



Bruce County Long Term Housing Strategy 2013-2023

2019 - Progress Report



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Bruce County Long Term Housing Strategy

Background and Vision

In 2018, Bruce County began a five-year review of the Strategy. During this review we recognize that although several of the issues and principles remain the same, other have emerged over the past five years. This was an opportune time to explore the change in the housing market and refined the plan to reflect a renewed awareness of our community, economic market and affordable housing. The collective vision continues to be to create appropriate, affordable, diverse and supportive housing choices for all Bruce County residents. This document is a progress report of the Long Term Housing Strategy, and an introduction of the updated Housing & Homelessness plan.

Housing Issues

In October 2014, SHS Consulting facilitated workshops with the Bruce County community and its partners, developers and builders to identify housing issues as outlined below.

 <p>The seniors demographic continues to grow faster than others</p>	 <p>Employment trends are influencing demand for affordable housing</p>	 <p>Inadequate supply of housing for persons with disabilities and availability of support services</p>	 <p>New housing stock is concentrated and not diversified</p>
 <p>Affordability remains an issue for some households</p>	 <p>Maintaining the existing stock is a challenge</p>	 <p>Finding and maintaining housing is a challenge for some</p>	 <p>High cost of utilities</p>



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In 2019, we continued on our journey and reevaluated the housing issues. Although many remained the same, we did hear of emerging trends in the region.

1 Supportive and accessible housing continue to be lacking

Seniors, individuals with developmental disabilities and those with mental health concerns are finding it increasingly difficult to find and maintain housing without the specialized supports they require.

2 Employment trends continue to influence the demand for affordable housing

Bruce Power's Life-Extension Program began in 2016 and will continue until 2053. The Life-Extension Program also involves the Major Component Replacement (MCR) Project which will begin in 2020 and will continue for approximately 13 years. This one employment trend is increasing the overall demand for housing.

3 Lack of housing options

In Bruce County, lack of options for housing makes it difficult to rapidly house people who are experiencing homelessness or exiting a provincial institution such as a hospital or correctional facility. There is no emergency shelters or transitional housing for men, male-headed families or youth. There is a shelter and transitional housing available for female victims of domestic violence and their children.

4 Maintaining the existing stock continues to be a challenge in Bruce County

Bruce County is scattered with older homes and buildings that require a substantial capital commitment, including the community housing portfolio owned by Bruce County Housing Corporation.

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High cost of utilities

Although mentioned in the consultations, the high cost of utilities was not identified as a top housing issue. A great amount of work has been done in this area including implementation of the Low Energy Assistance Program (LEAP), the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP) and the Housing Stability Fund (HSF). Each of the programs are available to lower income individuals and families to assist with the cost of their electricity bill and/or arrears.

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Location & lack of transportation are new issues emerging in this update

Lack of transportation makes it difficult for some people to find and maintain affordable housing while sustaining their employment. Affordable housing is often found in outlying areas where access to employment, services, and support is impossible without transportation.

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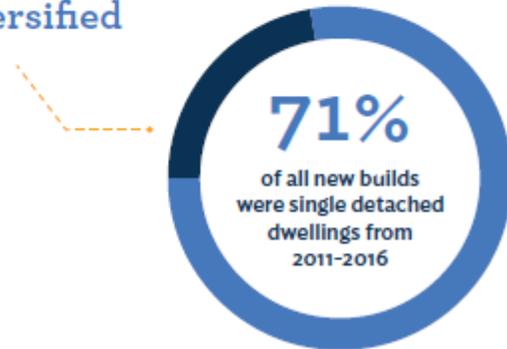
Affordability and availability are the two most prevalent concerns among residents

Housing in Bruce County, particularly along the lakeshore, has become unaffordable, not only for low-income individuals and families, but among middle income earners as well.



