

Grey County Housing and Homelessness Plan

2014 Year in Review

Submitted to:

Ministry of Municipal Affairs and
Housing
Housing Division
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Submitted via email



County of Grey

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Background

The County of Grey Housing and Homelessness Plan encompasses the entire housing continuum including homelessness prevention, transitional and emergency housing, supportive housing, rent geared to income housing, private rental housing and affordable homeownership

The Grey County Housing and Homelessness Plan outlines the vision and direction that forms a 10 year strategy to improve the housing and homelessness system in Grey County. The plan builds on past successes, enhances current programs and promotes and strengthens community networks. The plan describes how this will be achieved through a list of recommendations aimed at creating positive outcomes.

Each year an evaluation of the implementation and tracking of key indicators are reported on. The following is an evaluation of the 2014, the first year of the 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Grey County.

The plan is divided into four key sections:

- Sustain and Create Affordable Housing
- Homelessness Prevention
- Transitional Housing
- Service Coordination and Collaboration

Progress Report

An engaged and improved process with tenants, staff, agencies and public is needed to meet the current and future demands for affordable housing. At the same time fiscal responsibility, accountability and looking for efficiencies is needed to maintain and sustain our aging infrastructure and assets. The following is an update on the progress of the Grey County Housing and Homelessness 10 Year Plan- 2014 a Year in Review.

Sustain and Create Affordable Housing

Affordable housing is defined as housing that is less than 30% of a household income. A number of issues have led to a shortage in affordable housing units in Grey County; lack of affordability, an aging housing stock and lack of appropriate unit types in certain areas of the County. The following are recommendations:

1. Maximize use of Federal, Provincial, Municipal resources for new affordable rental housing
2. Increase number of rent supplement units
3. Investigate strategies to upgrade physical qualities of units
4. Investigate utility costs for homeowners and tenants with limited financial resources
5. Develop a long term strategy to sustain and support existing social housing
6. Support affordable housing in municipal planning documents
7. Community Improvement Plans: Economic Development

As part of the 10 year plan, Grey County Housing has committed to 200 new affordable units of housing and 300 renovations of affordable housing through various programs over the next 10 years. The Investment in Affordable Housing Program provides funding for five years for the rent supplement, homeownership, rental build and Ontario Renovates programs. The recent extension of funding of the Investment of Affordable Housing program has allowed Grey County to commit to 150 new affordable housing units through the rental build, rent supplement and homeownership program and maintenance of 140 units of housing through the Ontario Renovates program in the next 5 years. The County is working with interested parties to build 10 -12 units of affordable housing as part of developments. A request for proposal will go out in January of 2016.

In 2014 \$339,000 was invested in 15 rent supplements for a 10 year period. Staff are working with local agencies to provide a subsidy and service for individuals in need of affordable housing and mental health supports. Fifteen Homeownership loans in the amount of \$131,155 and 39 Ontario Renovates projects in the amount of \$393,074 were supported in 2014.

The housing pillar of the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force has an Above Standards Housing Project looking at strategies to inform and provide assistance and consistency for by law and regulatory professionals.

Repairs to furnaces have been added to our Sustainable Housing Benefit program to compliment the Ontario Renovates program.

Grey County is working closely with local utility companies to develop relationships and assist low income residents to provide alternative arrangements for payments waive deposits and late fees.

Grey County supports the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force and United Way in lobbying the Province to stabilize utility rates for low income earners/families.

Building Condition Assessments and Energy Audits were conducted on all Grey County owned and Non Profit Housing Providers buildings and family homes. A ten year capital

plan has been developed for all County owned homes and training session on a five year capital plan for non profits is in the works for 2015.

Plan Amendment#110 proposes to amend the County Official Plan by including policies to support secondary suites. OPA#110 was circulated to a number of stakeholders, and based on the comments received, some of the proposed policies require further research including up to date data to support the proposed policies. It should be noted that some local municipalities have updated their official plans and a number of the municipalities have included policies that support secondary suites.

Council has supported the establishment of a development charges grant-in-lieu fund whereby developments that meet the proposed criteria will be eligible to apply for a grant-in-lieu of development charges.

The County Official Plan includes policies which encourage a diverse range of housing types. When meeting with developers during pre-submission consultation meetings, County staff encourage developers to explore providing a diverse range of housing types and trying to increase density where possible.

