

Niagara Region's

Pathway to Functional Zero

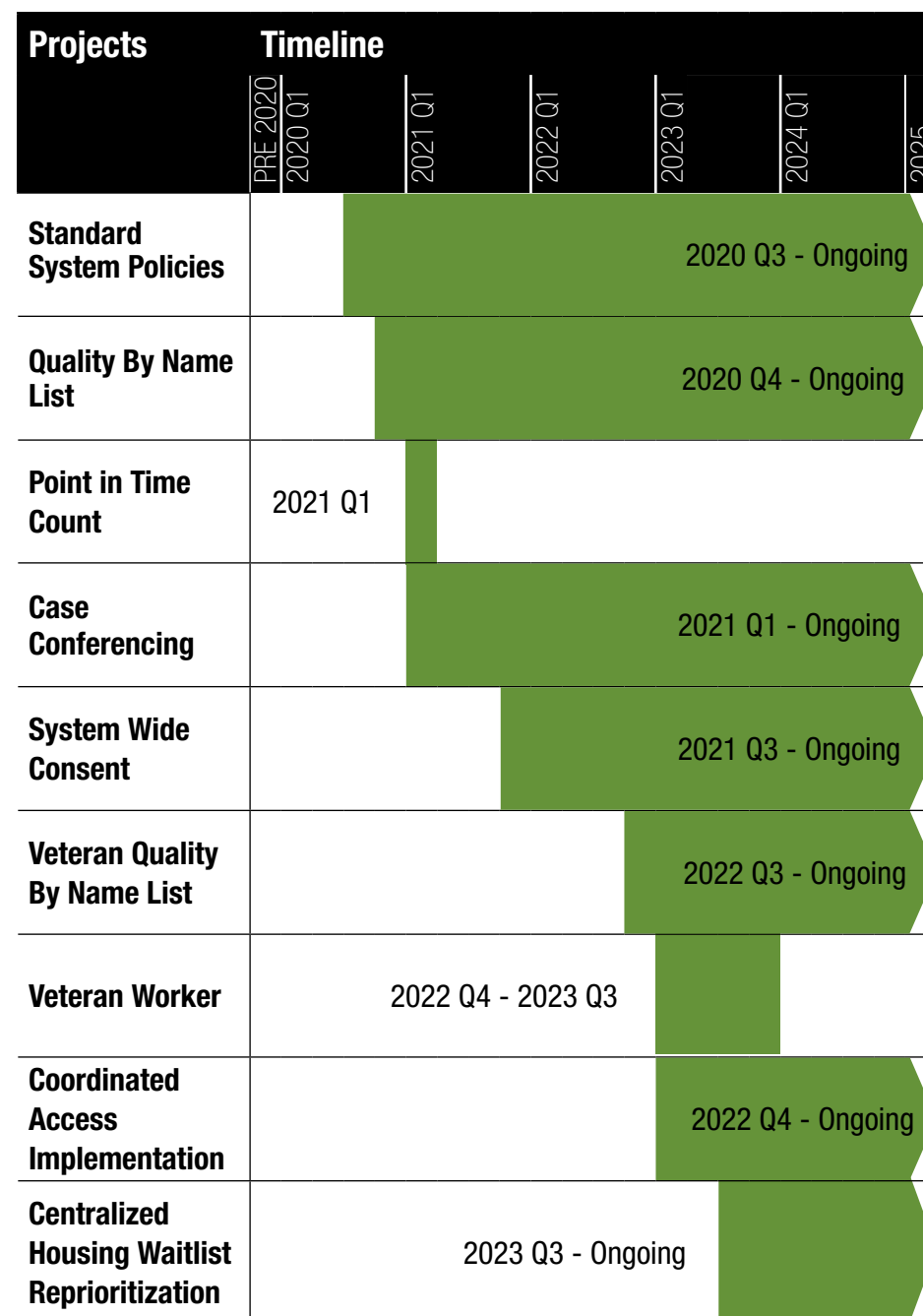
Housing-Focused
Strategy to address
Homelessness

After joining Built for Zero in 2019, Niagara’s homeless serving system adopted a way of looking at homeless services to make them better with the goal of achieving a functional zero end to homelessness. Niagara’s system transformation and investment is driven by recognized best practices, collaboration with our partners and making improvements one step at a time.

