



Grey  
County

Colour It Your Way

## Housing and Homelessness

*2015 Report*

**Down with Homelessness - Up with Housing!**



# Background

**The Grey County Housing and Homelessness Plan** forms the **10 year strategy** for improving the housing and homelessness system in Grey County. The plan builds on past successes, enhances current programs and promotes and strengthens community networks.

Everyone deserves a safe, appropriate and affordable place to live. During our consultation process with Grey County residents, we asked:

*“What needs to happen so everyone in Grey County has access to appropriate housing?”*

## What we heard:

- We need more affordable, safe, accessible, well maintained housing
- The demand for affordable housing exceeds the supply.
- A lack of jobs and supports is the prime reason for housing issues.
- People need housing first.
- We need accessible supportive housing.
- We need an emergency housing system.
- We need to encourage the province to change laws that hold people back.
- Both landlords and tenants need to better understand their responsibilities.
- Agencies need to cooperate - *No Wrong Door*.



## Summary:

This annual report highlights the progress made on goals of the Grey County 10 Year Housing and Homelessness plan in 2015.

The update includes funding initiatives, success stories, pilot projects and highlights teamwork among community members, service providers and the County of Grey. Together we can help everyone have safe, appropriate and affordable housing.



# Our Targets:

-  **Support 200 more affordable housing units** in the next 10 years through rent supplement, Homeownership and new rental programs.
-  Help **renovate and repair 100 homes** for owners with limited incomes such as seniors and people with disabilities.
-  **Renovate 100** homes to make them more accessible for homeowners with limited income.
-  **Preserve 1380 units of social housing** through responsible management and planning.
-  Preserve **110 transitional housing spaces for people with special needs** through the domiciliary hostel program.



## Did you know...

Substandard and unaffordable housing is linked to mental illness and other diseases and illnesses. Safe, affordable and appropriate housing improves quality of life. Supportive housing improves the mental health of those with serious mental illness including long hospital stays. The average daily per diem for affordable housing in Canada is less than that of emergency shelter, an acute hospital bed or incarceration:

Affordable Housing	\$38.50
Emergency Shelter	\$44.50
Acute Hospital Bed	\$917.50
Psychiatric Hospital Bed	\$505.50
Jail	\$300.00

## Our Mission:

To collaborate with community partners and private enterprises to develop a coordinated system of services needed by residents of the County of Grey to obtain, maintain and sustain safe, appropriate and affordable housing.



# 2015 Progress on Grey County Housing & Homelessness Plan

## Creating Affordable Housing

- 122 people assisted with monthly financial subsidy at an average of \$200 a month
- \$279,460 spent helping 26 households make repairs and increase energy efficiency in their homes through the Ontario Renovates Program
- \$221,030 spent helping 27 households make a down payment on homes through the Homeownership Program
- Development charges fund of \$50,000 to support affordable housing
- Development charges fee deferral agreement
- Continued work with sector associations for federal reinvestment for social and affordable housing

## Sustaining Affordable Housing

- \$200,000 spent upgrading Housing with related supports (former Domiciliary Hostels) with sprinkler systems to maintain health and safety of residents.
- \$133,226 invested through the Ecofit program to repair social housing units (program started March of 2014)
- \$800,000 over three years for the Alpha Street revitalization program for insulation, waterproofing foundations, new patios, privacy screens, landscaping, painting, lighting, windows and free internet.
- Supported Grey Bruce Public Health in the Above Standard Housing Project for Grey and Bruce Counties. Hosted focus groups with tenants, landlords and municipal bylaw officers.
- \$3,446,283 spent in support of non-profit housing providers to offer affordable housing

# Preventing Homelessness

- \$637,173 from the Sustainable Housing Fund helped prevent households from becoming homeless.
- Helped 377 households move to affordable housing.
- Helped 224 households pay their utility bills.
- 12 community agencies were funded to work with people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness.
- Y Housing Services provided service to more than 1500 visitors to their program
- Financial support for the Safe n Sound store front drop in centre for people looking for affordable housing.



## Collaboration with Community Partners

- We bring our services to communities through satellite offices in Hanover, Durham, Markdale, Dundalk and Meaford.
- We support the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force and the various projects in transportation, food security, housing and income security.
- Grey County is working toward developing a rural transportation plan.
- Funding and/or support for various community initiatives and partnerships
- Grey County is working with community partners and agencies to bring services into Grey County Housing.



