



A PLACE TO CALL HOME FIVE YEAR UPDATE

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

MESSAGE FROM THE WARDEN

The Council and staff at the County of Wellington are committed to providing safe and affordable housing for our residents throughout our area of service which includes the City of Guelph and the Wellington County.

As the Service Manager for Guelph-Wellington we are obligated under the Housing Services Act, 2011, to review and amend our housing and homeless plan every 5 years. As reflected in our Annual Reports, since the approval of the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan in 2015 we have made significant progress towards achieving our housing and homelessness goals.

Highlight/Accomplishments Since 2015:

Affordable Housing

The County of Wellington has leveraged federal, provincial and municipal funding, to support the construction of 82 units of affordable housing in the County and the City of Guelph.

Homelessness and Housing Stability

The County of Wellington implemented a Coordinated Entry System (CES) and established a By-Name List(BNL) to inform referrals to appropriate housing supports and services. Guelph-Wellington was the fourth community in Canada to achieve a quality BNL.

Preserving Existing Social Housing Stock

The County of Wellington budgets and invests annually to repair and maintain County owned and operated housing units and continues to leverage federal, provincial and municipal funding to ensure ongoing viability of all social housing units in Guelph-Wellington.

Housing Provider Partner Capacity Building

The County has supported local housing provider partners to complete Building Condition Assessments (BCAs), to determine the state of the social housing stock and establish an up-to-date list of priority projects for future investment.

Social Service Integration

Established an integration team that has moved forward in integrating frontline reception across Social Services divisions.

Each of these achievements is big news for our community and should be celebrated, while recognizing that there is more work to be done towards reaching our community goal that everyone in Guelph-Wellington can find and maintain an appropriate, safe and affordable place to call home.

Sincerely,

Dennis Lever, Warden, County of Wellington

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Housing and Homelessness Plans play a critical function in setting out how Service Managers are addressing housing and homelessness locally.

In 2015, the County of Wellington released A Place to Call Home – A 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Guelph-Wellington. This report presents the results of the five-year review and amendments to the plan.

Provincial Updates and National Housing Strategy

The initial 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan was developed in accordance with the Housing Services Act, 2011 and the Ontario Housing Policy Statement, 2011. This 5-year plan update takes into consideration the new 2016 Provincial Policy Statement and the 2016 Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy (LTAHS) Update, as well as the provincial goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2025. There is a new emphasis on Housing First, Indigenous Peoples, client-centred coordinated access, and the importance of strong partnerships and collaboration across sectors.

In addition to these provincial policy changes, the federal government has released the first ever National Housing Strategy, a 10-year plan that will see the investment of \$40 billion towards housing and homelessness initiatives across the country. These changes at both the provincial and federal levels signal exciting opportunities to improve affordability and supports for vulnerable households in Guelph-Wellington.

Community Vision

The central vision for the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan is:

This statement is in alignment with the provincial policy directions and LTAHS update, and continues to be relevant, well-liked and supported by community members. It remains unchanged for the 2020 5-Year Plan Update.

Approach

The County of Wellington launched the planning process for the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan Update in the spring of 2018. Eden Grodzinski of JPMC, the principal consultant on the development of the original 10-year plan, was contracted to lead the project. All told, the planning process included an updated need and demand assessment, consultations with individuals with lived experience, housing and community service providers, government officials, and multiple strategy sessions with the County of Wellington staff to refine the objectives and targets. The findings and recommendations also build upon a variety of public meetings, interviews, focus groups, surveys, municipal reports and implementation strategies that the County of Wellington has undertaken since the release of the original 10-year plan in 2015.

Housing Need and Demand

This five-year review process offered an opportunity for the County of Wellington to consider if any substantial changes have taken place in the local context since the initial assessment of current and future housing needs, particularly in relation to local demographic and economic changes.

According to the 2016 Census, the total population of the service area is 222,726, over half of which lives in the City of Guelph (59%; 131,794). The remainder of the population lives in small urban centres and rural areas throughout Wellington County (41%; 90,932), which includes the Town of Minto, Township of Wellington North, Township of Mapleton, Township of Centre Wellington, Town of Erin, Township of Guelph/Eramosa, and Township of Puslinch.

Thank you to all the community members, service providers, municipal councillors and staff who have contributed to various conversations about affordable and social housing and homelessness prevention in Guelph-Wellington. This 2020 Housing and Homelessness Plan Update would not have been possible without the valuable insight and feedback of all participants.

2. COMMUNITY VISION

2.1 Vision for Guelph-Wellington

The central vision of the County of Wellington’s 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan is that:

Everyone in Guelph-Wellington can find and maintain an appropriate, safe and affordable place to call home.

This vision statement was established in 2015, based on extensive community consultations and a validation survey that were held as part of the development of the original 10-year plan. The community vision is not only 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.

It is interesting to note that the wording, **“a place to call home”** which showcases prominently in the community vision and the title of the County of Wellington’s 10-year plan (2015) has also been adopted in reports by the Provincial Expert Advisory Panel on Homelessness (2015) and Canada’s National Housing Strategy (2018).

3. PROVINCIAL FRAMEWORK FOR HOUSING AND HOMELESSNESS PLANS

3.1 Background

The County of Wellington is the Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (“Service Manager”) for the City of Guelph and the County of Wellington. The City of Guelph is a separated municipality and the County of Wellington is comprised of seven lower tier municipalities: Town of Minto, Township of Wellington North, Township of Mapleton, Township of Centre Wellington, Town of Erin, Township of Guelph/Eramosa, and Township of Puslinch. For the sake of simplicity, this geographic service area is referred to as “Guelph-Wellington” in this report.

As the Service Manager for Guelph-Wellington, the County of Wellington is responsible for the delivery and administration of provincially mandated social and affordable housing programmes, as well as initiatives to prevent and address homelessness. In accordance with the Housing Services Act 2011, the County of Wellington is also responsible for developing, implementing and reporting on a 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan. Housing and Homelessness Plans play a critical function in setting out how Service Managers are addressing housing and homelessness locally, including creating new affordable rental units, improving the sustainability of the social housing stock, working with other community providers in the delivery of housing and related support services, and preventing and reducing homelessness.

The initial 10-year plan was approved by County Council in November 2013, and subsequently released to the community in the spring of 2015. Beginning in June 2015, the County of Wellington published four Annual Reports to the community which highlight the progress that has been made on the strategic objectives in the 10-year plan. By leveraging federal, provincial and municipal funding, the County of Wellington has been able to establish several new housing stability initiatives, increase the number of households that are receiving rental assistance, build 82 new affordable rental units, and support the continual renewal of the existing social housing stock. See **Section 6** for detail.

Building on the momentum of the 10-year plan, the County of Wellington commissioned two implementation strategies – Homelessness Implementation Strategy (2015) and Social and Affordable

Housing Implementation Strategy (2017). This five-year update takes into consideration the progress, community consultations, changing environment, and best practice research that have occurred since the first 10-year plan was released in 2015.

3.2 Updated Policy Guidelines

The original plan was developed in accordance with the provincial guidelines outlined in the 2011 Ontario Housing Policy Statement. In 2016, the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing updated its policy guidelines for 10-year housing and homelessness plans and released the LTAHS Update. This five-year review process offers an opportunity for the County of Wellington to consider if any substantial changes have taken place in the local context since the initial assessment of current and future housing needs, particularly in relation to local demographic and economic changes, and to ensure consistency with the updated provincial policy framework.

What's New?

The new Provincial Policy Statement is now aligned with the update to the LTAHS, and also the provincial goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2025. There is a new emphasis on Indigenous Peoples, client-centred coordinated access, and the importance of strong partnerships and collaboration across sectors. In addition, the renewed Policy Statement highlights that Housing and Homelessness Plans are an important tool to support poverty reduction.

The 2016 Provincial Policy Statement contains eight directions, as follows:

1. Accountability and Outcomes

- Demonstrate a system of coordinated housing and homelessness services that assist households to improve their housing stability and prevent homelessness.
- Include strategies to promote client-centred, coordinated access to housing and homelessness prevention services.
- Be developed with public consultation and engagement with diverse local communities, including those with lived experience of homelessness.
- Include strategies to measure and report publicly on progress under the plan.

2. Goal of Ending Homelessness

- Be informed by the results of local homelessness enumeration.
- Include a strategy to prevent and reduce homelessness, incorporating innovative approaches and a Housing First philosophy.
- Include strategies to reduce and prevent the number of people experiencing chronic homelessness and homelessness among youth and Indigenous peoples, as appropriate to the local context.

3. Coordination with Other Community Services

- Demonstrate a commitment to working with partners across service systems to improve coordination and client access to housing, homelessness prevention services and other human services.
- Demonstrate progress in moving toward integrated human services planning and delivery.
- Address collaboration, where possible, with Local Health Integration Networks (LHINs), to coordinate Service Manager social and affordable housing and homelessness services with LHIN-funded services.

4. Indigenous Peoples

- Include a strategy for engagement with Indigenous organizations and communities – including First Nation, Métis, Inuit organizations and communities, where present in the service area.

- Demonstrate a commitment to coordination and collaboration with Indigenous housing providers and service providers to support access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples.

5. A Broad Range of Community Needs

- Include a strategy to address accessible housing and homelessness services for people with disabilities, as well as those who have mental health needs and/or addictions.
- Include a strategy to address the housing needs of survivors of domestic violence, in coordination with other community-based services and supports.
- Address the needs of different demographic groups within their community. This could include: seniors, Indigenous peoples, people with developmental disabilities, children and youth, LGBTQ youth, women, immigrants and refugees, persons released from custody or under community supervision, youth transitioning from the child welfare system and Franco-Ontarians.
- Demonstrate a commitment to service delivery that is based on inclusive and culturally appropriate responses to the broad range of community needs.

6. Non-Profit Housing Corporations and Non-Profit Housing Cooperatives

- Include strategies to support capacity building and sustainability in the non-profit housing sector.

7. The Private Housing Market

- Identify an active role for the private sector in providing a mix and range of housing, including affordable rental and ownership housing, to meet local needs.
- Identify and encourage actions for municipalities and planning boards, where applicable, to support the role of the private sector, including the use of available land use planning and financial tools.

3.3 Reporting Requirements and Timeline

Service Managers have been asked to complete and submit updated Housing and Homelessness Plans to the Ministry of Housing and Municipal Affairs by June 30, 2019. As part of the review process, Service Managers are required to provide a written report of their review summarizing major changes made to the plan.

