



RPD* 6280 ADVANCED PLANNING

ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS IN HURON COUNTY

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ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This paper was prepared for Huron County's Planning Department in support of its efforts to identify effective methods to address homelessness occurring in the region. The authors would like to acknowledge Huron County's planning staff, Jennifer Burns and Victor Kloeze, for initiating this research and providing guidance throughout the project. We would also like to thank Wayne Caldwell and Paul Kraehling for their continued support—particularly in light of the changing circumstances due to COVID-19. We appreciated the opportunity to explore this topic and hope our findings help provide insight and direction going forward.

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KEY FINDINGS

This report highlights that planners in both urban and rural contexts have a role to play in helping to minimize the potential for and impact of homelessness across Canada. Homelessness is a complex issue that requires the coordination of a wide range of diverse actors to adequately address. This report identified some actionable items that can be undertaken by planners and/or other municipal actors in Huron County. These items are detailed in Section 9 but can be summarized as:

1. Build upon existing research and examine the leading causes and impacts of homelessness and poverty in the region, as well as structural barriers.
2. Determine an effective way to measure the number of individuals facing or at risk of homelessness, as well as provide opportunities to capture their experiences as appropriate.
3. Create an inventory of what services, both formal and informal, are currently available and identify any gaps.
4. Partner with grassroots organizations and social networks.
5. Inventory the stock of affordable housing within the region as well as abandoned or underused buildings that could be repurposed. Maintain and improve upon any existing social housing.
6. Partner with private landowners and developers to collaborate on ways to expand the current affordable housing stock.
7. Expand existing municipal homelessness funding programs to allow for additional services and to create leverage.
8. Enlist transition workers, lawyers, or case workers to help guide people through the homelessness programs and supports.
9. Review municipal interpretations and applications of provincial Employment and Income Support programs, and revise them to be more client centered.
10. Improve upon the coordination of services and build stronger partnerships between different levels of government and neighbouring regions. Consider creating and funding a larger collaborative framework such as a Task Force.

Planning tools have contributed both positive and negative influences on homelessness and yet been under-utilized in contributing to amelioration strategies. Many of the above items can be undertaken by or with a municipal planner. Using case studies, this report synthesizes a range of planning tools that have been leveraged around the world to address homelessness at the municipal scale. One crucial thing planners must bear in mind is to not displace homeless people while creating opportunities for new development. Planners must focus on “doing no harm” by identifying and reducing barriers that stand in the way of providing legal or regulatory legitimacy to vulnerable populations.

The chart below (Table 1) highlights our key findings, the details of which are embedded throughout this report.

TOOL	OUTLINE	CASE STUDY	BENEFITS	BARRIERS
Inclusive Housing and Zoning	Enabling policies to establish a mandated percentage of affordable dwellings (for sale or rent) in new residential development projects or areas (ex. accessory suites)	The City of Vancouver's Cambie Corridor Plan	Increases supply of land eligible for development & supply of available housing. Effectively encourages a range of residential and social development that can be tailored to low incomes or homeless individuals	Although the zoning allows for development for affordable units, these units may still be out of reach for some populations. Definition of affordable is contentious. Adapting zoning by-laws and schedules is a long, complex, and political process. Usually involves incentives
Transition from homeless individuals into rental housing	Homelessness issues are identified and are connected to essential supports to find and maintain housing provided, by means of training.	Cambridge Support to End Persistent Homelessness (STEP) Home Collaborative	Helped transition homeless individuals into housing. Support recovery and help new tenants to maintain housing	Training to enter the workforce to maintain housing was absent. Support from landlords was challenging as they were responsible for damages by tenants.
Second-Stage or Transitional Housing	Combines government funded longer-term housing with services. Can be managed by non-profits	United Kingdom; Niagara, Ontario	Targets chronic homelessness. Can repurpose buildings, new development, or provide legal framework for buildings already operating as residences.	Not a permanent solution, may lack eligibility for hidden homeless. Very costly to redevelop buildings and may compromise design or quality. The cost of operation may be too high for non-profits.

TOOL	OUTLINE	CASE STUDY	BENEFITS	BARRIERS
Housing First Strategy	Enables municipalities to provide housing to anyone in need. Can be led by government, in partnership with private landowners, or incorporated into private development.	Helsinki, Finland	Provides homes quickly without eligibility requirements, meaning both visible and hidden homelessness can be addressed. Landlords can participate voluntarily, and may be encouraged through incentives to do so.	Expense is borne by the municipality. Requires existing infrastructure and/or partnerships with private actors. May not solve spatial and service delivery barriers specific to rural regions.
Municipally owned Housing Association	Municipalities create an arms - length agency that uses public funds to purchase or develop housing stock to meet identified needs	Barcelona, Spain	Ability to build on municipally owned land and thereby ensure affordable housing long-term. Management of property subject to municipal standards	Slow and bureaucratic process. May have legal or political limitations.
Transportation	Providing some form of transportation or satellite services to alleviate challenges of accessing services in rural communities	Wellington County	Can be run through the municipality and/or by volunteers. Helps to address some of the challenges associated with homelessness.	Does not address root causes of homelessness. Difficult to run efficiently and equitably. Privacy and safety considerations if using private vehicles.
Regulate Short-Term Rental Housing Market	Restrict ability to reserve residential units for tourists (ex. Airbnb) or voluntarily leave units vacant.using stock to meet identified needs	The Home-Sharing Guide for Ontario Municipalities	Adds a revenue stream or adds units to the market quickly.	A potentially long, political process to put into place. May lack leverage/authority to enter into conversations with Airbnb.

TOOL	OUTLINE	CASE STUDY	BENEFITS	BARRIERS
Partner with Grassroots organizations to expand temporary housing and resources	Incorporate non-traditional examples of housing informed by grassroots initiatives into strategies.	United Kingdom	Can mitigate against the impacts of homelessness by providing an individual with immediate housing. Opportunity to access services.	This is not always a long term solution. Chronic homelessness will still occur even with these initiatives in place. Housing may not be suitable long term and may have health and wellness impacts.
Prevent eviction and arrears follow up.	Funding in place to help individual's mediate with landlords, manage debt and arrears, legal aid, alternative housing, as well as advice and information.	Partnership between City of Toronto Houselink and Toronto Community Housing (THC)	Improved tenancy rates due to arrears follow up and eviction prevention activities. Increase in safety and security, decrease use of emergency services and improved health by bridging gaps between services and service providers.	Participation was voluntary and participants could opt out at time. Clear roles for service providers were not identified resulting in delay.

