finance staff explored the existing practices and pressures with ensuring housing-enabling infrastructure is in place to increase the supply of housing.

This section outlines challenges by development type as follows:

Greenfield Development
Pressures associated with the development of new housing in undeveloped areas

Redevelopment or Intensification
Pressures associated with adding density to existing built-up areas

High-Density Intensification
Pressures associated with the construction of high-density residential development

Municipal Infrastructure Challenges: *Greenfield Development*

Greenfield development refers to the construction of new housing on previously undeveloped land, typically at the edges of urban areas. These sites are often agricultural or rural lands that have been designated for urban expansion through municipal planning processes. While greenfield areas present fewer constraints related to land use compatibility or demolition, they require the full buildout of infrastructure from the ground up.

Municipalities must plan, finance, and construct all three classes of infrastructure, *local*, *community*, and *district infrastructure,* before homes can be occupied. This creates significant upfront costs, long timelines for environmental and servicing approvals, and challenges in coordinating infrastructure phasing with housing delivery targets.

What We Heard: Local Infrastructure

- Greenfield development requires entirely new on-site services (e.g., sidewalks, curbs, streetlights, local water and wastewater lines) with costs often borne by developers, but timing and completeness can be outside municipal control.
- In some projects, essential amenities are deferred, leaving residents without sidewalks or lighting for some time.
- Rural areas lacking municipal water / wastewater depend on costly private systems, which limit growth potential and require major investment to upgrade.
- Large distances and rural cross-sections add cost and complexity to building urban-standard local infrastructure.

What We Heard: Community Infrastructure

- Shift from single-detached to moderate-density housing increases demand on collector roads, trunk mains, stormwater facilities, parks, schools, and libraries, often beyond what older systems were designed to handle.
- Infrastructure costs are especially burdensome for smaller municipalities with limited reserves; even large cities struggle when adding new development areas.
- Cost-sharing agreements (e.g., front-ending) help but are difficult to negotiate across multiple landowners or phases.
- Servicing often depends on developer timing, leading to mismatches between housing delivery and infrastructure upgrades.

What We Heard: District Infrastructure

- Major systems like wastewater treatment plants, lift stations, and regional transit are expensive and require long timelines for approvals, funding, and construction.
- Development charge revenues often cannot cover the cost of new facilities, especially if build-out is slow.
- In two-tier systems, regional control over major servicing, such as water, can delay local growth if timelines and priorities are misaligned.
- Even well-planned greenfield areas can face long waits for district-level capacity expansions.

Municipal Infrastructure Challenges: *Redevelopment or Intensification*

Redevelopment and intensification development involves increasing housing supply within existing built-up areas, often through replacing or upgrading existing buildings and infrastructure. These projects aim to make better use of serviced land, typically in neighbourhoods with aging infrastructure and limited available land.

While redevelopment can support more sustainable land use patterns, it frequently requires upgrades to community infrastructure, such as watermains and road networks, to support increased capacity. Municipalities must navigate complex site constraints, costly utility relocations, and coordination with private property owners, all while managing the expectations of existing residents and balancing service levels across older communities.

What We Heard: Local Infrastructure

- Rural municipalities who have experienced significant population growth face challenges in transitioning to urban standards. This includes upgrading roads, sidewalks, and local water/wastewater to support higher densities.
- Additional residential units (ARUs) and lot-splitting may strain downstream infrastructure, often without coordinated upgrade planning.
- Responsibility for funding upgrades can be contentious between municipalities and developers, especially when triggered by private redevelopment.
- Reactive rather than proactive planning often leads to delays and piecemeal improvements.

What We Heard: Community Infrastructure

- Population growth often outpaces upgrades to collector roads, trunk mains, and stormwater systems in older neighbourhoods.
- Aging assets (e.g., combined sewers, undersized pipes) create barriers but also opportunities to modernize during redevelopment.
- Community amenities, like schools or libraries, may lag behind growth due to long planning horizons and funding constraints.
- Intensification in areas with underused servicing is a cost-effective way to leverage existing infrastructure.
- Some municipalities must impose density caps or phased servicing to avoid overloads due to existing system limitations.