A summary of the modifications to the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Guelph-Wellington can be found in Section 6.1.

4. APPROACH

4.1 Planning Process

The Service Manager launched the planning process for the 10-Year Housing and Homelessness Plan Update in the spring of 2018. Eden Grodzinski of JPMC, the principal consultant on the development of the original 10-year plan, was contracted to lead the project. All told, the planning process included an updated need and demand assessment, consultations with individuals with lived experience, housing and community service providers, and government officials, and multiple strategy sessions with the County of Wellington staff to refine the objectives and targets.

Partners in Guelph-Wellington's housing and homelessness support system: PROVINCIAL

Government regulator, programme funder, information and research; local municipalities planning and development, land use regulators, funders; county of wellington social services CMSM system planning and administration, programme funder, housing provider; COMMUNITY MEMBERS tenants, homeowners, peers, donors and volunteers; federal government and CMHC regulator, programme funder, mortgage insurer, information and research; community benefit sector social services, health care, foundations, faith

groups, education and research, criminal justice; housing sector service providers, realtors, property managers, insurers, financiers, developers, contractors.

4.2 Community Engagement

The community engagement process for the development of the original 10-year plan was extensive. Approximately 210 people participated in a range of in-person consultations throughout the service area, and over 270 individuals contributed to a validation survey about the community vision and strategic priorities. In addition, the County of Wellington has conducted supplementary focus groups, interviews and surveys as part of the development of the Homelessness Implementation Strategy (2014) and Affordable and Social Housing Implementation Strategy (2017). Stakeholders involved have included individuals with lived experience, social service providers, LHIN and healthcare providers, housing providers, landlords and developers, and local municipalities.

The consultation process for the 10-year plan refresh was designed to be respectful of stakeholders' time, and to supplement the feedback gathered through previous conversations and homelessness enumerations. In keeping with the new policy directions, input was sought from four key stakeholder groups: individuals with lived experience, Indigenous partners, non-profit housing corporations and co-operatives, and local government departments.

Individuals with lived experience

On June 15, 2018, a meeting was held with the Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination - a local advocacy and planning coalition comprised of over 35 members who bring a range of lived experiences, including service users, peer advocates, social services and healthcare professionals, and concerned community members.⁴ The focus of discussion was on sharing the new policy directions and validating the community vision statement and objectives. Following this meeting, a special focus group was planned to engage individuals with lived experience of housing and homelessness. While the event was open to everyone, outreach and the setting focused on identifying community members who currently reside in social housing complexes. All told, eight participants - with personal experiences of addictions, mental health, domestic violence, rural and urban homelessness, and living in shared market rent accommodations and subsidized housing – attended the focus group on August 15, 2018. The community feedback from these sessions corroborated previously identified issues and needs.

Indigenous partners

Special consideration has been given to determine the best methods for reaching out and working more closely with Indigenous organizations and communities in the service area. In 2018, a new Indigenous focus was established as part of the 2018 Point-in-Time (PiT) Count and Registry Week. Feedback from the enumeration process, as well as input from Indigenous community partners and advocates has been incorporated into the strategic objectives. See **Section 6**.

Non-profit housing providers and co-operatives

The County of Wellington regularly holds education and information sharing workshops with its non-profit housing corporations and housing co-operatives. The afternoon of the Housing Provider Session held on May 30, 2018 was dedicated to discussing the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan and emerging issues and needs facing local social housing providers.

Local government departments

On June 27, 2018, a special focus group was held with staff representatives of the City of Guelph and County of Wellington from the following departments/ programmes: Ontario Works, Child Care, Planning and Economic Development. The feedback from this meeting provided insight into other municipal plans and initiatives that may influence the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan.

4.3 Data Sources

This report presents a compilation of housing data gathered from a variety of respected sources including the County of Wellington, Statistics Canada, and Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). A special thanks goes to the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing for providing special tabulations for Service Manager areas.⁵

Unless otherwise specified, all data is from Statistics Canada, 2016 Census. Where available, “median” figures for household income and house prices have been used to adjust for outliers (e.g., a few high income earners may make the socio-economic status of the Service Manager area appear higher than it really is). For affordability analysis, income figures have been inflated to 2017 values using the provincial Consumer Price Index (CPI). For a detailed list of data sources, definitions and explanations, please refer to the endnotes.

5. ASSESSMENT OF HOUSING NEED AND DEMAND

This section presents an overview of available socio-demographic and housing market data which paints a portrait of the need and demand for social and affordable housing in Guelph-Wellington, and provides essential context for the strategic objectives.

Below is a summary of the data findings for Guelph-Wellington. For comparison purposes, information for Ontario is also provided. Detailed community profile data for each of the municipalities in the Service Manager area can be found in **Appendix A**.

5.1 Community Profile

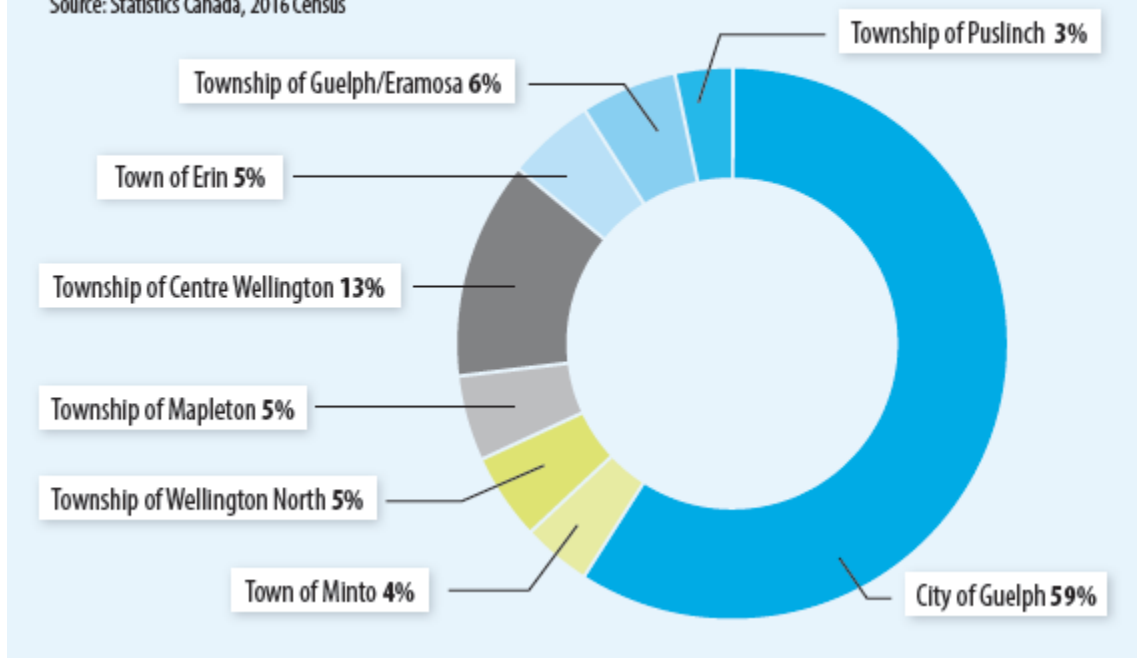
Guelph-Wellington is a vibrant community located in the heart of southwestern Ontario, with proximity to vital transportation corridors. The community is gifted with some of the most beautiful and varied topography in the province, including the Grand River watershed. The area encompasses 2,661 km² of land and is comprised of eight municipalities: Centre Wellington, Erin, Guelph, Guelph/Eramosa, Mapleton, Minto, Puslinch, and Wellington North.

According to the 2016 Census, the total population of the service area is 222,726, over half of which lives in the City of Guelph (59%; 131,794). The remainder of the population lives in small urban centres and rural areas throughout Wellington County (41%; 90,932). See **Figure 1**.

The economy of Guelph-Wellington has a strong basis in agriculture, manufacturing, education, and healthcare. Building a strong economy and creating high-quality local jobs is a top priority for the County of Wellington. Affordable housing is a primary issue impacting economic development activities, as the availability and cost of housing is one of the key factors that individuals and businesses consider when initially choosing and remaining in a community. One of the key pillars of the County of Wellington’s “Invest Well” Community Improvement Plan is the creation of more rental housing options to address the needs of households at varying income levels.⁶

FIGURE 1: Population Distribution in Guelph-Wellington, 2016

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census



5.2 Rural Context

The rural environment that characterizes Wellington County presents issues that differentiate how the population accesses social services in comparison to residents of large urban centres. Low population density means that it is not financially viable to establish emergency shelters in rural areas, and so the majority of homelessness support services are located in Guelph. In addition, the central offices of the County of Wellington, Social Services Department are located in downtown Guelph. An Ontario Works and Settlement Services office located in Fergus provides full support for these programmes, and appointments can be made for other social services in Fergus as well as in Mount Forest.

Transportation to services is a major challenge. Due to the geographic spread of the community, travelling between destinations can be quite time consuming, particularly in wintertime (e.g., it takes about an hour to travel by car from Mount Forest to Guelph). The City of Guelph is currently the only local municipality with public transportation. At present, the majority of people who live in rural areas of Wellington County rely on personal vehicles for transportation. A County funded transportation programme, delivered through third party community agencies in the county, is available for low income households to improve access to supports and services. The County of Wellington recently received a five-year grant from the Ministry of Transportation's Community Transportation Programme for the establishment of a Ridesharing Programme. It is anticipated that the County's ridesharing system will make it more convenient for individuals to access essential services in the community.

It is important that the response to rural housing issues consider the specific rural context and where possible use local data to inform decision making.

