

Report PDR-CW-22-17

To: Warden Barfoot and Members of Grey County Council
From: Scott Taylor
Meeting Date: April 13, 2017
Subject: **Grey County Age Friendly Planning Study**
Status: Recommendation adopted by Committee as presented per Resolution CW-64-17; Endorsed by County Council April 27, 2017 per Resolution CC19-17;

Recommendation

- 1. That Report PDR-CW-22-17 regarding the Grey County Age Friendly Planning Study, prepared by University of Guelph Planning Students, be received for information;**
- 2. That County Planning staff consider the findings of this study as part of the Recolour Grey Official Plan Review process; and**
- 3. That this study be shared with staff from the County, member municipalities, the Grey Bruce Health Unit, and those that requested the results of the Grey County Age Friendly Planning Study.**

Background

As part of Recolour Grey, the County is reviewing our Official Plan to ensure it is serving the needs of residents and businesses. One of the initial engagement questions for Recolour Grey asked people to think about where they saw themselves (and the County) in 5, 10, 15, or 20 years. The answer to this question may be radically different if answered today by a 15 year old versus a 65 year old.

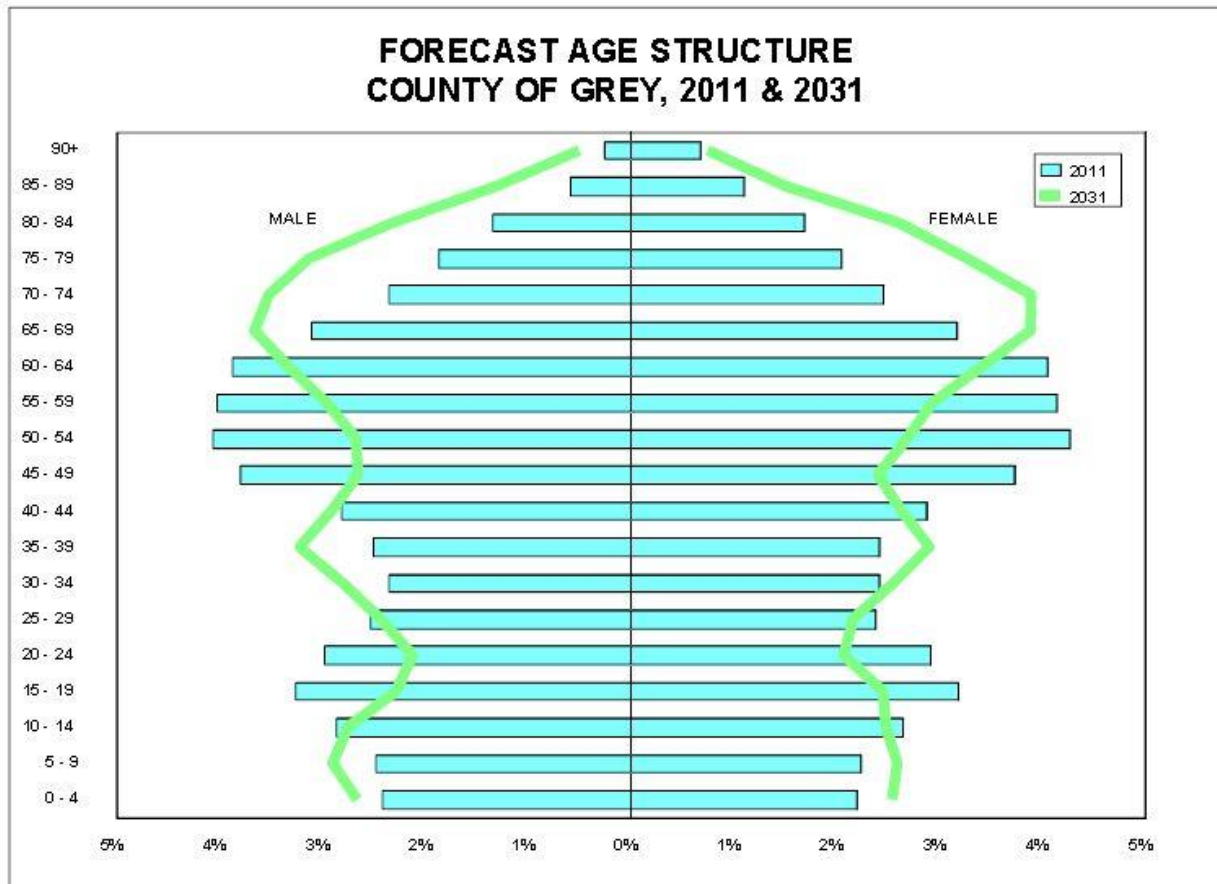
Through the Recolour Grey public consultation that has occurred to date, County staff have received feedback from a broad range of people and groups. In beginning to analyze the feedback received, two very distinct groups' needs within the County have emerged, youth and older adults. One of the first community events staff attended as part of Recolour Grey was the Youth Roots Summit in Hanover. At that event, staff received a number of comments from youth, which ranged from the need for;

