

The Public Good

The newsletter of The Public Good Society of Dartmouth

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No Place Like Home

At a discussion hosted by The Public Good Society of Dartmouth (TPGS) in July, 2010, a clear consensus emerged that the Society's efforts could best be employed by "making affordable housing a reality".

On October 15, 2010, TPGS held a workshop, "No Place Like Home," where members of the community further defined how TPGS could best support the already considerable housing work that is being done in Dartmouth. The role envisioned for TPGS is one of co-ordination, partnership building, public education, and advocacy. Recommendations from the workshop include:

- 🏠 Co-ordinate efforts by reducing fragmentation & working collaboratively with other groups.
- 🏠 Build partnerships by providing leadership for a housing strategy in Dartmouth, facilitating a discussion with key players, discovering lessons learned, & working with soup kitchens and food banks.
- 🏠 Advocate by developing partnerships with politicians and the public service, holding government accountable, & following up on the workshop.
- 🏠 Educate by developing a "Dream Team" for speaking to the community, speaking to various groups and hearing and sharing stories, promoting individuals to the problem in their everyday contacts, & showing business people how housing issues affect them, and others.
- 🏠 Provide training by building capacity and awareness, & doing a community asset map with housing providers to look at strengths and how to pool resources to better deliver service.

At the workshop, TPGS committed to follow up these discussions with an event to move housing issues forward. On Friday, May 6, 2011, this follow-up event will happen with a Focus Group to define specific actions to improve housing conditions in Dartmouth.



Some of the presenters in "No Place Like Home", October 2010: [left to right] Liz Cleary-250 Homes, New Beginnings; Megan Gray-Adsum House for Women & Children; David Harrison-Affirmative House, Affirmative Industries; Paul O'Hara-North End Community Health Association; Carol Charlebois-Metro Non-Profit Housing; & Wendy Fraser-Supportive Housing for Young Mothers.

Why We Exist

There is a wide range of excellent services designed to assist marginalized people in building capacity and improving their quality of life. If you ask me what they are, three years after I joined the Connections that Work project, I could tell you 90% of them. These services include: employment readiness, housing and mental health supports, literacy, parenting courses, social clubs, university lectures, and an artist collective dedicated to assist creative people with disabilities. And that is only to scratch the surface.

The challenge for clients is simple: how do they know these services exist and how do they find them. Some clients receive their monetary supports from Income Assistance and are fortunate to have caseworkers referring them to needed services. But for most clients these services remain unknown and are located in headquarters far away from where marginalized people gather.

A common critique of non-profits and governments is that there is redundancy - several organizations fighting over the same clients. I have heard this concern from more than a few taxpayers. But my response is clear, at the four foodbanks and one soup kitchen I visit there is only one staff person on site. I come to assist with resources in hand, to help navigate and transport clients looking for services.

Kevin Little
Community Outreach Facilitator
The Public Good Society

Thanks to funding from the Nova Scotia Department of Community Services, the "Connections that Work" project will continue helping people in Dartmouth until March 2012.

The State of Housing in Dartmouth

A statistical profile of households and housing characteristics will be presented by the TPGS at the May 6th Focus Group on Housing Action. It is important to review where we are now so we have a common starting point from which to move forward. The statistics will provide context for action on housing issues.

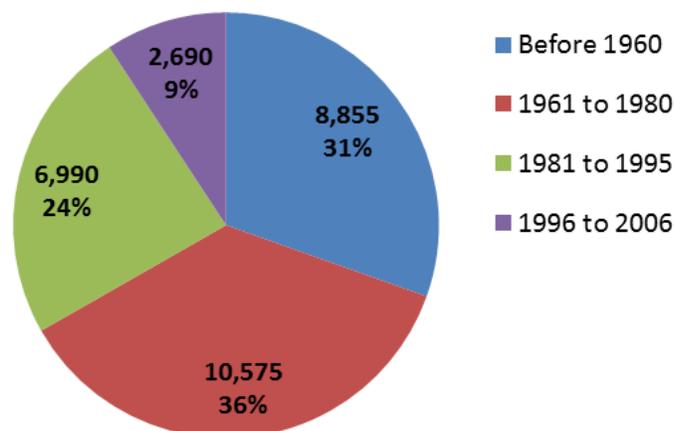
For example, there is a higher than average need for major repairs to dwelling units in Dartmouth, as compared to the rate in HRM. In Dartmouth, 7.4% of households identified that their dwellings were in need of major repairs, according to the 2006 Census (the most recent figures available). In HRM, the rate was 6.8%.

Many homes are in need of major repairs as the housing stock in Dartmouth is relatively old. The chart below shows the period of construction for dwellings in Dartmouth.

Dartmouth's housing stock is aging, with 67% of the dwellings being built prior to 1981 and only 9% built between 1996 and 2006.

This is significant, because older housing requires more maintenance, which equals time and money. Often, households are considered to be in core housing need because they do not have the money to maintain their homes. However, if these homes are owned and are fully paid for, they may be the only housing that the home owners can afford. If these homes are rented, the landlords may choose not to maintain their properties, leaving tenants in housing that requires major repairs.

**Period of Construction for Dwellings in Dartmouth
(number and percent of dwellings)**



In Dartmouth, 55.5% of households are owners, while 44.5 % of households are renters. This ratio of owners to renters represents a high level of renters in Dartmouth as compared to the 36% of households which are renters in HRM.

A Summary of Downtown Dartmouth Housing Issues Identified:

Specific On-the-Ground issues:

- * Limited Supportive Housing
- * Need supports in the community
- * Gaps in shelters for youth
- * Need increase in allowances for social assistance
- * Gap between transition housing and community living

Big Picture policy issues:

- * Housing Strategy for Dartmouth
- * National Housing Strategy
- * Concerted long-term/sustainable housing strategy

Discussion points:

- * Develop a liveable model of housing
- * Grassroots up - involving those affected in the process
- * Sustainability - homeless vs. housing strategy
- * Allocation of resources - funding a mix of housing types

"The Public Good" is published twice a year by The Public Good Society of Dartmouth.

For more information on the Society see our web site at www.publicgoodsociety.ca.

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