5.3 Demographic Make-up

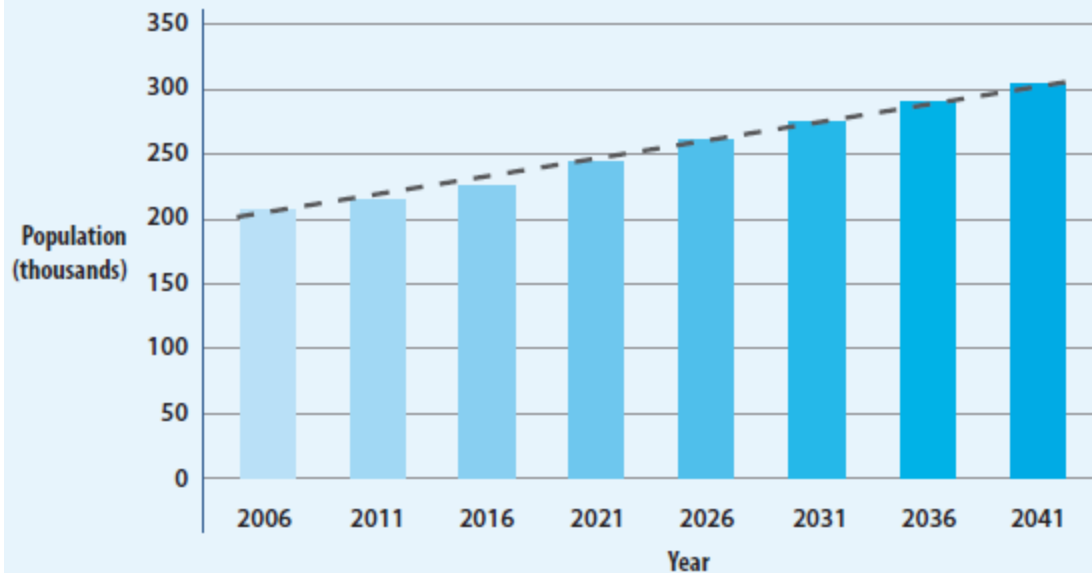
Population Size & Growth

Between 2011 and 2016, the population of Guelph-Wellington grew 7%, from 208,360 to 222,726 persons – 2 percentage points higher than the provincial growth rate over the same time period. Population growth is greatest in Guelph (8%) and lowest in Wellington North, Guelph/Eramosa, Minto and Puslinch (4%). By 2041, the total population is expected to reach 303,200.⁷ Over the next 25 years, the largest growth rate is

expected to occur in Centre Wellington, which is forecast to almost double in population size. See **Appendix A**.

FIGURE 2: Historical and Projected Population Growth in Guelph-Wellington, 2006-2041

Sources: Statistics Canada estimates, 2006-2016, and Ontario Ministry of Finance projections, 2017-2041

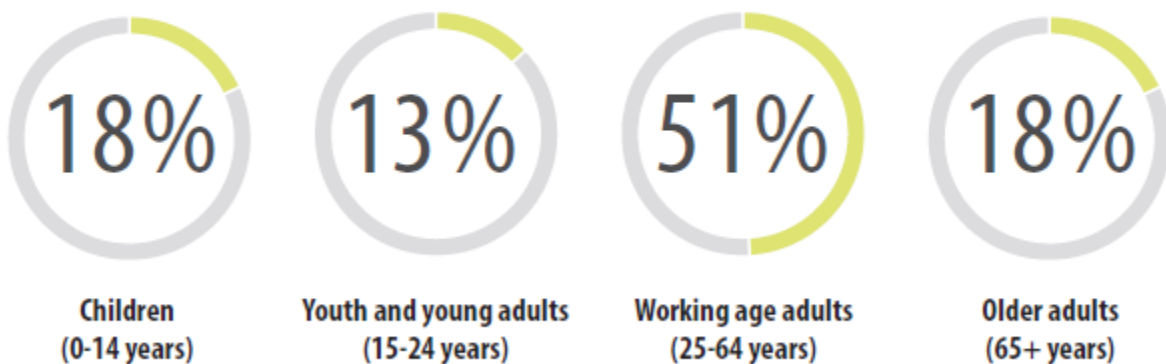


Age Distribution

Figure 3 illustrates the age distribution of the population living in Guelph-Wellington. The age breakdown is similar to the provincial distribution. However, there are some deviations among the local municipalities. Mapleton has a larger proportion of children ages 0-14 (28%) and fewer older adults (10%). Whereas one-fifth of the population living in Centre Wellington (20%), Minto (20%), Wellington North (21%), and Puslinch (22%) are seniors. In general, the population of Wellington County is older than the City of Guelph.

FIGURE 3 – Age Distribution in Guelph-Wellington, 2016

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census



Immigrants and Refugees

The proportion of the population of Guelph-Wellington that is foreign born is 17%, compared to 29% for Ontario. Many of these individuals have lived in Canada for many years, while others are relative newcomers. A total of 3,585 individuals living in Guelph-Wellington immigrated to Canada between 2011

and 2016; 89% of whom live in Guelph. Overall, recent immigrants make up 11% of the total foreign-born population, 2% of the full population, and 1% of all households.

Since the commencement of 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plans, Canadians have opened their hearts and communities to welcoming Syrian refugees. Guelph-Wellington received between 300 and 400 refugees in recent years, many of whom were privately sponsored⁸. Due to challenges finding affordable accommodations for large family sizes, staff of the Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership have observed that many of these families have migrated to other communities.

Income

In general, household income levels in Guelph-Wellington are above the provincial medians. In 2015, the median total household income in Guelph-Wellington was \$81,347, in comparison to \$74,287 for Ontario. However, the median income of area households varies substantially, from a low of \$63,712 in Wellington North to a high of \$111,808 in Puslinch.

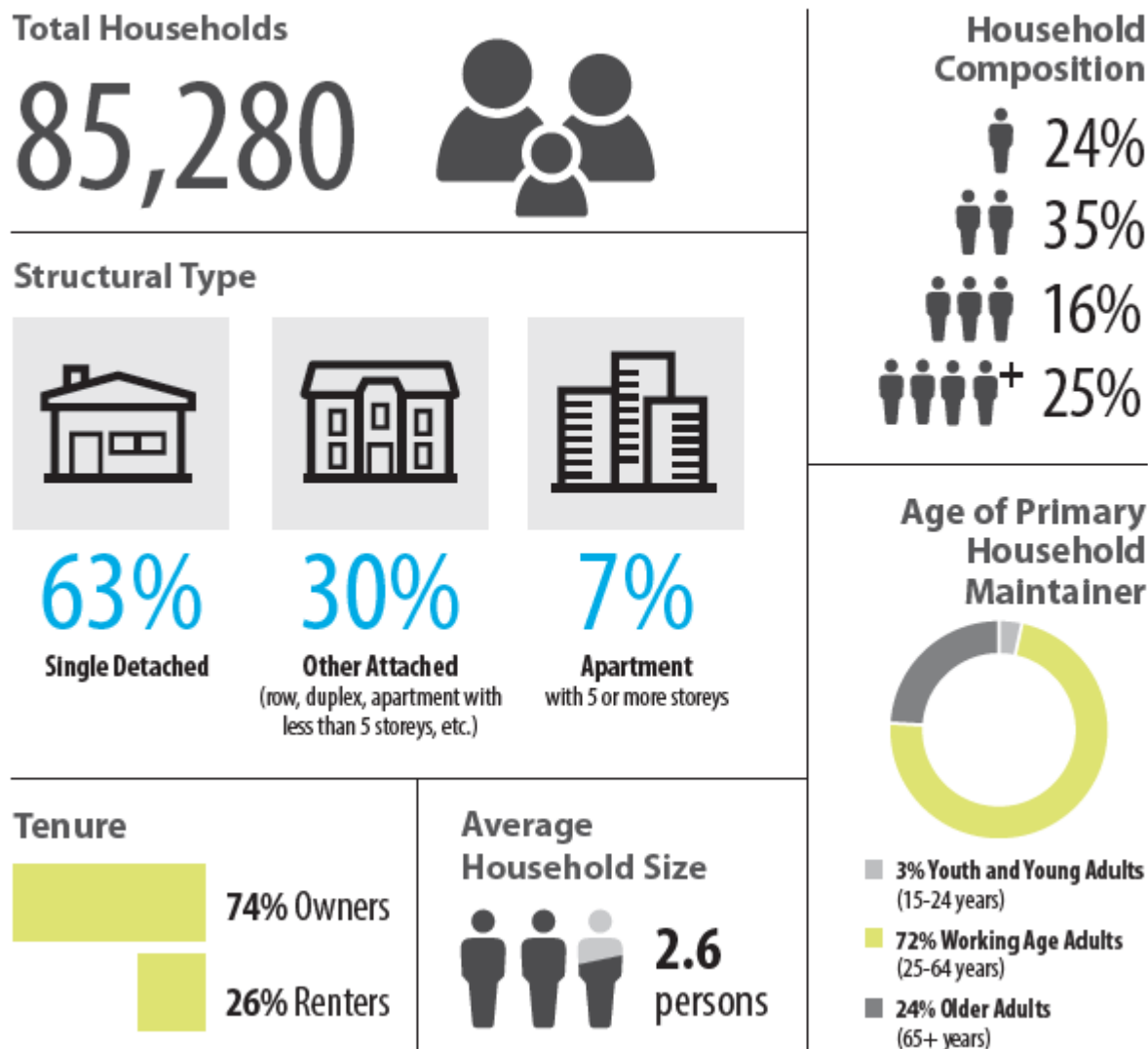
One-tenth of the population is living in low income, compared to 14% for Ontario (after-tax Low Income Measure, 2016). However, the poverty rate differs widely among the local municipalities and by age groups. The poverty rate among young children (ages 0-5 years) in Mapleton (23%) and Wellington North (22%) is higher than the provincial average (20%). In addition, the prevalence of low income among seniors (65+ years) is significantly higher in Minto (16%), Wellington North (16%) and Mapleton (14%) than for Ontario (12%).

One of the factors contributing to the high prevalence of low income in Minto, Wellington North and Mapleton may be educational attainment. In these three communities, the percentage of working age individuals (25-64 years) who do not have a high school diploma is much higher than for Ontario. See **Appendix A**.

5.4 Household Characteristics

Below are some quick facts about the household makeup of Guelph-Wellington, 2016.

Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016 and Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2018 Housing Data for Service Managers



NOTE: Data may not add up to 100% due to rounding

5.5 Market Housing

According to the 2016 Census, there are 85,280 households in Guelph-Wellington – 96% of which are market rental or owned units. As illustrated in Section 5.6, the demand for subsidized rental units vastly outweighs the availability. As a result, many low-income households are required to find housing in the private market. Understanding the availability and cost of housing in the private market is therefore important to determining the need and demand for affordable and social housing.

