

BRUCE COUNTY

Housing & Homelessness Plan Update

2019-2023



Warden's Message

I am excited to introduce Bruce County's Housing & Homelessness Plan update. The Plan outlines the strategic direction we will follow as we continue on the journey to advance the vision of an affordable, safe and suitable home for all residents. This Plan is a five year review and update to the previous Long-Term Housing Strategy introduced in 2013. This Plan reflects the previous direction, while introducing new awareness of particular issues that are emerging in Bruce County.

The Housing & Homelessness Plan update is a consolidation of input received from key stakeholders, community partners, staff and residents who took the time to attend a consultation, participate in key informant interviews or complete on-line surveys. Bruce County staff cannot do this alone and rely on a number of community partners and collaborative tables to move the housing agenda forward.

On behalf of County Council and Bruce County I would like to express an immense thank you to everyone who participated in any or all of the information gathering session and for helping Bruce County identify needs and priorities to develop the strategic direction and immediate actions for affordable housing in our community.

I look forward to watching our community work together and gather momentum as we implement the updated plan over the next five years.

Sincerely,



Mitch Twolan, Warden
County of Bruce





Housing & Homelessness Plan Update

Bruce County's Housing & Homelessness Plan (referred to here-after as the Plan) update is a five year review and update to the former Long-Term Housing Strategy (2013-2023). The updated plan aligns with the Province's revised policy statement and vision that 'every person in Ontario has an affordable, suitable and adequate home to provide the foundation to secure employment, raise a family, and build strong communities.'

As Municipal Service Manager, Bruce County is required to review and, if necessary, update the plan every five years. By completing this review, Bruce County meets its obligations set out in the Housing Services Act, 2011.

Upon review of the 2013 strategy we recognize that although several of the issues and principles remain the same, others have emerged over the past five years. This update is an ideal opportunity to explore the change in the housing market and refine the plan to reflect a renewed awareness of our community, economic market and affordable housing.



This Housing & Homelessness Plan update

provides a summary of the current housing trends as they pertain to Bruce County and sets out strategic directions, including actions and outcomes. Ultimately, the Housing & Homelessness Plan update aims to create a strategic community-focused approach to meeting housing choice, affordability and stability needs over the next five years.



The Past Five Years

Highlights

Over the past five years, council, staff, community partners, non-profits and the private sector have worked diligently to advance the previous Long-Term Housing Strategy. Below are a number of highlights from the past five years.

- 01** Ongoing partnerships with Public Health, Women’s House, YMCA, United Way, CMHA and Community Living
- 02** Ongoing participation in the Poverty Task Force and Housing Sub-Committee
- 03** Ongoing collaboration between the Planning and Development Department and the lower-tier municipalities
- 04** Ongoing administration of the Housing Stability Fund to assist with rent & utility arrears, first or last month’s rent and/or moving expenses
- 05** Provided funding to assist with the creation of a secondary unit for a family in the Municipality of Kincardine

The Past Five Years (continued)

- 06 Approximately **\$2 million in capital upgrades** for existing community housing units per year
- 07 **Continued financial commitment** for the Home Repair and Home Ownership programs
- 08 Partnership with Westario Power to deliver the **Low Income Electricity Assistance Program (LEAP)** to residents of Bruce, Grey, Huron and Wellington counties
- 09 **Communication and education** around the Ontario Electricity Support Program (OESP)
- 10 **Twelve new units**, including four supportive units, completed with the assistance of Investment in Affordable Housing program funding money
- 11 **Development of the Community Delivered Rent Supplement Program**, in partnership with the YMCA Owen Sound Grey Bruce to increase the number of supportive rental opportunities in Bruce County
- 12 Partnership with Grey Bruce Public Health Unit to initiate a **Community Engagement Pilot Project** in a community housing neighbourhood
- 13 Commissioned with Grey County, the development of a **customized information portal with Community Connections: 211** to provide an ease of access to service information



Our Approach

The Plan builds on previous work, focuses on addressing matters of provincial interest, serves as the County's response to the requirement to prepare a housing and homelessness plan and is our commitment to look beyond obstacles and innovate collaboratively to meet the actions in our plan. →



Our Approach (continued)

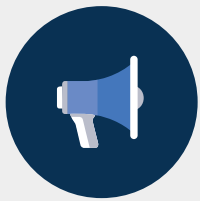
Several methods of consultation and information gathering were used to ensure a robust process in creating the plan.

