

Continuing Housing Innovation in Windsor-Essex

Windsor-Essex Innovative Housing Project Advisory Group



Project Collaborators

People and families in collaboration with . . .

City of Windsor

The City of Windsor is the delivery agent for Windsor and Essex County for the 'Investment in Affordable Housing Program for Ontario' funded by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing. The City of Windsor allocated program funds to facilitate the goals of the 'Continuing Housing Innovation in Windsor-Essex Collaborative' as proposed to the Housing Task Force (Ministry of Community and Social Services).



Community Living Windsor

Community Living Windsor is the agency receiving and flowing the allocated individualized funds provided by the Ministry of Community and Social Services. They are working with each person and family according to their individual requests through a range of flexible services including but not limited to financial recording and remittance, user friendly forms, support with workers, etc.



Private Contractors

Alliance General Contracting and Flex Custom Home Solutions, two local contracting firms with significant experience in accessibility renovations, are providing in-kind consultation/renovation advice.



Alliance General Contracting

Flex Custom Home Solutions

Windsor-Essex Family Network

This autonomous family-to-family support organization has led the My Home, My Choice initiative in Windsor-Essex since 2010. This work builds leadership capacity and does community development work through: resource creation, inspirational story-telling, connections, learning events, forums and more.



Windsor-Essex Family Network

Windsor Essex Brokerage for Personal Supports (Brokerage)

Windsor-Essex Brokerage put forward the proposal for this collaboration on behalf of the 'project advisory group.' Brokerage provides independent facilitation & planning with the person and their family by: exploring life as an everyday citizen with housing being an important aspect; listening deeply together to the person's voice and strengthening that voice; having supported decision-making at the core.



Windsor-Essex Innovative Housing Project Goals

Eight people through conversations with their family, friends, independent facilitator/broker, service providers and other partners will:

- **Create and/or enhance** their own home options.
- **Continue to make choices about giving their time and gifts in valued roles** like job providers, volunteers, employees, entrepreneurs, family members, neighbours and people who actively follow their hobbies and leisure choices.
- Discover more gifts and capacities, develop tailored supports, expand relationships and **make a positive difference in the lives of others.**



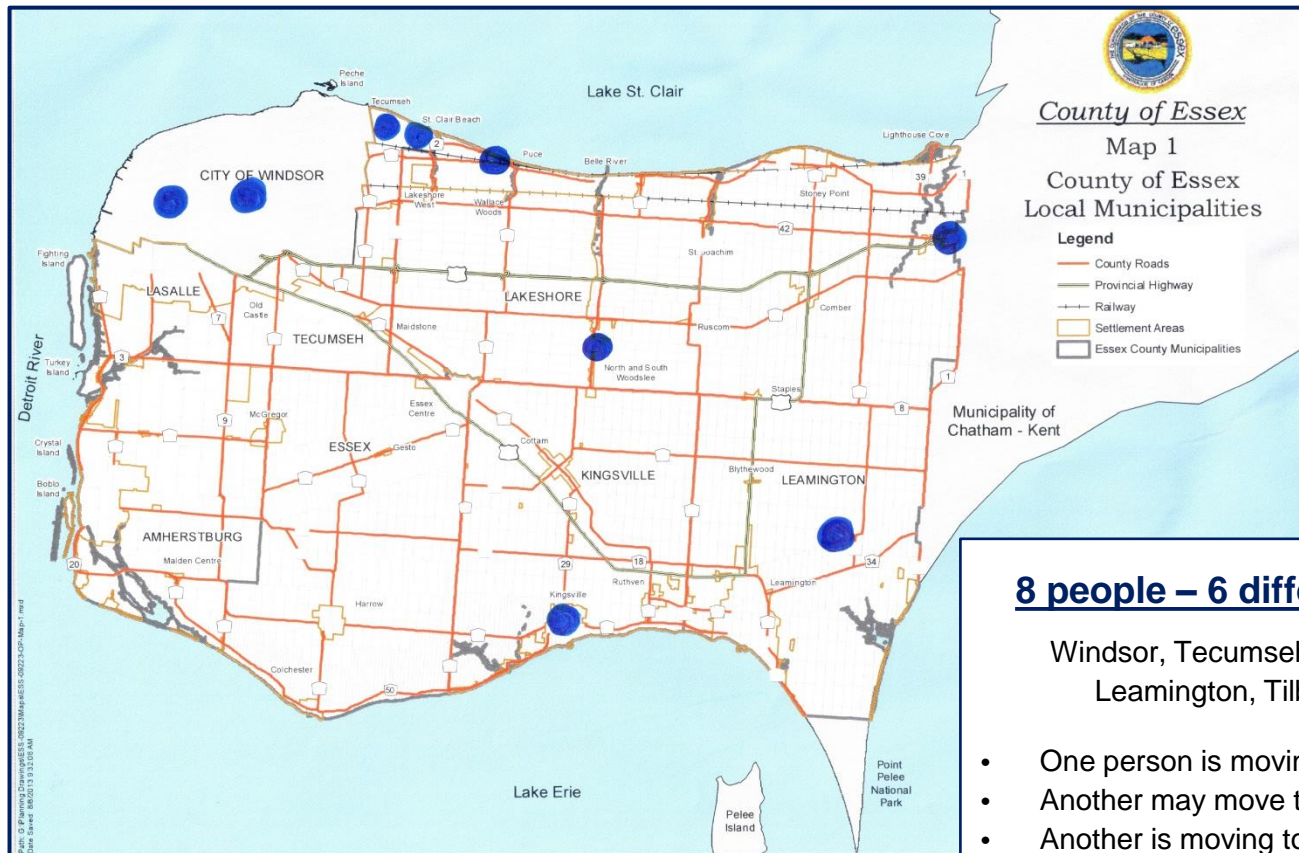
How our family members contribute through valued roles