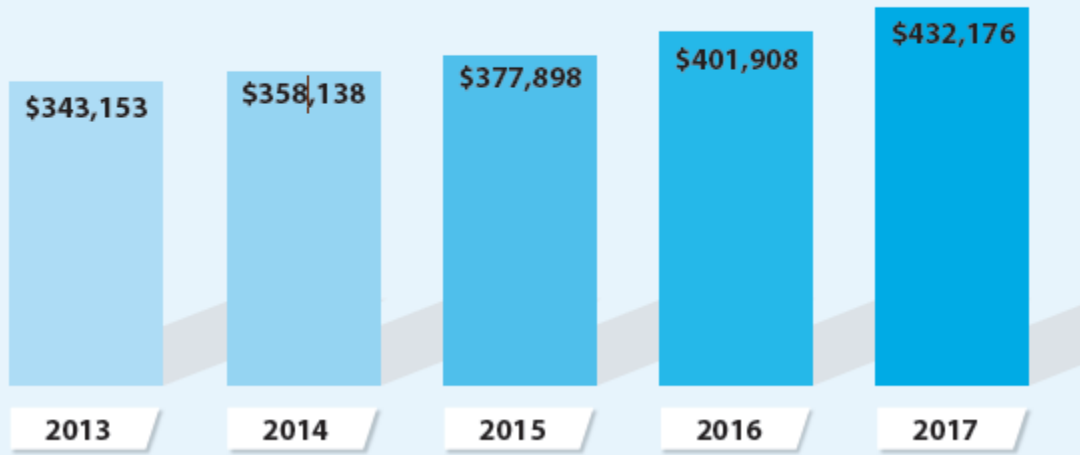
Housing Values

In 2017, the median value of a house in Guelph-Wellington was \$432,176, an increase of 26% since 2013. In comparison, the median price of a dwelling in Ontario was slightly higher at \$454,036, up 31% since 2013.

Medium and high-density housing options (e.g., apartment and townhouse units) are inherently more affordable than low-density housing (e.g., single- and semi-detached dwellings), as they tend to be smaller in square footage and require less land for development. At present, Guelph-Wellington's housing stock is predominantly comprised of low-density housing (67%).

FIGURE 4: Median Values of Dwellings in Guelph-Wellington, 2013-2017

Source: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2018 Housing Data for Service Managers, based on data from Real Property Solutions, 2013-2017 data



Average Market Rents (AMR)

Rental rates vary according to unit size. Generally, the larger the unit (i.e., more bedrooms), the higher the rent. In 2017, the Average Market Rent (AMR) for all unit sizes in the primary⁹ rental market in Guelph-Wellington was \$1,054 per month, ranging from \$749 for a bachelor apartment to \$1,193 for a 3+-bedroom unit. These rates may or may not include utilities such as heating and electricity. Overall, the rental rates for Guelph-Wellington increased 13% between 2013 and 2017. In comparison, the AMR for all unit sizes in Ontario was slightly higher at \$1,140 in 2017, up 26% since 2013.

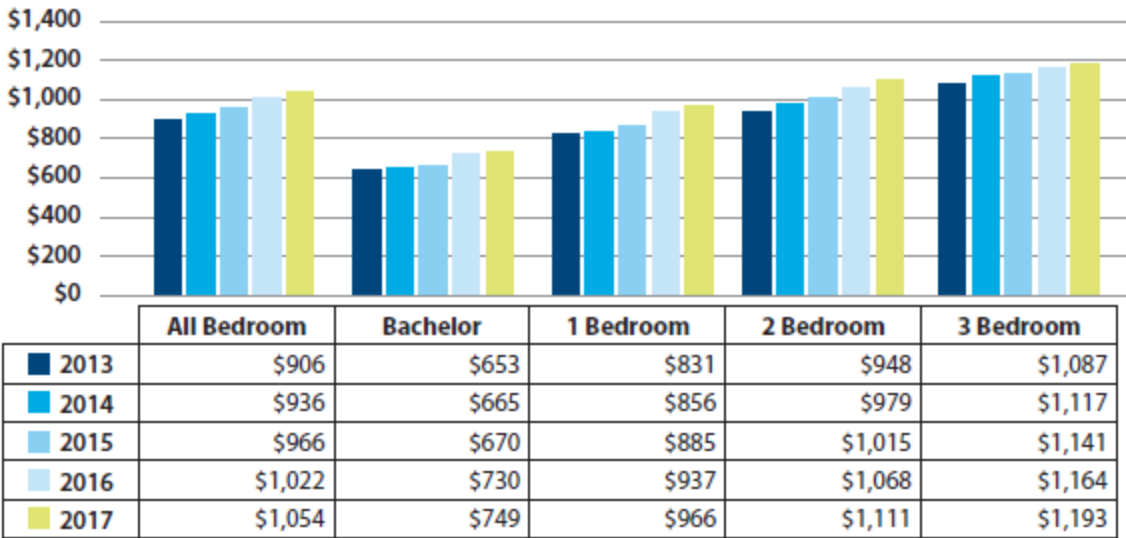
Given the presence of two postsecondary institutions in the City of Guelph (University of Guelph and Conestoga College) and the housing structure types that have historically been built in rural communities, a great percentage of the rental units in Guelph-Wellington are in the secondary market. The secondary rental market consists of rented single detached, semi-detached and townhouse homes, accessory apartments, condominium apartments, and one or two apartments located in a commercial or other type of structure. Unlike the primary rental market, which consists of purpose-built rental apartments, the secondary rental market stock is considered to be temporary. There is a lack of information available on the secondary rental market, as CMHC does not conduct rental market surveys for secondary units in the Service Manager area.

According to research conducted by the City of Guelph (2013- 2014), 45% of rental units in Guelph were in the secondary market, and one-quarter of all accessory apartments were not rented. Accessory apartments are typically less expensive than units in the primary rental market. Other types of secondary rental units (e.g. townhouse and condominium apartments), with the exception of bachelor units, tend to be more expensive.¹⁰



You have to earn **\$46,200** annually to afford
Average Market Rent (AMR) in Guelph-Wellington.

FIGURE 5: Average Market Rents by Unit Size in Guelph-Wellington, 2013-2017



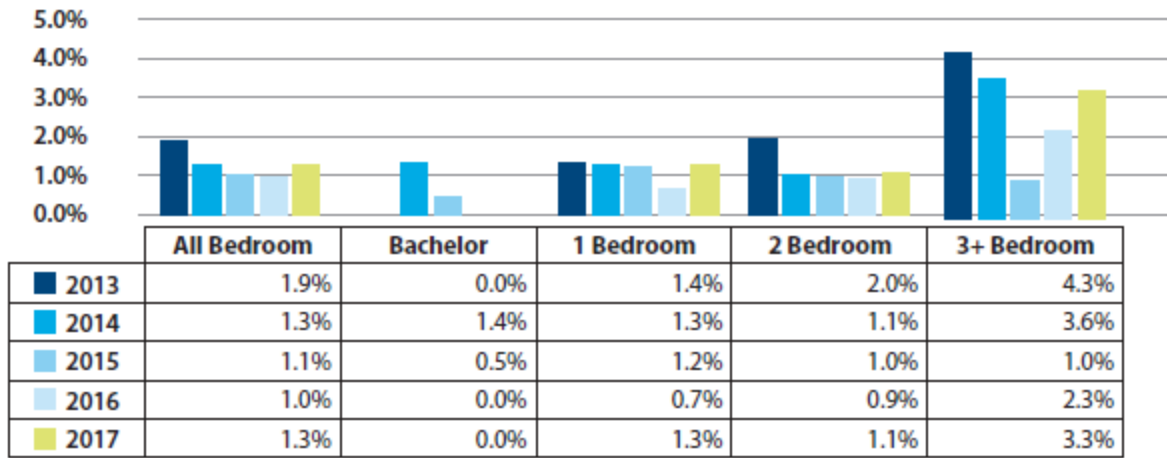
Source: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2018 Housing Data for Service Managers, based on Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Rental Market Survey, 2013-2017

Rental Vacancy Rates

There is a very tight rental market in Guelph-Wellington. In 2017, the vacancy rate was 1.3%, which is well below the benchmark of 3% for a well-balanced market. This means that even if a household has sufficient income to pay market rents, they may not be able to find an available unit to lease, particularly households seeking bachelor apartments, which currently have a posted vacancy rate of 0%.

The vacancy rate for Guelph-Wellington has increased slightly over the past several years, as new purpose-built rental units have been established in the community. However, the majority of these new rental units are not affordable, as they are geared to the higher end of the private market.

FIGURE 6: Rental Vacancy Rates in Guelph-Wellington, 2013-2017



Source: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, 2018 Housing Data for Service Managers, based on Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation Rental Market Survey, 2013-2017

5.6 Subsidized Housing

The Corporation of the County of Wellington is the Consolidated Municipal Services Manager (CMSM) for the purposes of administering Federal, Provincially and Municipally funded programmes under the Housing Services Act, 2011 (HSA).

County of Wellington's Housing Portfolio



Rent-Geared-to-Income

The County of Wellington owns and operates **1,189** units of rent-geared-to-income housing in 31 properties across the service manager area.

Housing Providers own and operate **1,089** units of rent-geared-to-income housing in 30 properties in Guelph-Wellington.

Rent Supplements (Federally, Provincially and Municipally funded RGI units administered by CWHS) support households in 285 market units.



Affordable Housing

The County of Wellington owns and operates **131** units of affordable housing in Guelph-Wellington.

External housing partners support **172** units of affordable housing in Guelph-Wellington.



Rent Support

The County of Wellington provides over **100** rent supports through various programmes (examples include HAP, CAD and CASU) to improve housing choice and affordability in the private market in our service manager area.

Centralized Waiting List

All applications for Rent-Geared-to-Income (RGI) assistance for subsidized housing located in Guelph-Wellington are managed by the County of Wellington through the Centralized Waiting List. This "one-stop" centralized approach means applicants only need to complete one application form to apply to multiple housing providers for RGI assistance.