A review of the previous plan and the yearly updates was undertaken along with an analysis of the Service Manager Policy Statement, 2016, the Province’s updated Long-Term Housing Strategy, 2016 and Bruce County’s GPS Engagement Summary Report to determine a strategic direction for the review. As well, local census data, common local indicators, the Province’s Affordable Housing Price & Rent Tables and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing’s Service Manager profile data was examined to support the development of targets and outcomes.



On December 14, 2018, over **30 key stakeholders and community agencies** participated in a community consultation to share perspectives, provide input and form potential solutions for the housing needs of the people who call Bruce County home. Key informant interviews took place to gather targeted input from members of the Indigenous Community, as well as those working with victims of Domestic Violence and the Developmental Disability sector. Finally an on-line survey was completed by 117 residents.

The information obtained through these processes contributed to the foundation of the plan.



What's Happening in Bruce County?

Bruce County's population in 2016

68,147

▲ 3.1% over the 2011 census

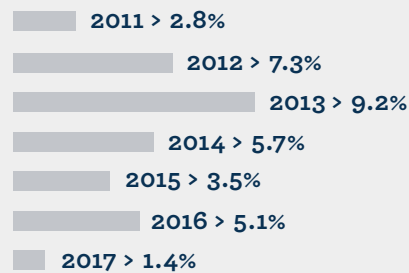


2016

29%

 of all renters are in core housing need

Vacancy rates



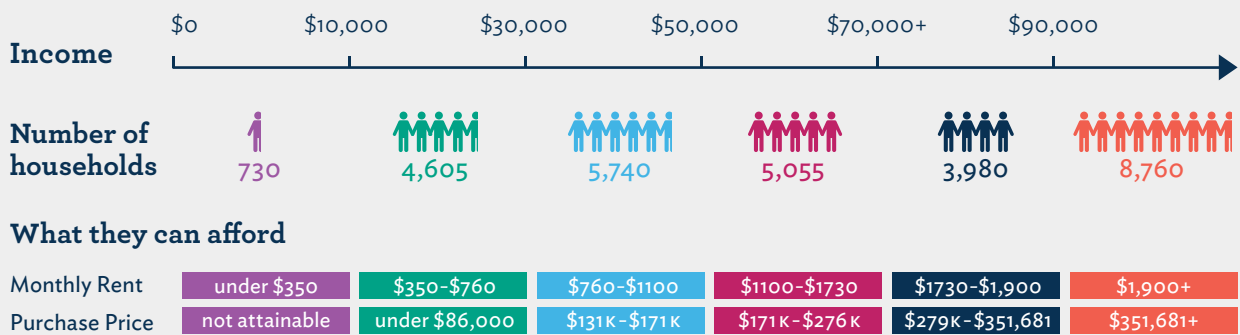
DID YOU KNOW?

A healthy vacancy rate for any community is **3%**

45%

 of tenant households spend ▲ 30% of their income on housing related costs

The housing & income continuum in Bruce County (2016)





Waitlist has been increasing over the past 4 years

306
2015

365
2016

373
2017

489
2018



In 2018, Bruce County undertook its first homelessness enumeration. Although, the response was small and therefore not generalizable the results did raise questions and point to a need for further study of youth and Indigenous persons as populations with unique circumstances.

Indigenous



Youth



Average resale price for a home in 2018

Only affordable to those above the 60th income percentiles. This represents 8,760 households or 30% of the population that can afford to buy a home at the average resale price in Bruce County.

16.1%

of all rentals in Bruce County are subsidized



Housing Issues in Bruce County

There are a number of trends influencing the housing market in Bruce County. Several of the identified issues were present in the 2013 strategy in various forms, while others are emerging as the population and landscape in Bruce County changes. →



1

The seniors population continues to grow faster than other groups

2

Employment trends are influencing demand for affordable housing

3

Inadequate supply of housing for persons with disabilities and availability of support services

4

Maintaining the existing stock is a challenge

5

High cost of utilities

6

Finding and maintaining housing is a challenge for some

7

Affordability remains an issue for some households

8

New housing stock is concentrated and not diversified

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.

2018/2019 Housing Issues (continued)



5 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.

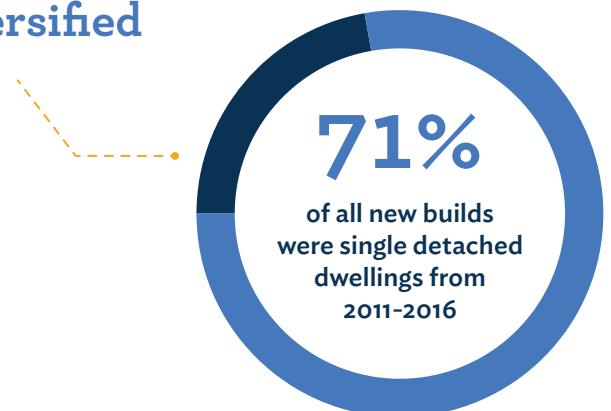
6 Location & lack of transportation are new issues emerging in this update

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.

