

Attainable Housing & Saying ‘Yes in My Backyard’

Effective communication about
attainable housing



Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination

VISION

Poverty will be eliminated in Guelph-Wellington.

MISSION

To work collaboratively, informed by diverse voices of experience, to take local action and advocate for system and policy change to address the root causes of poverty.

Priority Areas:



Livable Incomes
& Decent Work



Homelessness
& Housing



Food
Insecurity



Health
Inequities



What do we know?

- Communities face housing affordability challenges with:
 - the price of housing
 - the types of housing
- Housing is expensive & limited stock makes it challenging to find an appropriate option to meet needs
- This region is mandated to grow under provincial legislation
- Local economies depend on attracting employees who can access housing, but too many people cannot afford to live here
- A multi-pronged approach to meeting housing need is necessary to support a community and its economy to thrive



What do we know?

- Housing pressures are impacting people across income levels
- Housing availability & affordability challenges are often not visible in rural areas making it challenging to demonstrate need
 - Awareness building and stories are key

“ We are a household with two educated professionals working full time jobs with good pay and we could just barely afford a 3-bed house. I worry for the next generation. ”

“ For some there isn't enough affordable or subsidized housing. Some have to leave our community to find affordable homes. ”

“ The cost of renting or owning in Centre Wellington is getting so high that our children who were born and raised in this town can't afford to live here anymore. My grown children are living at home with us because they can't afford to live in their own place. ”

Quotes sourced from:

Centre Wellington Community Foundation Vital Signs 2019 Report, <https://cwcfoundation.ca/vital-signs/vital-signs-2019-report>



‘Yes in My Backyard’

- Saying yes to accepting our community’s collective responsibility to make our shared space welcoming to everyone



When everyone has a safe and affordable place to call home our whole community benefits.



‘Not in My Backyard’ (NIMBY)

- Attitudes and tactics used by people or groups in opposition to a proposed development based on concerns
- NIMBYism can range from concerns based on neighbourhood impacts such as traffic and building form to discriminatory concerns based on stereotypes or prejudice toward who will there
- Concerns are often based on assumptions that:
 - property values will decrease
 - safety risks & crime will increase



How can you tell if opposition is discriminatory or not?



Use the cringe test!

- If it sounds wrong to say the same thing about a racial, ethnic or religious group, then it's discrimination...
 - *"Neighbours deserve to be warned before _____ move in."*
 - *"This neighbourhood is not suitable for _____."*
 - *"This neighbourhood already has its fair share of _____."*
 - *"If _____ are going to live here, then there should be a wall around it or frosted windows."*
- General guideline: talk about land use and planning, not people.



Housing & Human Rights

- Housing is a human right
- Everyone has the right to be free from discrimination in housing
 - **“Every person has a right to equal treatment with respect to the occupancy of accommodation without discrimination** because of race, ancestry, place of origin, colour, ethnic origin, citizenship, creed, sex, sexual orientation, age, marital status, family status, disability or the receipt of public assistance.” – *Ontario Human Rights Code*, s.2(1)
- People should be able to live in a neighbourhood of their choice free of discrimination
 - **“It is the Ontario Human Rights Commission’s position that people or groups identified under the Code should not have to ask permission from prospective neighbours before moving into a neighbourhood.”** – *Ontario Human Rights Commission*, 2009.

Learn more: <http://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/policy-human-rights-and-rental-housing/v-identifying-discrimination-rental-housing>



Belief:

My property values will go down.

TRUE

FALSE

Key Points:

- Ample research concludes that there is no impact on property values.
- New developments can often help to beautify a community with new or rehabilitated properties.



Belief:

Crime will increase and our community will be less safe.

TRUE

FALSE

Key Points:

- Often based on negative stereotypes about future residents or false assumptions that this housing is dangerous for a community. That isn't the case.
- Research supports that affordable and higher density housing does not increase crime rates.
- In fact, many existing affordable housing sites are located close to schools with no issues and with support from the community.



Belief:

Attainable housing projects fall under the same planning process as any other housing development.

TRUE

FALSE

Key Points:

Yes, these projects falls under the same planning and community consultation process as any other development.