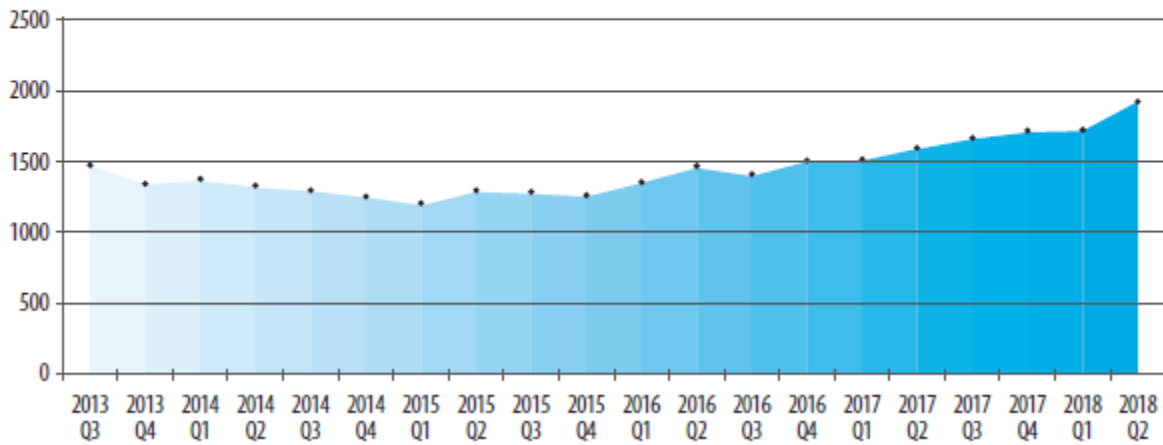
In general, the demand for subsidized housing greatly outweighs the supply, as a result there is a large waiting list for social housing units across Ontario. It should be noted, however, that the waiting list is not a true indicator of social housing demand. Not all of the households on Guelph-Wellington's Centralized Waiting List are current residents of the community, as individuals can apply to be added to any waiting list

in the province. Also, many individuals do not apply for social housing due to the length of time it takes to get a unit, and the ongoing reporting requirements to maintain eligibility status.

The number of households on the Centralized Waiting List fluctuates over time as individuals are housed, new households are added to the list, and outdated files are removed from the waiting list. The following chart illustrates the variable pattern of the number of households on the Centralized Waiting List between 2013 and 2018, with a low of 1,242 households in 2014 Q4 to a high of 1,918 households in 2018 Q2.

FIGURE 7: Number of Households on the Centralized Waiting List in Guelph-Wellington, 2013-2018

Source: County of Wellington, 2018



Applicants on the wait list can only receive a social housing subsidy when vacancies are created. However, few vacancies are created. According to a review conducted by the Auditor General of Ontario (2016), only about 5% of people on the wait lists are housed in a given year. Waiting times also vary according to unit size and location. The average wait time in Guelph-Wellington for all unit types is about 3 years, from less than 2 years for a bachelor apartment to over 6 years for a 4-bedroom apartment. In comparison, social housing wait times across Ontario range from 1.8 years to over 9 years.¹²

5.7 Housing Affordability

Shelter-to-Income Ratio

Given the difference between household income levels and the high price of housing, one in five households in Guelph-Wellington spend above the recommended shelter-to-income (STIR) ratio of 30%.

A greater proportion of tenant households (38%) spend more than 30% of their income in comparison to owner households (15%). However, in terms of actual numbers, there are more owner households (8,800) than renters (7,915) spending over 30% due to the ratio of tenure (74% owners; 26% renters) in Guelph-Wellington.

Likewise, a higher percentage of one-person households (38%) spend more than 30% of their income in comparison to two or more-person households (15%). However, in terms of actual numbers, there are more multiple person households (9,379) than single person households (7,335) spending over 30% due to the household composition in the service area.

In general, the STIR ratio for Guelph-Wellington is lower than Ontario, with the exception of Erin where the proportion of households (22% owners and 49% renters) who spend more than 30% of their income on housing is above the provincial average (20% owners and 46% renters). See **Appendix A** and **Figure 8**.

Core Housing Need

Core housing need is a vital indicator of community well-being that takes into account three factors:

Affordability – Does the household spend 30% or more of their total before-tax income on accommodation?

- **Suitability** – Are there enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of the household according to the National Occupancy Standard?

- **Adequacy** - Is the dwelling in need of major repair?

Households led by youth or young adults (household maintainers ages 15 to 29 years) attending school full-time are not included in Statistic Canada's Core Housing Need data, as these households are considered to be in a transitional stage of life.

One tenth (8,095) of all households in Guelph-Wellington were living in core housing need in 2016, below the provincial rate of 15%. The main reason for households being in core housing need is due to affordability. Nine percent (7,810) of households fall below the affordability standard, followed by adequacy (1%; 850) and suitability (0.7%; 575).

In Guelph-Wellington, the rates are higher for renters (26%; 5,395) than for homeowners (5%; 2,700), and for one-person households (21%; 4,005) than for two or more-person households (7%; 4,090). This trend is comparable with the province.

Who can afford to purchase a home in Guelph-Wellington?

In 2017, owner households would require an annual income of \$120,200 (70th income percentile) to afford to purchase a house at the median resale price of \$432,176 in Guelph-Wellington. Households with incomes at the 50th percentile could afford to purchase a condominium apartment at the median resale price of \$273,277, while households with incomes at the 80th percentile would have enough money to buy a single detached dwelling at the median resale price of \$467,160.

How do individuals on social assistance fare?

As illustrated in the table below, households who receive social assistance, as well as minimum wage workers, would encounter challenges finding suitable market housing in Guelph-Wellington as they do not have sufficient income.

The individuals whose annual household income falls below the 30th income percentile for renter households (\$28,800 in 2017) are eligible for subsidized rental units. At present, approximately 45% of tenants residing in properties owned and/ or managed by the County of Wellington receive social assistance.

TABLE 1: Affordable Monthly Rent for Low Income Households in Guelph-Wellington, 2017

Sources: Ministry of Children Community and Social Services: OW Rate Charts, October 2017 and ODSP Rate Chart, September 2017. Ministry of Labour, Minimum Wage Rates 2018

	Monthly Household Income	Percentage of Income spent on Average Market Rent	
		Bachelor (\$749/month)	1-bedroom (\$966/month)
OW Single	\$721	104%	134%
ODSP single	\$1,151	65%	84%
Full-time worker earning minimum wage ¹³	\$2,123	35%	45%

5.8 Homelessness

Point-in-Time (PiT) Count

A total of 325 individuals were identified through a Point-in-Time (PiT) Count in April 2018 as experiencing homelessness in Guelph-Wellington – 30 more individuals than the previous PiT Count held in April 2016. This increase, however, does not necessarily imply that there has been a rise in homelessness in Guelph-Wellington over the past two years. Based on feedback from the 2016 PiT Count, the enumeration process was refined. The 2018 PiT Count involved a more lengthy and targeted approach in Wellington County, as well as a focused outreach with Indigenous communities. The increase may also suggest improved levels of trust between individuals experiencing homelessness and local service providers

Shelter Use

Since the development of the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan in 2013 and the establishment of a Housing First Programme in 2015, emergency shelter usage in Guelph-Wellington has been on the decline. Between 2013 and 2017, the average number of persons using emergency shelters per night has dropped 25% - from 71 in 2013 to 53 in 2017. Likewise, the average length of stay has fallen 7% for individuals and 9% for families during the same time period. During the 2018 enumeration period (April 2018) less than one quarter of the homeless population accessed the shelter system during the count in April 2018. Many people purposely avoided the shelter system in Guelph-Wellington because of a preference to stay with friends/family (42%), concerns about safety (25%), rules regarding substance use (10%), bed bugs and other pests (10%), transportation challenges (8%), or ownership of pets (5%). Others were turned away as the shelters were full (3%) or individuals are banned from the premises (2%).¹⁵

5.9 Indigenous Peoples

According to the 2016 Census, 2% of Guelph-Wellington's population (3,385 individuals) self-identify as Indigenous. There is no band housing in the area, however, there are 1,030 Indigenous households (1% of total households). The distribution of Indigenous peoples mirrors the overall population distribution, with the majority of Indigenous peoples residing in Guelph (56%), followed by Centre Wellington (15%) and Guelph Eramosa (8%).

In 2016, 24% (240) of all Indigenous households in Guelph-Wellington spent more than 30% of their income on housing, in comparison to 21% of all households. Likewise, 30% of Indigenous households in Ontario spent above the recommended STIR ratio of 30%, compared to 26% for all households.

Nearly one in five Indigenous households (18%; 180) in Guelph-Wellington were living in core housing need in 2016, in comparison to 10% for all households. Similarly, 23% of Indigenous households in Ontario were in core housing need, above the rate of 15% for all households. The main reason for households being in core housing need is due to affordability. In Guelph-Wellington, 15% (150) of Indigenous households fall below the affordability standard, followed by adequacy (6%; 55) and suitability (1%; 10).

Indigenous homelessness is a human condition that describes First Nations, Métis and Inuit individuals, families or communities lacking stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means or ability to acquire such housing. Unlike the common colonialist definition of homelessness, Indigenous homelessness is not defined as lacking a structure of habitation; rather, it is more fully described and understood through a composite lens of Indigenous worldviews. These include: individuals, families and communities isolated from their relationships to land, water, place, family, kin, each other, animals, cultures, languages and identities. Importantly, Indigenous people experiencing these kinds of homelessness cannot culturally, spiritually, emotionally or physically reconnect with their Indigeneity or lost relationships (Aboriginal Standing Committee on Housing and Homelessness, 2012).¹⁶

5.10 Summary of Housing Need and Demand

In summary, the geographic area of Guelph-Wellington is not homogenous. The income of area residents varies by municipality, affecting the levels of housing affordability in the community. In addition, housing styles and tenure preferences differ between rural and urban communities. Consequently, it is important to recognize that issues related to social and affordable housing and homelessness and the appropriate strategies to deal with them may differ across the Service Manager's catchment area.

Overall, Guelph-Wellington fares better than the provincial average on many indicators of housing affordability. However, the lack of affordable housing (rental and ownership) is a growing issue in Guelph-Wellington, and impacts not only low-income households, but also moderate-income earners and economic development opportunities. According to the Federation of Canadian Municipalities, ownership has become out of reach for many workers, despite low interest rates.¹⁷ In 2017, 7 out of 10 households could not afford to purchase the median resale house price of \$432,176, and 1 in 2 renter households could not afford to rent an apartment at the average market rent of \$1,054. With increasing rental rates and housing prices, lagging household incomes, and rising levels of consumer debt, the number of households at risk of homelessness is expected to rise, and the demand for social housing will continue to go up.

6. OBJECTIVES, TARGETS AND ACHIEVEMENTS

6.1 Summary of Modifications to the Plan

In 2015, the County of Wellington released A Place to Call Home – A 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Guelph-Wellington. The plan outlined eight goals (objectives), which provided a road map for achieving the desired vision. This vision statement continues to be relevant, well-liked and supported by community members, and therefore remains unchanged for the 2020 5-Year Plan Update.

There continues to be eight strategic objectives, however, the wording has been modified to better reflect the new provincial policy directions and emerging community needs and priorities, as explained below.

