

Attachment 4

Affordable Housing Strategy: Focus Group Feedback on Issues February 12, 2015

Participants

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation:	Erica McLerie
County of Wellington:	Heather Burke, Housing Director Ryan Pettipiere, Special Services Manager - Ontario Works Eden Grodzinski, Consultant on 10-Year HHP for County
Guelph and District Association of Realtors:	David Halls
Habitat for Humanity:	Steve Howard, Executive Director
Local Builder/Developer:	Al Allendorf, Joylife Property Management LP Alfred Artinger, Reid's Heritage Homes Pam Kraft, Fusion Tom Lammer
Older Adult Representative:	Laura Greenway-Balnar, Older Adult Strategy – COALT Janet Fowler, Older Adult Strategy – COALT
Poverty Task Force:	Randalin Ellery
Student Representative and University of Guelph:	Kathryn Hofer, Student Life Brittany Skelton, Central Students Association, Jane Londerville, Dept. of Marketing & Consumer Studies
Wellington Guelph Housing Committee:	Gary Roche

Regrets

Landlord/Property Manager:	Balner Management Ltd. Sifton Properties Limited
The Guelph Chamber of Commerce:	Kithio Mwanzia

Purpose

The focus group session was held to engage key stakeholder groups in the State of Housing Report (Phase II of the Affordable Housing Strategy). The session presented data trends and analysis and identified preliminary issues. Participants were asked to review the data and preliminary issues to confirm that the data was correct, clear and supported the issues and that the issues accurately reflected the Guelph context. Participants were also asked whether there were any additional issues that should be considered and whether any additional supporting data was needed.

Preliminary Issues

Issue 1: Market housing does not meet the affordability needs of all households in Guelph.

Issue 2: The supply of affordable ownership and rental housing is not sufficient to meet the needs of smaller households.

Issue 3: Low vacancy rates coupled with limited growth in the supply of primary rental units makes it difficult for people to secure rental housing.

Issue 4: The secondary rental market provides choice of dwelling types but the supply changes year over year.

Issue 1: Market housing does not meet the affordability needs of all households in Guelph.

Questions

1. Does the data support this issue?
2. Is the data clear and complete?
3. Does this issue reflect your experience? How?
4. Does this statement capture the issue?

Participant Comments

- Data is great but needs simplification, provide examples and stories to reflect real people.
- Include individual perspectives: students, first time home buyers and those living in poverty.
- Need to explain "market"- suggestion to use "private rental and ownership" term to align with the continuum.
- Market housing alone cannot meet the needs of all households in Guelph.
- Interest rate impacts affordability.
- Data shows that targets are being exceeded, can't meet everything.
- Market demand does not support smaller units.
- Need to know more about the 1,300 households who are waiting for social housing. Where are they living? Is it suitable to meet their needs?

Issue 2: The supply of affordable ownership and rental housing is not sufficient to meet the needs of smaller households.

Questions

1. Does the data support this issue?
2. Is the data clear and complete?
3. Does this issue reflect your experience? How?
4. Does this statement capture the issue?

Participant Comments

- Need to review need by age of household maintainer to identify if and how this issue is influenced by age.
- Change "smaller" to "1-2 person households".
- Assumes people want just what they need. Is this realistic? A market for larger homes exists.
- Define smaller households.
- Should focus on single renters since this is where the problem is.
- There is community resistance to high density units.

Issue 3: Low vacancy rates coupled with limited growth in the supply of primary rental units makes it difficult for people to secure rental housing.

Questions

1. Does the data support this issue?
2. Is the data clear and complete?
3. Does this issue reflect your experience? How?
4. Does this statement capture the issue?

Participant Comments

- Need to provide more information about student housing.
- Explain why November was chosen to study the secondary rental market.
- Suggestion to engage with people who are having challenges. i.e. seniors, youth, people living in low income, etc.
- CMHC doesn't say that 3% is a healthy vacancy rate across the board. This can vary in different locations.
- Opposition to "renters," especially for new builds (i.e. purpose built rentals).
- Purpose built student housing will not be flexible as demand changes.
- Explore link between low unemployment rates and low vacancy rates.
- Not economical to build purpose built rental.
- Issue is compounded as landlords can continue to charge higher rents (supply and demand economics) and be more selective with tenants (background and credit checks), can prevent movement along the housing continuum.

Issue 4: The secondary rental market provides choice of dwelling types but the supply changes year over year.

Questions

1. Does the data support this issue?
2. Is the data clear and complete?
3. Does this issue reflect your experience? How?
4. Does this statement capture the issue?

Participant Comments

- Data doesn't show changes year over year.
- Should the secondary rental market be factored in if it is so "volatile"?
- Change the issue to state "supply is not secure" instead of "supply changes year over year".
- Need to know more about the secondary rental market, need to see trends over time.
- Statement that 25% of accessory apartments are not being rented may not be accurate.
- Are there issues of equity and/or discrimination faced by those accessing the secondary rental market?
- Should look at secondary market data for comparator municipalities.

Any Other Issues?

Within Scope

- **Affects Guelph**
- **Affordable housing connection**
- **Market housing connection**

Any Other Issues?

Questions

1. Is there data to support this new issue?
2. Does this issue reflect your experience? How?
3. Does the statement capture an important housing issue in Guelph?

Participant Comments

- Concern that the focus is solely on market housing. Strategy should address how you will work with the County to ensure social housing is maintained and how new affordable rental housing (affordable to the lowest income groups) will be developed within the City.