- If no special planning approval is needed, public consultation is not required.
- If it is needed, the developer must consult the immediate neighbourhood about land use, not about how the building will be managed or who will live there.



Belief:

The best way to build support for a particular project is to maximize community consultation and awareness about the issues during planning processes.

TRUE

FALSE

Key Point:

- People need to understand what they have a say over and what they don't have say over.
- Consultation is about land use and planning, not about how the building will be managed or who will live there.
- Education and awareness is best before and after the planning process.
- An open house rather than a town hall can help to ensure everyone has the space to get the information they need.



Belief:

New residents will not fit into the community and we'll lose our character.

TRUE

FALSE

Key Point:

- Good design that respects planning guidelines and regulations will create a successful project that supports the existing character of a neighbourhood.
- Attainable housing is not affordable because it is poorly constructed. Like any other development, it must comply with the same building code standards for physical condition and quality.
- Inclusive communities provide housing opportunities for all. Wellington County is a welcoming and caring community.



Belief:

Attainable housing is better suited for a different or bigger community.

TRUE

FALSE

Key Point:

- Housing and economic pressures are being experienced across Wellington County in all communities.
- Attainable housing is a solution that is appropriate for all communities and creates opportunity that can benefit everyone, both existing and future residents.
- Like anyone else, individuals who will move into attainable housing want to live in a nice and affordable neighbourhood that meets their needs. Everyone who will live in attainable housing will choose to live there.



Belief:

Traffic and parking are going to be a problem.

TRUE

FALSE

Key Point:

- Any new development must meet certain municipal planning and engineering standards, which help to ensure harmony between a proposed development and the surrounding community. This includes traffic and parking.
- Housing oriented for older adults, lower-income families or environmentally conscious people are likely to attract residents with lower levels of car ownership.



Belief:

Increasing density will negatively impact the community by straining services and public infrastructure.

TRUE

FALSE

Key Point:

- Higher-density housing generally requires less extensive infrastructure than low-density development for things like piped water and sewer services, schools, roads, etc.
- It provides greater capacity for community's to cover the cost of providing infrastructure, resulting in more affordability for all residents (e.g. density plays a key role in making public transit possible).
- It can revitalize local economies and stimulate community investment. It attracts new business that brings jobs, opportunity and economic prosperity that benefits the whole community.



Belief:

Attainable housing is a cost-effective and necessary solution.

TRUE

FALSE

Key Points:

- Housing that meets community need is necessary to support a strong economy and thriving community.
- Communities can save money when residential development is allowed in communities where infrastructure has already been paid for or where infrastructure is needed.
- Meeting housing need can reduce public costs associated with more costly interventions that stem from people not being able to afford or access housing (e.g. social services).



When communication gets challenging

- You can support or reinforce positions with high level key messages
- Strengthen key messages with personal experience
- Lead with care – support with facts
 - “I’ve seen the difference support can make...”
- Refer to resources that are already developed/approved/accessibile
- Know when to end the conversation



Bridge and block

- “Bridge” from shaky ground to safer ground:
 - “I can’t speak to that specific situation, but what I CAN tell you... in MY experience... [restate key message.]”
 - “What I really want to talk about is...”
- “Block” inappropriate questions.
 - “I’m not going to respond to that.” or “Sorry, that’s not something I can speak to.”

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When you say 'Yes in My Backyard' you:

- support a welcoming community where everyone can access the housing they need free of discrimination
- encourage others to show their support for attainable housing to meet community needs and support a strong local economy
- help to build the community support necessary to support project proponents and elected officials to champion projects



When everyone has a safe and affordable place to call home our whole community benefits.



Taking Action:

- Use the tools available to you!
 - Attainable housing & YIMBY campaign to build support
 - Planning mechanism, including:
 - zoning & design guidelines
 - infill & intensification
 - strategize to maintain existing stock & create new stock
 - use planning tools to support acceptance & remove barriers to new development



Sign-up for the YIMBY Campaign

- Add your name to a growing list of supporters!



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Website: www.gwpoverity.ca/yimby



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