- more recreational facilities and activities for young people,
- better employment opportunities, to
- being treated as contributors to the community, rather than loiterers and vandals.

Staff also heard from many older adults as part of Recolour Grey, who flagged;

- accessibility and transportation issues,
- housing affordability, and
- the need for services catering to older adults.

With the County’s aging population, including an in-migration of retirees, and an outmigration of some of its youth, the County needs to be sure we support all age groups. As part of the County’s 2015 Growth Management Strategy, Hemson Consulting Ltd. forecast the below population pyramid to the year 2031, based on the 2011 Census.



Source: Hemson Consulting Ltd. based on Statistics Canada 2011 Census.

Figure 1: Grey County's Population Pyramid Forecast to 2031

In response to the Recolour Grey comments, and the pending demographic changes, the County partnered with students Katherine Howes, Neil Stoop, Ying (Ingrid) Li, and Xinyue (Jenny) Li, from the University of Guelph Masters Planning program to further research age friendly communities. Although the study paid particular attention to these two demographics (youth and older adults), the intent is to ensure we also plan for all age groups in between. This topic is also of interest to Grey Bruce Health Unit staff, who partnered with Planning staff on this Study.

As part of this project, the student consulting team;

- visited the County,
- met with Grey Bruce Health Unit and County Planning staff,
- conducted a digital survey with Grey County residents,
- received feedback from an in-class survey with grade 8 students,
- interviewed local planners, Health Unit staff, economic development officers, County staff (from various departments), and key stakeholders who provide services to youth or older-adults,
- researched other municipal approaches to age friendly communities, and
- provided recommendations for the County to consider moving forward with Recolour Grey policies.

In total over 150 surveys were completed and a number of additional interviews were conducted with key informants. The students also had the ability to review some excellent source materials that were developed, or are under development locally. The Town of Hanover shared their 2016 Age Friendly Needs Assessment Study with the students. Materials from the Council on Aging Grey Bruce Owen Sound, and the Seniors Focus Group (towards a Seniors Advisory Committee) sessions in Grey Highlands were also reviewed by the students.

County staff hope to continue to liaise with some of the stakeholders from this project, such as the Council on Aging Grey Bruce Owen Sound, on Recolour Grey and other projects moving forward.

County staff would also note that some of the feedback from these surveys extends beyond the purview of age friendly communities. These additional responses will be beneficial in the overall Recolour Grey process.

A link this Study has been posted below, and will also be posted on the County website shortly.

[Link to Grey County Age Friendly Planning Study](#)

Existing Planning Policy

Planning at its core is about looking forward. Planning policy aims to envision the community's needs over a 20-year horizon, the standard length of an official plan. Within these policies, we need to ensure that all members of the community, now and in the future are considered, whether they be youth, older adults, wealthy, or of more modest financial means, etc. Demographic trends such as birth rates, growth, migration (in and out), and employment all factor into what the community needs will be over the planning horizon.