Table 1. A Range of Strategies and Tools used to Address Homelessness

3.0 INTRODUCTION

HOMELESSNESS IN CANADA

Over the past two decades, the number of individuals and families experiencing homelessness in Canada radically increased. As of 2016, the Homeless Hub estimated that 1.3 million Canadians had experienced homelessness or housing insecurity at some point during the past five years (Adamo et al, 2016). This number has likely grown given the insufficient and deteriorating stock of affordable housing in both urban and rural municipalities across the country and its contribution to the housing crisis (Meda, 2009). Homelessness is often described as either absolute or hidden, and either can be a short-term or chronic experience.

Absolute homelessness occurs when an individual is without housing of any kind, and includes people staying in emergency shelters and those living in inadequate housing that was not intended to serve as a permanent residence, such as abandoned houses, tents, sheds, or outdoors. Hidden homelessness occurs when an individual does not have a consistent or dependable home. Hidden homelessness is much harder to measure as it includes people who use personal resources to survive such as staying with family or friends, enduring unhealthy relationships because they are without alternative housing arrangements, or remaining in correctional facilities or medical institutions longer than necessary. It also includes those whose previously adequate living arrangements become compromised, which could include an inability to pay for heating. Short-term and emergency shelters are intended to provide some immediate relief and offer the opportunity to access supportive services. A shelter is not intended to become, nor should it be considered a long-term solution to homelessness, but a humanitarian “bandaid” measure that in the interest of public health offers basic protection from harm (APA, 2003).

Homelessness is a complex problem rooted in economic, cultural, psychological, and institutional factors, and compounded by low levels of social protection and the breakdown of family and social networks (Meda, 2009). Unlike the visible homelessness commonly associated with urban areas, homelessness in rural areas generally falls into the hidden homelessness category due to “long-standing traditions of rural residents preferring self-help and reliance on relatives, friends and neighbours” which has disguised the magnitude of the problem (Macdonald & Gaulin, 2019). Rural areas are often perceived as idyllic places free from homelessness which has contributed to this issue being unnoticed, understudied, and under-problematised.

Addressing homelessness may not be a typical objective for municipal planners and as a result planning instruments are rarely leveraged during prevention and intervention measures. The designation and development of residential land is, however, one of the primary functions of planning, and so ensuring access to adequate and affordable housing is arguably one of the main social objectives of municipal planners. Instead, planning is often positioned to exacerbate homelessness and a lack of adequate housing can be attributed to a failure of planning.

This paper uses case studies to examine how planners have addressed homelessness at a municipal scale. Further, these case studies and their associated policies and methods inform recommendations for how Huron County, Ontario can integrate strategies and apply them to mitigate homelessness occurring within the region.

4.0 SCOPE

This project will examine responses to homelessness throughout southern Ontario, with special attention paid to the role of planning and planners. While southern Ontario provides the backdrop for the project, case studies have been selected from international, national, and local examples to provide a broad basis for comparison. The applications of the report are specifically curated for Huron County, an upper tier municipality in the southeast region of Ontario. The county has a population of 59,297 as of 2016, the majority of which live in a rural context, while the county seat is located in the Town of Goderich which is home to ~7,600 residents (Statistics Canada, 2017).

These broad guidelines are intended for use by planners in both rural and urban contexts depending on the resources and timelines available. The case study analysis highlights the ways in which planners can play an important role to reduce homelessness to determine the housing needs by regulating the zoning by laws by removing regulatory and legal barriers, providing incentives for the agencies that help to provide services to tackle homelessness. This research identifies the importance of transitioning of an individual from short term housing to long term housing to prevent immediate and permanent homelessness. This report also establishes the need of involvement of professional planning bodies such as the Canadian Institute of Planners (CIP) and Ontario Professional Planners Institute (OPPI) to educate communities about best practices, and provide necessary training to equip planning bodies to deal with complex issues of homelessness.

5.0 METHODOLOGY

This paper uses a desktop study to examine secondary data regarding homelessness. To retrieve this data, a scan of relevant literature and reports was used. This scan included academic literature, grey literature, news and media outlets and finally reports. This information was compiled on the University of Guelph library database and Google searches using a scan of key words including homelessness, planning, rural, urban, and strategies. This research uses a case study method, where both urban and rural areas are examined in respect to homelessness strategies.

The case studies were chosen for inclusion in relation to the research goals, which are as follows:

1. To explore existing and potential planning tools that address homelessness and how these tools may be integrated into municipal policies and programs.
2. To examine effective methods that holistically address homelessness.
3. To understand the role of planners within a systematic response to homelessness.

The areas which were chosen for the case studies include the United Kingdom, Finland, Vancouver, Waterloo, and Toronto. After addressing the research questions, this report discusses key findings in order to make recommendations on how tools or highlights from the case studies could be applied within the context of Huron county. This methodology uses a broad based approach to provide general recommendations.

This methodology is limited due to time constraints of the project and the information that is available through the University of Guelph database. The case studies may also have limitations as they provide information on a specific region using a strategy cultivated exclusively for that region. As the case studies are broad, the authors have opted to focus on a few examples of initiatives and strategies available and may not showcase all the nuances that define each policy and its contextual application. The recommendations are limited to the findings which were developed from the case studies.

CASE STUDY REGIONS:

**ENGLAND, UNITED KINGDOM
HELSINKI, FINLAND
VANCOUVER, CANADA
CAMBRIDGE, ONTARIO
TORONTO, ONTARIO**

6.0 THE PLANNERS ROLE AND MUNICIPAL CAPACITY

The system currently in place to address homelessness and provide aid is as complex as the issue itself, conceived of and executed through a combination of public and non-profit organizations. These services are generally funded through a mix of federal, provincial, and municipal public funds, as well as through private donations coordinated by a charitable or grassroots organization (APA, 2003). As a part of provincial-municipal restructuring in the 1990s, Ontario's government shifted the administration of social housing and homelessness programs to local governments, a process that was formalized under the Social Housing Reform Act in 2001 (Adamo, 2016). This process left municipalities with new responsibilities but no additional funding or revenue-generating authority to meet them.

The Government of Ontario also has a Housing Services Act (2011), through which municipalities are required to develop 10-year housing and homelessness plans. These plans are intended to identify local needs and priorities within their municipality, and set targets and objectives to meet those needs in coordination with the provincial Housing Policy Statement (Adamo, 2016). Many of these plans incorporate elements of Housing First methods, which employs a recovery-oriented approach. This approach advocates for moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing as quickly as possible with no eligibility requirements, and referring them to additional supports and services as needed. Governments often rely on non-profit and grassroots organizations to distribute aid, coordinate individuals with services, advocate and provide justification for programs, as well as champion action.

