

Habitat for Humanity to build affordable homes in Dufferin County



By Mike Pickford

With the local housing market seemingly refusing to slow down, Habitat for Humanity Wellington Dufferin Guelph (WDG) is looking into the possibility of constructing affordable homes in Dufferin County for those who need it most.

In a release to media last week, Steve Howard, CEO of Habitat for Humanity WDG, explained the organization was currently exploring a number of potential properties in the region that could be turned into affordable homes for single- and dual-parent families, people with disabilities and senior citizens.

Some of the properties the organization has looked at would "enable our affiliate to build a whole community rather than one single home," Mr. Howard said. "The need for affordable housing impacts every piece of our society, which means we need to scale up and think big."

According to statistics presented to Dufferin County council earlier this year, approximately 10 percent of the county's population currently lives in poverty, with one in every nine households living in core housing need. Mr. Howard noted this reality has called for Habitat for Humanity WDG to partner with organizations, corporations, individuals and the County to make a greater impact in the community.

Housing is one of the main areas of focus for Dufferin and its Poverty Task Force. Keith Palmer, Director of Community Services with the County, says he's pleased to see community partners coming forward in an attempt to address housing needs in the region. "The County of Dufferin and Habitat for Humanity are happy to be working together to (address this issue)," Mr. Palmer said. "A main theme of the County of Dufferin's 10 Year Housing and Homelessness Plan is to work collaboratively with local agencies to help address housing affordability. Partnering with Habitat for Humanity will provide even more assistance to families as they navigate the housing continuum."

One such initiative the County already has in place to help potential first-time buyers is its Home Ownership Program. Aimed towards "moderate" income individuals and families with a fairly good financial record, the program accepts applications from individuals or families who are currently renting and earn less than \$88,000 per year. Should an applicant be successful in their application, the County provides an interest-free down payment assistance loan up to a maximum of \$20,000 to help purchase a home listed in Dufferin County for up to \$400,000.

In addition to partnering with the County of Dufferin, Habitat for Humanity WDG has formed various advisory committees of its own, including Events and Construction, that have been filled by members of the local community. As it seeks to raise funds for such a project, the organization is also planning an inaugural Ultimate Habitat House Party fundraiser. The event will be held on September 30.

"Our plans for Dufferin require innovation and dedication from our team of staff, volunteers and partners," Howard said.

"Community support on multiple levels is also critical. It takes a community build on this scale - we can't do this alone."

To find out how you can help Habitat for Humanity WDG with this project, visit habitatwdg.ca or contact resourcedevelopment@habitatwdg.ca.