Section 1.4.1 of the Provincial Policy Statement (PPS) requires municipalities 'to provide an appropriate range of housing types to meet the needs of current and future residents.' Section 1.3 of the PPS makes similar demands on municipalities to plan for 'a mix of employment and institutional uses' to meet the long term needs. Section 1.6.7 of the PPS speaks to transportation systems that efficiently move people and goods. Similar to the introductory remarks in this report, the housing, employment, and transportation needs of the County vary greatly across different age cohorts.

The County Plan echoes the policy provisions of the PPS, with key sections on housing including apartments in houses, growth management, settlement areas, transportation, and subdivisions. Recent studies such as the Growth Management Strategy and Housing Study Updates will help inform updates to the County Plan, alongside the Grey County Age Friendly Planning Study.

Findings of the Grey County Age Friendly Planning Study

As part of their research, the student consulting team came to the following conclusions, which have been divided into transportation, employment, and housing policy recommendations.

'Transportation Options

- *Improve community participation in the transit planning process, applying the 8 to 80 cities rule (i.e. if a city is good for 8 year olds and 80 year olds, it will generally meet the needs of those age groups in between as well).*
- *Investigate options to increase transportation opportunities in the County (further examining the viability of improvements to community-based volunteer transit programs).*
- *Pursue potential collaboration opportunities with local school boards to utilize non-traditional transportation options.*
- *Address active transportation planning in the Official Plan.*
- *Encourage further development and enhancement of pedestrian trails throughout the County, including multi-use trails.*

- *Support trail routes created by a linked system between community facilities, major parks, and open space areas.*
- *Support community based active transportation planning at the municipal level.*
- *To support ageing in place, investigate creating mobile services, to provide opportunities to those who are not mobile.*

Employment Opportunities

- *Continued investment in internet infrastructure to attract new employment opportunities.*
- *Increase community involvement and asset-based planning in the economic development process within the County.*
- *Utilize existing training centres and schools to engage the County's youth.*

Housing Variety

- *Continue to support a large diversity of housing options in the County as outlined in the current official plan.*
- *Increase efforts to attract diversified housing development.*

Outdoor Spaces and Buildings

- *Invest in physical infrastructure for open spaces (benches, age-friendly signage, community gardens).*
- *Invest in existing infrastructure to create a variety of multi-purpose recreation facilities.*
- *Generate guidelines to ensure that accessibility standards are being utilized in all county facilities.'*

Financial/Staffing/Legal/Information Technology Considerations

At this point there are no financial, staffing, legal or information technology considerations directly stemming from this report. County Planning staff will consider the findings of this Study to;

- implement some of the ideas into Recolour Grey, and
- share feedback with other County departments, member municipalities, and outside agencies where appropriate.

County staff will provide future updates to Council, on moving forward with recommendations to further support age friendly initiatives. Examining age friendly

community policies is 'just the beginning of the conversation'. Further work is required by the County and member municipalities to ensure we are providing for the needs of our residents now and in the future.

The work completed by the student consulting team was without cost to the County, and done as part of the coursework for their master's degree. County staff are grateful to the students' efforts in this regard, and would note that having to pay a consultant to complete a similar study would likely cost between \$30,000 - \$35,000.

Link to Strategic Goals/Priorities

Supporting the short and long-term needs of the community is a key priority for the County, and a priority that spans multiple departments. While certain demographics are less likely to attend planning public meetings or open houses, we need to make sure the needs of all age groups are considered in our County operations. Having the ability to collaborate with universities and students is a 'win-win' for the County and the schools/students.

Attachments

[Grey County Age Friendly Planning Study](#)

Respectfully submitted by,

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Director Sign Off: *Randy Scherzer*