The large number of diverse actors and stakeholders involved with homelessness strategies highlights the importance of interagency partnerships (Bridgman, 2003). It is crucial that all actors, especially those in the public sector, who have influence on homelessness begin to address and integrate it as a specific topic into all relevant policies and plans. This is not an easy task and would require appropriate training for all actors involved to ensure proper application including local government staff, planners, policy makers and property developers (Meda, 2009). Municipal planners in particular need more training about affordable housing, supportive housing, and equitable housing laws to inform better planning decisions. Planners must be given the tools to appropriately evaluate proposals, "starting with a review of zoning and subdivision regulations that may present barriers to affordable housing" (APA, 2003).

This is not justified solely on humanitarian grounds, which are of course compelling, but can also be understood economically. The annual costs to public systems and taxpayers for an individual to access emergency shelters costs anywhere from \$13,000 to \$42,000 per person, and institutional responses (e.g. correctional facilities and hospitals) cost anywhere from \$66,000 to \$120,000. This can be compared to \$13,000 to \$18,000 which is the total annual it is estimated to cost to provide supportive housing per individual (Adamo, 2016).

It is clearly more cost effective to provide immediate access to housing for people who are experiencing homelessness rather than to rely on tertiary support. It is also more effective to put supports in place that will help to keep them housed. It follows that the expanding the supply of diverse forms of affordable and supportive housing, although not the solution, is nonetheless a vital requirement for preventing and ameliorating the problem of homelessness (Meda, 2009; Bridgman, 2003). One crucial thing planners must bear in mind is to not displace homeless people while creating opportunities for new development. Planners must focus on “doing no harm” by identifying and reducing barriers that stand in the way of providing legal or regulatory legitimacy to vulnerable populations. Examples where this approach is vital include the revitalization of “abandoned” buildings, the illegality of rooming houses, or zoning motels and trailer parks to limit long-term or permanent residents.

Planners can play a significant role in reducing homelessness by assessing local housing needs within comprehensive plans and Official Plans, and working to identify opportunities to develop affordable and supportive housing. Planners also can educate and communicate with their communities to acknowledge homelessness occurring within the region and to build support for a range of affordable or non-traditional housing projects (Bridgman, 2003). It is a planner's responsibility to ensure that residents have access to short-term, emergency housing supports as necessary. This is often done by providing privately owned operations, such as motels, with a stipend but can also be by creating and supporting shelter systems which can be owned and operated publicly or by non-profits. Utilizing planning tools for more permanent solutions is, however, a slow, resource intensive, and complex process.

Planning tools often require the participation of private actors which adds the complexity of profit generation to each project. Though social and affordable housing can be developed by municipalities or by arms-length municipal housing associations, the capacity, resources, and political support to do so may not be available. Planning tools can be used to leverage public resources to cover the initial investment needed for the development, an investment that could be recovered later through increments in land values or tax revenue streams redirected for this purpose—such as using inclusionary zoning regulations (Meda, 2009).

Inclusionary zoning enables a larger number of units to enter the market within existing and future residential development, and is one technique that can remove barriers to creating affordable and social housing. Inclusionary zoning mandates affordable housing and therefore ensures predictable additions to the housing stock, or provides leverage municipal planners can use to benefit other programs.

Some of the erosion of the housing stock is due to residential units that are reserved for tourists (ex. Airbnb) or are voluntarily left vacant. Exploring how significant these occurrences are and if reintroducing these units could help to quickly expand affordable housing options within the region. The Government of Ontario funded the The Home-Sharing Guide for Ontario Municipalities which is a great resource for municipalities when considering existing policy parameters and opportunities (Ministry of Finance, 2018).

When relying on private developers to create social or affordable housing, it is common to establish economic incentives and cost-offsets to cover all or part of the difference between the market price of subsidized housing and the lower price of affordable housing. Incentives can include density bonus-ing, lowered development fees, and fast-tracking permits. Inclusionary housing helps redistribute the increments in value generated from the development of urban land to social purposes, and therefore should not be so demanding as to discourage private investment (Meda, 2009). This is considered to be less effective as often these units are affordable for a limited amount of time, and when done poorly the social mixing within buildings may be ineffective and stigmatizing. It is a planners role to assess needs within their community in regards to housing, transportation, and services, and they have a range of tools at their disposal to help create opportunities to address those needs. Planners also have the skillset to educate the public, create partnerships, and facilitate collaborative processes, all of which can be harnessed within municipal homelessness strategies.

7. CASE STUDIES

7. 1 INTERNATIONAL/NATIONAL

Homelessness is an issue which has an impact on individuals on a global scale. The World Economic Forum estimates that approximately 150 million people worldwide are considered homeless, which makes up approximately 2% of the world's population (2019). Internationally, strategies and initiatives have been put in place in an attempt to mitigate the issue of homelessness across the globe. In attempting to address the homelessness issue, planning plays a role within implementing strategies which aim to offer solutions within the realm of homelessness. This section reviews case studies from an international perspective examining strategies from the England, Finland and

Vancouver. All of these regions have identified strategies to improve homelessness within urban and rural areas. These case studies showcase grassroots initiatives, how Finland has made significant progress within homelessness mitigation, and finally the planners role in planning for homelessness within Vancouver. Since 1948 local authorities in the UK have been required by law to provide accommodations to those who are in need (Daly, 1989). After major “slum” clearances occurred during the 1950’s, the number of homeless individuals throughout the UK increased, making it an issue of concern throughout the nation (Daly, 1989).

7. 1.1 LESSONS FROM THE UNITED KINGDOM (UK)

In 1977 the Housing (Homeless Persons) Act was introduced, which required local authorities to permanently house certain categories of homeless people (Homeless Hub, 2019). This document was the first piece of legislation in Britain to provide a legal definition of homeless (Crowson, 2013). The Act focused on those who were considered to be vulnerable which included individuals in families or those made homeless by situational instances such as fires (Homeless Hub, 2019) This Act was introduced during a time when affordable housing was shrinking, and the Act did not allow for a large reduction in the number of homeless individuals throughout the nation (Homeless Hub, 2019).

The failure of the Act was caused by a variety of issues within the policy. One gap in the policy was that it aimed at providing homes exclusively for the most vulnerable. Often times, families or pregnant women were provided housing or temporary accommodation but those who were single individuals did not have the same experience, leaving a large proportion of homeless individuals with little support (Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2010). Furthermore, the accommodations that people were given were not always permanent, exacerbating issues of recurring homelessness (Fitzpatrick and Stephens, 2010). While this policy highlights a major step within policy to address homelessness within the nation, these gaps combined with a lack of available housing provide reasoning behind the failure of the policy to mitigate homelessness on a grand scale.

Looking into current strategies, the UK has refined their homeless policies including the Rough Sleepers Strategy (2011) and a prevention strategy entitled Making Every Contact Count A Joint Approach to Ending Homelessness (Homeless Hub, 2019). The City of London also has a homelessness strategy for 2019-2023 which outlines several goals addressing homelessness including prevention, increasing services, reducing impact and preventing recurring homelessness (City of London, 2019).