Sons, Daughters
Sisters, Brothers
Grandchildren
Nephews, Nieces
Cousins
Aunt, Uncle
Neighbours
Friends
Employers
Providers of work
Adult learners
High school grad
College student
Entrepreneurs
Employees
Volunteers
Pioneers of innovation
Computer enthusiast



Health enthusiasts
Artists, Painters
Ballroom dancer
Music lovers
Swimmers
People watcher
Equine rider
Teachers
Jogger
Handyman
Hip Hop dancer
Festival goer
Demolition expert
Loyal customers
Grocery shoppers
Sports enthusiast
Fitness enthusiast

Where our family members will live, work and play



Housing options that our family members chose

Buying a House

Two people are planning to purchase homes with assistance from a Homeownership Downpayment Assistance Program made available by the City of Windsor through the 'Continuing Housing Innovation in Windsor-Essex' collaborative project

Renting an Apartment

One person will be receiving a Rent Supplement/Housing Allowance subsidy to secure a private market rental apartment.

Secondary Suites/Private Space (in the family home)

Four people chose secondary suites/private self-contained space to be near family. Three are renovating to create/enhance and/or enlarge their apartments – two with funding through the Ontario Renovates program and one with the assistance of extended family. One person's secondary suite/private space has already been completed.

Parent as Landlord, Person as Tenant of Single Family Home

One person has chosen to live in the house next door owned by the parent. Ontario Renovates funding will be available by the City of Windsor through the 'Continuing Housing Innovation in Windsor-Essex' collaborative project.



What families believe

- Connections and relationships are important to living an everyday ordinary life. As families we have had to be intentional at making this a first priority while living with daily complexities and challenges.
- Working around barriers to have life feel as seamless as possible is important. It is difficult and needs a team effort – we can't do it alone.
- We need inspiration and encouragement from other people and families – hearing their stories, reading about their experience, networking and connecting helps get through the ups and downs.
- Our family member's homes must be separate from their direct services (attendant care, personal support, personal assistance, support workers, and/or other programs).
- People want to choose who they live with whether it is: with family, near family, away from family, alone or with a roommate. They know they can always make a change as things evolve.
- Independent facilitation and planning has meant: deep listening, strengthening of our family member's voice and has helped us think through possibilities for creativity and innovation.
- Having control and decision making over resources and funding can lead to more tailored supports and creativity. Direction and control over the purchase/contracting/choosing of staff is important -- but infrastructure to support us is needed as well.



What's important from our history – the old

People and families driving change – from the late 80's to present

- People were asking questions, asking for change, hopeful around supports for a 'whole' life (1980 and 90's)
- Some proposals and plans around a whole life including a home of one's own and individualized funding were prepared as early as 1999 – this continues today throughout Windsor and Essex County
- Families were looking to community first, relationships and what it takes to be included and contribute

Efforts made to shift control and decision-making to people and families (1990's)

- A separation of functions was possible – this opened up options
- Self-determination and the person 'directing' was valued
- Control over resources began

Relationships and partnerships

- We had champions and leaders within agencies, government and among people and families – since late 80's
- We risked together and had tough conversations
- We met new champions outside the disability sector over the last eight years.

