

2018 Annual Report

A Place to Call Home

A 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Guelph-Wellington

Message From the Warden

On behalf of Council, I am pleased to present the County of Wellington's 2018 Annual Report on the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan (HHP). This comprehensive report demonstrates the collective progress our community has made towards achieving our HHP goals. The following are some of the report's highlights.

2018 Housing and Homelessness Highlights:

Housing and Homeless Plan Update

To meet our obligation under the Housing Services Act, 2011, the County launched a review of the 10-Year Housing and Homeless Plan in the spring of 2018. The planning process included a series of strategic consultations with individuals with lived experience, housing and community service providers, government officials, and multiple strategy sessions with County staff. The update allowed us to refine our housing and homelessness goals and objectives to better reflect the new provincial policy directions and emerging community needs and priorities.

Coordinated Entry System (CES)

The County has continued to work to strengthen the CES by increasing door agency participation and enhancing prioritization of the quality By-Name List (BNL), which is leading to improved referrals to services and supports for individuals and families that are experiencing homelessness or are at risk of homelessness. With access to real time data Guelph- Wellington is well positioned to meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness and track progress in reducing homelessness in our community.

Preserving Existing Stock

Supporting the sustainability of the existing housing stock is vital to protecting affordability in our community.

The County has committed \$16.7M over the next 5 years towards social and affordable capital improvement projects and in 2018 budgeted \$3.6M in annual general maintenance for County owned units. In addition, the County adjusted administration and maintenance benchmarks in 2018 and provided one-time capital funding to some housing providers.

Continued investment from upper levels of government for preventative maintenance, as well as major capital repairs and retrofits, are needed to continue to sustain and revitalize the existing social housing stock.

Affordable Housing Development:

Since 2005, the County of Wellington has leveraged funding to support the construction of 311 units of affordable housing in Guelph-Wellington. In an effort to identify future affordable rental housing development opportunities, the County released an Expression of Interest in late 2018 and has begun to engage with proponents in an effort to enhance the proposals and help them access funding for the development of new affordable housing in our service manager area.

The work highlighted above only happened because of strong leadership and community partnerships. I would like to thank all County staff, local service providers, and community advocates for their ongoing work. We will build on these successes in 2019 with a continued focus on working together to ensure that everyone in Guelph-Wellington can find and maintain an appropriate, safe and affordable place to call home.

Sincerely,

Kelly Linton, Warden,
County of Wellington

Total Households Assisted in 2018 (by housing type)

- 2,555 rent geared to income (RGI)
- 303 affordable
- 133 rent support
- 19,416 emergency shelter nights

Year 5 Report | Background

In close consultation with the community, the County of Wellington (The County) developed the 10-Year (2014-2024) Housing and Homelessness Plan (HHP) entitled "A Place to Call Home."

The community came together with a common vision that "Everyone in Guelph-Wellington can find and maintain an appropriate, safe and affordable place to call home."

As an extension of the HHP, the County developed a comprehensive 5-year (2014-2018) Homelessness Strategy. This strategy informed the required actions needed to fully address the goals and targets of the HHP within the scope of local homelessness funding and programming.

In 2016, the County merged HHP and Homelessness Strategy reporting, consolidating the progress, measures, and successes our community has made towards meeting the goals identified in the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan and the 5-year Homelessness Strategy into one Annual Report and in 2017 we further centralized reporting and added reporting on the progress and measures of the Affordable and Social Housing Implementation Strategy (2017-2018). Future Annual Reports will continue to support this concise and consistent reporting structure.

In 2018, the County undertook an update of the HHP, as per the Housing Services Act, 2011, which requires that Service Managers review their 10-year plans at least once every five years. The County launched the planning process for the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan Update in the spring of 2018. The planning process included an updated need and demand assessment and consultations to refine the objectives to better reflect the new provincial policy directions and emerging community needs and priorities. A new objective statement has been added to promote emphasis on the housing and homelessness needs of Indigenous Peoples. However, the vision statement, which was established in 2013, remains unchanged. Not only is it consistent with the provincial policy directions, but also continues to reflect the community's desire for a statement that is simple, bold, direct, and inclusive of all population groups and types of housing options.