## Community Relations Worker (CRW)

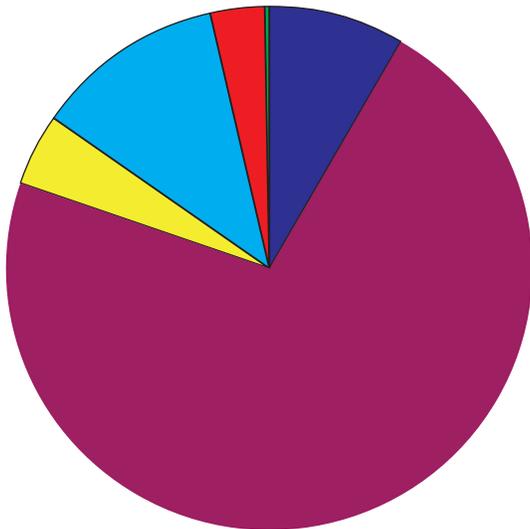
Grey County Housing's **Community and Tenant Relations** work with tenants to bring in supports based on the needs of the tenant. Currently over 20 community agencies partner with Grey County Housing. These partnerships have built a stronger community for our tenants through programs such as community gardens & meals, financial literacy, health and well-being, positive parenting and youth engagement.

# What is Social Housing?

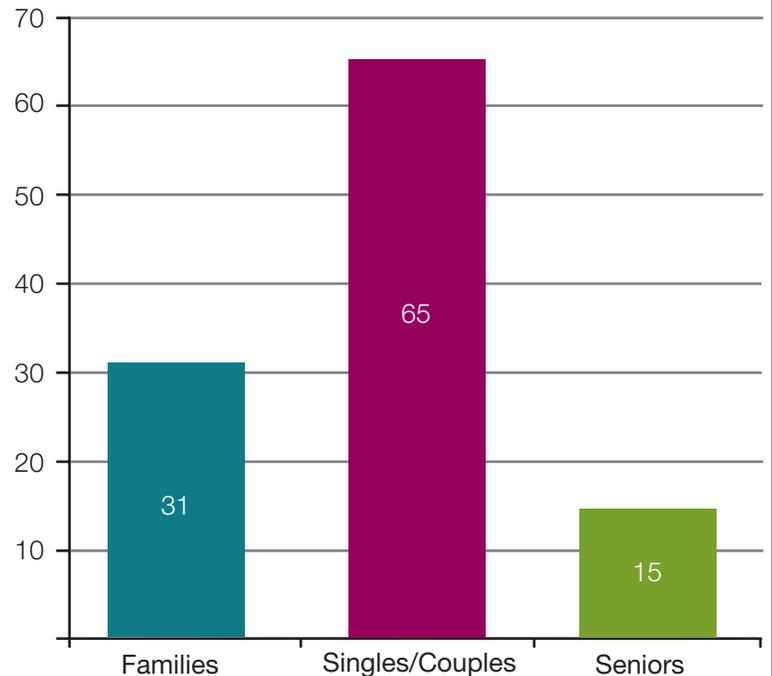
In Grey County, there are 888 units of rent-geared-to-income housing operated by the Housing Department. In addition, the department also supports an additional 603 non profit housing units.

Size Distribution for Grey County Housing Units

- Bachelor (76)
- 1 Bedroom (637)
- 3 Bedrooms (104)
- 2 Bedrooms (41)
- 4 Bedrooms (28)
- 5 Bedrooms (2)



Applicants Who Received Housing (2015)



## Rent-Geared-to-Income Assistance

Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance is commonly called subsidized housing. People who are eligible for RGI assistance pay reduced rent that is roughly equal to 30% of their total gross household income.



# Housing Needs Community Planning and Collaboration!

## Rural Transportation Pilot Project

Grey County staff have been working with interested transportation stakeholders to determine the best way to provide accessible transportation in rural Grey and Bruce counties. Stakeholders include Home and Community Support Services (HCSS), Grey County (Ontario Works), the Meaford Handivan and Beaver Valley Outreach.

The pilot's goal is to provide low cost community transportation services to the citizens in Grey and Bruce counties who face transportation barriers. HCSS is the lead agency for the pilot.

- ✓ Received funding in 2015 through the South West Local Health Integration Network to purchase "Tripspark", a technology for coordinating transportation services in an efficient manner by matching client needs with available vehicles.
- ✓ Grey County Received \$99,790.00 from the Ministry of Transportation (MTO) Community Transportation Pilot Grant Program.



## Poverty Task Force

The Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force's core purpose is to enable community partnerships to advocate for poverty reduction and elimination across Grey and Bruce Counties.



- Supports a "community of change" that focuses on reducing poverty by addressing root causes and taking action that leads to long-term change.
- Focus on community-based action in 4 key sectors: housing, income security, food security and transportation.
- Addresses poverty stigma and education taking a Bridges Out of Poverty approach carried out through Bridges Action Group, Community Voices, Getting Ahead program and Bridges training.
- Continue to build partnerships with key community stakeholders, most recently with Refugee Community Initiatives

# Alpha Street Revitalization

Grey County committed over \$800,000 to the revitalization of Alpha Street Family Housing over three years. The revitalization includes: insulation, waterproofing foundations, new extended patios and dividers, improved lighting, security system, landscaping, windows, painting and free internet.