Homeless	The situation of an individual, family, or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect means and ability of acquiring it.
Functional Zero End to Homelessness	Achieved when the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness is zero, or if not zero, then either 3 or 0.1 per cent of the total number of individuals experiencing homelessness, whichever is greater.
Built for Zero	An ambitious national change effort helping a core group of leading communities end chronic homelessness and veteran homelessness.
Point in Time Count	An estimate of homelessness in a community during a given time-period, generally 24 hours.
Quality By Name List	A real-time list of all known people experiencing homelessness in a community. It includes a robust set of data points that support coordinated access and prioritization at a household level and an understanding of entries and exits from homelessness a system level.
Common Assessment	A transparent approach to support consistent matching and prioritization of individuals for appropriate services and housing resources.

Coordinated Access

Niagara adopted Coordinated Access to objectively match people with appropriate services no matter how they enter the homeless serving system. This was made possible by having all service providers use a **Quality By Name List** and **Common Assessment**. Standard system policies and system wide consent help make services consistent and referrals seamless for community members. Further enhancements increased the returns of veterans and long-term shelter users to housing.



Q1: Jan., Feb., March, Q2: April, May, June, Q3: July, Aug, Sept, Q4: Oct., Nov. Dec.

Housing Focused Shelters

Emergency shelters in Niagara have been adopting a housing focused approach that aligns with a **Housing First philosophy**. During COVID-19, an Isolation shelter was opened for those experiencing homelessness who needed to isolate, were sick, or recovering from COVID-19. Additional measures introduced during the Pandemic included expanding hotel shelter options and opening Niagara's first **Housing Focused Shelter**. Other enhancements addressed infection prevention and control, increased shelter capacity, decreased barriers for people accessing shelter, and increased returns to housing for people using shelter. A shelter capacity review completed in 2023 will inform future changes to better meet local need.

Housing First Philosophy

Is rooted in the underlying principle that people are better able to move forward with their lives if they are first housed. This is as true for people experiencing homelessness and those with mental health and addictions issues, as it is for anyone.

Housing Focused Shelter

A low-barrier emergency accommodation for people experiencing a housing crisis. Being housing focused means supporting people to return as soon as possible to safe, appropriate housing with the supports they need to stay housed.

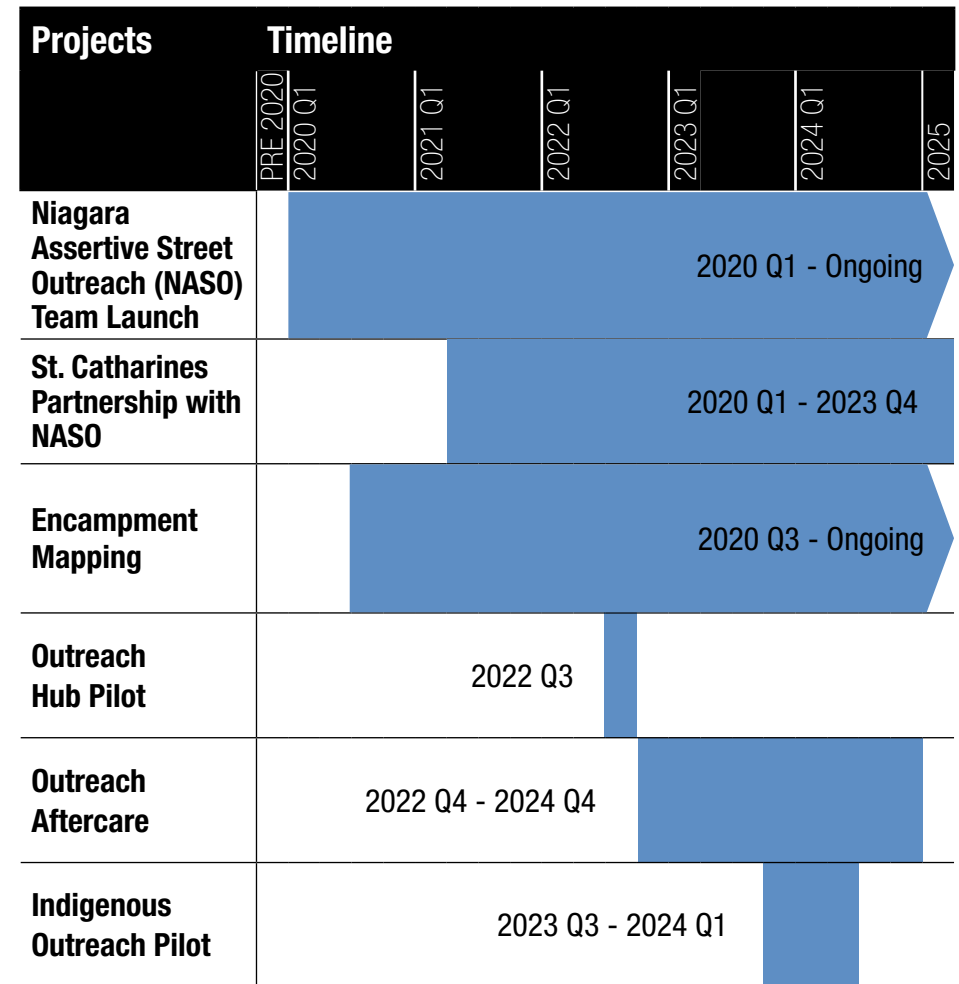
Projects	Timeline						
	PRE 2020	2020 Q1	2021 Q1	2022 Q1	2023 Q1	2024 Q1	2025
Isolation Shelter		2020 Q1 - 2022 Q2					
Hotel Shelter Expansion			2020 Q3 - 2021 Q2				
Accessibility Enhancements			2021 Q1 - 2022 Q3				
Housing Focused Shelter Pilot			2021 Q1 - 2022 Q2				
Updated Shelter Restriction Policy			2021 Q1 - Ongoing				
Expanded Landlord Engagement			2021 Q1 - Ongoing				
Shelter System Expansion			2022 Q1 - Ongoing				
Infection Prevention and Control Guidance			2022 Q2				
Shelter Beds Moved Back to Welland					2022 Q4 - Ongoing		
Updated Shelter Standards				2023 Q2 - Ongoing			
Shelter Capacity Review				2023 Q2			
Shelter Capacity Review Implementation				2023 Q3 - Ongoing			

