

RENTSAFE OWEN SOUND COLLABORATIVE

A Report on Landlord & Tenant Survey Findings in the City of Owen Sound

November 2024



What is the reality of rental housing in the Owen Sound Community?



The **RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative** is a group of organizations and community partners working together towards the goal of safe and healthy homes for all

*Connecting people across sectors towards healthy housing for all
RentSafe is a collaborative initiative lead by the Canadian Partnership for
Children's Health and Environment (CPCHE)*

Introduction to the RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative

RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative was formed in 2019 building on the momentum generated by the local RentSafe EquiP participatory research and final report, *We Are All Neighbours* (October 2019). The Collaborative has strong links to the province-wide RentSafe initiative.

The Collaborative includes people from multiple sectors and perspectives, including housing providers, leadership and staff from health and social services, Indigenous and non-profit organizations, emergency services, tenants and community members.

The RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative conducted surveys with landlords and property managers (in the fall of 2021) and with tenants (in the fall of 2022) about their views and experiences regarding rental housing in Owen Sound.

RENTSAFE: CONNECTING PEOPLE ACROSS SECTORS TOWARDS HEALTHY HOUSING FOR ALL

- The Collaborative is linked to the province-wide RentSafe initiative (2014-present) that aims to address unhealthy housing conditions affecting tenants living on low income in both urban and rural communities in Ontario.
- Catalyzed by the RentSafe EquiP research project in Owen Sound (2016-2019), an Equity-focused Intersectoral practice that focused on building meaningful interaction among people from diverse sectors.
- Launched at the final RentSafe EquiP research event (November 2019) by community members and agency partners seeking to continue to work together to promote safe and healthy homes for all.

Land Acknowledgement

The City of Owen Sound is situated on the traditional territory of the Anishinabek Nation: The People of the Three Fires known as Ojibway, Odawa, and Pottawatomie Nations. We are thankful for the opportunity to live, learn and grow on this land. We are all treaty members.

A 10 Year History of RentSafe

An ongoing story of Owen Sound / Grey Bruce leadership and participation
at provincial and local levels

Owen Sound / Grey-Bruce		Ontario Wide
Above Standard Housing Project (Grey-Bruce Health Unit, Poverty Task Force, Community Voices, CPCHE)	2014	Launch of the province-wide RentSafe Initiative, led by CPCHE Tenant focus groups in Grey-Bruce, Perth, Toronto
Active participation of Owen Sound / GB tenants, landlords and service providers in RentSafe (Advisory Committee, surveys, Roundtable, Tenants Network)	2015	RentSafe sectoral surveys: Public Health, Legal Aid, Frontline Services, Small-Scale landlords, Municipal by-law
	to 2017	RentSafe Roundtable, Hamilton (2016)
Launch of RentSafe Equip Research – An Equity-focused Intersectoral Practice	2017	RentSafe Tenants Rights Advocates Retreat, Stratford Tenant advocate videos: “My Voice is Power” “Defining Adequate” “Stigma in the System”
RentSafe Equip Learning Exchanges (June-Oct) Intersectoral Retreat (Nov)	2018	RentSafe report: Towards Healthy Housing for All: Summary & Recommendations
RentSafe Equip findings shared at Healthy Communities Partnership & RentSafe Roundtable: Formation of RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative	2019	
“Housing Issues? We’re Here to Help” video produced Launch of Owen Sound surveys for tenants and landlords Vital Signs presentation on initial survey results	2020 to 2023	RentSafe Initiatives: Addressing Mould in rental housing (with key input from RentSafe Owen Sound); Addressing Hoarding subgroup
Sharing of the survey findings to support community dialogue and solutions; presentation at the Poverty Task Force	2024	RentSafe team developing policy options to support local action on rental housing habitability: Public Health Survey

SURVEY OUTVIEW

The surveys were designed to:

- provide better understanding of rental housing conditions in Owen Sound;
- learn more about the issues faced by tenants and landlords / property managers



The goal of the surveys is to inform community dialogue on issues and potential solutions for safe and healthy homes for all.

To review the complete list of survey questions, follow the following links:

Landlord/property managers survey questionnaire:

https://rentsafe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/rentsafeowensound_landlordsurveyquestionnaire.pdf

Tenant survey questionnaire :

https://rentsafe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/rentsafeowensound_tenantsurveyquestionnaire.pdf

- Landlord Survey conducted in Fall 2021;
- Tenant Survey conducted Fall 2022;
- Preliminary results reported in “Vital Signs” in December 2022;
- Presentation of results at the Bruce-Grey Poverty Task Force Meeting in May 2024



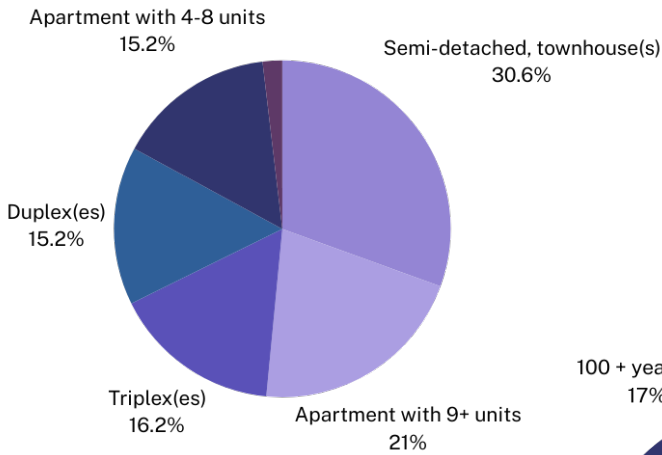
LANDLORD SURVEY DEMOGRAPHICS¹

There was a total of 36 Respondents. Of these respondents, they are responsible for nearly 800 rental units in Owen Sound (about 40% of the rental market)