Alpha Street is home to over 100 children. Grey County Housing and Grey County IT departments are working together on a pilot project that will provide free Wi-Fi internet to the 68 households. Grey County is also working with local service agencies for access to affordable computers. Providing internet access and the use of computers ensures children have the same opportunities and tools as their peers.

The goal of the Alpha Street Wi-Fi project is to explore opportunities for providing Internet and computer access to all social housing tenants and to develop models for delivering these services across other Grey County's housing sites.



# Grey Bruce Task Force on Crystal Meth and Other Drugs

The Task Force guides the investigation of solutions for community impacts of drugs and alcohol usage and abuse throughout Grey and Bruce Counties. Awareness and education results in an informed public that is ready and willing to partner for initiatives to deal with these problems for families and their communities.



# Getting AHEAD Graduates

A partnership with Grey County Social Services and Adult Learning Center to encourage participants facing barriers to search out resources.

- ✓ Since 2009 there have been 21 Getting AHEAD Programs running through Grey County and 159 people have graduated.
- ✓ 89% retention rate from beginning the group to graduation



## Testimonials

“My life was directionless.”

“Realizing where I wanted to be in life was the first step but not the final one.”

“I discovered through this workshop; it is only the beginning of my journey.”

# Bruce Grey Data Information Sharing Collaboration (BG DISC)

The Bruce Grey Data Information Sharing Collaborative (BG DISC) is a collective of non-profit, social service, government, health and education organizations. They share vital rural data to better inform regional programming, policies and funding for social supports.

# Above Standard Housing Project

The Grey Bruce Health Unit and the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force initiated the Above Standard Housing Project (ASH) in 2014. ASH seeks in the short term to better understand the local factors that contribute to substandard housing conditions. In the long term, it is hoped this understanding lead to strategies/initiatives that will improve and sustain housing conditions; moving from ‘substandard’ to ‘above standard’

# Ontario Renovates

Ontario Renovates helps low to moderate income homeowners repair and renovate their homes or make them more accessible. Forgivable loans of up to \$15,000 are provided for repairs. If the property is sold within 10 years, the loan is due back to the County. Forgiveness of funding occurs at an equal rate over the 10 years. Returned funds go back to Ontario Renovates. Grants are provided up to \$5,000 for accessibility renovations.

**In 2015, there were 27 renovation projects worth over \$493,000!**

“Grey County – Ontario Renovates Program came at a time when myself and my daughter struggled to get through a cold Grey County winter and heating with electric base board heaters, we could not keep up with the bills and it was always cold.

I applied for the Ontario Renovates program and it was suggested that we switch my current heating source to a Heat Pump and it not only make a huge difference on my heating bill, I now know my daughter is warm when I snuggle her in a night. This program made a huge difference in our life.” – Grey County Resident



## Homeownership

This program is designed to provide renters with a loan, up to 5% of the purchase price, to assist them in purchasing their own home. Applicants must be eligible for a mortgage and must meet program eligibility.

“I would have never pictured myself as a single parent becoming a home owner, but thanks to Grey County, I was able to get my son and I out of rental apartments and into a house we now call home.” - Grey County Resident

## Y Pilot Program - Community Outreach

After numerous evictions, months of boarding houses and couch surfing, Monica was lost. To make matters worse, she was a victim of abuse and lived with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD). Monica had ongoing history with the YMCA Housing and emergency shelter since 2010. After many years, she was ready to make the necessary changes to secure safe and affordable housing. This also led to family reconnections. In May, Monica secured housing in her community of choice and, with the supports of Community Outreach program, was able to buy important items such as furniture, grocery cards, a cellphone, and bus tickets to assist in her future goals.

Monica has regular scheduled check-ins with her worker to discuss issues and ensure she stays on track.



## What's Next???

- Pilot Project in 2016 to enhance services for housing with supports
- Expression of interest for private sector and community organizations to build new affordable housing units
- Poverty Task Force above standard housing project
- Electronic simplified application process for social housing wait list and programs
- Pilot project with McMaster University to offer tenants weekly health assessments in own apartment building
- National Housing Day Forum
- Transportation – ongoing pilot project (phase 2)

## Contact us:

Grey County Housing  
595 9<sup>th</sup> Avenue East  
Owen Sound, ON N4K 3R3  
Phone: 519-376-5744  
Fax: 519-376-0445  
Website: [www.grey.ca](http://www.grey.ca)