What We Heard: District Infrastructure

- Area-specific plans (Secondary Plans, MTSA studies) guide intensification but required district services, such as wastewater pump stations, major transit, waste facilities, may lag years behind.
- This misalignment can force temporary servicing solutions or delay development approvals.
- Without reliable transit, intensified areas may underperform in attracting residents and achieving complete communities.
- Coordination with regional utilities and service providers is essential but can be slow.

Municipal Infrastructure Challenges: *High-Density Intensification*

High-density intensification refers to the development of mid- and high-rise residential buildings, often in strategic growth areas such as transit corridors, urban centres, or major nodes. These developments aim to accommodate significant population growth within a compact footprint, aligning with broader objectives for sustainable, transit-oriented communities.

High-density development places acute pressure on infrastructure systems across all levels. Local on-site infrastructure must be scaled for larger buildings; community infrastructure often requires costly upgrades; and district systems must be expanded to meet the intensity of demand. As a result, municipalities must balance the pace of development with infrastructure readiness while navigating complex regulatory and financial constraints.

What We Heard: Local Infrastructure

- Lack of adequate transit forces residents to rely on cars, creating congestion and expensive parking demands.
- Parking requirements add costs for developers and can deter development in some cases.
- Municipalities face environmental and livability challenges when vehicle reliance persists in supposed transit-oriented areas.

What We Heard: Community Infrastructure

- Fire flow capacity for tall buildings is a common bottleneck in older areas, requiring watermain upgrades.
- High-density growth near planned transit nodes is undermined when transit delivery is delayed.
- Rapid population growth strains parks, community centres, childcare, and schools; soft services often lag behind housing delivery.
- Limited and expensive land makes adding new amenities in dense areas challenging.

What We Heard: District Infrastructure

- Major transit corridors are central to growth strategies, but high-order transit construction timelines often lag far behind housing development approvals.
- Developers may delay projects if transit is uncertain, creating an uncertain situation for ridership and funding.
- Road networks in urban cores cannot feasibly expand, pushing municipalities toward active transportation solutions.
- Emergency services, waste management, and utilities can be unevenly distributed as density rises, requiring coordinated planning.

Municipal Infrastructure Planning Practices: Key Takeaways

What kind of growth challenges are caused by infrastructure gaps?

Housing Need gets Disconnected from Infrastructure Planning

Municipal infrastructure planning rarely incorporates specific housing needs, leading to a potential misaligned servicing and growth.

- Municipal servicing plans are typically based on long-range population and employment forecasts rather than detailed housing needs, such as unit type, or tenure.
- Most infrastructure planning operates independently from Housing Needs Assessments, which means key gaps, such as the need for purpose-built rental housing or seniors housing, are not directly considered.
- Some municipalities are starting to explore how housing need data can be used to inform infrastructure investment, but this practice is still in its early stages and lacks clear methodologies.

Reactive Infrastructure Planning Approach

Infrastructure is often delivered in response to development proposals rather than ahead of anticipated growth.

- Infrastructure upgrades are often triggered by development applications, forcing municipalities to respond rather than proactively service key growth areas.
- Municipalities have limited ability to direct where and when development occurs, making it difficult to plan and fund infrastructure efficiently.
- Housing pledges have increased pressure to approve projects quickly, even when infrastructure capacity or alignment is not in place.
- This reactive approach can lead to servicing delays, mismatched growth, and inefficient public spending.

Capacity Constraints Slow Growth

Many municipalities report that infrastructure systems are approaching capacity, threatening housing delivery.

- Wastewater treatment plants, trunk watermains, and stormwater systems are nearing their functional limits in high-growth municipalities.
- Several municipalities noted that if development beyond their approved units were brought forward, they would exceed available servicing capacity.
- Without new capital investment, municipalities may have to restrict development approvals or implement density caps in certain areas.
- The risk of a province-wide infrastructure capacity crisis is growing if housing and servicing timelines remain misaligned.