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Assertive Street Outreach

Assertive Street Outreach was introduced through a collaboration between four service providers to provide a consistent region-wide support for people experiencing **unsheltered homelessness**. An **encampment mapping tool** supports a coordinated social service response to identify and respond to active and inactive encampments. Additional enhancements increase the returns of people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to housing and improved housing stability.

Unsheltered Homelessness	People living in places not designed for human habitation (car, garage, or tent) or in a public space (park, or sidewalk) or abandoned building.
Assertive Street Outreach	An evidence-based, housing-focused program which engages with people experiencing unsheltered homelessness to minimize the harmful effects of rough sleeping while working towards long-term housing solutions.
Outreach Aftercare	Supports to increase housing stability for people who have returned to housing from unsheltered homelessness.
Encampment Mapping Tool	A secure online software application used by all assertive street outreach service providers to collaboratively map the location of sites in Niagara where people are experiencing unsheltered homelessness. The tool also tracks services responses, including resources deployed at each site.

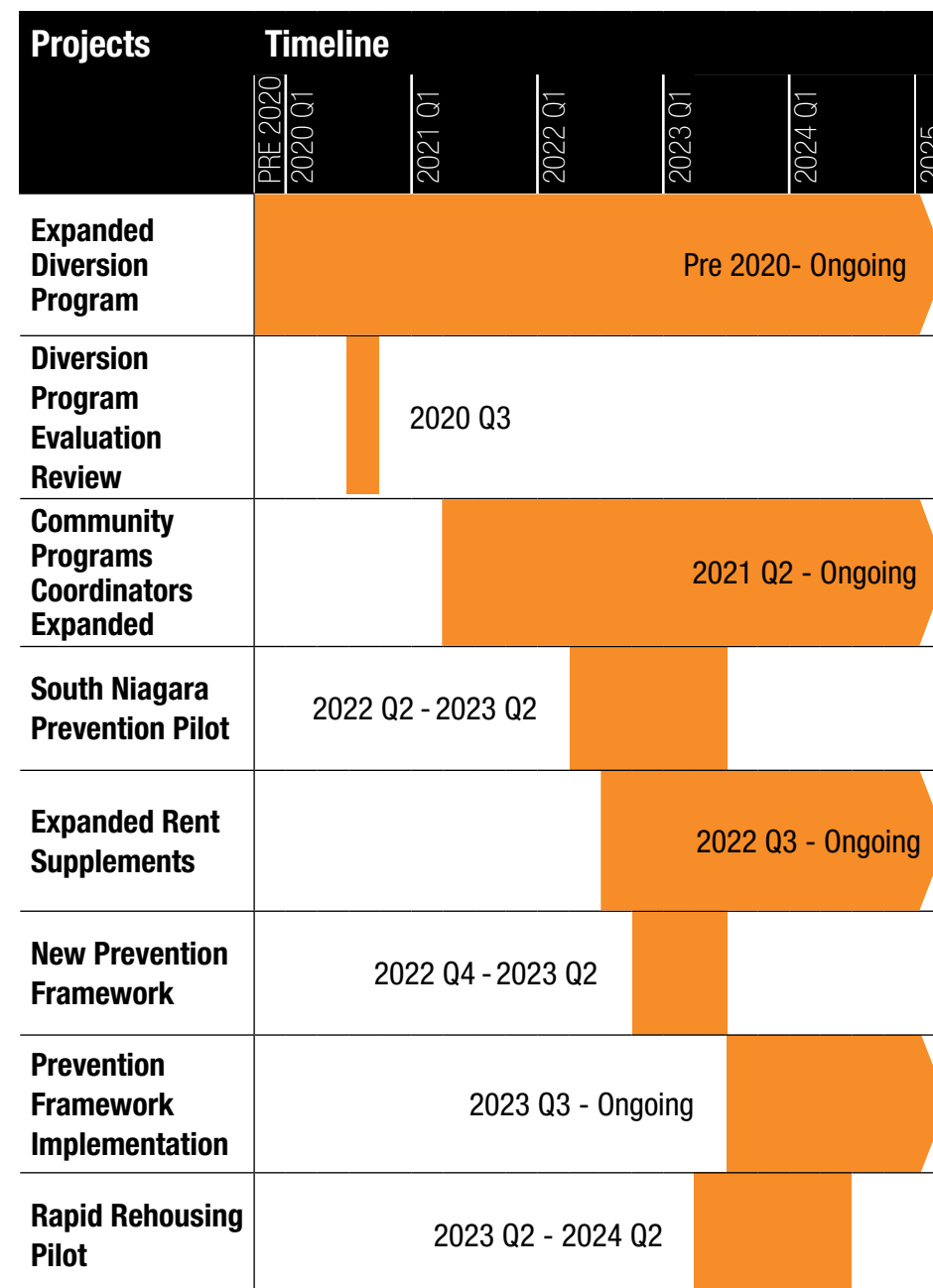


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Homelessness Prevention and Diversion

A consortium was formed by service providers who provide **Prevention** services to increase the quality and consistency of prevention service delivery. Niagara expanded its youth **Diversion** programs and introduced diversion for adults. A new prevention strategy will support increased use of best practices in homelessness prevention. System transformation in the area of prevention created readiness for a **Rapid Rehousing** pilot.

Prevention	Activities and supports to help sustain a safe and appropriate place to live when faced with the prospect of no longer being able to live there and becoming homeless.