2020-2024 Objectives - Summary of Changes

Goal 1: To help low-income households close the gap between their incomes and housing expenses. No changes.

Goal 2: To provide a range of housing stability supports to assist with housing retention and homelessness prevention was revised to better reflect the focus on housing stability, housing retention and homelessness prevention.

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. No changes.

Goal 4: To increase the supply and mix of affordable housing options for low-to moderate-income households. No changes.

Goal 5: To end chronic homelessness. The statement has been revised to mirror the provincial goal of ending chronic homelessness by 2025.

Goal 6: To promote client-centred, coordinated access to the housing and homelessness system. The statement has been revised to incorporate the concept of “coordinated access”.

Goal 7: To support the sustainability of the existing social and affordable housing stock. The term “preserve” has been replaced with “support the sustainability of” to mirror the provincial policy guidelines.

Goal 8: To foster access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples. A NEW objective statement has been added to promote emphasis on the housing and homelessness needs of Indigenous Peoples.

The concepts of best practices, accountability, outcomes and targets have been embedded into all objective areas.

6.2 Strategic Objectives: 2020-2024

OBJECTIVE 1:

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

Low income continues to be a significant barrier to finding and maintaining an appropriate, safe and affordable place to call home. Although the economic development and employment figures for Guelph-Wellington are positive, job opportunities for individuals with limited education and/or disabilities tend to be low paying and of a temporary nature. Recipients of social assistance programmes and individuals earning minimum wage continue to face significant affordability problems in the Guelph-Wellington housing market, as illustrated in **Section 5.2** – Housing Affordability. Many low-income households are forced to live in shared, over-crowded and sub-standard accommodations, which often exacerbate housing issues. According to the 2018 homelessness enumeration, the top two barriers participants cited to finding housing were “low income” and “rents too high.”

Housing affordability due to low income impacts people of all demographic groups, but in particular: youth and young adults, victims of domestic violence, lone parent families, seniors on fixed incomes, individuals with disabilities, and individuals with poor credit history. In addition, large families, particularly refugees and immigrants, struggle to find suitable and affordable housing in Guelph-Wellington.

Achievements: 2015-2019

Introduced new rent supplement and portable housing benefit subsidies. As of June 30, 2018, 285 households were receiving rent supplements through various programmes.

Piloted the Survivors of Domestic Violence - Portable Housing Benefit (SDV-PHB) for 12 households. The SDV-PHB pilot ended June 30, 2018, and all participants were transitioned to the provincially funded programme or housed through priority status in RGI.

Collaborated with the Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination on Income Security and Living Wage initiatives.

Removed former tenant arrears as a barrier for applicants to the Centralized Waiting List.

The Guelph Community Health Centre launched an ID Bank that provides safe identification storage and support to obtain identification, which improves access to social services, including income support and housing.

Recommended Activities: 2020-2024

Continue to seek additional funding from upper levels of government (e.g. National Housing Strategy) to expand rent support programmes.

Engage upper levels of government partners to extend existing rent support funding past their current expiry dates.

Continue to recruit and build relationships with private market landlords in order to facilitate new rent supplement units.

Continue to monitor best practices and regulatory changes regarding the delivery of rent supplement and portable housing benefit programmes, and update existing policies as needed.

Continue to support the work of the Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination.

OBJECTIVE 2:

To provide a range of housing stability supports to assist with housing retention and homelessness prevention.

For many people, homelessness is the result of an eviction. Evictions often have detrimental impacts on the lives of the individuals and families who lose their housing. While many people who lose their housing rely on support from friends and family, or move into cheaper, often substandard housing, many end up homeless. Evictions are also costly to landlords who incur lost revenue and court costs, and to the public because evictions impact the homelessness support system.¹⁸

Many tenants who have secured housing have trouble successfully maintaining their housing due to poor life skills (e.g., financial management, conflict resolution, relationship maintenance, coping abilities, etc.). Common complaints from landlords include tenants being in arrears, behaving disruptively, and causing excessive damages. According to research conducted by the City of Toronto (2016), households at risk for

eviction disproportionately include low-income and female-headed lone parent families, single adults, Indigenous persons, and individuals with addictions and/or mental health challenges.¹⁹

There is a lack of community awareness and understanding about tenant rights and responsibilities, as well as local housing policies. Examples of tenants being mis-informed about their legal entitlements and obligations under the Residential Tenancies Act (RTA) and receiving incorrect information about the social housing application process and waiting times from community case workers was evident in the focus group discussion of individuals with lived experience.

The County of Wellington currently offers a range of Housing Stability Programmes, including referrals to financial assistance, rent banks and emergency energy funds; landlord education and information on tenant rights and responsibilities; plus, two Housing Community Support Workers who provide outreach for tenants residing in County-managed social housing properties. In addition, the County has begun working on a Eviction Prevention Policy which will introduce strategies to support tenants at risk of eviction from becoming homeless. Helping vulnerable tenants to stay in their homes and avoid homelessness is a vital objective of the 10-year plan for housing and homelessness.

Achievements: 2015-2019

Partnered with Guelph Hydro to facilitate access to the Low-Income Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), assisting 525 low-income households over \$200,000 in utility deposits and 382 with arrear and disconnection waivers.

Expanded the Housing Community Support Worker programme from 1 to 2 case workers.

In partnership with Community Justice Initiatives (CJI), piloted services to mediate tenant disputes.

Continued to hold Spring and Fall Landlord education and information sessions for private-market landlords to raise awareness around tenant and landlord rights and responsibilities.

Recommended Activities: 2020-2024

Adopt and implement an Eviction Prevention Strategy which provides an integrated range of services to prevent those at imminent risk of eviction from becoming homeless. Work with other housing providers in delivering a coordinated approach to eviction prevention.

Hold education workshops for front line staff working for community organizations (housing providers, social services, health care, education, child welfare, housing providers, etc.) to share information about available housing stability programmes, tenant rights and responsibilities, social housing application process, reasons for vacancies, etc.

Work with Local Immigration Partnership to advocate for better housing options for refugees and newcomers.

Create additional educational resources for renter households (e.g., renter's toolkit, RentSmart20 courses).

Strengthen pre-offer process to identify "housing readiness" and support needs and facilitate referrals to appropriate community services.

Continue to foster community building activities within social housing buildings which enhance relationships among neighbours and decrease conflicts.

Continue to assist individuals that are at risk of homelessness or homeless with supports and services to prevent eviction and increase housing stability.

OBJECTIVE 3:

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

Over the past few years, the County of Wellington has been dealing with escalated issues related to the complexity of residents living in social housing units. This is in part due to:

Historical policies of mental health de-institutionalization in Ontario.

- Legislated Special Provincial Priority (SPP) status for victims of domestic violence.
- Better awareness and recognition of various mental health disorders (e.g., hoarding, autism, anxiety, etc.).

Less family support as parents are aging and/ or multiple generations in the households are struggling with complex issues.

- An aging population.
- A shortage of supportive housing options in the Waterloo Wellington LHIN service area for individuals with complex needs due to mental health issues and addictions.

As a result, Housing Services are dealing with an increasing number of:

After-hours emergencies.

- Unwelcome guests.
- Behavioural issues, resulting in neighbour conflicts.
- Clutter/hoarding issues.
- Fire code violations.
- Pest infestations.

Major damages to units.

- Poor money management resulting in rental arrears.
- Drug use and other illegal activities, resulting in increased police presence, safety issues, and impacts on the marketability of units.

Poor quality of life for individuals (e.g., social isolation, poor mental health and physical outcomes, etc.) and the social housing community as a whole.

Achievements: 2015-2019

Established a working relationship with the Waterloo Wellington LHIN on Housing First initiatives, and opportunities to improve coordination between the social housing system and the addictions and mental health systems.

Initiated partnership agreements with the Waterloo Wellington LHIN, Guelph Community Health Centre, Stonehenge Therapeutic Community, and CMHA to provide scattered site housing support services.

Provided mental health training for Housing services staff delivered by Centre for Addiction and Mental Health.

Access to mental health supports improved with the introduction of “Here 24/7.”

Received an extension for the Community Health Assessment Programme through Emergency Medical Services (CHAP-EMS).

Recommended Activities: 2020-2024

Continue to support OMSSA, AMO and other advocacy efforts to upper levels of government regarding the need for a range of supportive housing options, including permanent units that offer 24/7 on-site supports.

Work with the Waterloo Wellington LHIN to develop a plan for leveraging resources from upper levels of government to develop permanent supportive housing units.

Bring together community partners to explore opportunities to expedite access to mental health assessment and counselling supports and services for vulnerable tenants, when a tenancy is in immediate jeopardy.

Continue to partner with the Waterloo Wellington LHIN, Stonehenge Therapeutic Community, and CMHA to provide rent supplements and Intensive Case Management Support to individuals with complex needs.

In partnership with Guelph-Wellington Women In Crisis, explore the feasibility of establishing a second stage housing programme for survivors of family violence and human trafficking.

OBJECTIVE 4:

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

Affordable rental housing is widely recognized as a vital contributor to a productive labour market, as it enables households to more easily relocate to pursue job opportunities. It is also beneficial for young people starting their careers, new immigrants, recent graduates, and workers in entry-level positions who cannot afford a down payment to purchase a home. Nevertheless, finding affordable rental accommodations in Guelph-Wellington is extremely challenging, as rental vacancy rates are some of the lowest in the Country.

Since the introduction of the 10-year plan in 2015, 82 new affordable rental housing units have been built in Guelph-Wellington. These projects have received funding through the Federal-Provincial Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) Programme, Expansion. Under the IAH programme, the definition of affordable rent for these units is 80% of average market rent (AMR). Although this rental rate is below market, it is still not affordable for many households. For example, the current AMR for a 1-bedroom apartment in Guelph-Wellington is \$966 (2017). At 80% AMR, this unit would be rented for \$773. An individual earning minimum wage or receiving social assistance would fall short of being able to afford this rent. See **Table 1**.

It is anticipated that through the National Housing Strategy and reshaping of CMHC initiatives, there will be new funding opportunities to build more affordable rental housing units. This federal investment in affordable housing is welcome news, but there are some concerns about the proposed funding model. First, there are significant limitations to the County of Wellington's ability to match funding, as municipalities are restricted by an already overstretched property tax base. Second, current housing programmes do not promote capacity building of not-for-profits, a key partner in the housing system which built 93% of Ontario's existing supply of below-market rentals. Third, application-based funding places cumbersome (and often duplicated) administrative and reporting requirements on Service Managers. And finally, there will be a need for additional resources to provide layers of rent support for the new units, in order to ease affordability issues for people with the greatest need, such as seniors, Indigenous communities, people with mental health and addictions challenges, people with developmental disabilities, and the chronically homeless. ²¹

Achievements: 2015-2019

Created 82 new affordable rental units:

8 transitional units - Michael House, Guelph.