Municipal Infrastructure Planning Practices: Key Takeaways

What kind of growth challenges are caused by infrastructure gaps?

Funding Shortfalls Create Uncertainty

Municipalities rely on development charges to fund infrastructure, but pressure is mounting to reduce them.

- Development charges are the primary tool municipalities use to cover the cost of infrastructure for new housing, including water, sewer, roads, and community amenities.
- Recent challenges in the housing market, including affordability, have led to a reassessment of the role of development charges. In response to these challenges, the province has implemented cuts to eligible development charge expenses.
- When development charge revenues fall short, municipalities are often forced to delay infrastructure projects or increase property taxes to compensate.
- Without an alternative long-term and stable revenue source, reducing development charges could significantly hinder the ability of municipalities to support housing growth.

Transit Lags Behind Development

High-density, transit-oriented areas are often stalled by delays in building the transit infrastructure they depend on.

- Many municipalities have identified strategic growth corridors based on planned transit investments, but the transit infrastructure has not kept pace with land use planning.
- Developers may be reluctant to proceed in these areas without transit certainty, leading to delays in construction and reduced housing supply.
- Where development does proceed without transit, residents often remain car-dependent, undermining goals for sustainable, walkable communities.

Integration Tools become Unused

Although municipalities have strong planning tools, poor coordination and weak funding limit their effectiveness.

- Municipalities rely on Official Plans, Asset Management Plans, and Master Plans to coordinate land use and infrastructure planning.
- Housing targets are not always linked to infrastructure investment planning, making it difficult to prioritize servicing for the types and locations of housing most needed.
- Coordination challenges persist across municipal departments (e.g., engineering, planning, housing) and between upper- and lower-tier municipalities.
- Long-term, stable funding mechanisms are needed to support the proactive infrastructure planning these tools are intended to enable.

PART 4

Integrating Housing Needs Assessments in Long-Term Planning

This Section

This section includes the following:

- Federal Housing Needs Assessment Template Requirements
- Housing Needs Assessment Outcomes
- Importance of Considering Housing Needs

This section aims to address the following key research question:

3. How can a municipal Housing Needs Assessment be used to help effectively plan for infrastructure projects?

Integrating Housing Needs Assessments in Long-Term Planning

Ontario municipalities face mounting challenges in planning and delivering infrastructure that supports diverse, affordable, and timely housing development. As highlighted throughout this report, the disconnect between identified housing needs and the delivery of housing-enabling infrastructure, combined with limited funding tools and reactive planning processes, has created mounting pressure on municipalities.

To address these challenges, Housing Needs Assessments offer a valuable tool for aligning infrastructure investment with the actual housing needs of communities.

Housing Needs Assessments provide detailed insight into the types, tenures, and affordability levels of housing needed to serve current and future populations. When integrated into long-term planning frameworks, such as Official Plans, Asset Management Plans, and Master Servicing Plans, Housing Needs Assessments can help municipalities move beyond generalized growth forecasts and plan infrastructure that responds directly to local housing gaps.

This section explores how incorporating housing need into infrastructure planning can support more proactive, coordinated, and equitable growth management strategies across Ontario.

Federal Housing Needs Assessment

Recognizing the need to better align housing delivery with infrastructure capacity, the federal government has introduced a standardized template for Housing Needs Assessments. This template provides a consistent framework for municipalities to identify and quantify local housing demand, including detailed projections of housing by type, tenure, and income level.

A key innovation of the template is the inclusion of **Section 7.0: Infrastructure to Support Housing**, which explicitly connects housing needs with the planning of housing-enabling infrastructure.

Section 7.0 emphasizes the importance of coordinating land use planning, infrastructure investment, and housing delivery to achieve timely and complete communities. It encourages municipalities to:

- Identify infrastructure gaps that may limit housing development;
- Align housing needs with existing infrastructure capacity and long-term infrastructure plans;
- Highlight constraints that may delay the delivery of housing due to servicing limitations; and,
- Inform capital planning decisions and infrastructure funding priorities using Housing Needs Assessment findings.

