Affordable Housing & Homelessness Working Group
NEWSLETTER

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WELCOME TO OUR FIRST NEWSLETTER!

The Affordable Housing and Homelessness Working Group has taken a leadership role in both understanding and addressing homelessness and affordable housing in the municipality. The committee began in the fall of 2015 to undertake research in affordable housing and homelessness. Over the last three and a half years, the working group has provided guidance and oversight on a number of research projects and has engaged the community through workshops and presentations on homelessness and affordable housing in CBRM.

Members of the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Working Group from left to right. Front row: Rene Prince, Lynn Rossiter, Brenda Moore, Peggy Vassallo, Catherine Leviten-Reid, Scott Davis, Kendra Coombes, Erin Neville. Back row: Fred Deveaux and Billy Hill. Missing from photo: Bridget Smith, Lilla Roy, Janet Bickerton, Beth Gillis, Cyd Lepage and Nancy Baroni. Photo Credit: Beth Gillis.

WORKING GROUP MEMBERS RECEIVE AWARDS IN HOUSING, HEALTH & HOMELESSNESS

Dr. Catherine Leviten-Reid receives the 2018 Gold Roof Award for Housing Research Excellence. The award, sponsored by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, recognizes researchers whose work supports the National Housing Strategy (NHS) vision that all Canadians should have access to affordable housing that meets their needs. Catherine's research and expertise in housing is a game changer in building momentum in in CBRM.

Award presented by Adam Vaughan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Families, Children and Social Development. Photo Credit: Cape Breton University

Janet Bickerton receives the 2019 Health Advocacy Award from the Council of the College of Registered Nurses of Nova Scotia. This award recognizes the significant and sustained contributions to the health of Nova Scotians. On the Working Group, Janet has served as principle investigator on two homeless counts and offers extensive knowledge and expertise in developing and implementing community based initiatives.

Photo Credit: Cape Breton Post

On January 21, 2019 the Affordable Housing and Homelessness Working Group hosted a one day conference to share results of research projects and to discuss next steps. The morning consisted of three presentations. The first two presentations reported on the results of a one day point in time homeless count and a one month service based homeless count. The third presentation introduced a mapping deprivation project. Participants were asked for their reaction to this research and what if anything stood out for them?

There was a number of responses and the following is a summation of the various comments.

Homelessness Research:

- Large number of young people in both counts - We need to do better job of addressing youth homelessness
- Would like to hear from people with lived experience - first voice stories!
- Not much change in two years!
- It's a complex issue
- Need a clearer definition of access to health care
- Change begins with awareness of all parties
- We need to work on vulnerabilities and factors to prevent homelessness

Mapping Deprivation Project

- A lot of orange and red throughout the CBRM showing high deprivation
- Value of deprivation index - Is there a role for regional housing and geographic choices for new builds/investments. Scatter vs cluster
- Give more context around disparity between HRM & CBRM (i.e. economic opportunities/outmigration)
- Transit seems to be an important puzzle piece
- Would like to know more on how the information is being used to improve the situation?

A REPORT ON OUR CONFERENCE TABLE TOP DISCUSSIONS

The afternoon focused on two working documents. The first, a Youth Homelessness Plan was introduced with recommendations already made from previous community consultations. The second was a Situational Assessment on Affordable Housing and Homelessness in CBRM. The table top discussions focused on the Situational Assessment and asked **what actions could be implemented that would impact homelessness and affordable housing issues in the Cape Breton Regional Municipality?** Groups at each table were given one of three priority areas to brainstorm around what actions could be taken. Results are as follows:

PRIORITY #1

Expand and improve the continuum of supports for individuals experiencing or at risk of homelessness in the CBRM

Develop a Coordinated Access System for individuals and families experiencing homelessness

Provide Education at the community level to increase awareness of homelessness

Increase and implement the types of services and supports that meet people's needs

Engage with landlords in the process and provide strategies for eviction prevention

PRIORITY #2

Increase access to affordable rental housing for households in need

Partner with the Municipality to work on policy that will support affordable development in CBRM

Create new affordable housing units by supporting organizations in their development plans

Innovate transportation solutions together

Set up a means of navigation for people to locate appropriate housing resources
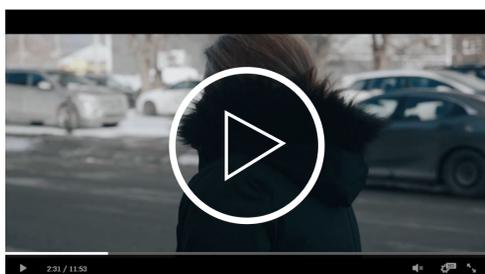
PRIORITY #3

Take steps to make existing housing stock adequate, safe, and appropriate

Develop an inventory of information and grants for the public to access

Implement a tenant education program

Look at the needs of existing housing stock and develop linkages to address those needs

Promote programs that provide environmentally sustainable upgrades in existing housing stock

Click here for the CBRM Youth Homelessness Video

Click here for Affordable Housing Situational Assessment, Youth Homelessness Plan and Homeless count Infographics