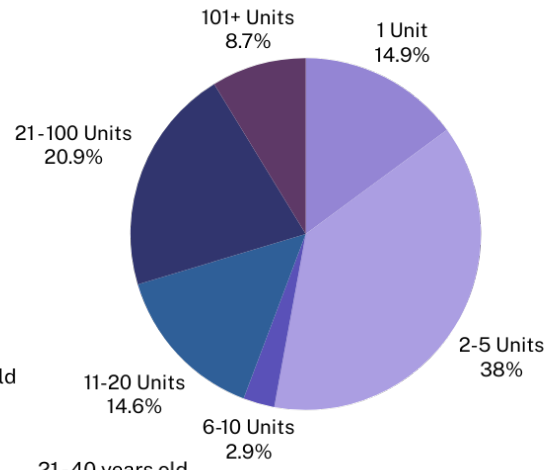
According to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) data from October 2023 that there are 1904 rental units in Owen Sound. Ten years prior, in 2003, the estimation was 1817 units. This is a very small increase over 20 years. According to CMHC data in 2023, the average rent was \$1100; in 2003, the average rent was \$636.

According to 2016 census data, Owen Sound's private rental rate was 43% of the population (compared to home ownership), much higher than the Ontario average of 31%. This does not include social / subsidized units. There are 691 subsidized units in Owen Sound (496 for Grey County and 195 from non-profit housing).

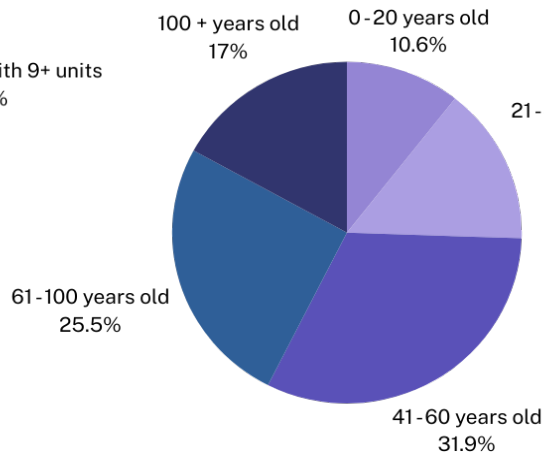
What type of units do you own / manage?



How many units are you responsible for?



What is the age of your rental stock?



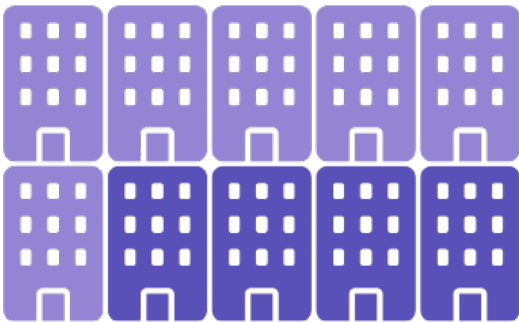
¹ We are still gathering information from the 2021 Census to update from the 2016 Census data

Tenant Survey Demographics

545 Valid Responses

According to CMHA data from October 2023, there are 1904 rental units in Owen Sound, which represents about $\frac{1}{4}$ (28 %) of the rental units for Owen Sound

Who is your landlord?



47% renting in co-operatives, non profit or county housing

30% renting from an individual

23% renting from a company / corporation

What type of housing do you rent?



45% of respondents living in duplex or triplex

20% in semi-detached, townhouse, or single family

20% in apartment building with 4-8 units

16% in apartment building with 9+ units

How long have you rented this unit?

40% reported living in a rental unit for past 1-5 years

31% reported 6-10 years

20% reported 11+ years

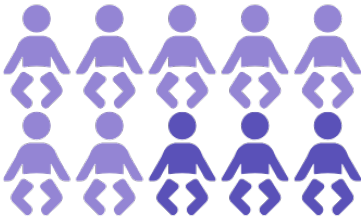
9 % reported less than 1 year

Tenant Survey Demographics

The demographics show a broad cross section representation of tenants living in a variety of rental units, length of tenancy, household composition and income.

Indigenous community members and newcomers to Canada are well represented in the responses.

Who is living with you in the rental unit?



26% of respondents were living alone

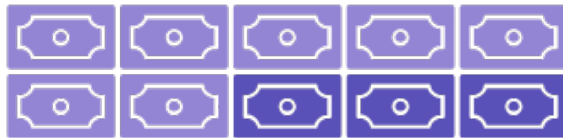
23% with 1 or more roommates

22% couples without children

20% couples with children or multigenerational

10% single parent

What is your household income?



29% of respondents reported household income between \$50,000 and \$74,999

26% reported household income between \$30,000 and \$49,999

26% reported household income \$75,000 or over

20% reported household income under \$30,000

10% single parent

SURVEY FINDINGS - MAINTENANCE

LANDLORDS

19% of respondents reported all of their units required repairs costing over \$1000 per year

- 32% reported less than 10% of units requiring repairs over \$1000 / year
- 19.4% reported none of their units required repairs

TENANTS

77% of respondents reported requesting maintenance in the past year

- 35% requested maintenance and it was completed
- 27% requested maintenance and it was not yet completed
- 15% reported their landlord doesn't intend to address their concerns

COMPLETING REPAIRS

50%

of respondents reported difficulties hiring contractors to complete repairs in Owen Sound, with timing /availability being the most frequently reported challenges

HOUSING COST

75%

Of tenants reported spending 30% of their income on housing



SURVEY FINDINGS – HOUSING CONDITIONS

LANDLORDS

The most frequently reported rental unit problems (presented as % of affected units) include:

1. Plumbing leaks ($\leq 18\%$)
2. Broken windows ($\leq 15\%$)
3. Broken or non-functioning exterior door locks ($\leq 14\%$)
4. Bedbugs ($\leq 14\%$)
5. Mice ($\leq 13\%$)
6. Pet damage ($\leq 10\%$)
7. Cracks or holes in wall, floors or ceiling ($\leq 9\%$)
8. Heat not working ($\leq 12\%$)
9. Evidence of mould ($\leq 3\%$)
10. Water leaks or flooding from outside ($\leq 2\%$)

TENANTS

Reported rental unit problems (presented as % of respondents include:

1. Pests/ insects other than bedbugs (73%)
2. Unit too hot or too cold (71%)
3. Water leaks (62%)
4. Anxiety regarding their unit's physical condition (60%)
5. Had left a unit in the past due to poor conditions (57%)
6. Noise (51%)
7. Drafty doors (49%), dysfunctional windows (49%)
8. Mould (47%)
9. Poor air quality (43%)
10. Bedbugs (42%)

Respondents reported that 12 to 30% of the units had damage caused by tenants / guests beyond expected wear and tear. Non-payment and conflict between tenants were similarly reported issues

87%

Of tenants reported wanting to leave due to poor conditions but not being able to do so.



SURVEY FINDINGS – TENANT RELATIONS

LANDLORDS

35%

Of respondents reported difficulty accessing unit to complete the repairs, with entry refusals and difficulty contacting tenants being the most frequently reported challenges

Other concerns reported by landlords affecting between 3-18% of the units include:

- Housekeeping issues resulting in additional costs
- Conflict / stressful situations with tenants
- Hoarding issues resulting in additional costs
- Illicit activities requiring police intervention

TENANTS

Nearly all respondents (95%) reported knowing how to contact their landlord when needed, and reported prompt responses (82%)

Over half of the respondents reported feeling comfortable raising issues with their landlord (55%)

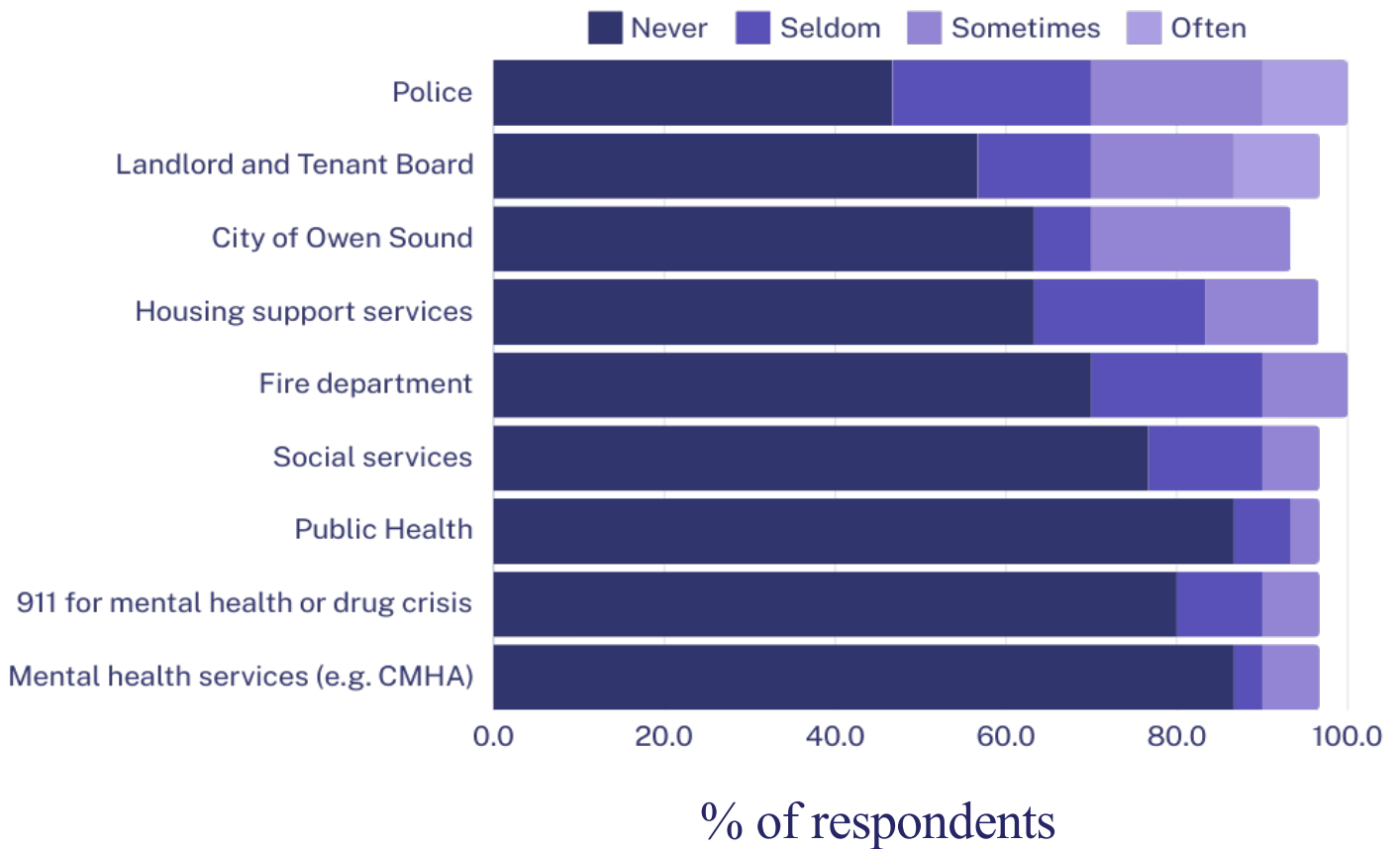
49%

Just under half of respondents reported issues with requesting maintenance such as delays in completing the work, refusal to do the work, being unable to reach the landlord or having a poor relationship with the landlord



Landlord Survey Findings

What local services were landlords accessing for tenants?