As the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (CMSM) for Guelph-Wellington, the County has an important leadership role related to system planning, coordination of services, and the development of

partnerships in the area of housing and homelessness. Accomplishing the goals of the HHP requires the support of all stakeholders within the housing and homelessness system.

Summary

This Annual Report highlights progress that has been made on the targets and goals of the HHP. Strong community partnerships and Municipal investments have been vital to many of these initiatives, and have been further reinforced through Federal and Provincial funding under the Social Infrastructure Fund (SIF), Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH), Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS) and the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) funding.

The 2018 Annual Report is not intended to be an exhaustive account of all housing and homelessness actions that have taken place over the past year. Instead, the focus is on the most significant progress made towards achieving our housing and homelessness goals.

Special Priority: Human Trafficking and Domestic Violence

As part of the Long Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS) Update released in March 2016, the province committed to improve housing options for survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking through a portable housing benefit.

In 2017, the County of Wellington was one of 22 pilot sites across Ontario, and successfully delivered the benefit to a number of special priority households in Guelph- Wellington. In July 2018, the Provincial Government rolled up the programme and committed ongoing funding to ensure that survivor households can access a benefit to help pay rent.

The County of Wellington transitioned all pilot households to the provincial programme and continues to support access to the provincially funded portable housing benefit on an ongoing basis.

Success Story Profile: Building Affordable Housing

The County of Wellington continues to leverage funding and establish partnerships to increase the supply and mix of affordable housing – this is what we have accomplished since 2005!

- 2005 – 747 Paisley – 34 units
- 2006 – 371 Waterloo – 44 units
- 2007 – 182 George St. – 10 units
- 2009 – 32 Gordon – 7 Units
- 2011 – 165 Gordon – 55 Units
- 2012 – 401 Edinburgh St. N. – 80 units
- 2015 – Michael House – 8 units
- 2017 – 169 Gordon – 55 units
- 2018 – 250 Daly St. – 11 units
- 2019 – Cityview – 8 units

The County released an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the Development of Affordable Rental Housing to support non-profit and private sector parties in developing successful affordable rental housing proposals for future funding opportunities in Guelph-Wellington.

Progress: HHP Goals and Actions Taken

The following represents actions taken by the County and community partners to meet the goals of the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

Goal 1

To help low-income households close the gap between their incomes and housing expenses.

- As of December 2018, 410 households were receiving rent supports through various programmes supported by the County.
- The County, as Service Manager, restructured the Rent Support Programmes to streamline administration and landlord engagement, increasing options for low income households in the private market.
- Successfully transitioned 12 households from the Survivors of Domestic Violence Portable Housing Benefit pilot to the provincially funded Portable Housing Benefit (PHB-SPP) in June 2018, and have since provided administration support to help eligible households access this provincially funded programme.
- Since 2014, the County has partnered with Guelph Hydro to facilitate access to the Low-Income Energy Assistance Programme (LEAP), assisting 536 low-income households with approx. \$217,000 in grants towards hydro arrears, and assisting 389 households with deposit waivers.
- In 2018, the Poverty Task Force updated the living wage for Guelph-Wellington and launched a decent work project to increase awareness and support for fair wages and working conditions. Decent work improves the affordability and wellbeing of households.
- Through the SPACES (Supporting People and Communities Employment Support) initiative, Ontario Works offers targeted wage incentives to nonprofits to hire OW clients; increased earnings can improve affordability for eligible households.

Goal 2

To provide a range of supports to assist people at risk of homelessness to remain housed.

- In 2018, the County provided assistance to 936 households through internal housing stability programmes to assist with shelter related expenses in order to prevent evictions or stabilize their housing situation.
- The County provides funding to the Salvation Army, Community Resource Centre and the Welcome In Drop In Centre for community housing stability programmes that assisted an additional 372 additional households maintain their housing.
- The County continues to be an active partner in the Wellington County Rural Youth Homelessness Committee and Rural Emphasis campaign to raise awareness of rural youth homelessness.
- In 2018, Community Support Workers stabilized housing for approximately 104 vulnerable tenants in rent-g geared-to-income and affordable housing in Guelph- Wellington.
- The County offered bi-annual Landlord Sessions to private market landlords in Guelph-Wellington to raise awareness around tenant and landlord rights. Topics included RentSmart Ontario, risk management, human trafficking and standard leases.