Tangible options

- Independent facilitation and planning
- Individualized funding/direct funding
- Personal Support Agreements/Budgets



What`s important from our history – the new

My Home My Choice Initiative, 2010 to present Windsor-Essex Family Network, the lead

- Capacity building and leadership development among families
- Community engagement; resource creation and development
- Community development work within the broadest of sectors



Highlights


- **2011 Housing Forum:** Partners outside the sector, numerous community stakeholders and families attended - 156 people in total.
- **2012 Round Table About Affordable Housing Options For People with Disabilities and Others Needing Support.** Suggestions for a pilot project were made as well as recommendations for 'ad hoc group work' on specific topics.
- **Six families have shared their stories** about their individualized, innovative housing journey at seven different learning events between the years 2010 and 2015.
- **540 participants** (a majority families) have learned about affordable housing options, innovation and possibilities since the beginning of the initiative! ... **The work continues!**

Keeping hope alive over the years: conversations, sharing stories and more

- People and families continued their efforts planning for a whole life that included an innovative, individualized home option despite the barriers
- **Different things were being done by different people/families as life changed and evolved and they began designing their future.**
- Community housing resources and programs available to all citizens were being explored. Families found partners outside the disability sector who were supportive of their vision.
- **The Individualized Funding Model Initiative (IRMI) in 2007 provided a platform for some before it abruptly ended. Families hoped for a return someday.**
- Stories of innovation shared by families inspired and strengthened others. Information resources created were shared widely. People held on to hope.



How the idea of ‘My Own Home’ began for each person participating in the project

- Each person, at some point, began to communicate in their own way, that it was time for more privacy, their own space, and more separation from their family. This included people who did not use words.
 - **Families were listening and felt they had to move the idea of 'home' forward in order to respect and honour their loved ones.**
 - Together people and families imagined what a separate home could look like. They talked things through with the assistance of their independent facilitator and others they trusted.
 - **Questions were explored together about: What is a home? What keeps it 'my' home?**
- 



Thinking through the idea of ‘My Own Home’

- Sometimes it was hard for families to imagine moving forward with plans for a separate home option - without support funding, without funding for housing – at the same time managing significant complexities. Six of the eight families lived with complex physical, medical and/or mental health experiences on a day to day basis.
- **Families worked hard focusing the planning on relationships and what life looks like for any ordinary citizen in their community – the strength of believing in community first.**
- People and families moved forward with exploration. They took risks, did lots of work on their own and kept conversations going - over many years.





Readiness and moving forward: People are active in the planning and evolution. Sometimes the person is ready faster than their parents or the work that needs to be done; it can feel slow.



People and families look to the future with a **vision** to live and contribute as everyday, ordinary citizens in their neighbourhoods and community.

Everything cycles from and back to the vision of life as an everyday, ordinary citizen.



Thoughts are shared even before they are shaped. Ideas and possibilities evolve through conversations and listening to the person as their voice is strengthened.



Families have work to do in between. With regard to housing it could be exploring the community, speaking with municipalities, funders, service providers, financial lenders, lawyers, etc. The pieces start coming together.



An independent facilitator/broker walks with the person and their family assisting with the conversations at a pace the person directs and finds safe. Questions are explored together like: What would make a home “my home”?



How this might be done in other parts of the province . . .

This presentation has been about shifting power to people and families over time. **It has been about the hard work and conversations that have occurred for people to realize an individualized home option as one part of their everyday ordinary life.** It has been about assisting people and families along what they might describe as a 'difficult journey'.

Other communities may already be well along a similar path. No matter where you are on a continuum of change this is what we have learned to do and continue to work on:

- ✓ **Having conversations, dialogue and working hard together**
- ✓ **Asking the important questions**
 - Can we together support and respect separate roles and new functions for: people and families, family networks, independent facilitators, service providers, other partners?
 - Can we celebrate and appreciate the healthy tensions that occur with any change and innovation?
- ✓ **Remembering our history and the work that has been done. It is important to continue forward.**



Questions



...and Thank You