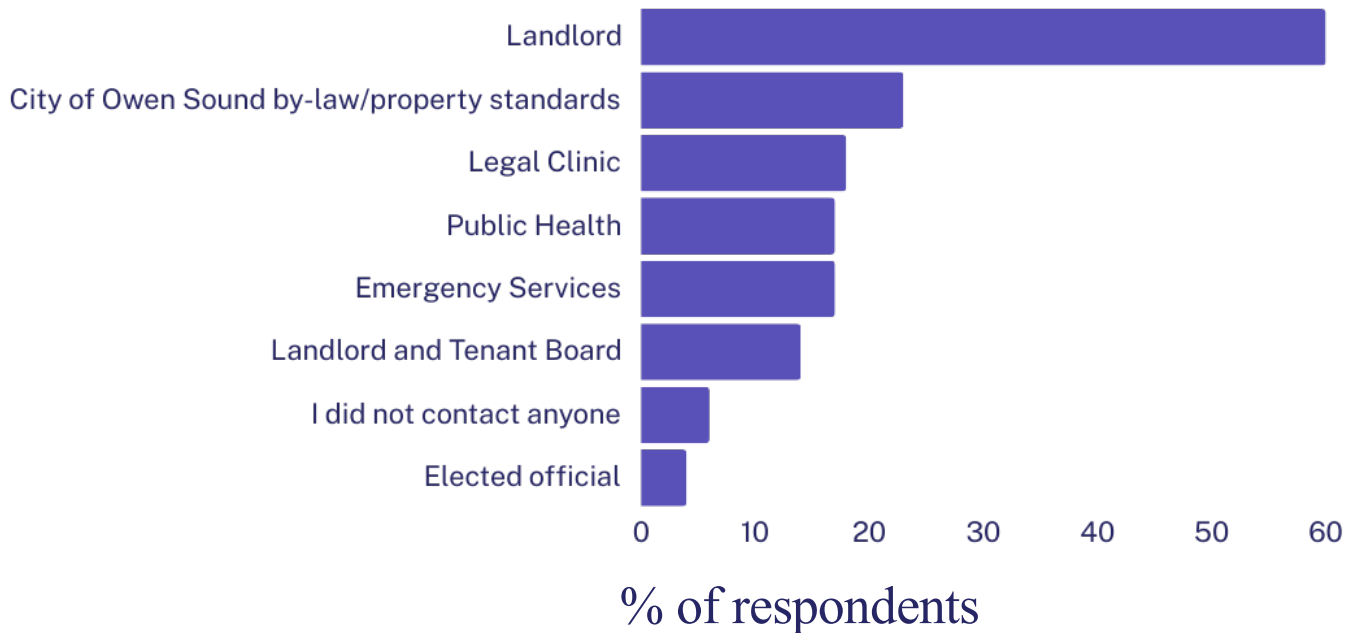


- Landlords reported highest degrees of satisfaction with fire department (8/9 satisfied), and police (12/16 satisfied)
- Lower levels of satisfaction with the Landlord and Tenant Board (2/12 satisfied), City of Owen Sound (4/9 satisfied), housing support services (5/8 satisfied), and social services (0/6 satisfied)

“Renting in Owen Sound has been traumatic. There are no legitimate supports of landlords.”
– Landlord survey respondent

TENANT SURVEY FINDINGS

When you had a concern about unsafe or unhealthy conditions in your unit, who, if anyone, did you contact?



Tenants reported lower levels of satisfaction with Housing Support Services (31% dissatisfied), Mental Health Services (29% dissatisfied), and City of Owen Sound (28% dissatisfied).

Highest degree of satisfaction with fire department (47% satisfied), Social Services (44% satisfied) and Landlord and Tenant Board (43% satisfied)

“Why do we not have a certain standard that landlords have to keep places in...should be inspections done in rentals, fire, home inspections.” – Tenant survey respondent

LANDLORD SURVEY FINDINGS

Plans for the future (presented as % of respondent's units)

- 7-16% of landlords are expected to have major renovations and rent will be increased
- 4-6% are expected to be sold to outside investors
- 4-6% are expected to be sold to local buyers
- 1-12% are expected to have major renovations but rent will be kept at / near current levels
- Up to 2% are expected to be converted into short-term rentals
- Up to 3% of units are expected to be made into supportive housing
- Less than 1% are expected to be taken over for personal use

"I believe the City of Owen Sound is very lacking in support of quality affordable housing. This is leading to labour shortages. The reason substandard housing exists in Owen Sound is simply the fact the City allows it to by its lack of bylaw enforcement" – Landlord survey respondent

"Government incentives for improved efficiencies such as windows/doors/ heating are only available for homes that you own and live in as your primary residence. How does that help the tenants to live in the best possible home?" – Landlord survey respondent

POINTS OF CONNECTION – UNIT QUALITY CONCERNS

A large majority of tenant respondents reported some sort of quality concern with their rental unit

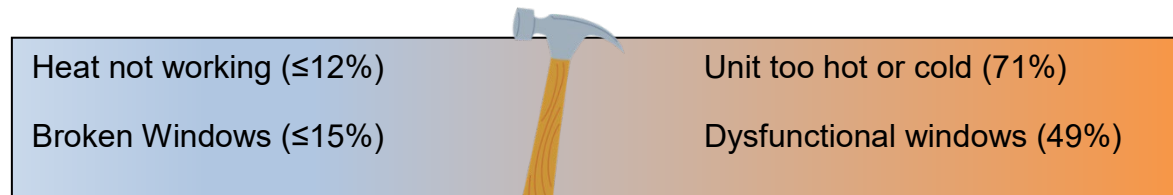
Landlords and tenants both commonly reported issues related to temperature control (including broken / impaired windows), plumbing and water leaks, pests and bedbugs and mould

LANDLORDS

TENANTS



Unresolved plumbing and water leaks can lead to long term disrepair, causing structural damage and mould.