Taxation procedures and strategic incentives can help bring unmaintained housing back to market and regulations can help to introduce a revenue stream that supports other aspects of affordable housing. In the UK, municipalities have the authority to issue a property tax increase of up to 50% on properties that have been unoccupied and unmaintained for more than two years. On the other hand they reward landlords who provide long term leases to vulnerable individuals, such as those experiencing chronic homelessness, by awarding a vacant housing grant that will cover 50% of any renovation costs (Colini, 2019).

Within the UK there is a Local Government Association (LGA), which outlines that planning has an impact on homelessness through affordable housing. An article by the LGA explains that “the planning system is not a barrier to house building. It gives protection to communities so that they can ensure new developments are environmentally friendly, safe, supported by the right infrastructure and include affordable homes” (2020, para 4). It appears that in terms of planning and homelessness in the UK, the planners role focuses heavily on applications and the process involved with affordable housing, and social programs and assistance falls onto the cities and social workers responsibilities.

Initiatives:

Exploring initiatives which directly aim to address homelessness, Busses 4 Homeless is a grassroots organization that aims to provide shelter, food and resources for those who are struggling with homelessness in the UK. The program operates by refurbishing decommissioned school buses, and converting them into places for homeless individuals to eat, sleep and seek assistance so that they may be reincorporated back into the community (Busses 4 Homeless, 2020) They not only provide busses for sleeping, but their fleet also includes busses for learning, wellness and dining (Busses 4 Homeless, 2020). This is included in their aim to address homelessness within a holistic approach, a three month intensive program comprised of the following steps:

1. Help Identify and Overcome the issues that lead to them being homeless
2. Teach them Soft and Vocational skills
3. Engage them into Apprenticeships / Further Training
4. Help secure Employment / create Small Businesses
5. Re-engage them back into the community through housing, support and long term mentorship (Busses 4 Homeless, 2020).

This approach allows for addressing homelessness not only by temporarily accounting for shelter, but working with people to ensure integration back into the community.

7.1.2 ADDRESSING HOMELESSNESS IN FINLAND

Examining homelessness within an international context, Finland is an example of a country which has provided many resources and tools to their homeless population, representing major strides in addressing both the causes and impacts of the issue. Over several years, Finland has drastically reduced the number of homeless people throughout the country. In the mid 1980's it was estimated that there were approximately 20,000 homeless people. By 2008, the country was able to cut that number down to 8,000 showcasing just how successful the country's strategies are (Tainio & Fredricksson, 2009).

From 1987 to 1991, the Finnish government made the eradication of homelessness a top priority (Tainio & Fredricksson, 2009). This strategy highlights cooperation between housing, social welfare, and health authorities. Helsinki took action in 10 municipalities by modifying existing buildings and transitioning them into serviced apartments available to those in need without precondition requirements, akin to a Housing First model. These buildings tended to be existing shelters, hostels, or abandoned buildings, but alternatively were individual units purchased by either the Municipality or a housing association. This includes a large building with 250 beds that was previously run as a hostel by the Salvation Army which was then renovated in 2014 to become 80 independent apartments with on-site staff (Colini, 2019). The Y foundation worked with local social services to rent out apartments to those who were in need and by 2009, there were over 30,000 apartments that provided homes for those who were in need (Tainio & Fredricksson, 2009).

Examining the Action Plan for Preventing Homelessness in Finland 2016-2019, there are aspects of the action plan which highlight collaborative methods to reduce and prevent homelessness. This strategy is not just a "housing first" strategy whereby people are giving access to housing, it is an integrated strategy which aims not only to address homelessness, but to prevent it from happening and reduce its burdens where it exists (Pleace, 2017).

Along with its integrated approach, this action plan is highlighted by the high amount of consultation which was involved in implementing the strategy. The plan involved consulting by academics and experts from around the world regarding how best to tackle homelessness (Pleace, 2017). Furthermore, the action plan addresses homelessness at the primary, secondary and tertiary levels where primary is housing policy, welfare and health services, secondary is focused on high risk groups and tertiary is focused on stopping recurrent homelessness (Pleace, 2017). Finland provides an example of how a simplistic policy can have a great impact on the state of homelessness in an area. The housing first aspect of the policy and its collaboration enabled the county to have some of the lowest instances of homelessness across Europe.

7. 1.3 HOMELESSNESS IN VANCOVER CANADA

Vancouver is a large metropolis located on the West Coast of Canada. This city was chosen for a case study as the urban centre struggles with high prevalence of homelessness and as a result has a robust homelessness strategy. It also identifies the role of the planning department within the strategy. A key issue within Vancouver is housing. Vancouver has the highest priced housing in Canada (City of Vancouver, 2011). Furthermore, the city has a large demand for social and affordable housing, however the amount of this type of housing which has been built versus what is needed is far from ideal (City of Vancouver, 2011).



Figure 1. Displays a variety of services and departments which are involved in homelessness planning within the city of Vancouver. The planning department is just one piece of the puzzle.

Figure 1. Visual representation of the planning departments role within homelessness planning (City of Vancouver 2011).

While the issue of homelessness remains a point of concern throughout the city of Vancouver, major strides have been made to mitigate the issue through initiatives such as the Housing and Homelessness Strategy. Examining the report Vancouver Long Term Housing and Homelessness Strategy 2012-2021, the report suggests that efforts have been improving the situation, reporting an 83% decrease in homelessness within the province since 2008 (City of Vancouver, 2011).

Main points from the report reflect efforts such as:

- Increased shelter capacity during the winter months as a part of the Mayors Homeless emergency Action Team or HEAT. This is the initiative that has resulted in the 82% reduction in homelessness since 2008, since it has moved people from the streets into shelters.
- Renovating 200 units to provide the capacity to reduce street homelessness.
- Working with Vancouver Coastal Health, Business Improvement Associations and churches to provide better support for those who are facing homelessness.
- The Urban Health Initiative which focuses on providing health care in shelters, addressing mental health issues and aiding with food security (City of Vancouver, 2011).

Addressing Homelessness Planning in Vancouver:

Examining how planning measures can affect homelessness planning, Vancouver discusses zoning policies which enable secondary suites and laneway housing to facilitate new housing opportunities (City of Vancouver, 2011). Zoning has also played a part in creating affordable housing options where the Cambie Corridor Plan required 20% of units to be affordable on sites made for rental units (City of Vancouver, 2011). This increases the amount of affordable units being built. As planners often are the ones who handle zoning by laws, changing in zoning and delineating different zoning, it is important to mention that within the three main strategic directions mentioned by the strategy, zoning and housing are articulated as main areas of focus. This highlights that planners and the planning department within the city are key elements of addressing the homelessness issues within the city of Vancouver.