7 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.

8 New housing starts in Bruce County are not diversified





How Do We Get There?

Affordable housing is the foundation for a strong, resilient community, sustainable economy and place where people can thrive. Bruce County's updated plan sets out strategic actions for change. Bruce County's new direction will guide the community towards a shared set of values to help create a sustainable and integrated affordable housing system. →



Bruce County is committed to developing a people-focused, collaborative, solution-based system of strategies to drive the plan.



Increase affordable housing stock. Bruce County understands there is a lack of available housing stock throughout the region. Bruce County is committed to working with the non-profit housing providers and the private sector as well as lower-tier municipalities to increase the affordable housing stock, including supportive housing, in Bruce County.



Explore rural mobility models. Bruce County has limited transportation options either within communities or between communities. Although solving the transportation concerns is outside the scope of the Plan, we will work with community partners, private and public sector employers and lower-tier municipalities to discuss transportation barriers and solutions.



Better understand the needs of Youth & Indigenous groups. As suggested in the Bruce County's 2018 Homelessness Enumeration, youth and Indigenous groups were suggested as avenues for further study.



Increase housing support options. Bruce County will review and determine how best to meet the needs of individuals and families at greatest risk and help them access services quickly, by exploring and leveraging supportive housing options.



Coordinated systems and strong partnerships. Navigating the system can be a confusing and daunting task. Bruce County and its community partners are aware of the need for a coordinated system with a no wrong door approach. Bruce County is committed to strengthening collaborative partnerships to streamline and transform services as well as explore a Housing First Approach for rural communities to assist with rapid rehousing and ending homelessness.



Long Term Outcome

The long term outcome or vision for the Plan is “appropriate, affordable, diverse and supportive housing choices for all Bruce County residents”. To achieve this outcome we have introduced strategic actions including targets for each strategy identified in the plan. →



Through consultations and conversations we developed actions to measure our movement towards our strategies and the long term outcome. The immediate actions are stepping stones to reaching our vision.

Bruce County is committed to measuring our outcomes against our goals annually. These measures will be presented and will be available publicly on the County website.

[brucecounty.on.ca](https://www.brucecounty.on.ca)

Our Strategies

Increase Affordable Housing Stock



Explore Rural Mobility Model



Increase Housing Support Options



Better Understand the Needs of Youth and Indigenous Groups



A Coordinated System and Strong Partnerships



Strategies & Actions



Increase Affordable Housing Stock

Increasing the affordable housing stock is imperative to reaching our vision. Increasing affordable housing stock will require an approach that involves Council, staff, private developers and our non-profit partners.

Over the past five years new affordable housing has been added to the County's portfolio. However, increasing the supply to reach the demand will require intentional efforts and purposeful partnerships to advance the housing supply.

This will involve developing strategies to consider utilizing surplus lands for affordable housing and targeting private developers to encourage affordable development across the County.

Throughout the consultations we heard that alternatives to single detached homes need to be considered. This includes the exploration of tiny homes, secondary units and other non-traditional forms of housing.

Coordination with lower-tier municipalities and Bruce County's Planning and Development Department will be imperative to ensuring sustainable communities and the reconsideration of conventional approaches to land use planning policies to ensure new development meets the needs of the community.



Immediate Actions

- 1** By the end of 2020 replace 15 RGI units and add 10 affordable and 10 modest market units in the Municipality of Kincardine
- 2** By the end of 2020, in conjunction with Bruce County planners, develop a navigational and visual tool to promote affordable housing to developers
- 3** By the end of 2020, in partnership with the County planners, attend 8 municipal council meetings to discuss affordable housing and make specific recommendations to support the implementation of the Plan
- 4** By the end 2020 attend 8 municipal council meetings to seek local commitment to prioritize surplus public land for affordable housing
- 6** Throughout 2023, develop and promote resources for the development of secondary units in both existing homes and new builds

Strategies & Actions



Explore Rural Mobility Model

There is currently limited formal public transportation systems in Bruce County. There is specialized transportation available to some residents, as well as limited bus service to some major city centres. Bruce County, like many rural communities, is a ‘car-first’ region that is automobile focused. This means that efforts to improve mobility options must overcome a culture that favours cars and disadvantages residents who cannot use cars or those that cannot afford to use a car, such as children, youth, the elderly and persons with disabilities.