Community Relations Workers have developed a new tenant handbook and at the two week mark visit the new tenant. There are plans to survey of all tenants for community services and enhancements to improve their quality of life

2014 economic development for county of grey consultation sessions, social services and housing part of sessions, plan in 2015 to follow

Future Steps:

- Addition of more rent supplements for private renters
- Request for proposal for new affordable builds
- 2015 workshop on risk management for non profit providers
- Tool kit for landlords/tenants from Above Standard Housing Project
- Internet pilot project Alpha Street Complex
- Workshop on capital planning for non profit providers
- Regeneration scan of family units of Grey County housing
- Tenant survey
- The Housing Study data will be updated. Following the update the proposed policies will be reviewed and brought back to Council for consideration
- Development fee deferral agreement
- Release of 2015 economic development plan for Grey County

Homelessness Prevention

8. Promote the formation of an eviction diversion program for Grey County
9. Initiate a tracking system to identify individuals experiencing homelessness
10. Focus on supports for those individuals with long term homelessness
11. Ensure appropriate discharge plans for local hospitals, police, child welfare system, corrections
12. Advocate with other levels of government for changes in legislations to reduce homelessness

Direct deposit of Ontario Works and Ontario Disability Support Program are recommended for hard to serve to maintain tenancy.

Planning is underway with Poverty Task Force Housing pillar for sessions for landlords and tenants in 2015/16.

Sustainable Housing Benefit CHPI funds to maintain housing by providing additional supports for utilities and rent

Coordination with United Way partners for accessing credit and budget counseling.

Future Steps:

- Engage emergency responders for awareness and education on working with hard to serve.
- Hire Homeless Outreach Worker and implement pilot project to work with persons experiencing chronic homelessness using housing first model. Engage community agencies to participate in the project. Project to start April 2015

Transitional Housing

13. Enhance supportive housing with on-going supports through collaborative community partnerships
14. Work with community partners to enhance existing support services through case management and focused collaboration

Investment in domiciliary hostels through continued funding for ongoing resident need and additional funding to meet future fire code legislation

An Affordable Housing and Housing with Supports forum was held October 2014 to bring together Grey Bruce community partners to learn about urban and rural community initiatives.

Discussions were started with Hope Grey Bruce to build a model of interactive housing, social service and supportive housing for wrap around supports by breaking down mandates and confidentiality barriers. Rent supplements are being provided to supportive housing to extract intensive services no longer needed and maintain affordable housing

Future Steps:

- A model of interactive housing between social services, housing and mental health services for Grey County.

Service Coordination and Collaboration

15. Continue to support the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force
16. Develop Citizen Engagement Strategies
17. Collaborate with community partners to explore the needs of off reserve housing for Aboriginal populations
18. Encourage organizations to engage in integrated service and system planning

Action groups through the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force for affordable housing, income security, food security and transportation are supported by County staff as active members of the working groups. These working groups draft local policies and are involved in a number of local initiatives such as the coordinated rural transportation plan, AAA housing project, affordable and attainable food project and the living wage campaign.

Representation from Saugeen Reserve at local Social Service/Housing Network consisting of Housing, OW, ODSP and childcare programs

Current renovations of Grey County Building being planned for future human service integration opportunities such as a shared service counter.

Future Steps:

- Surveys for all tenants of Grey County Housing to identify needs and services for improving quality of life
- Internal liaison with M'wikwedon Cultural Centre to exchange information on upcoming events and inform on local programming.

Community Partners

The following is a list of community partners involved in the development and implementation of the Grey County 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan

Ontario Disability Support Program	United Way Grey Bruce
Hope Grey Bruce	Bruce Grey Public Health
Y Housing Program	Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force
Non Profit Housing Providers	Safe n Sound
O Share	Victim Services
South East Grey Support Services	211
Men's Program	Tanner Senior Centre
Alzheimer's Society	Habitat for Humanity
Community Living Owen Sound	Women's Centre
Community Living Hanover	Beaver Valley Outreach
Blue Mountain Affordable Housing Task Force	Victorious Living
Victorious Order of Nurses	Salvation Army
Keystone	M'Wikewdong
G&B House	Various Dom Hostel Providers
Bruce Grey Family and Children Services	CCAC
Legal Aid	Various Local Churches
Home and Community Supports	Red Cross
Various Departments within Grey County	Southgate Community Connection
Meal on the Hill	Community Representatives
People with Lived Experience	

Reporting

Grey County reports annually to our stakeholders through presentations to County Council, the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force, the Healthy Communities Initiative, Non Profit Providers, Grey Bruce Health Unit and other interested community partners. A copy of the report is also available on our website and sent as part of our newsletter to tenants of Grey County Housing.