- The County has strengthened internal eviction prevention procedures to prevent eviction and stabilize housing for tenants in County owned buildings and continues to work with housing providers to assist with eviction prevention.
- The County has enhanced system coordination and added resources to enable Property Services Officers and Community Support Workers to create individualized support plans with tenants, specific to their needs.
- Wyndham House increased housing stability outreach team capacity to provide ongoing support to tenants (housing searches, eviction prevention, property maintenance and repair, etc.) and landlords (advocate for units, providing funding to repair damages, etc.).
- Ontario Works and Housing Services continue to strengthen coordination of benefit payments to assist individuals to address arrears, prevent eviction or afford moving expenses.
- The Welcome In Drop In Centre works closely with support agencies in the community, including Specialized Outreach Services (SOS) and Canadian Mental Health Association (CMHA), to ensure that individuals experiencing homelessness are connected with appropriate supports to find and maintain housing.

Goal 3

To offer a comprehensive range of supportive housing options for residents with complex needs due to aging, disabilities, mental health issues and addictions.

- The County has extended their partnership with the Community Health Assessment Programme through Emergency Medical Services (CHAP-EMS). CHAP EMS reported that 479 seniors in Guelph-Wellington participated in their programme in 2018.
- In partnership with the LHIN and Stonehenge Therapeutic Community, the County delivered a new rent supplement to create supportive housing for 6 individuals with complex needs including mental health and addictions.
- At various buildings, the County enhanced staff resources, improved staff mobility and agency involvement to strengthen on site supports and services for tenants.

Did You Know?

As Service Manager, the County works along the entire housing continuum; supporting a full range of housing options to residents of Guelph-Wellington, including temporary emergency shelters, transitional housing, supportive housing, subsidized housing, affordable market rental housing and homeownership grants.

We are working with our housing providers to address end of mortgage agreements, which are all set to expire by 2033, in an effort to preserve 1089 units of rent-geared-to-income units and 462 affordable market rent units in Guelph-Wellington.

Goal 4

To increase the supply and mix of affordable housing options for low- to moderate-income households.

- The County released an Expression of Interest (EOI) for the Development of Affordable Rental Housing to support non-profit and private sector parties in developing successful affordable rental housing proposals for future funding opportunities in Guelph-Wellington.

- Construction started at 9 Cityview Drive South by Habitat for Humanity, for 8 units of affordable rental housing supported in partnership with the County.
- Completed construction on the County's new affordable housing for families building with 11 units at 250 Daly Street in Palmerston.
- The County continues to contribute \$500,000 annually to the Affordable Housing Reserve for the purposes of future affordable housing development within the County of Wellington.
- In 2018, the County provided over \$200,000 in homeownership loans to improve affordability for 11 first time homebuyers in Guelph-Wellington.
- The County piloted a version of the Ontario Renovates programme which helps provide emergency loans to homeowners in need of urgent repairs. The County was able to help 4 households with these emergency loans.
- The County Co-chaired a rural housing table to facilitate affordable housing conversations within a rural context and find solutions specific to local community need.
- The Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy, the Poverty Task Force, the City of Guelph, and the County of Wellington have been active advocates with other levels of government for the provision of supportive housing in our community.
- HOPE House engaged students to lead an advocacy campaign to explore opportunities for the development of new affordable housing units in our community, including tiny homes.
- The Welcome In Drop In Centre has built relationships with landlords in the private market to make units available to their clients and has been granted permission to be on-site regularly to provide supports and services.
- County Planning worked with local municipalities to implement improved second unit provisions in zoning by-laws.
- The City of Guelph continues to have permissive regulations supporting the creation of secondary suites (accessory apartments) within existing dwelling units provided minimum building and zoning requirements are met, e.g. parking.
- In 2018, the City of Guelph allowed subordination of Habitat's Development Charges payment obligations so that Habitat could secure financing.

Goal 5

To reduce the length of time and number of people that experience homelessness.

- Guelph-Wellington recommitted to the national 20,000 Homes Campaign to house 20,000 individuals experiencing homelessness and end chronic homelessness in 20 communities by July 2020.
- The County revised the Local Priority Policy to include homelessness as a priority on the Centralized Waiting List.
- The County successfully rolled out the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) 4, which has improved operational capabilities for the County and service providers including data collection, reporting, and integration of services. HIFIS 4 will strengthen programme delivery and community planning.
- The County made a commitment to hire an additional Housing First Worker, increasing the number of households supported in accessing permanent housing from 45 to 60.