Diversion	A practice to help people seeking shelter to identify immediate alternate safe and appropriate housing arrangements and connect them with services and financial assistance to return to permanent housing.
Community Programs Coordinators (CPCs)	Provide eviction prevention, tenant support and community engagement for households in Community Housing.
Rapid Rehousing	Short-term rental assistance and services tailored to individual needs that help people obtain housing quickly, increase self-sufficiency, and stay housed.



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Supportive Housing

Niagara continues to innovate in the area of supportive housing to increase available options for people experiencing homelessness to become successfully housed. Niagara's supportive housing prioritizes people experiencing **chronic homelessness**. The success of the housing focused shelter model inspired the piloting of an innovative **Bridge Housing** facility which later included a **Recuperative Care Bed Program**. The addition of more permanent supportive housing increases the return of people experiencing homelessness to housing.

Chronic Homelessness

Refers to individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness AND who have either experienced a total of at least 6 months (180 days) of homelessness over the past year or have had recurrent experiences of homelessness over the past 3 years, with a cumulative duration of at least 18 months (546 days).

Housing First and Home for Good Programs

A proven recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that focuses on moving individuals with complex needs into independent and permanent housing with case management to support housing retention and improved well-being.

Bridge Housing

A temporary support for individuals with significant need in the areas of mental health, addictions and physical health to prepare for permanent housing or permanent supportive housing.

Recuperative Care Bed Program

A short stay transition setting for individuals experiencing homelessness who are discharged from hospital and need supports to recover and recuperate.