Changing the culture and moving a mobility strategy forward will take a concentrated and systemic approach involving several partners and lower-tier municipalities.

It should be noted that although transportation is a concern in Bruce County it is outside of the scope of the Plan to address. However, the County will explore solutions through an integrated transportation/ mobility committee.

Immediate Actions

- 1 Bring the voice of the Plan to an integrated mobility committee



Strategies & Actions



A Coordinated System and Strong Partnerships

A Coordinated System includes, but is not limited to, Human Services Integration. It encompasses building and maintaining strong partnerships and collaborative efforts to address housing and homelessness issues in Bruce County. This includes, continued partnerships with the YMCA and CMHA to develop a Housing First Approach for rural communities to assist individuals and families requiring supportive living arrangements.

A Coordinated System includes a focus on improving and maintaining tenancies and preventing homelessness in the County.

This strategy will involve a number of tools to better assist the most vulnerable in our communities. As well, technology will play an important role as we move towards a more integrated and efficient system.

Immediate Actions

- 1 By the end of 2020, complete a feasibility study on the implementation of the Homeless Individuals and Families System (HIFIS)¹
- 2 By the end of 2020, seek the input of a table of community providers to guide the implementation of the plan and identify and address system gaps
- 3 Through 2023, attend Board meetings of the non-profit housing providers to maintain on-going support for viable affordable housing options
- 4 Through 2023, provide governance training to support Board members of the non-profit housing providers in developing sustainable financial models

¹HIFIS is a comprehensive data collection and case management system designed to better understand what is happening in the community and to work collaboratively with partners.



Better Understand the Need of Youth and Indigenous Groups

Bruce County conducted its first homelessness enumeration in April, 2018. Although the results are not generalizable due to low number of respondents; the report did identify the two areas of youth and Indigenous homelessness for further research and consideration.

Consultation with community partners verified the need for action with these specific groups and the Ministry has identified youth and Indigenous populations as target areas in their updated strategy.

Bruce County's next homelessness enumeration will be conducted in 2020.

Immediate Actions

- 1 By the end of 2021, in partnership with the YMCA of Owen Sound Grey Bruce, develop a working group to complete a research project on youth homelessness
- 2 By the end of 2020, provide funding for M'Wikwedong's Giiwe² Project to advance the services and supports for the Indigenous populations

²The Giiwe Project is an Indigenous-led inter-agency collaboration that aims to reduce Indigenous homelessness by fostering more coordinated housing-related services that are equipped for responding to Indigenous-specific housing needs and preferences



Increase Housing Support Options

Increasing housing support options, including outreach, community supports and housing support workers, will take the collaborative work of several community partners to ensure supports are available. Leveraging the appropriate supports increases positive outcomes and tenancies for individuals and families with developmental disabilities, mental health & addictions, complex physical health needs, or those who are chronically homeless, youth, Indigenous, elderly or transitioning from institutions.

Immediate Actions

- 1 By the end of 2023, create a meaningful partnership with the newly formed provincial agency, Ontario Health and/or the local health service providers to explore supportive housing options
- 2 By the end of 2023, continue to build on local partnership to explore housing support options



As we continue this journey...

Bruce County is committed to the actions outlined in this plan. We appreciate this is a collaborative document and will take the work of many people and organizations to come to fruition. →

We value the impact of affordable, suitable and adequate housing in allowing people to thrive and form the foundation for recognizing their full potential. Affordable housing offers residents the building blocks to succeed in all facets of life.



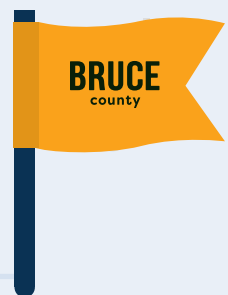
Our continuing journey

The actions and goals outlined in this plan are Bruce County's commitment to working towards a community with adequate and affordable housing choices for all. A place where needs can be met to ensure everyone has a safe, affordable and appropriate home.

We are the explorers.

The dreamers who take roads less travelled. Those who turn alternatives into sustainable choices. Those who see tried and true as an invitation to try something new. Here's to children who look under rocks. And parents who help with the lifting. Here's to active, inquiring minds, and those with the vision to look beyond obstacles. Here's to celebrating business innovation – and just as important, to exploring farm life in the morning, beach life in the afternoon and bright starry skies all night long. Here's to the explorers – here's to us. Bruce County is where those roads less travelled become a journey: In life, in our work, in our communities, and in how we spend our days together.

Be an Explorer and call Bruce County home.





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