- Conducted the 2018 Everyone Counts Point in Time (PiT) Count/Registry Week with improved outreach in rural communities, and a specialized strategy to connect with Indigenous Peoples experiencing homelessness.
- The County continues to provide funding to Women in Crisis' Rural Women's Support Programme, that assists women dealing with situations of domestic violence.

Goal 6

To promote practices that make the housing and homelessness system more accessible and welcoming.

- Work continues towards full integration of Ontario Works, Housing and Children's Early Years receptions to improve access and services for households in Guelph-Wellington as well as improving client services overall.
- Technical support work started on improvements to online housing application software, which will improve intake, applicant management and communication with households.
- Addition of a Property Services Officer has enabled the County to increase individualized support for tenants with complex needs in our buildings.
- Guelph-Wellington Women in Crisis and Family and Children's Services of Guelph and Wellington County became new Door Agencies for CES and are participating in the Housing Stability Working Group to increase community collaboration among homeless service providers.
- The Wellington Guelph Drug Strategy and City of Guelph By-Law, participated in the development of a sleeping rough protocol, alongside Outreach Services, to balance the rights of all people to be in public places, while respecting the right of communities to live in a safe and peaceful environment.
- The Poverty Task Force convened partners to update and release the cold weather response plan for individuals experiencing homelessness and collected funding for winter survival kits.
- HOPE House assisted individuals with system navigation and taught life skills to assist with accessing housing.
- Ontario Works caseworkers continue to support clients in a holistic manner, in areas related to housing including application, low-cost/no-cost household items, apartment hunting, accessing emergency shelter, supporting someone with emergency food or transportation supports.
- The Welcome In Drop In Centre has improved intake and daily processes to ensure more individualized support for individuals and families experiencing homelessness.
- The City of Guelph through the Local Immigration Partnership (LIP) began exploring options to reduce housing barriers for newcomers in Guelph-Wellington.

Goal 7

To preserve the existing social and affordable rental housing stock.

- The County supported the continuation of the tax exempt status of the affordable housing units at ANAF Unit 344 in cooperation with the City of Guelph.
- The County successfully wrapped up the Social Housing Improvement Programme with \$2.4 Million in capital investment completed across a number of Non-profit and Co-operative social housing properties.

- In 2018, the County allocated approximately \$3 million in capital projects and retrofits, and \$3.6 million for maintenance and upkeep to preserve our existing County owned and operated social and affordable rental stock.
- The County continues to support housing providers' planning initiatives towards major capital retrofit projects to improve and preserve the quality of our social housing.
- The County adjusted administration and maintenance benchmarks in 2018 and provided one-time capital funding to some housing providers.
- The County continues to work closely with local social housing providers reaching the end of their current operating agreements, to find a new framework to extend these agreements.
- The County, through the Wellington Housing Corporation, worked over the course of 2018 to normalize the operations of the 35 units previously operated by Mount Forest Non-Profit Housing Corporation.
- The City of Guelph continues to use the condominium conversion policies of its Official Plan to prohibit condominium conversion during times of low vacancy rates.

Goal 8

To seize opportunities to turn research knowledge into action.

- Wyndham House and the Welcome In Drop In Centre welcomed Iain De Jong from OrgCode Consulting Inc. to complete a third party evaluation of the shelter system and drop in resources. Both providers continue to make system improvements based on this evaluation and a Housing First philosophy.
- A change to how By-Name-List (BNL) indicators are used has resulted in an improved system of referral and prioritization.
- Ongoing improvements to homelessness data collection and validation is leading to improvements in local decision making and overall homelessness serving system planning.
- Housing Services continues to use research and best practices from other Services Managers, as well as feedback from housing advocates, applicants and tenants to inform policy and procedure development.
- Guelph Wellington Coordinated Entry System (CES) underwent an evaluation in 2018 and findings were used to improve programme engagement and to strengthen overall programme operations.
- Completed and received Council approval on an update to the community's 10 Year Housing and Homeless Plan and submitted it to the Province for review.
- The results from the CHAPS EMS programme (CP@Clinic program) McMaster study, delivered at social housing buildings in Guelph-Wellington, has gained international attention about health and wellness in subsidized housing.
- The County continues to partner with community agencies and advocates, including the Poverty Task Force, to promote efforts that increase community understanding and awareness of housing and homelessness.
- As an agency member of the National Learning Committee, A Way Home National Coalition, and the Canadian Observatory on Homelessness, as well as a local 20,000 Homes campaign partner, Wyndham House closely follows research and best practice, and uses data to drive decision making at both programme and agency levels.

