

FILLING THE GAPS

Huron County Housing and Homelessness Report Card

A Year in Review...

The Long-Term Affordable Housing and Homelessness Plan for the County of Huron was created to be balanced, planned and sustainable.

In 2014, The Plan identified nine key areas for action in response to a changing funding environment for affordable housing and homelessness services. With more flexible funding and a greater shift towards local decision making and planning, the following initiatives are now underway.



The Housing

First Philosophy

Stable housing is a basic human right and once housing is obtained, other enduring issues such as addictions or mental health can be appropriately addressed.

#1 Establishment of a Steering Committee

The Steering Committee is comprised of multi-disciplinary community partners and stakeholders who guide the work of The Plan, along with adding a locally relevant lens to reflect the current need in the community.

We invite you to join us in extending a big thank you to the agencies that have offered their gift in-kind of time and resources to support the County in the development and implementation of The Plan.

United Way Perth-Huron—Ryan Erb

Huron County Health Unit—Janice Dunbar

Safe Homes for Youth—Vicky Parent

The Women's Shelter/Second Stage Housing—Michele Hansen and Gertie Gerrits

Huron Perth Canadian Mental Health Association —John Roberts

Choices for Change—Catherine Hardman

Huron County Planning Department—Susanna Reid





#2 Expand Access to Affordable Housing

Huron County staff, along with the Steering Committee, are committed to continued advocacy for both Provincial and Federal programming and to leverage resources required to assist in improving access to housing.

In addition, we are participating at technical tables for the Provincial Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy.

Plans are emerging to create a landlord engagement strategy where private landlords can register available units to a central access point.

The Plan identified a required increase of 141 affordable units and 59 affordable supportive units over the next ten years.

To date, 42 housing allowances are disbursed monthly and 7 rent supplement units have been created along with 5 supportive units in partnership with the Huron Perth Canadian Mental Health Association. An additional 5 more units are scheduled for the upcoming year. A new partnership with a local Addictions Supportive Housing program has created 8 new units in Huron County.

#3 Data Collection

It is critical that we establish baseline data with current and relevant information. Data is challenging to capture due to the hidden nature of this complex social issue in Huron County; therefore, unique and collaborative approaches will be required.

In 2015 along with the County of Huron, the Housing department teamed up with the United Way and the University of Waterloo to create a Community Trends Platform. The Platform will enable close examination of trends and impact over time to govern programming solutions in Housing and in poverty within the County. To date, key indicators have been submitted to the Community Trends Platform project as the building blocks for the database.

The Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) is also being explored as an additional tool in the Housing field for data collection.

Research, tracking and monitoring of local data will enhance collaborative knowledge and aid in gaining momentum in the development of homelessness solutions.

#4 Emergency Service System Oriented Towards Ending Homelessness

Housing Services, along with partnerships with the Salvation Army, focus on aiding critically vulnerable people to obtain access to financial supports required to stabilize their situation.

Challenges continue with local motel owners and emergency shelter solutions. Stigma barriers need to be broken down.

Shelter diversion is the preferred approach as retaining existing housing or other housing options have greater lasting opportunity.



Core Principles of Housing First

- 1. Access to rapid housing with supports***
- 2. Reasonable cost for housing that does not impede quality of life***
- 3. Housing Choice—location near natural support systems and accessibility/safety features***
- 4. Readiness is not a requirement to obtaining housing***
- 5. Integrated housing***
- 6. Entitled to tenancy rights and responsibilities***
- 7. Housing supports as necessary***

#5 Increase Targeted Efforts to Prevent Homelessness

Ontario Renovates - designed to assist people to stay housed with the accessibility aids needed to support independent living for longer.

Housing Services has formed new partnerships with One Care Community Support Services and Safe Homes for Youth, which are two community agencies that work with targeted populations. These vulnerable sectors, seniors and youth, cannot be lost sight of as priority areas in homelessness prevention.

Pathways to Self-Sufficiency remains a core program to assist low-income households with financial stability when in crisis with such things as rental and utility arrears. The recent increase in utility costs has been taken into account for the future of this program.

The Salvation Army continues to be a community partner that provides assistance to people in financial emergencies. Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative funds were granted to assist the Salvation Army in this important work.

#6 Improve Service Coordination

Collaboration with partnering agencies will advance participant outcomes. As such, Housing Services is now a member of a broadening group of networks and service coordination tables.

HealthCare, mental health, addictions, seniors care, family violence prevention and youth agencies are all now engaged in Housing First dialogues. We are already uniquely entwined with income support programs such as Ontario Works.

Further interconnections with service delivery partners such as police, the local Assertive Community Treatment team (ACT), corrections, and hospital discharge planning teams, are a required next step.



#7 Use Municipal Planning Tools to Facilitate Affordable Housing

In a new partnership, the Steering Committee includes a Planner from the County Planning Department.

A potential next step is to engage with lower-tier municipalities. A facilities review is currently underway and may lead to further discussion on

#9 Establish a People –Centred System of Housing and Homelessness Supports

In order to address the unique needs of individuals and families, community partners need to work in collaboration to establish a Housing First case management approach.

The County has partnered with Perth Huron Family Services to provide support through a Housing Outreach Worker for our tenants.

To date, an enhanced referral system to support agencies has been set as a priority with participating agencies.

By adopting a Housing First case management approach residents will have a greater opportunity to find, keep and live in affordable and permanent housing.

#8 Preserve and Improve Existing Social Housing

The County has invested in a Preventative Maintenance program which will greatly assist in maintaining aging housing stock.

A Community Garden program has been initiated with the intent of expanding in the upcoming years.



Where do we go from here to fill the gaps...

While all Housing programs are expected to contribute to reducing or preventing homelessness, there remains an ongoing need for innovative ways to address rapid rehousing and improve the self-sufficiency of individuals and families at imminent risk of homelessness. Instead of organization by organization and program by program approaches the creation of a systems frame work will, over time, prove stronger.

We need to continue to explore broader systemic approaches to addressing homelessness and housing stability.



Approved by : _____ Dated: _____

Warden - Paul Gowing: _____

County Clerk - Susan Cronin: _____