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New housing starts in Bruce County are not diversified



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2019 Highlights

- Completion of the updated Housing and Homelessness Plan
- Approval for the replacement of 15 RGI units, as well as 10 affordable and 10 modest market units in the Municipality of Kincardine
- 100 applicants offered community housing units in 2019
- 7 new rent supplement units created in 2019
- \$185,000 distributed in 2019 for first or last month's rent, rental arrear, utility arrears and/or moving expenses
- \$140,000 distributed to 14 homeowners for energy efficiency and accessibility upgrades
- \$9,495 provided to one new homeowner to assist with the down payment on their new homes
- \$21,250 distributed for Westario Power's Low-income Energy Assistance (LEAP) program

Coming in 2020

- Completion of our 35-unit apartment building and Kincardine hub
- Continued financial support for the Community Delivered Supportive Rent Supplement Pilot Program to increase the number of supportive rental opportunities in Bruce County
- Sustained investment in the home repair program
- Continuation of the Housing Stability Fund to assist households with first or last month's rent, rent arrears, utility arrears and/or moving expenses
- Continued collaboration through membership in the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force, as well as, specific efforts of the Housing Sub-Committee
- In collaboration with community partners, develop a Housing Response Table to provide access to a system navigator for vulnerable residents
- Renewed focus on the updated Housing & Homelessness Plan

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Progress on Addressing Actions

Bruce County has a clear role in helping to achieve outcomes. A healthy, coordinated and integrated housing and homelessness system relies on the efforts of all partners to help advance solutions. Based on community feedback regarding the current housing issues facing Bruce County, the following five goals were identified:

- educate partners;
- cultivate strong partnerships and coordinate efforts;
- enhance financial and program supports for housing and services;
- make planning rules more flexible; and
- maintain existing stock.

Rooted in these goals are 35 actions - the stepping stones for meeting these goals. This progress report details Bruce County's accomplishments in 2019.

Educate Partners

The aim is to broaden community awareness and support for the updated strategy and to increase the capacity of non-profit and private sector housing providers.

Accomplishments

- Regular updates and activities posted on the Bruce County website and Facebook page
- Continued partnership with the Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force Housing Action Group to lead, support and develop housing related projects
- Information sharing and education about municipal by-laws impacting tenants

What's Next

- Continued membership on Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force and also the specific Housing Action Group
- Continue to work with County and Municipal Planners to encourage affordable housing

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Cultivate strong partnerships and coordinate efforts

Coordinating efforts for housing and support service delivery among stakeholders and developing a ‘no wrong door’ culture for providing services.

Accomplishments

- Ongoing communication and information sharing with various community partners including Public Health, Women’s House, YMCA, CMHA, VON, Community Living, mental health and development services
- Ongoing work with Bruce County, Planning & Economic Development Department
- Strong partnership with YMCA to deliver services to the homeless and those at risk of homelessness
- Continued partnership with Westario Power to deliver the Low Income Electricity Assistance Program (LEAP) to residents in Bruce, Grey, Huron and Wellington counties
- Continued partnership with Healthy Smiles Ontario to offer dental services in social housing common room
- Continued partnership with Grey Bruce Health Unit and Grey County Housing to initiate a community Engagement Pilot Project in a community housing neighbourhood
- Continued membership in the Bruce Grey Community Drug & Alcohol Strategy, Community Leaders in Grey and Bruce working to shift attitudes, improve policies and change systems in support of those experiencing and/or at risk of substance abuse.
- Commissioned with Grey County the development of a customized information portal with Community Connections: 211 to provide an ease of access to service information and ensure there is “no wrong door”
- Continued involvement in the Bruce Grey Data Information Sharing Collaborative (BGDISC), a local rural data sharing tool to inform decision makers
- Communication and collaboration to develop a Housing Response Table for vulnerable residents.

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What's Next

- Concentrated effort to work with Bruce County Planning & Economic Development staff, as well as the Strategic Initiatives staff to move the housing agenda forward
- Continued partnership with Grey County, the YMCA, CMHA, and Grey Bruce Health Services to develop the Housing Response Table

Enhance financial and program supports for housing services

Continuing financial and program support for affordable and special needs housing, advocating to senior governments for funding of affordable and special needs housing, and encouraging better access to health -related services that help to sustain households.