Though strides have been made through the homelessness strategy, an article released by the Vancouver Sun, indicates that the 2019 homelessness count had the highest number of homeless individuals within the city since 2005 (Eagland, 2019). This highlights that while efforts have been made to improve the homelessness situation within the city, there is space for improvement. Factors such as high housing prices, gentrification and lack of resources are all driving the issue within Vancouver. It is important that planners take initiatives such as the Cambie corridor plan, and implement more zoning of this kind so that the housing market may open up to a greater number of individuals.

7. 2 STUDY AREA 2 SOUTHERN ONTARIO

7.2.1 CAMBRIDGE STEP HOME COLLABORATIVE-REGION OF WATERLOO

The Region of Waterloo is located in the Southwestern part of Ontario. It includes seven municipalities such as Waterloo, Cambridge, Kitchener, Wellesley, Wilmont, Woolwich and North Dumfries (Region of Waterloo, 2020). The Region of Waterloo developed All Roads Lead to Home Homelessness and Housing Stability Strategy to reduce homelessness across the region with the help of government, business, non-profit groups, landlords and the residents (Region of Waterloo, 2012). As a result of this strategy the STEP Home (Support to End Persistent Homelessness) program was initiated to address barriers among the people experiencing chronic homelessness (Din, Katsivo, Murray, Petrillo, & Suttor, 2018). For the purposes of the study, the region conducted a count of existing people experiencing homelessness using SPDAT (Service Prioritization Decision Assistance Tool) to measure chronicity of homelessness and complexity that affect the housing stability among homeless people (Din, Katsivo, Murray, Petrillo, & Suttor, 2018). As a result, the first list to house people was formed known as PATH (Priority Access to Housing Services).

The regions' first project, "Cambridge Pilot," was launched with the goal of housing a select number of individuals from the list. The project consisted of two stages to help the transition from homelessness into housing. The first stage is a three-phase approach to house homeless individuals into conventional housing systems with the help of an outreach worker, housing liaison worker and support coordinator.

Stage 1: Eligibility, readiness, document preparation and housing preferences

During this phase, individuals with the highest chronicity and complexity from the PATH were contacted by an outreach worker to inform them about the program and offer them help to find housing and support services (Din, et al, 2018). If an individual agrees to engage in the services, they sign a consent form and service agreement. The outreach worker then works with the participant to get the documents ready such as proof of income (if a steady source of income is not available, the worker will help to secure financial need if needed), identification and other necessary documents. Once all the documents are ready, the outreach worker will assist the participant in discussing their housing needs and preferences.

Stage 2: Housing search, viewing, lease signing and moving in

After identifying the individuals needs, the housing liaison workers will then outline preferences for housing with an outreach worker and connect with potential landlords that are willing to participate in the program. Any unit requirements or preferences are discussed with homeless individuals. After the right unit is available, the housing liaison worker takes the participant for unit viewing and meets the landlord or the property manager. If the participants accept the unit and landlord approves, a lease is signed, and the housing liaison worker will assist in moving in (Din, Katsivo, Murray, Petrillo, & Suttor, 2018).

Stage 3: Move in

Participants will physically move into the new house and are introduced to the next stage of the program.

The third stage involves a five step process that aims to maintain their housing to recover from homelessness. These steps were developed in consultation with a housing-based case management consulting company (Din, Katsivo, Murray, Petrillo, & Suttor, 2018). Throughout the process, the Personal Support Workers (PSWs) will work with participants if any other additional support is needed. Through the second stage, the participant is supposed to complete all the activities in the workbook provided. On average, this stage takes about 18 months to complete (Din, Katsivo, Murray, Petrillo, & Suttor, 2018).

Step 1: Housing

After the participant is settled in the new house, the support worker will introduce themselves with their roles and explain the responsibilities of participants as a tenant. During this stage, the support worker will also talk about the budget and crisis plan and even complete a full SPDAT assessment (Din, Katsivo, Murray, Petrillo, & Suttor, 2018).

Step 2: Individual Plan

After a complete assessment of SPDAT, the support worker will determine the areas to work on to support housing stability. Areas such as trauma, addiction, abuse, legal issues and others

Step 3: Self Awareness

The support worker will closely work with the tenant to make a plan based on the areas identified affecting the housing stability

Step 4: Self-management

At this stage, the tenants continue to work with the support worker. Necessary changes are made to the existing plan if needed. Outlook towards life is explained again by taking self-control and accountability. At the end of this stage, the tenants complete a survey on quality of life and make plans for the future.

Step 5: Rebuilding

This is the stage where the tenants go back to the workbook and make sure that all the activities are completed, and the current focus is on transition planning. If needed, the participant is still connected to the support worker on the on-going support, while all other support services are disconnected.

Observations:

As a result of this pilot project, 62 individuals were housed out of 75 participants, while 13 people dropped out of the program and went back to being homeless. Additional efforts were made by the support workers to understand their special needs and 8 individuals were re-housed through the program (Din, Katsivo, Murray, Petrillo, & Suttor, 2018). Since the region receives funding from the federal and provincial government through Homelessness Partnering Strategy (HPS), Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI) and Investment in affordable Housing programs, the complete project is administered by the Region of Waterloo (Region of Waterloo, 2012).

The project runs with the partnership between the region and the four different organizations which is administered by their respective supervisors. Despite the fact the project has worked well it faces a lot of human resource issues such as vacations and sickness due to involvement and dependency of different organizations. The program's main focus was to find a stable housing solution and overall well-being of an individual but not on the training and development to find a secure job to maintain the housing. It was also observed that there was no repair fund or security fund given to landlords to safeguard their property in event of any damages.

7.2.2 HOMELESS STRATEGIES IN TORONTO

Houselink is a housing provider that works to provide affordable housing to people with mental health and addiction issues (Din, Katsivo, Murray, Petrillo, & Suttor, 2018). In 2013 Houselink partnered with Toronto Community Housing (TCH) to provide on-site support. The support is voluntary to the people who identify themselves having mental and addiction issues. TCH acts as landlords, and the initiative is responsible for property management and aiding addiction issues. Since TCH acts as a landlord it allows them to identify the tenants who may need additional support. Further, TCH connects these individuals to STEPS staff who provides necessary services to maintain housing status and avoid evictions.

The STEP program comprises five mental health housing support housing workers, a recovery worker, and a coordinator for a capacity of 100 people (Din, Katsivo, Murray, Petrillo, & Suttor, 2018). The program helps to provide services such as eviction prevention, informal counseling, referral services, recreation and community development. These support services are provided in a 7 step process as follows.