55 affordable units for seniors - Webster Place, Fergus.

11 affordable family units – 250 Daly St., Palmerston.

8 affordable rental units for priority populations – Habitat for Humanity, Guelph.

Increased Homeownership programme funding, resulting in first time homeownership opportunities for 32 households between 2013 and 2018.

Increased number of homeowners receiving Ontario Renovates for accessibility.

Held 6 affordable rental housing development workshops.

Published an Affordable Rental Housing Development Resource Guide to support individuals and groups wanting to develop, build, and operate affordable rental housing.

Established a Wellington Housing Corporation that will add flexibility and opportunity for future housing development.

Purchased 182 George St., Arthur preserving 10 affordable units.

Collaborated with municipal land use planning:

Reducing multi-residential tax rates.

Creating a policy framework for secondary suites in rural areas (County of Wellington Official Plan Amendment 99).

Participating in the development of the City of Guelph's Affordable Housing Strategy.

Securing development charge (DC) forgiveness for affordable housing buildings in Township of Centre Wellington and Town of Minto.

Establishing DC waivers for a new intensified "zone" of 4 or more units in Wellington North.

Recommended Activities: 2020-2024

Continue to support OMSSA, AMO and other advocacy efforts to upper levels of government regarding the need for more funding to support the development of new permanent affordable rental housing units, including options for additional subsidies to reduce rents to RGI levels.

Leverage funding from upper levels of government to increase homeownership opportunities for moderate-income households (i.e. 40th-60th income percentile).

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.

Exploring inclusionary zoning and/or alternative development standards to promote affordability.

Creating an inventory of public land/assets and brownfield properties.

Continue to collaborate with other Social Services and County Departments on development opportunities (e.g., housing and childcare development partnerships).

Expand affordable housing resources for developers online.

To continue to facilitate housing conversations within the rural context.

OBJECTIVE 5:

To end chronic homelessness

Tremendous efforts have been made to end chronic homelessness in Guelph-Wellington since the introduction of the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan. In 2014, the County commissioned an implementation plan to establish more specific strategies to address homelessness, with a focus on Housing First.

In 2015, a new Housing First programme was established. This programme is delivered by two community agencies – Welcome In Drop In Centre and Wyndham House – who employ three intensive case managers, who collectively support an average of 45 youth and adult households experiencing chronic homelessness. To date, 12 individuals have successfully completed the Housing First programme.

In 2016, the County of Wellington and the Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination signed on to co-lead a local campaign with “20,000 Homes” - a national change movement focused on ending chronic homelessness in 20 communities and housing 20,000 of Canada’s most vulnerable homeless people by July 1, 2020. To kick off the local campaign, the County and Poverty Task Force co-hosted the first ever Registry Week in Guelph-Wellington in April 2016. The data collected during Registry Week 2016 was used to start a By-Name List (BNL). This list identifies individuals experiencing homelessness by name and vulnerability score (captured through a standardized assessment tool), and is used to inform referrals to housing-specific supports and services. Guelph-Wellington was the fourth community in Canada to achieve a quality BNL.

In February 2017, the Guelph-Wellington 20,000 Homes Campaign worked with community partners to develop and implement a Coordinated Entry System (CES). The CES is a client-centred and standardized process for assessing and prioritizing housing related needs. Since its implementation, the CES process is used to prioritize an individual's housing needs, reducing homelessness, and improving the community's response to homelessness.

In April 2018, a follow up PiT Count/Registry Week was held, with funding support from the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy. The need to develop a specialized outreach strategy to connect with Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness was identified during the planning process. Funding from the Guelph Community Health Centre's Indigenous Healing & Wellness Program supported the hiring of an Indigenous Homelessness Community Coordinator to focus on engaging the Indigenous community in the count.

In September 2018, the County of Wellington signed on to the 20KHomes Collaborative that is based on the Community Solutions Built for Zero Campaign. The 20KHomes Collaborative is a structured and supportive approach to ending chronic homelessness that uses data along with a combination of peer learning and Collective Impact elements to set common agendas and progress measures, reinforcing best practices, and continuous communication and activities.

Concurrent to these efforts, work has been progressing on specifically addressing youth homelessness. A grant was obtained to conduct research on rural youth homelessness, and community providers held a Theory of Change event focused on the issue. Additionally, Wyndham House has adjusted its programming to better align with the newly adopted CES, and to address the increase in the youth homeless population, and growing complexity of issues they are presenting with. The new youth Housing First programming model streamlines services for youth based on the intensity of case management support required.

Achievements: 2015-2019

Introduced and evaluated a new Housing First Programme, in partnership with the Welcome In Drop In Centre and Wyndham House.

Introduced and evaluated a new Shelter Diversion and Rapid Exit Programme, resulting in reductions in emergency shelter numbers and motel use.

Welcome In Drop In Centre relocated its women's shelter (Dwelling Place) to increase capacity, and completed renovations at the men's shelter (Stepping Stone) to better meet the needs of the homeless population.

Joined the national 20K Homes Campaign and participants in 20KHomes Collaborative

In collaboration with the Canadian Alliance to End Homelessness (CAEH), the Guelph-Wellington 20K Homes Campaign provided Housing First training to community agency staff.

Conducted two homeless enumerations (PiT counts/registry weeks).

Implemented a CES.

Established a quality BNL - Guelph-Wellington was the fourth community in Canada to do so.

Hired a Housing Stability System Coordinator to enhance coordination among homeless system providers and support the CES.

Supported the work of the Rural Youth Homelessness Committee.

Partnered with Wyndham House and Family and Children's Services to provide supporting housing options for youth leaving the foster care system.

Partnered with Dunara, the Welcome In Drop In Centre, CMHA and a private landlord to provide a supportive living environment for 10 formerly homeless individuals.

Developed a Data Sharing Protocol and has begun testing the implementation of the Homeless Individuals and Families Information System (HIFIS) 4. HIFIS 4 will improve operational capabilities to support better homelessness programming and community planning.

Added a local priority of homelessness to the Centralized Waiting List.

Recommended Activities: 2020-2024

Continue efforts to improve the CES using the BNL and System Scorecards provided by the 20K Homes Campaign to drive monthly reductions in the number of individuals experiencing homelessness.

Explore the feasibility of a Street Outreach Programme.

Conduct a fidelity assessment of the Housing First Programme and explore opportunities to expand the Programme including leveraging peer support for the Programme.

Establish a process to create a coordinated care plan as part of CES for individuals experiencing chronic homelessness.

Continue to collaborate with community partners to conduct homeless enumeration every two years.

Establish a Housing Locator position with service providers to design a Landlord Engagement Strategy to enhance and create new landlord partnerships.

Collaborate with the Upper Grand District School Board and Wellington Catholic District School Board on introducing homelessness curriculum into the schools.

Continue to support the work of the Rural Youth Homelessness Committee and the new Rural Emphasis campaign to raise awareness of youth homelessness in rural Wellington.

Collaborate with institutions on strategies to improve discharge planning processes.

Implementation of HIFIS 4 across all of the Housing Stability service providers to enhance service delivery.

Seek further opportunities to intentionally pair Provincial, Federal and Municipal initiatives.

Continue to advocate for increased funding through the renewed Homelessness Partnering Strategy to strengthen our local response to chronic homelessness.

OBJECTIVE 6:

To promote client-centred, coordinated access to the housing and homelessness system

One of the existing strengths of the local system is the strong collaboration between the County of Wellington's Housing Division and community service providers. Services are planned, coordinated and

delivered in a streamlined and integrated way. The focus now needs to be on continuously improving policies and practices, so that they are more client-centred.

There is a desire to make things simpler, easier, less stressful and invasive for people navigating the housing and homelessness system. The County of Wellington is working on integrating, simplifying and streamlining service delivery at the local level, to achieve better outcomes. The County of Wellington continues to move towards full service integration to reduce reporting fatigue, improve system navigation, and programme delivery. This work needs to be done internally, across social services divisions, to improve information sharing and policy alignment. As one focus group participant remarked, "I gave that information to my Ontario Works caseworker, why doesn't Housing have it?"

There is also a need to address privacy and information sharing barriers among external stakeholders funded by other ministries and levels of government (e.g. police, healthcare providers, child and youth services, etc.).

Achievements: 2015-2019

Transitioned the Housing Stability team from Ontario Works to the Housing Services Division, to further integration and enhance service delivery.

Created an online resource for the Housing Help Centre to assist individuals with locating affordable market rental listings more easily throughout the service area.

Expanded the Rural Transportation Programme to include East Wellington.

The process for accessing Emergency Energy and Rent Bank funding from multiple providers was streamlined and made more person-centered.

Settlement Services staff actively supported numerous refugee families in securing housing.

Supported the development of the Welcome In Drop In Centre's 2nd Floor, a project which has brought together a multi-disciplinary range of supports in a community hub for clients experiencing homelessness.

Established an integration team that has moved forward in integrating frontline reception to provide ongoing engagement and communication with each other and those providing service in trying to meet the needs of the individuals.

The Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination coordinated a Community Cold Weather Response Plan for Individuals Experiencing Homelessness that empowers partner agencies to decide when to open warm up locations during the day and emergency shelters at night.

Recommended Activities: 2020-2024

Continue to support OMSSA, AMO and other advocacy efforts to remove legislative barriers and administrative burdens that are obstacles to furthering service integration at the local level.

Continue efforts to further improve coordinated access to the housing and homelessness system.

Continue efforts to modernize housing policies and practices (e.g. on-line application process, annual updates to the centralized waiting list, mobile rent payments, etc.).

Continue to expand and streamline the process between divisions by integrating intake and having common communication, reporting and services in place to provide better outcomes for people.

OBJECTIVE 7:

To support the sustainability of the existing social and affordable housing stock

The County of Wellington is doing its part to ensure that housing is adequately funded and delivered, but faces challenges to maintaining and repairing aging social housing stock, with many buildings now 25-50 years old. Housing provider partners face capital challenges as well, and rely heavily on provincial and federal investments for social housing repairs and retrofits. Repair delays as a result of unpredictable funding have the potential of adding significant costs onto operators and undermine the viability of a valuable community asset. In addition to aging stock, there is an additional risk of the loss of a significant number of social housing units as funding agreements with housing provider partners begin to expire.