POINTS OF CONNECTION – LACK OF TRUST AND COMMUNICATION

Landlords reported challenges with contacting tenants and accessing unit to complete repairs

Tenants reported a lack of comfort with landlords accessing unit

LANDLORDS

35% of respondents reported challenges in accessing a rental unit

- 42% of those reported challenges cited tenant refusal
- 37% of those reported challenges cited not being able to reach the tenant
- 26% of those reported challenges cited concern for personal safety
- 21% of those reported challenges cited concern for tenant's mental health

"We keep rent below market value to retain tenants longer and have had respectful tenants" – Landlord survey respondent

TENANTS

56% of tenants reported being comfortable with landlords accessing their unit but:

- 25% reported being somewhat uncomfortable
- 9% reported being uncomfortable

60% of tenants reported the physical conditions of their housing made them feel nervous, anxious, unable to stop worrying or unable to sleep

Tenants whose landlord lived in the same building as their landlord / property manager were 19% more likely to report anxiety, worry, nervousness or lack of sleep related to the physical conditions of their housing (vs a landlord / property manager who lived in a different building)

"I can't afford to move to healthier conditions. My rent is already 60% of my monthly income." – Tenant survey respondent

POINTS OF CONNECTION – LACK OF SATISFICATION AND EFFECTS ON WELLBEING

Approximately 1/3 of landlords reported a lack of financial and / or personal fulfillment with being a landlord in Owen Sound

A significant proportion of tenants reported poor conditions and / or feelings of being unsafe in their unit

LANDLORDS

38% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the prompt “I find it **financially** rewarding to be a landlord / property manager in Owen Sound”

34% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the prompt “I find it **personally** rewarding to be a landlord / property manager in Owen Sound”

35% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the prompt “I would recommend being a landlord / property manager to a friend or family member.”

41% of respondents either disagreed or strongly disagreed with the prompt “Five years from now, I could see myself being a landlord / property manager in Owen Sound”

TENANTS

87% of tenants reported wanting to move due to poor conditions but couldn't

60% of tenants reported having anxiety regarding their unit's physical condition

57% of tenants reported having left an unit in the past due to poor conditions

34% of tenants reported not feeling comfortable raising issues

29% of tenants reported feeling unsafe in their unit

“With the rising costs of rental units, many are unable to afford an increase in rent to move to a new unit so they are stuck where they are. Living in an unsafe and unhealthy home should not be ‘better than being homeless’” –
Tenant Survey respondent

Interconnection of Concerns

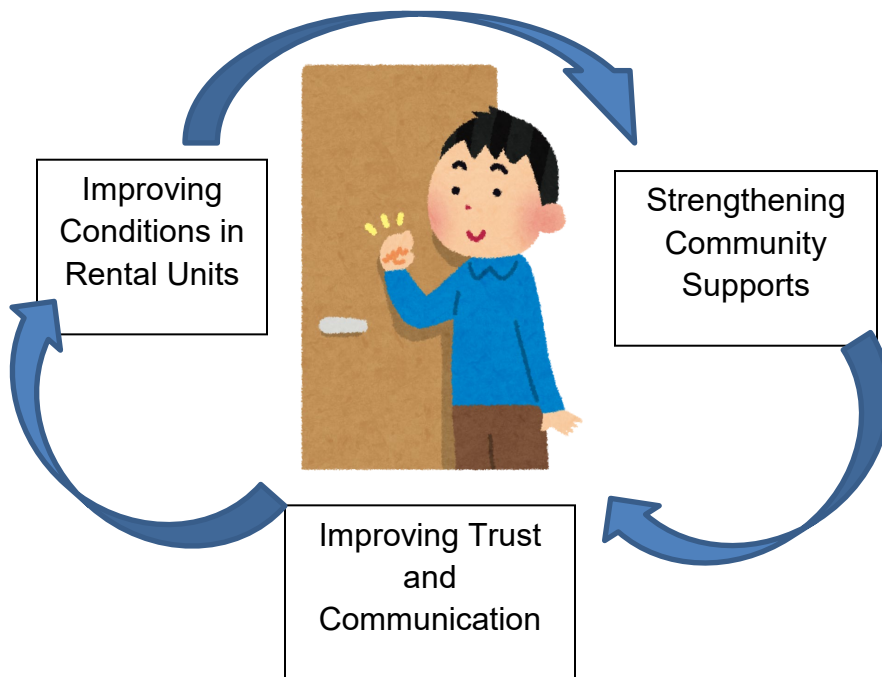
The “*We are All Neighbours*” Report (RentSafe, October 2019) discusses the charm of small-town living in Owen Sound. The report also notes, however that older housing stock is related to rental unit quality issues. In turn, older housing stock can then lead to a lack of available units. These factors can lead to issues of tenant affordability and a lack of landlords’ financial incentive.