Step 1: Assessing the need and if partnership is needed

TCH works with in-house staff to identify the individuals who need assistance, interview them and partner with the Centre for Urban Health Solutions to collaborate on designing the research instrument, data analysis and assign roles as needed.

Step 2: Research Instrument

From the interviews conducted in step 1, areas in which a tenant needs assistance is determined and a detailed questionnaire is designed with 8 domains of service needs. The questionnaire with few modifications made is based on the Ontario Common Assessment of Need (OCAN) to relate back and coordinate with the agencies across the board, and also for better understanding of a tenants service needs and capacity to guide the further development program (Din, Katsivo, Murray, Petrillo, & Suttor, 2020)

Step 3: Tenant Participation

In order to ensure complete participation from the tenants, the project information was shared in the lobby of the building and on the spot interviews were conducted. The participants were then taken to an interview room for privacy and were given gift cards to a nearby grocery store to thank for their time to participate. This step helped the TCH and Houselink to create a realistic list of the service users who need assistance (Din, Katsivo, Murray, Petrillo, & Suttor, 2018).

Step 4: Building Connections

The interviewer establishes a relationship with the residents which helped them to explore these issues deeply. This also helps to identify support needs that the tenant might need immediately. Following with the interview the interview participants were provided a resource guide with services available in the community. If the interviewer identifies that the issue is serious and needs special attention a Support Housing Worker (SHW) is assigned. The SHW will help the tenant to maintain the housing status by connecting to the services and apply for necessary funding if needed.

Step 5: Analyze the data

At this stage a detailed project report is made while distributing the workload equally by gathering different perspectives on the themes identified. The report is then shared among the partners and design further service planning.

Step 6: Use findings for service planning

Gaps in services are identified from the report and then strategies are made in order to fill them and the duties are coordinated among the service providers to complete the program (Din, Katsivo, Murray, Petrillo, & Suttor, 2018).

Observations:

The project was completely voluntary and the participants could opt in and out of the project at any level of the project. Improvement in safety and security was seen after involvement of Houselink with TCH and dependency on the emergency services were reduced. The program also helped to improve the health conditions among the tenants. The property staff were educated and had a hands on list of the services available to maintain the housing status by allowing them to follow up the arrears. Initially the project is completely dependent on the property manager for interview and to identify the participants and decide who should get the service first.

Clear roles were not identified as a result expected results were not achieved. This led to delaying the project as the SHW had to go back to interviews again again to identify and fill the gaps in the project.

8.DISCUSSION

This section explores some of the differences between rural versus urban contexts when defining and researching homelessness. This section also features details regarding barriers to homelessness and planning. Differing contexts are important to consider when discussing how strategies within the case studies can be applied within a rural setting, such as Huron County. Finally, this section discusses barriers related to policy and implementing action to mitigate homelessness, particularly focused around how to implement strategies at the municipal level.

8.1 RURAL VS. URBAN

Homelessness is a discussion which commonly focuses on studying individuals in urban areas who have become homeless. While urban homelessness is an issue which deserves to be addressed, rural homelessness is a phenomenon which has been sorely neglected. It is important to recognize that “rural” is a phenomenon which has many definitions. Roberston et al., explain that “rural” is sometimes understood in relation to an urban area or population threshold (2007). This lack of clarity can lead to issues defining rural homelessness and identifying differences to urban contexts. This includes a lack of research. Roberston et al., state that “very few researchers addressed issues related to rural homelessness” (2007, p. 1). This is in contrast to urban areas where strategies and research are prevalent.

Milbourne and Cloke offer some insight within their book *International Perspectives on Rural Homelessness*. The authors explain that rural homelessness can be “invisible” where rural homeless individuals are not seen or concentrated in visible public spaces such as streets, parks, shelters, or hostels (Milbourne & Cloke, 2013). Since these individuals are not always seen or concentrated the same way they are in urban areas, policies can neglect focus on rural homeless people (Milbourne & Cloke, 2013). This can be reflected in the lack of resources, funding, or welfare services for homeless people in some rural areas, as well as a lack of participation in existing services by those who need them. Findings from a survey conducted in Wellington County noted that the majority of rural individuals who were identified as homelessness were very reluctant to self-identify as “homeless,” particularly if only facing short-term, hidden homelessness, and were very reluctant to access services as a result (Taylor, 2018).

Examining an article by Lawrence (1995), the author indicates that while rural areas may not see homelessness of the same magnitude as urban areas, exploring the population differences, rural areas sometimes have higher rates of homelessness proportionally than some urban centres. The author reflects themes mentioned by Milbourne and Cloke articulating that the issue with homelessness in rural areas within Iowa is that homelessness may not be as visible in these areas due to rural geography and infrastructure (Lawrence, 1995). Chronic homelessness is most commonly observed in single males in urban contexts, however in rural areas, it is families, single mothers, and children that disproportionately experience homelessness (Taylor, 2018; APA, 2003).

Sue-Ann Macdonald and Dominique Gaulin from the Universite de Montreal tie rural homelessness to the rising cost of housing, changing economic realities of farming, transformation of the industrial environment, and social upheaval. They also believe it to be influenced by an increase in the qualification criteria for employment. In general, rural populations have attained lower educational credentials than their urban counterparts and as a result may be less competitive. Family incomes in rural Canada also tend to be lower compared to urban centers, and incidences of low-income or poverty are “more pronounced”. Rural communities are also impacted by diminishing housing resources. The gentrification of rural areas by the incoming urban middle class both depletes the supply of housing and raises land prices and taxes. Housing shortages are also compounded by influxes of migrant workers and tourists that varyingly leave long term residents with fewer, and less suitable, housing options (Taylor, 2018). There is also a lack of social housing and rental opportunities are less prevalent (Macdonald & Gaulin, 2019).

8.2 BARRIERS

Municipalities have limited jurisdiction and authority over the key drivers of homelessness and precarious housing within Canada. Priorities within policies, plans, and budgets are primarily determined at provincial and federal levels and have significant sway over factors such as economic opportunities (incomes, educational assistance programs, and social assistance) as well as available policy tools that can be leveraged to support the development of affordable and social housing both publicly and privately (Adamo, 2016). Top down homelessness programs have also primarily prioritized chronic, visible homelessness, which “means there are likely to be fewer public dollars available in the coming years for the majority of the homeless population that do not meet new eligibility criteria” (Adamo, 2016).

As federal social housing operating agreements and policies such as the 10-Year Plan requirements created under previous government programs expire, financial uncertainties related to maintenance of existing services are expected to worsen. The specific needs and challenges of rural municipalities to meet the needs of those who are experiencing or are vulnerable to homelessness within their region—including those staying with friends or family, who are precariously housed, or have inadequate shelter—may similarly not be addressed within formalized funding programs.