Accomplishments

- Promotion of affordable homeownership throughout Bruce County
- Promotion of the Ontario Renovates program to residents who own their own homes and require minor repairs for sustainability
- Administration of Housing Stability Fund is focusing on ensuring the funds are making a sustainable impact to lower income residents
- Administration of the Low-income Electricity Assistance Program to assist with high energy costs
- Continued partnership with VON Aging at Home Supportive Housing in County operated social housing units
- Continued partnership with CMHA for supported rent supplement units
- Community Support Program engages tenants who are or may become at risk of losing their housing or who may need additional supports to keep their housing
- Implementation of the Community Delivered Rent Supplement Pilot Project

What's Next

- Build collaborative partnership with community partners and health care providers to increase access to housing supports

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Make Planning Rules More Flexible

Eliminating policy and zoning barriers to the creation of affordable housing, including secondary suites and encouraging the use of Community Improvement Plans (CIPs) and other planning tools to encourage a more diverse housing stock.

Accomplishments

- Respond to regular inquiries from developers who want to build affordable housing
- Increase the diversity of housing stock, including adding private rentals for seniors
- Community Improvement Plans: CIP's are encouraging secondary units as accessory apartments
- Continuing to work with lower tier municipalities to leverage flexibility for affordable housing development

What's Next

- Continued investment in the development of affordable housing
- Continued partnership with Municipal planners
- Continue to work with the planning department to develop tools to assist developers in providing affordable housing

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Maintain Existing Stock

Promotes improving energy efficiency and the condition of the existing housing stock and ensuring the sustainability of social housing properties in Bruce County.

Accomplishments

- Approximately \$2.2 million in capital upgrades for existing local housing corporation, social housing stock
- The home repair program assisted 14 homeowners in 2019 to maintain or upgrade their homes for energy efficiency, accessibility and capital upgrades
- Application of the Canada-Ontario Community Housing Initiative (COCHI) and Ontario Priorities Housing Initiative (OPHI) funding to assist in capital projects and rent supplement

What's Next

- Continued administration of the home repair program
- Capital improvements will continue in 2020

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Investment in Affordable Housing

The Investment in Affordable Housing (IAH) program in Bruce County will provide \$3,023,200 in federal and provincial funding for the creation and repair of affordable housing over 6 years. The IAH program will reach maturity in March 31, 2020

Components

- **Rental Housing:** to increase supply of rental housing for households on, or eligible to be on the social housing waitlist
- **Homeownership:** to assist low to moderate income renter households to purchase affordable ownership and rental properties
- **Home repairs and renovations:** financial assistance to renovate affordable ownership
- **Rent supplement:** to address affordability issues of households in modest private rental units

Additional Units Created in 2019

Rental Housing - Funds were committed to assist in developing the 35 unit build in Kincardine

Homeownership - one new homeownership loans was granted in 2019

Home repair - 14 home repair applications were approved in 2019

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Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)

The vision for the Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) is a better-coordinated and integrated service delivery system that is people-centered, outcome-focused and reflects a Housing First approach to prevent, reduce and address homelessness in communities across Ontario.

CHPI's two main outcome objectives are:

- 1) To assist people experiencing homelessness obtain and retain housing; and
- 2) To assist people at risk of homelessness to remain housed.

Components

- **Housing Stability Fund:** To assist individuals, couples and families who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless to secure affordable permanent housing in Bruce County
- **Community Support Coordinator:** Provides financial counseling and supports related to affordable housing to individuals who are at risk of eviction
- **YMCA Grey Bruce:** Provided housing support services for the homeless or those at risk of homelessness
- **Giiwe Project:** An Indigenous led, inter-agency collaboration aimed at reducing off-reserve Indigenous homelessness.

In 2019, \$787,159 of provincial funding was spent on these programs to assist residents of Bruce County who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

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Summary

Bruce County has remained committed to its vision and has cultivated and developed strong partnerships within the community to broaden awareness and acceptance of the need for more affordable housing.

*A special thank you to County Council, County staff,
all of our community partners and developers for their dedication,
commitment and innovation shown that is proving to result in
Better Housing Choices for All
for our residents who call Bruce County Home.*

For more information on Bruce County's Long Term Housing Strategy Update or to discover how you can support the housing vision in your community, [Click Here](#)

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