Landlord can feel stuck in a broken system



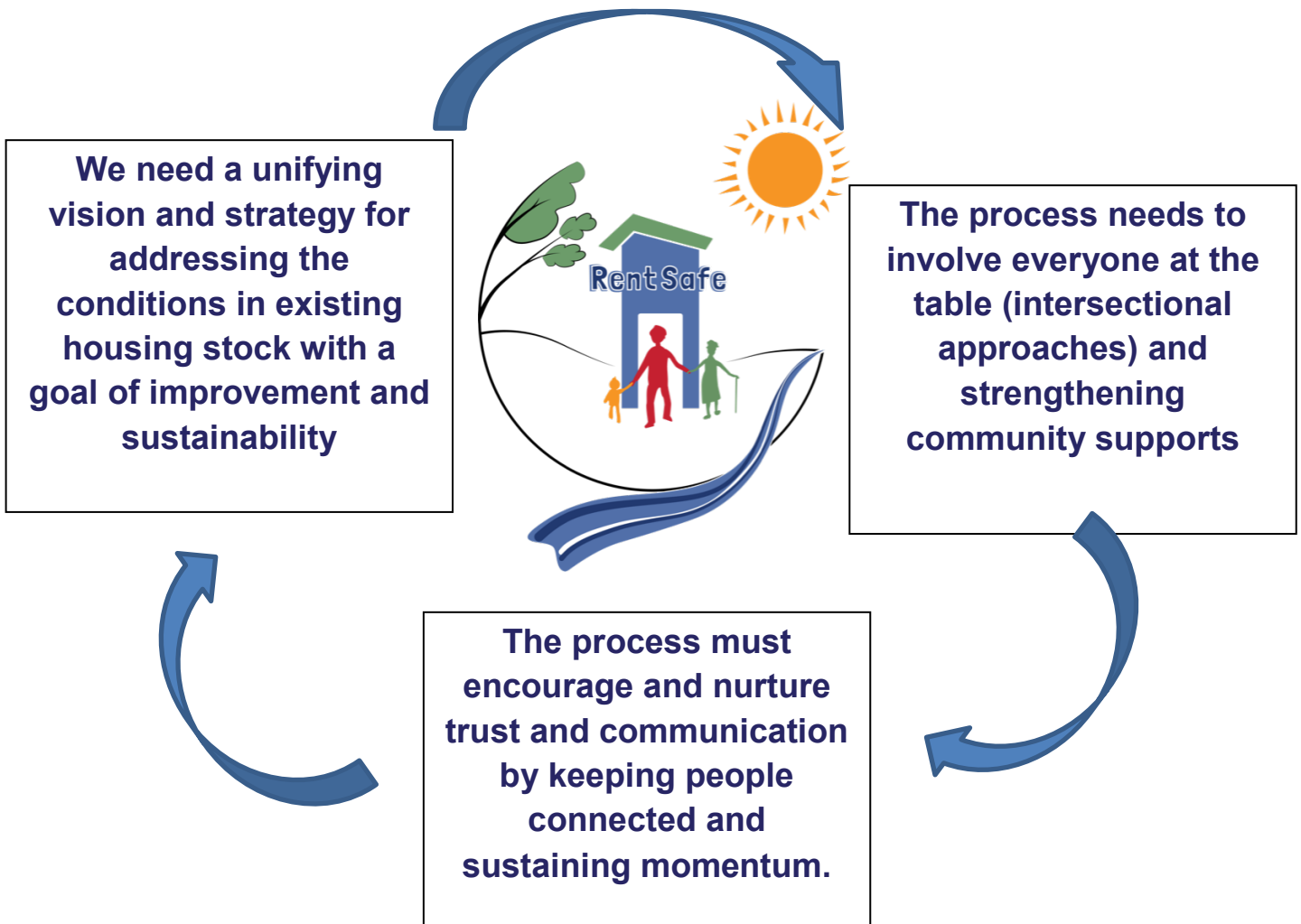
Tenants can feel trapped without good solutions

Themes that interconnect:



Connecting to the We Are All Neighbours Report:

We need a unifying vision and strategy for addressing the conditions in existing housing stock – building on the draft vision for healthy housing as the foundation of well-being in Owen Sound (included in Appendix) → this needs to involve everyone at the table (intersectional approaches) → the process must encourage and nurture trust and communication by keeping people connected and sustaining momentum.



Recommendations – Owen Sound City Council

The surveys conducted in 2021 (landlords) and 2022 (tenants) found some positive results. About 2/3 of landlords report financial and personal fulfillment in being a landlord in Owen Sound. Most tenants know how to contact their landlord and receive a response when contacted. Both landlords and tenants report high satisfaction rates with the responses from the Fire Department. However, there are significant concerns about the quality of housing from the majority of tenants (the majority of tenants reporting wanting to move due to poor conditions but being unable to do so, only 8% reported that they had not requested maintenance from their landlord in the past year) and landlords reported financial and personal challenges in undertaking repairs.

Recommendation #1: Collection of data

We recommend that the City collects data on habitability issues in rental housing (for example, the incident of mould, pests, water leaks, broken windows, etc) via bylaw and fire department inspections.

This data is important to better understand the depth of the issues facing older housing stock in the City and in developing strategies to encourage and support landlords to maintain existing housing stock that is safe and healthy.

Recommendation #2: Include model bylaw language for mould repairs in Owen Sound's bylaws

The Municipal - Public Health Provincial Working Group to Address Substandard Housing Issues, a successful intersectoral collaboration that was catalyzed by the province-wide RentSafe work, recently developed a model by-law on mould for use by municipalities across the province. The Working Group unites the efforts and expertise of the leading professional associations serving public health inspectors and municipal by-law/property standards officers across Ontario.