Priorities/Next Steps for 2019

Moving forward, we will continue to work together to achieve the goals of the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan, next steps include:

Strategic System Planning

- Continue to improve system coordination across the local housing and homelessness system to ensure that individuals and families are connected to appropriate services and supports.
- Continue to expand on the eviction prevention work already completed in past years, and formalize processes with the County's non-profit and cooperative housing provider partners in delivering a coordinated approach to eviction prevention

Affordable Housing Development

- The County of Wellington is looking to support the proponents of the 2018 expression of interest for affordable rental housing development, to move their projects closer to being development ready.
- Support knowledge mobilization around affordable rental housing development in the community, by making resources and guidelines more accessible to community members to foster community support for future development.
- Work with Habitat for Humanity towards the rent up of their 8 affordable rental housing units being developed at 9 Cityview Dr. S. Guelph.
- Pursue opportunities to unlock existing land assets in Guelph-Wellington for the potential development of future affordable rental units

Housing Initiatives

- Review and where possible streamline and revise existing policies for the Housing Allowance and Portable Housing Benefit Programmes to address community needs and gaps.
- Bring together community partners to explore the opportunities to expedite access to mental health assessment and counselling supports and services for vulnerable tenants, when a tenancy is in immediate jeopardy.
- Work with local planning and building departments to explore the feasibility of creating an inventory of public land/assets and identify conditions in current planning regulations, and municipal services.
- Continue to collaborate with area municipalities on:
 - Strategically targeting housing investments in alignment with area-led Community Improvement Projects, Official Plans and Economic Development activities.
- In collaboration with community partners, host community forums and workshops, which enhance the knowledge, skills and capacity of municipal staff, community service providers and property managers.
- Create additional educational resources for renter households (e.g., renter's toolkit, RentSmart courses).
- Strengthen pre-offer process to identify support needs and facilitate referrals to appropriate community services.
- Work with our technology partners to bring in new systems that will allow for community members to apply for social housing and manage their rent payments online.

- Create a satellite office for Housing Services in the county's north end to improve local supports and services for tenants across the service manager area.

Homelessness Initiatives

- Homelessness Initiatives
- Formalize agreement with Family and Children's Services and Wyndham House to:
 - support partnerships with private landlords in delivering supportive housing options to youth; or
 - support improved outcomes for youth leaving the foster care system, in an effort to prevent and reduce youth homelessness.
- Collaborate with the Upper Grand District School Board and Wellington Catholic District School Board on introducing homelessness resources into the schools.
- Continue to improve HIFIS 4 operational capabilities, data collection and reporting functions to support better homelessness programming and community planning.
- Continue to improve the Coordinated Entry System by expanding training and increasing door agencies participation, and by broadening the use of BNL to inform referrals and housing placements.
- Continue to lead and support evidenced based decision making in the local Built for Zero Canada campaign, to reach our goal of ending chronic homelessness in Guelph-Wellington.

Research and Collaboration

- Increase opportunities to share housing and homelessness system expertise to build local capacity and knowledge, and improve housing outcomes in Guelph-Wellington.
- Strengthen relationships with Indigenous organizations and communities in our Service Manager area.

Acknowledgements

First, we would like to thank Warden Kelly Linton, the County of Wellington Council, and Social Services Committee both past and present, for their ongoing support for housing in our community. Secondly, we would like to thank staff in Treasury, Planning and Economic Development for their partnership and support.

We would also like to thank our community housing and homelessness service delivery and advocacy partners for their leadership and hard work.

Finally, we would like to acknowledge the hard work of staff in the Housing Services Division who support our tenants to find, maintain, and retain safe and affordable housing.

Communication

The County of Wellington will distribute this annual report to the community through presentations at local community tables, through posting on the County's website and sharing directly with participating stakeholders. This report will also be sent to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing as part of the County's commitment to report annually on our progress toward goals and targets established by the community in the 2014 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

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