Projects	Timeline						
	PRE-2020	2020 Q1	2021 Q1	2022 Q1	2023 Q1	2024 Q1	2025
Consolidated Housing First		2020 Q1 - Ongoing					
Expanded Peer Support		2020 Q1 - Ongoing					
Additional Home For Good Units			2020 Q4 - Ongoing				
Canada-Ontario Housing Benefit (COHB) Roll-out			2021 Q1 - Ongoing				
YWCA Oakdale Home For Good			2021 Q2 - Ongoing				
Salvation Army Housing Worker					2021 Q3 - 2022 Q4		
Bridge Housing			2021 Q3 - Ongoing				
Buchanan Permanent Supportive Housing				2022 Q1 - Ongoing			
Transfer of Housing First Units to Home for Good Program				2022 Q3 - Ongoing			
Increased Housing First/Home For Good Rent Supplements				2022 Q3 - Ongoing			
Recuperative Care Bed Program Pilot			2023 Q1 - 2024 Q2				
Indigenous Housing First Pilot			2023 Q3 - 2024 Q2				
New Supportive Housing				2024 Q1 - Ongoing			
New Transitional Housing				2024 Q2 - Ongoing			

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Community Housing

Housing Services and Niagara Regional Housing (NRH) continue to develop new community housing including a recent build at Hawkins Avenue in Niagara Falls, and new builds underway at York Street in Welland and Crescent Avenue in Fort Erie. New developments have included units for **Housing First** program participants. An expanded development team is providing project management support to non-profits developing community housing in Niagara. A Community Housing Master Plan has identified the needed supply of **community housing** and that there is sufficient land available on which to develop community housing.

Community Housing

Includes housing provided by Niagara Regional Housing as well as Non-Profits and Co-operative Housing as well as rent supplements and housing allowances with private landlords.

Projects	Timeline						
	PRE 2020	2020 Q1	2021 Q1	2022 Q1	2023 Q1	2024 Q1	2025
Community Housing Master Plan	Pre 2020 - 2022 Q2						
Community Housing Master Plan Roadmap and Implementation					2023 Q1 - Ongoing		
NRH Project Manager Expansion			2021 Q1 - Ongoing				
Hawkins Build (Includes Housing First Units)				2022 Q1 - Ongoing			
Rapid Housing Initiative (RHI)					2023 Q2 - Ongoing		
York Street (RHI 2, includes Housing First Units)					2023 Q2 - Ongoing		

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Partnerships with Other Sectors

Partnerships with other sectors including Health and Justice are essential to support the safety and overall well-being of people experiencing homelessness.

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	PRE 2020	2020 Q1	2021 Q1	2022 Q1	2023 Q1	2024 Q1	2025
Emergency Medical Services (EMS) Street Outreach		2020 Q1 - 2023 Q3					
Regional Essential Access to Coordinated Health (REACH) Clinic Expansion		2020 Q4 - Ongoing					
Mobile REACH Clinic		2021 Q1 - Ongoing					
Collaborative Homelessness and Mental Health Pilot (CHAMP)		2021 Q1 - 2023 Q1					
Niagara Regional Police Community Oriented Response and Engagement (CORE) Unit			2022 Q2 - Ongoing				
Expanded Mental Health and Addictions Support Home For Good			2022 Q3 - Ongoing				
Port Colborne Situation Table	Timeline: Pre-2020 – Ongoing						
Expansion of Situation Table		2023 Q4 - Ongoing					

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System Capacity Building

Niagara Region provides ongoing training to homeless services providers on recognized best practices, improves data to inform good decision-making, and includes input from people who have used homeless services in Niagara. These efforts ensure a consistent, professional, streamlined approach among homeless services providers.

Projects	Timeline						
	PRE 2020	2020 Q1	2021 Q1	2022 Q1	2023 Q1	2024 Q1	2025
Homelessness Data Strategy and Training		2020 Q1 - Ongoing					
Provider By-Name List Champions				2023 Q2 - Ongoing			
Lived Expert Journey Mapping		2020 Q1 - 2023 Q2					
Anti-Racism Anti-Oppression Training			2022 Q2				
Peer Support Training			2022 Q2				
Trauma Informed Care Training			2022 Q3				
Housing Focused Shelter Training				2023 Q2			
Common Assessment Tool Training				2023 Q3			
Diversion Training for Prevention Organizations				2023 Q3			

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Don't know where to call for help?

Dial 211 to access homelessness services or connect with over 50,000 services in Ontario.

Have a question about Niagara's homeless serving system?

**Email your question to:
homelessness@niagararegion.ca**

Niagara We're Here for You

June 2023