Its members include: Ontario Association of Property Standards Officers (OAPSO), Municipal Law Enforcement Officers Association of Ontario (MLEOA),

Ontario Public Health Association (OPHA), Canadian Institute of Public Health Inspectors - Ontario Branch (CIPHI-ON), Association of Supervisors of Public Health Inspectors of Ontario (ASPHIO) and RentSafe.

The mould model by-law, now available through the Ontario Association of Property Standards Officers (OAPSO), was informed by a comprehensive scan of existing by-laws across Ontario and co-created with the expertise of both public health inspectors and municipal property/by-law officers.

The model by-law supports municipalities across the province to update and improve municipal property standards regarding mould in rental housing.

Recommendation #3: Prioritize supports for landlords to maintain the habitability of their units and to facilitate effective tenant-landlord interaction as a key strategy in retaining and improving the existing rental housing stock in Owen Sound.

We are currently in a housing crisis with increased incidents of homelessness. Households and individuals are turned away every day from accessing Grey County emergency housing because of lack of space. Not only is more housing required but we also want to keep and maintain our existing affordable rental housing stock and retain existing tenancy for long-term stability for both landlords and tenants.

The City should play a role in retaining existing rental housing stock, informed by better data on habitability concerns, and via supports to ensure that both tenants and landlords are equipped to fulfill their responsibilities to maintain healthy conditions. The City should be involved in helping to find solutions to maintain a robust, healthy and financially diverse rental housing market for the Owen Sound community.

Recommendations – for Owen Sound Community

As the RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative reviewed and reported the findings from the surveys, we are also looking forward to how the community can respond to the findings in concrete ways. These recommendations are starting ideas and potential solutions for further work and collaboration.

1. Small scale landlords provide vital housing stock: How can we support to ensure that necessary repairs are done?

Possible solutions to consider and research:

- Micro-financing pilot
- Learning exchanges
- How to navigate social support for tenants to better understand concerns and barriers and possible supports
- Where to find support when struggling with challenging situations
- Best practices guide to common repair and maintenance issues

2. Many tenants do not feel comfortable contacting their landlord about repair issues (34%): How can we support tenants and work along side them in making these requests? How can we move towards prevention? How can we be more proactive?

Possible solutions to consider and research:

- Do we need more data to understand why tenants do not feel comfortable?
- “first eyes” approach from service providers – how can we use the support systems in our community to help advocate with the tenants when observe / hear issues
- Community agencies working collaboratively with warm referrals and shared understanding of “who does what”
- Learning exchanges
- Video guide / best practice guide
- Mentorship system
- Wrap around support for hoarding situations

3. Financial Supports: What financial supports or incentives could help landlords and tenants access resources to improve rental housing conditions?

Possible solutions to consider and research:

- Advocacy for better federal renovation program addressing the unique needs in smaller urban areas and applicable to rental properties
- Micro-financing pilot program
- Pilot program in partnership with existing community resources (examples, Habitat for Humanity / Georgian College)
- Collaboration and expanding partnership with companies that do re-furbishing
- Insurance company (for home owner) – could there be financial incentives for healthy and well maintained rental buildings
- Possible incentive program within the property tax scheme (could this also be linked to a proactive inspection process)

4. Systematic Change: What long term changes do we need to ensure that existing rental housing stock in Owen Sound is affordable, healthy and safe for all?

- Explore options for pro-active inspections to avoid a complaint driven process similar to restaurant inspections system
- improvements with the Landlord and Tenant Board process to make it more accessible and proactive
- strong community involvement and reporting mechanism to ensure long term stability, such as a City / Public Health rental housing committee
- Explore options for renoviction bylaws to prevent bad faith evictions and maintain affordable housing stock (similar to examples in Hamilton and Toronto)

RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative Members

The RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative is an inclusive space for sharing information, promoting understanding and seeking collaborative solutions to the rental housing crisis in Owen Sound. It includes people from a broad array of sectors and perspectives, including landlords, tenants, and people from the following agencies and organizations:

Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force
Bruce County Housing
Centre for Environmental Health Equity
Community Voices
Grey Bruce Public Health
Grey Bruce Community Legal Clinic
Grey County Housing
M'Wikwedong Indigenous Friendship Centre – Giwe project
Owen Sound Fire and Emergency Services
Owen Sound Hub
Owen Sound Municipal Non-Profit Housing Corporation
RentSafe (Ontario-wide)
RentSafe Equip research team (Owen Sound)
RentSafe Tenant Advocate Network
United Way Bruce Grey
YMCA of Owen Sound Grey Bruce / Y Housing

To learn more about the RentSafe Owen Sound Collaborative, please contact:

- **Jill Umbach**, Network Coordinator, Bruce Grey Poverty Task Force, povertytaskforce@unitedwaybg.com
- **Seana Moorhead**, Lawyer and Executive Director, Grey-Bruce Community Legal Clinic, Seana.moorhead@gbclc.clcj.ca
- **Erica Phipps**, Director, RentSafe, erica@healthyenvironmentforkids.ca / Adjunct Professor, University of Ottawa, ephipps@uottawa.ca

Resources & Publications

RentSafe in Owen Sound: <https://rentsafe.ca/owen-sound/>

We Are All Neighbours (final report on RentSafe EquiP community-based research): https://rentsafe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/rentsafe-in-owen-sound_final-report.pdf

RentSafe Owen Sound Roundtable: [Meeting Summary](#) (2019): <https://rentsafe.ca/rentsafe-in-owen-sound-roundtable/>

Video: **Housing Issues? We're here to help:** https://rentsafe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/rentsafe-in-owen-sound-video_housing-issues-wee28099re-here-to-help.mp4

RentSafe mould resources (includes podcast with Owen Sound community members and agencies): <https://rentsafe.ca/2019/06/26/new-resources-on-mould-and-health-for-physicians-and-their-patients/>