This shift signals a growing recognition that planning for housing and infrastructure must occur in tandem. By embedding infrastructure considerations within Housing Needs Assessments, municipalities are better equipped to take a proactive, integrated approach to managing growth.

Housing Needs Assessment Outcomes

Housing Needs Assessments are tools that help municipalities identify and quantify the gaps in their housing supply. These gaps reflect the difference between the housing that exists, and is currently being built, and the types of housing that residents need based on income, household size, age, and tenure. Housing Needs Assessments are essential not only for guiding local housing strategies but also for informing long-term infrastructure planning that supports the delivery of these homes.

As Ontario faces intensifying housing and infrastructure pressures, the value of Housing Needs Assessments becomes increasingly clear. The province has set aggressive housing targets to meet projected population growth, but municipalities cannot achieve these targets if the enabling infrastructure is not in place. Many communities across Ontario face bottlenecks in critical housing-enabling infrastructure, such as water and wastewater capacity and high-order transit to facilitate high-density development. These infrastructure challenges delay or prevent the delivery of housing, particularly in fast-growing rural areas and high-density urban corridors.

Housing Needs Assessment outcomes can inform infrastructure priorities by identifying what types of housing are needed, such as built forms that will support affordable rentals, family-sized units, or seniors housing, and where that need is concentrated. This level of detail enables municipalities to:

- Target infrastructure investment in areas with the highest housing need, ensuring that **servicing supports desired housing outcomes rather than simply responding to market pressures**;
- Align land use and infrastructure plans by **tying Official Plan designations and growth forecasts to identified housing gaps**; and,
- **Coordinate housing and capital planning processes** by ensuring that housing strategies are reflected in capital budgets, asset management plans, and infrastructure master plans;
- Engage more effectively with development partners by **identifying priority areas and housing forms**, helping to guide the location, timing, and type of private investment.

// Housing Needs Assessment Outcomes

Different types of development bring unique infrastructure requirements. Greenfield areas require full systems to be built from scratch; redevelopment or intensification areas need upgraded sewer and watermain pipes and community amenities; and high-density intensification nodes demand major transit and municipality-wide infrastructure investments. Without understanding where and what types of housing are most needed, municipalities risk overbuilding in some areas while underserving those in greatest need.

Housing Needs Assessments offer a foundation for engaging with upper levels of government on funding. By linking specific housing needs to identified infrastructure constraints, municipalities can make a stronger case for targeted investments, whether through capital grants, streamlined approvals, or ongoing transfers. This is particularly important as development charges, a key funding source for infrastructure, are under increased pressure, while demand for housing continues to grow.

Ultimately, incorporating outcomes identified through Housing Needs Assessments into long-term infrastructure and capital planning will assist municipalities in moving from reactive decision-making to more strategic, forward-looking approaches. This alignment is critical to ensuring that the right types of housing are delivered where they are most needed, supported by timely and coordinated infrastructure that fosters complete, connected, and affordable communities.

Importance of Considering Housing Needs

To address the current housing crisis in Ontario and meet future population needs, municipalities must move toward a more integrated approach to growth management, one that links housing demand with infrastructure planning.

A detailed municipal Housing Needs Assessment provides a strong foundation for this approach by identifying specific housing gaps by type, tenure, and affordability level. The findings from Housing Needs Assessments can and should be directly used to inform infrastructure planning and investment decisions across departments and tiers of government, including, but not limited to, the following:

1. **Inform infrastructure priorities based on housing need**
2. **Align the type and scale of infrastructure required with housing form**
3. **Coordinate land use, infrastructure, and housing policy**
4. **Strengthen intergovernmental and interdepartmental coordination**
5. **Improve development review and incentive programs**
6. **Support long-term affordability goals**

To fully realize these benefits, municipalities should embed housing need considerations into long-term infrastructure and financial planning processes. This includes updating asset management plans, capital plans and budgets, infrastructure master plans, and growth forecasts in line with Housing Needs Assessment findings. It also means fostering collaboration across internal departments and with development and community partners to ensure that infrastructure and housing delivery are aligned.

