

## Executive Summary

Chatham County has been engaged in the work of addressing housing needs for more than 20 years. The changing landscape of Chatham County has increased the need for more affordable housing, as growth brings new residents and economic activity and creates increased pressures for existing residents. The most recent report, the Chatham County Affordable Rental Housing Report and Strategy Toolbox<sup>i</sup>, outlined housing trends and identified goals and strategies for implementation.

Given the changing environment over the last five years, the County has undertaken a strategic planning effort to create an updated Housing Action Plan. Working with Minnesota Housing Partnership, a national technical assistance provider through U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development, Chatham County and myriad partners participated in data collection, a strategic planning retreat, and follow up meetings to create the Action Plan. This report includes a summary of updated data on the state of housing, documents the strategic planning process, and summarizes the Housing Action Plan. These activities will be implemented over the next several years and will be monitored and evaluated to ensure continued relevancy.

Key issues that were identified through the data collection and environmental scan are noted below, as well as an overview of the Strategic Housing Action Plan.

## Data Trends

### *Economic Development Increases Housing Demand*

Large economic development projects throughout the County have or will bring billions of dollars in investment and nearly 10,000 jobs. This alone will have an impact on the demand for housing, let alone existing residents and new residents coming from elsewhere in the region or from out of state.

### *Limitations in Housing Development and Supply*

Housing development throughout the County has occurred in spurts but has generally not been enough to keep up with demand. Development along the 15-501 corridor as well as large, planned unit developments are working to address the lack of supply. However, limitations on development due to water and wastewater capacity have slowed down construction for new projects.

### *Housing Price Increases Create Cost-Burden*

Since the beginning of the COVID-19 pandemic, housing prices have increased dramatically. The median home sales price was around \$250,000 at the beginning of 2020, increasing to more than \$650,000 as of fall 2023. Low-income households have fewer affordable options, and the rate of housing-cost burden has increased, particularly for low-income renters.

### *Affordable Housing Development Has Not Kept Pace with Demand*

Several affordable housing projects have been developed over the last five years on both the east and west sides of the County. However, a marginal increase in units has not been enough to meet the demand, as the number of cost-burden renter households continues to increase, despite an increase in affordable rental units.

## Factors Influencing Chatham County Management of Housing Initiatives

### *Limitations Given Development Capacity and Processes*

Challenges with current development capacity due to water and wastewater limitations have reduced the amount of affordable housing that can be developed within the County.

### *Growing Internal Staff Capacity*

County efforts to increase housing staff capacity continue, though it is understood that this takes both time and resources. Increased staff capacity will be needed to efficiently provide funding and programming in partnership with housing developers and service provider organizations.

### *Need for Capacity Building for Community Organizations and Partners*

Working with partners, such as service provider organizations, neighboring local governments, landlords, and businesses may increase service provisions, but makes collaborative approaches more complex.

### *Lack of Streamlined Communication and Collaboration Among Partners*

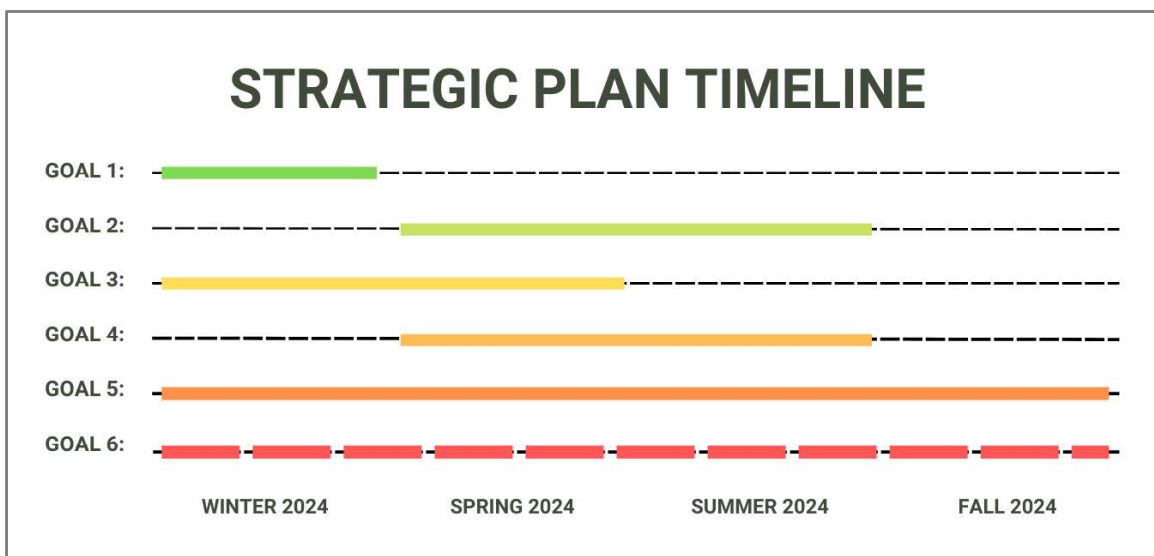
Communication between County departments, service providers, and the broader community is not currently streamlined. This creates a lack of a clear narrative around the issue or a unified approach to addressing it.

### *Housing Market Conditions and Economic Influences Increase Needs and Challenges*

External factors, such as the housing market, economy, and legal limitations pose challenges to new housing production.

## Timeline and Outline of Housing Action Plan

The Strategic Housing Action Plan includes six broad goals to address the County’s housing challenges. Each of these goals has associated outcomes as well as strategies for implementation. These strategies will be implemented over the next several years, with many beginning throughout 2024. A complete summary of Action Plan goals, objectives, and strategies can be found on the next page.



# AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGIC PLAN SUMMARY