This may be due to the difficulty in measuring hidden homelessness, particularly in rural contexts where there may be less services that can act as gatekeepers and vulnerable residents may be less likely to self-identify as homeless.

In terms of planning tools, the American Planning Association has identified some of the most common barriers they have faced, most of which also bear relevance to Canada (Bridgman, 2003). One of the most common issues is municipal zoning restrictions that may restrict the number of unrelated individuals within a residence, ban rooming houses, place undue high standards for development such as unnecessarily large square footage requirements, or place restrictions on supportive services provided within a residential unit. This is also true of parking requirements which may limit the financial feasibility of inclusive developments. Access to some form of public transportation is also a significant advantage for those who are experiencing precarity to ensure they may have dependable access to services and employment (APA, 2003). Wellington County has addressed this barrier for their rural populations by funding a transportation program under their Community Resource Center that targets clients that have no other means of transportation, are low income, and under the age of 65. The transportation program connects vulnerable and homeless people with their medical appointments, counselling, legal appointments, Food Bank, educational upgrading, employment agencies, and places of employment free of charge (CRC, nd).

Public opposition is another significant barrier to consider. Even if all pieces come together to be able to repurpose or develop social or affordable housing stock, neighbours may resist or disrupt its progress on the basis of property values and/or a fear of crime. Incorporating education and advocacy into municipal homelessness strategies prior to and during development is a necessary component to help prepare communities and create the necessary conditions for success and social acceptance. This is particularly important given that the target population includes people already facing marginalization, vulnerability, and who may also co-present mental, behavioural, and/or physical challenges that could represent additional barriers to the individual's care.

9. RECOMMENDATIONS

The following are a list of recommendations as informed by the case studies and literature review. They are organized by application and are specific to Huron County and/or municipal planners. When taken together, they both emphasize the complexity of the issue as well as the limitations and opportunities of planning tools to address needs within the community, and provide a range of ideas to draw from moving forward.

9.1 APPLICATION WITHIN HURON COUNTY

Huron County is a picturesque region situated on Lake Erie, made up of nine lower tier municipalities: South Huron, Huron East, Town of Goderich, Central Huron, Bluewater, Ashfield-Colborne-Wawanosh, North Huron, Howick, and Morris-Turnberry (Figure 1). It is predominantly agricultural and encompasses a large land area of 3,399 square kilometers (Statistics Canada, 2017). Job losses in the manufacturing sector have occurred in the region since 2006 and may have caused higher instances of individual economic instability.

Though the population of Huron County is considered to be stable, the Long-Term Affordable Housing and Homelessness Plan for the County identifies a “deep and increasing housing need at least among the segments of the Huron County population with the lowest incomes” which has been projected as requiring an additional 141 affordable units by 2024 (Huron County, 2014). This is evident given that the average wait time for an affordable non-profit housing unit for a single individual in Huron County was two years as of 2012, a timeframe which increases within Huron’s densest towns that provide the majority of services (2014).

Huron County is the upper tier umbrella and is therefore responsible for delivering Social Services (i.e. social housing, social assistance and childcare) to the region in accordance with the Housing Services Act (2011) and the Ontario Housing Policy Statement, which includes homelessness and eviction prevention. This involves administering the following programs and funding streams:

- The Community Homelessness Prevention Initiative (CHPI)A Long-Term Affordable Housing and Homelessness Plan for the County of Huron 2014-2024
- The Consolidated Homelessness Prevention Program (CHPP) funded the Ministry of Community and Social Services (MCSS).



Figure 2. Map of Huron County with Insert of Southern Ontario (Marr, 2015).

- Youth Residential Facilities, Emergency Housing Services (Associated with the Huron Women's Shelter, Second Stage Housing and Counselling Services)
- Provincial Rent Bank
- Consolidated Housing & Community Development Plan, Continuum of Care for the Homeless, and Public Housing Agency Plan

While it is very difficult to have an accurate count of the number of people experiencing homelessness, a 2018 survey conducted by the County's Social and Property Services in partnership with local services revealed that a minimum of 100 individuals were found to be experiencing homelessness in Huron County (County of Huron, 2018). This is considered to be a low estimate as it likely did not capture all forms of hidden homelessness. There is currently a 10-Year Plan for the County that was put in place in 2014 that identifies needs and risk within the region, as well as sets priorities such as affordable housing, preventing eviction, and economic development. Both the 2018 Enumeration report and 10-Year Plan provide a good foundation upon which to consider additional strategies to ameliorate homelessness but further research is necessary to build on these results and better understand the causes and impacts of homelessness in the region. The results of this research should inform strategies and partnerships moving forwards.

The next steps for Huron County, that may be undertaken by planners and/or other municipal actors, are to:

1. Build upon existing research and explore local factors that are contributing to homelessness and determine the leading causes and impacts of homelessness and poverty, as well as structural barriers. This is particularly important given that a significant number of individuals experiencing homelessness within Huron County self-identified as Indigenous, racialized, or LGBTQ+.
2. Determine the number of individuals experiencing homelessness as well as the number of households at risk. Formalize measurement strategies that can better track and predict instances of homelessness on an ongoing basis.
3. Create an inventory of what services, both formal and informal, are currently available as well as gaps. Respondents to the 2018 survey indicated that they have concurring mental health, addiction, as well as physical and wellness issues that will need to be addressed in tandem with homelessness strategies.
4. Partner with grassroots organizations and social networks such as LEAP and Winter Warmth, or Pathways to Self-Sufficiency. Given the rural setting, many individuals facing homelessness rely on social connections to get by. One reason given as a cause of homelessness was abuse occurring in the home. Enlisting trusted networks and organizations to help distribute supports will be an effective method to reach those most vulnerable.

5. Inventory the stock of affordable housing within the region as well as abandoned or underused buildings that could be repurposed to serve as second stage housing, or permanent housing under a Housing First approach. Preserve and improve upon any existing social housing. A better understanding of community needs will help to inform how to best provide safe shelter quickly. This could also include reconceptualizing motels, which the county already uses to house those in need.
6. Partner with private landowners and developers to collaborate on physical solutions which would include expanding the current housing stock and generating buy-in to inclusive housing principles for future developments.
7. Expand existing homelessness funding programs to allow for additional services. This could include the ability to enlist community based workers and organizations, or championing municipal housing projects. Consider eligibility requirements and priorities included within existing homelessness programs.
8. Enlist transition workers, lawyers, or case workers to help guide people through the homelessness strategy. Though there may be limited funding and housing supports available, employing a staff member from these professions can help individuals navigate existing systems, address concurring issues, prevent evictions by mediating with landlords, and enable advocacy for additional resources—all of which would be an asset.
9. Review municipal interpretations and applications of provincial Employment and Income Support programs, and revise them to be more client centered.
10. Improve upon Service Coordination. Find redundancies, particularly in terms of intake processes, being completed by all actors, and make the process of accessing services and housing more client-oriented. Build stronger partnerships between levels of the government and neighbouring regions to collaboratively build on this issue. Consider creating and funding a larger framework, such as a Task Force, that will help to facilitate this process and foster lasting collaboration.