Over the coming years, the Service Manager faces a number of challenges with respect to maintaining these aging, but important community assets. This involves:

Extending the useful life of aging buildings in need of significant capital renewal (e.g. roofs, elevators, parking garages, appliances, boilers, etc.)

- Altering or retrofitting units to accommodate changing demographics, accessibility needs, and technologies (e.g. scooters)
- Upgrading buildings to address energy efficiency, water conservation to ensure long-term sustainability and climate change resiliency

Revitalizing or disposing of single/semi-detached units that are no longer cost-effective to operate

- Dealing with rising maintenance and repair issues during unit turnover, which are resulting in escalating costs and lengthy vacancies
- Developing a comprehensive strategy for addressing end of operating agreements and mortgages with our housing provider partners

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

Achievements: 2015-2019

Signed 3 expiring operating agreements with federal housing providers, extending the viability of social housing units beyond their original operating agreements.

Administered the Social Housing Improvement Program (SHIP) to 19 projects (573 units) and the Social Housing Electrical Efficiency Program (SHEEP) renovation projects in Wellington North and Guelph (32 households).

Provided approximately \$500K in extraordinary capital loans to non-profit housing corporations and co-operatives to address major safety and structural repairs.

Supported local Housing Providers to complete Building Condition Assessments (BCAs), to determine the state of the social housing stock and establish an up-to-date list of priority projects for future investment.

Undertook a major renewal project at 261-263 Speedvale, Guelph to improve accessibility and community spaces for tenants.

Committed over \$16M in past 5 years for capital improvements projects and \$3M in annual general maintenance for County owned units.

In collaboration with local Hydro companies, replaced qualified appliances with new energy efficient alternatives.

The County adjusted administration and maintenance benchmarks in 2018 and provided one time capital funding to some housing providers.

Recommended Activities: 2020-2024

Continue to leverage funding from upper levels of government to address safety and structural repairs, climate change, environmental sustainability, and accessibility needs.

Continue to support OMSSA, AMO and other advocacy efforts to remove outdated Service Level Standards (SLS) that measure only a portion of the possible tools and approaches to improve housing availability and affordability, limiting flexibility and innovation.

Develop a business case for regenerating the County's public housing stock, which takes into consideration selling off single/semi-detached units and reinvesting the proceeds in new development opportunities, or site densification options.

Continue to support non-profit housing corporations and co-operatives in the delivery and potential development of social and affordable housing (e.g., education workshops, sharing of best practices and operating policies and procedures, support for the development of funding proposals and business cases, joint tendering opportunities, common list of approved vendors, etc.).

Continue to work with our local federal housing providers to try and maintain their involvement in social and affordable housing after their mortgages expire.

Develop a funding strategy between local provincial reformed housing providers and the County of Wellington to ensure that the providers thrive in our community by maintaining existing and developing new high quality and stable long term social and affordable housing.

OBJECTIVE 8:

To foster access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples

The County of Wellington is committed to working with Indigenous partners to address the legacy of residential schools, close gaps and remove barriers, support Indigenous culture, and reconcile relationships with Indigenous peoples. Accordingly, a new objective for the 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan has been established to highlight the importance of building relationships with Indigenous communities.

In 2018, work began on establishing a new relationship built on the fundamental understanding of the Gaswentah (Two Row Wampum) of friendship, trust and respect with Indigenous communities. The County of Wellington's Housing staff participated in cultural awareness training to learn, share and better understand how to support Indigenous peoples. Additionally, as part of the 2018 PiT Count- Everyone Counts, a specialized outreach strategy was established to connect with Indigenous peoples experiencing homelessness. With funding from the Indigenous Healing and Wellness Program which is hosted by the Guelph Community Health Centre, The Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination and the

Welcome In Drop In Centre hired a consultant to focus on engaging the Indigenous community in the count. An event, Welcoming Communities – “Indigenous Ties”, was hosted on the second day of the count at the Welcome In Drop In Centre. While the event was open to everyone, outreach and invitations focused on identifying Indigenous community members experiencing homelessness. Participants of the event shared stories, created art and made music together, and were invited to participate in the Ontario Enumeration Survey.

The County of Wellington is new to the journey of truth and reconciliation and recognizes that there is a significant amount of work that needs to be done to better understand appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples in our community.

Recommended Activities: 2020-2024

Strengthen relationships with Indigenous organizations and communities in our Service Manager area.

Coordinate with Indigenous community and partners to support access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples in our Service Manager area.

6.3 Objectives, Outcomes and Targets

The objectives, outcomes and targets listed below are intended to reduce homelessness and lead to improved housing outcomes in Guelph-Wellington. Data will be collected regularly to assess the achievement of desired results and reported annually to the Ministry and community on the progress made.

Objective 1

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

Outcomes

Improved access to rent supports that help improve housing affordability for low-income households.

Measures

Number of households that receive rent supports per year.

Targets

By 2024, 400 households receive rent supports per year.

Objective 2

To provide a range of housing stability supports to assist with housing retention and homelessness prevention

Outcomes

Improved access to supports and resources for tenants and landlords to stabilize housing and prevent evictions

Measures

Number of households at risk of homelessness that are stabilized (includes eviction prevention services, and assistance with rental and energy arrears) per year.

Targets

By 2024, 75% of households who received a subsidy and/or supports have retained their housing for at 6 months follow up.

Objective 3

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

Outcomes

Increased access to supportive housing options that help people to successfully live independently.

Measures

Number of households that receive housing support services through the Service Manager per year.

Targets

By 2024, there has been a 5% increase in the number of households that receive support services through the Service Manager.

Objective 4

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

Outcomes

Increased number of households who are living in affordable housing options.

Measures

Number of households in affordable housing per year.

Targets

By 2024, there has been a 5% increase in the number of affordable housing options.

Objective 5

To end chronic homelessness

Outcomes

People experiencing chronic homelessness find and maintain housing.

Measures

Reductions in the number of people actively experiencing chronic homelessness.

Targets

By 2024, Guelph-Wellington will reach the third key reduction indicator in the 20KHomes Campaign: Getting Close to Functional Zero Chronic Homelessness.

Objective 6

To promote client-centred, coordinated access to the housing and homelessness system

Outcomes

People are able to access the housing and homelessness support services they need in a timely and efficient manner.

Measures

Number of activities undertaken to improve coordinated access and customer service (i.e., training, policies, phones, positions, etc.)

Targets

By 2024, Social Services reception and intake is fully integrated.

Objective 7

To support the sustainability of the existing social and affordable housing stock

Outcomes

Improved viability of existing RGI units and social housing assets beyond their original operating and mortgage agreements.

Measures

Number of households in RGI and affordable housing units.

Targets

By 2024, the County and local housing providers are collectively continuing to maintain service level standards.

Objective 8

To foster access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples

Outcomes

Improved access to culturally appropriate housing and homelessness services for Indigenous peoples.

Measures

Number of engagement activities and resources initiated to deepen understanding of Indigenous housing and homelessness experience in Guelph- Wellington.

Targets

By 2024, the County and community housing partners are engaged in the development of a meaningful process that supports Indigenous participation in the housing and homelessness initiatives in our community.

Appendix a

ENDNOTES

- 1 Common Local Indicators for Service Managers 2017.
- 2 Government of Ontario (2016). Policy Statement: Service Manager Housing and Homelessness Plans. Toronto, ON: Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.
- 3 Government of Ontario (2016). Ontario's Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy Update. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- 4 The Guelph and Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination works 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. Current priorities include homelessness and housing. In collaboration with the County of Wellington, the Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination is the co-lead on the 20,000 Homes Campaign - a local campaign focused on ending chronic homelessness for the most vulnerable – and the Point-in-Time Counts and Registry Weeks conducted in 2017 and 2018.
- 5 MMAH Service Manager Profiles and Common Local Indicators for Service Managers 2017.
- 6 County of Wellington (2018). Invest in Wellington – Wellington County Community Improvement Programme. Guelph, ON: County of Wellington Economic Development.
- 7 Ontario Ministry of Finance. Ontario Population Projections Update, 2017–2041. Table 4: Historical and projected population by census division, selected years — reference scenario. <https://www.fin.gov.on.ca/en/economy/demographics/projections/table4.html>
- 8 Guelph-Wellington Local Immigration Partnership (n.d.) Helping Hands: Welcoming Syrian refugees to Guelph-Wellington. <http://www.guelphwellingtonlip.ca/refugee-supports/>
- 9 Primary rental market refers to purpose-built dwellings of 3 or more rental units.
- 10 City of Guelph (2015). Affordable Housing Strategy: The Current State of Housing in the City of Guelph. Guelph, ON: Author.
- 11 Common Local Indicators for Service Managers 2017.
- 12 Office of the Auditor General of Ontario (2017). 2017 Annual Report – Chapter 3, Section 3.14 Social and Affordable Housing. Toronto, ON: Queen's Printer for Ontario.
- 13 Assumes full-time work of 35 hours per week, 52 weeks per year at current minimum wage of \$14.00 per hour.
- 14 Ellery, R. (2017). Everyone Counts: 2018 Guelph-Wellington Point-in-Time Count. Guelph & Wellington Task Force for Poverty Elimination: Guelph, ON.
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- 17 Pomeroy, S. (2015). Built to last: strengthening the foundations of Housing in Canada. Ottawa, ON: Federation of Canadian Municipalities.

18 City of Toronto (2016). Eviction Prevention Framework. Toronto, ON: City of Toronto Shelter, Support and Housing Administration.

19 City of Toronto (2016). Eviction Prevention Framework. Toronto, ON: City of Toronto Shelter, Support and Housing Administration.

20 <http://www.rentsmartontario.ca>

21 OMSSA (2018). Housing and Homelessness Services In Ontario

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

We would like to thank Warden Dennis Lever, the County of Wellington Council, and Social Services Committee both past and present, for their ongoing support for housing in our community. We would also like to thank our community partners for their commitment and support to address housing and homelessness issues.

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.

Recommended Citation:

When referring to this document, please use the following citation:

Grodzinski E. (2019). A Place to Call Home - A 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan for Guelph-Wellington – Five Year Update (2020-2024). Guelph, ON; County of Wellington.

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