With housing demand expected to continue rising, municipalities that integrate Housing Needs Assessments into infrastructure decision-making will be better positioned to deliver housing efficiently, equitably, and sustainably.

Integrating Housing Needs Assessments in Planning: Recommendations

How can a municipal housing needs assessment be used to help effectively plan for infrastructure projects?

Inform Infrastructure by Housing Need

Housing Needs Assessment data should be used to direct infrastructure investments to areas and populations with the greatest housing need.

- Housing Needs Assessments identify specific gaps in housing supply, such as the need for affordable rentals, seniors housing, or larger family units.
- Municipalities can use these insights to guide capital planning and focus infrastructure upgrades in areas with the most acute housing needs.
- This targeted approach ensures resources are used where they will have the greatest impact on housing delivery and community outcomes.

Align Infrastructure with Housing Form

Planning for housing-enabling infrastructure should be tailored to the types and densities of housing identified in Housing Needs Assessments.

- Different housing forms require different infrastructure standards. For example, high-rise buildings need higher fire flow capacity, while ground-oriented homes impact local water and stormwater systems.
- By knowing what kinds of housing are needed, municipalities can plan more appropriate infrastructure upgrades, reducing the risk of underbuilding or overbuilding services.
- This alignment supports more efficient service delivery and helps avoid costly retrofits or mismatched infrastructure.

Integrate Housing into Land Use Planning

Housing Needs Assessment findings should be used to help align land use policy, zoning, and housing-enabling infrastructure planning to better support housing delivery.

- Municipalities can use Housing Needs Assessment data to ensure that Official Plan designations and zoning permissions reflect the housing types in need.
- Infrastructure Master Plans and servicing strategies can be adjusted to support areas where intensification is most appropriate and needed.
- This integration fosters smarter growth management and more complete, well-serviced communities.

Integrating Housing Needs Assessments in Planning: Recommendations

How can a municipal housing needs assessment be used to help effectively plan for infrastructure projects?

Improve Departmental Coordination

Housing Needs Assessments can provide a shared foundation to support coordinated decision-making across departments and governments.

- Housing needs data can be used by engineering, finance, housing, and planning departments to develop unified priorities.
- Housing Needs Assessments also support conversations with upper-tier municipalities or regional utilities on aligning infrastructure timelines with housing needs.
- This coordination strengthens infrastructure delivery and improves funding advocacy.

Refine Development Review Processes

Housing Needs Assessment findings can be used to inform approvals and incentive programs that advance housing goals.

- Municipalities can prioritize developments that fill identified housing gaps and align with existing or planned infrastructure capacity.
- Incentives can be targeted more effectively, such as fast-tracking approvals or reducing fees for developments that deliver needed housing types.
- This ensures municipal tools are used strategically to support both infrastructure efficiency and housing outcomes.

Advance Long-Term Affordability Goals

Planning for housing-enabling infrastructure that is informed by housing need supports sustained housing affordability.

- Infrastructure bottlenecks contribute to slower housing delivery and increased market competition, driving up prices.
- Housing Needs Assessments help municipalities identify where servicing investments can unlock land for affordable housing.
- Over time, this approach reduces housing pressures and fosters more inclusive, resilient communities.

Appendix I

Feedback on Federal Housing Needs Assessment Template

This Section

This section includes the following:

- Benefits to Municipalities
- Limitations and Gaps
- Considerations for Future Iterations

Feedback on Federal Housing Needs Assessments Template

Recognizing the need to better align housing delivery with infrastructure capacity, the federal government has introduced a standardized template for Housing Needs Assessments. This template provides a consistent framework for municipalities to identify and quantify local housing demand, including detailed projections of housing by type, tenure, and income level.

When done properly and regularly, a Housing Needs Assessment will allow a community to answer fundamental questions such as:

- Where does the greatest housing need exist in our community?
- How can we set meaningful housing targets and measure progress to support the right kind of housing for all residents?
- How much housing, which size and at what price point do we need to ensure that all current and future households can live in suitable, adequate and affordable housing?