9.2 INTEGRATING HOMELESSNESS INTO PLANNING

Ending homelessness is a shared responsibility of government, businesses, not-profits, groups, landlords, and residents who all have a role to play. A public planner has the important duty to improve the communities by addressing existing and future needs. It is a well-known fact that the lack of affordable housing limits an individual's capacity to secure long-term or permanent housing. Hence, a planner can play an essential role in eliminating homelessness by determining the local housing needs within the region then reflect that need in zoning by-laws and official plans to develop supportive and affordable housing.

An important component of this is to include a definition of affordable that uses a shelter cost to income ratio, such as the minimum housing wage and/or percentage of income spent on rent, that may help both contextualize the issue within broader social and economic trends as well as create a foundation for measuring efficacy rates (Adamo, 2016). An important component of this is to include a definition of affordable that uses a shelter cost to income ratio, such as the minimum housing wage and/or percentage of income spent on rent, that may help both contextualize the issue within broader social and economic trends as well as create a foundation for measuring efficacy rates (Adamo, 2016)

To deal with homelessness, municipal planners must introduce this subject as a part of housing in local plans. This measure can help to reduce homelessness by determining the need and shortage and accordingly develop strategies to address the shortage in homelessness. Land use can also help to reduce homelessness by introducing a housing element that would provide a choice of housing options, distributed throughout the community. It will also help local planners to coordinate with service funding agencies and community development. It provides the opportunity for planners to cross-reference and achieve common goals with federal and provincial policies with efficient use of public funds (APA, 2003).

One of the significant factors that contributes to an affordable housing shortage is the demand for large minimum lot sizes for single-family. Zoning or permitting requirements can contribute to the shortage of affordable and supportive housing, which can encourage the development of single, detached homes in low-density developments. The low-cost multifamily development fails to maximize profits for private developers and also results in reduced taxes for municipal government (APA, 2003). Housing owned by non-profit organizations may be exempted from taxes and development charges. Therefore planners to explore the possibility, including abandoned institutional and industrial buildings. It will further help to increase the facilities and frequency of services provided. Provisions for additional services at hospitals and rehabs to help identify the needs at grassroots levels.

When considering prioritizing inclusionary zoning within plans, or partnering with private developers to incorporate affordable units within new developments, some components that should be defined include the percentage of inclusionary housing to be built, the tenure system, the price and target group, the length of affordability of these dwellings (for sale or to rent), and the alternatives such as in-lieu fees or taxation that can offered to developers (Meda, 2009). Any new revenue streams can be used to finance housing and homelessness programs.

A planner must also work to accommodate community services with emergency shelters and short term shelters for the homeless. It should also be ensured that these shelters should not become long term solutions to tackle homelessness but should offer basic protection from immediate harm of being homeless. It is also equally important to identify the stakeholders with their roles and duties.

The major components that must be touched upon are prevention, assessment, outreach, supportive services and housing services such as transitional, permanent supportive and permanent.

Two notable examples of municipal planners who are creating new ways of strategizing solutions include Barcelona's municipal government which is creating its own housing association to build supportive housing on municipally owned land. They also created a Right to Housing plan which coordinates social services in regards to housing. This strategy is funded directly by the municipality and has a budget of €10 million euros (Colini, 2019). The second is by planners in Niagara Region who are championing an initiative to convert older motels and hotels that have been neglected by changes in tourist patterns, to instead provide long-term, affordable, single-room occupancy (City of Niagara Falls, 2019).

These motels are already informally serving as the primary residence for a number of low-income populations. Planners have the ability to fast-track changes in zoning and permits to provide motel owners with the resources available to nonprofits to support operations and maintenance. Given instances of deterioration, redevelopment of these lots to provide more adequate housing is being considered. It also allows residents to declare a permanent home and thereby access services and advocate freely. This initiative has had wavering political support due to concern from the Business Association and planners must now pivot to community engagement and education (City of Niagara Falls, 2019).

Last but not least, the local planning bodies should share their experiences with federal and provincial planning divisions such as the Canadian Institute of Planners, Ontario Professional Planners Institute and similar. This step will help to communicate the best practices across the country so that the other communities lacking in facilities can adopt, upgrade or change their strategies to ensure a common aim to achieve housing for all. The involvement of such bodies will help to identify the barriers to provide and preserve the existing affordable housing and support the efforts to provide incentives to increase the supply. Planning divisions can also help to educate the local planners to address the special needs to serve the homeless and provide tools to evaluate housing needs better.

10.CONCLUSIONS

Homelessness is an issue which affects many people across the world. Both urban and rural areas have developed strategies and initiatives to mitigate the effects of homelessness. This research draws upon case studies from international and local contexts including Finland, the UK, Vancouver, Cambridge, and Toronto to explore what role municipal planners have had, or could have, in addressing homelessness in their region.

Reflections from key findings within these case studies such as, zoning for affordable housing, temporary housing and resources through initiatives, transition from homelessness into rental housing, inclusive housing and finally preventing eviction all provide strategies to address homelessness. Regarding concrete steps to address homelessness in Huron County, the key findings from the case studies provide steps that the county could also draw upon to address homelessness in the region.

Further research is needed to improve the knowledge, efficacy, and efficiency of planning tools in the fight against homelessness. There has been relatively little attention and study to planning's interaction with intervention and prevention, particularly in a rural context (Meda, 2009). Though there are many grassroots and government initiatives that have made important progress, early findings suggest that homelessness is not declining, an outcome Homeless Hub suggests that is not the result of poor plan design and weak implementation but rather due to the limited supply of new affordable housing that municipalities can deliver, coupled with the declining availability of tools to influence the private market and encourage inclusive and/or affordable housing. These challenges require the coordination of actors, from federal government to grassroots organizations, to address. Planners have the skill sets to help to facilitate these conversations.

Homelessness is a phenomenon which affects people's livelihoods and wellbeing. Policies, addiction, lack of housing and mental health issues all provide insight into why people become, and continue to be, homeless. It is important to recognize that many factors that influence homelessness are beyond the jurisdiction and authority of municipal governments and community-based organizations, and require coordination with higher levels of government to adequately address (Adamo, 2016). While all these factors are complex, leveraging planning tools to provide a range of housing supports and health related resources in both rural and urban areas has the potential to positively impact the lives of homeless individuals and other vulnerable citizens.

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