The following section contains feedback from municipalities as they filled out the Federal Housing Needs Assessment template for the first time in 2024/2025.

Federal Template: Benefits for Municipalities

Provides a consistent framework

- Many appreciated it as a good resource and starting point that encouraged municipalities to think holistically about housing needs.
- It helped ensure a level of consistency across jurisdictions, regardless of municipal size or capacity.

Supports comprehensive thinking

- Encouraged departments to collaborate and bring together data from multiple sources.
- In some cases, the process prompted conversations between planning, finance, and housing staff that had not occurred before.
- Some municipalities noted that linking housing needs with infrastructure capacity, if built into the template, could have additional benefits by informing federal and provincial infrastructure investment decisions.

Useful for baseline comparisons

- Created a single repository of housing data that can be referenced in future planning or funding applications.
- Helped identify both the scale and types of housing needs in a structured way.

Federal Template: Limitations and Gaps

Data availability

- Smaller and mid-sized municipalities struggled to find statistically significant data for some required fields (e.g., rental data).
- Many had to rely heavily on upper-tier governments or consultants to fill data gaps.
- Some data fields were not relevant to all municipalities but still had to be filled out. For example, sales prices by unit size in municipalities without condominium markets has little value.
- There was a lack of nuance or importance given to non-market housing data, an area that is underreported as is, and would benefit from being tracked in a uniform manner.
- Municipalities noted that the housing data required in the template does not provide the same level of affordability analysis based on income deciles as past local Housing Needs Assessments.
- Tables for recording results for the population and household projections were not clear, leading to confusion and inconsistent data inputs across municipalities.

Capacity constraints

- Completing the template required dedicated time and expertise; several municipalities said it would have been nearly impossible without hiring a consultant or reallocating staff.
- Resource limitations were especially challenging for rural or small municipalities.
- Several municipalities expressed concern that the forecasting elements are too resource-intensive, given that most municipalities do not have the tools or in-house expertise to project such specific data into the future. This may reduce comparability across municipalities.

// Federal Template: Limitations and Gaps

Format limitations for storytelling and local nuance

- The template was described as “structured and pretty dry,” making it difficult to convey unique local conditions or qualitative insights.
- The instructions and long text introductions reduced the readability of the document for the general public.
- Several municipalities created separate narrative or visual documents for community or council use.

Incomplete links between housing need and infrastructure

- Some found it difficult to draw a straight line between social housing needs (e.g., affordability challenges) and infrastructure projects, especially when infrastructure is outside municipal control in two-tier systems.
- Multiple municipalities noted that the template currently lacks a direct link to infrastructure, and could be improved by including land supply analysis (e.g., vacant lots, infill potential), infrastructure capacity mapping, and alignment with Asset Management Plans.

Federal Template: Considerations for Future Iterations

Make it more flexible and context-sensitive

- Allow spaces or prompts for municipalities to provide narrative explanations alongside data to capture local conditions, context, and policy considerations.
- Consider tailoring indicators to reflect a wider range of community sizes and urban/rural contexts.

Improve data accessibility and integration

- Provide municipalities with easier access to standardized, up-to-date datasets from CMHC, Statistics Canada, and other sources to reduce local data collection burdens.
- Set standards for collection of non-market housing data, including expanding the types of shelter and housing required.
- Expand the contents of the pre-populated templates, where possible, and ask municipalities to comment on local context rather than produce detailed forecasts themselves, reducing workload and improving consistency.
- Allow for contributions for upper-tier municipalities, where applicable and appropriate.

Improve template approachability and visual aesthetic

- Suggestions included moving detailed methodology to an appendix, adding a "summary of key findings" section, and revamping the formatting to make the document more user-friendly for the public.

Strengthen the link to funding and implementation

- Clearly communicate how the completed Housing Needs Assessment will be used to inform funding decisions or policy priorities.
- Incorporate an analysis of residential land capacity and infrastructure investment timelines to directly inform servicing master plans and capital budgeting.

Appendix II

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