RentSafe hoarding resources: <https://rentsafe.ca/2022/12/15/hoarding-resources-collection/>

RentSafe Tenants Advocates videos: <https://rentsafe.ca/2018/10/22/rentsafe-tenants-rights-advocates/>

Full collection of RentSafe resources, guides, videos and resources: <https://rentsafe.ca/publications-videos-events/>

Lessons From a Rural Housing Crisis: Grounded insights for intersectoral action on housing inequities (2021), Social Science & Medicine

“It Doesn’t Happen Any Other Way”: Relationship-building and reflexivity for equity-focused intersectoral practice (2023), Health Promotion International

Appendixes

- A. A draft vision for healthy housing as the Foundation of well-being in Owen Sound (From “We Are All Neighbours” Report, Oct 2019)
- B. Model Mould Bylaw
- C. Full data Analysis of the RentSafe Owen Sound Landlord Survey (pending)
- D. Full data Analysis of the RentSafe Owen Sound Tenant Survey (pending)

Link to Survey Questions:

Landlord/property managers survey questionnaire:

https://rentsafe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/rentsafeowensound_landlordsurveyquestionnaire.pdf

Tenant survey questionnaire :

https://rentsafe.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/11/rentsafeowensound_tenantsurveyquestionnaire.pdf

Appendix A: A draft vision for healthy housing as the foundation of well-being in Owen Sound (from the We Are All Neighbours Report)

Drawing upon what we heard and learned from research participants, we offer the following as a draft vision of a stronger and more effective intersectoral response to housing needs in the community. The vision we have sketched out below builds on and reflects existing strategies and action, including key principles and strategic elements of the Grey County Housing and Homelessness Plan, the work of the Above Standard Housing project and Giiwe, and the RentSafe Summary and Recommendations report. It is offered as a starting point for those in the community – including community members, housing providers, governmental and Indigenous leaders, managers and frontline staff of relevant agencies and organizations, and others – to develop and unite around a collective vision and plan of action.

Vision Statement: We envision Owen Sound as a community that is ‘getting it right’ on housing. We are taking decisive and coordinated action to ensure healthy homes for all as a powerful means to improve health, social cohesion, and vibrancy in the community.

We envision Owen Sound to be a community where...

1. Every resident, regardless of income level or circumstance, has a safe, healthy home that is affordable, accessible and appropriate to their needs.
2. Housing is recognized as a basic human need and a human right. Adequate housing is broadly understood to be more than shelter, as in the definition of United Nations Special Rapporteur on Adequate Housing. It is viewed as a positive asset that supports human wellbeing and dignity.
3. Improving the quality and availability of housing is embraced by the community as a practical and strategic way to improve physical and mental health, social cohesion and general well-being in the community, and as an essential step toward Indigenous-settler reconciliation.
4. Intersectoral tables that address housing and those that address relevant intersecting issues (e.g., mental health, cultural safety) are sustained and supported with resources and robust engagement at both decision-making and staff levels. All intersectoral tables include meaningful and sustained participation of people with grounded expertise.
5. There is ‘no wrong door’ for people experiencing housing inadequacy, regardless of age, gender, cultural identity or circumstance. All relevant agencies and organizations have mutual knowledge of ‘who does what’ and shared understanding of their respective capacities and limitations. Staff are trained on how to best guide people to

find the supports they need in a supportive and culturally safe way. Warm referrals are the norm.

6. There is a 'can-do' rather than a 'tick box' culture within and between the various agencies and organizations that provide housing and social support services. Staff are supported and rewarded for being holistic and human in their approach to problem-solving with clients, and are discouraged from rigidly applying rules and screening criteria to exclude people from getting services.

7. A municipal plan, developed through an inclusive and transparent process, is in place to increase the quantity of healthy and affordable housing stock. The plan includes incentives and investment to bring underutilized, vacant and abandoned stock back on-line as affordable housing, as well as the removal of barriers to creative housing options by modifying zoning and other by-laws, where appropriate.

8. Municipal property standards reflect up-to-date scientific knowledge about health and safety risks including mould and dampness, pests, inadequate heat, lack of ventilation/poor air quality, water quality concerns, radon, noise and other indoor environmental health issues.

9. Measures are in place to increase access to financing for retrofits and repairs, especially for non-profit and affordable (low income) housing providers. Such measures promote energy efficiency and renewable energy sources as a means to address climate change and energy poverty.

10. Public health inspectors, municipal property standards officers and fire safety officials collaborate to ensure properties meet or exceed health and safety standards. These agencies work together and with community partners to inform and engage the community on the responsibilities of both landlords and tenants in maintaining safe and healthy homes and sustaining tenancies.

11. Transportation strategies are aligned with housing needs and availability. Increased public transportation enables people who don't own cars to consider housing options outside of the downtown core.

12. Government and non-governmental entities invest in and promote measures to build community around where people live (e.g., community gardens, playgrounds, recreational facilities) to improve well-being, strengthen social cohesion, and support successful tenancies.

Appendix B – Excerpts regarding Mould from the Model By-Law from the Ontario Association of Property Standards Officers: <https://www.oapso.ca/association-by-laws-and-notices>

“Healthy Environment” – means free from mould, dampness and adverse health effects

“Minor Accumulation” – means 1-3 patches of mould, each less than 1 m² (10 square feet) in size

“Moderate Accumulation” – means more than 3 patches of mould greater than 1 m² but less than 3 m² (32 square feet)

“Mould” – means a multi-cellular spore-producing microorganism that obtains nutrients from organic substrates and does not contain chlorophyll

MOULD

1. Any accumulation of mould shall be immediately cleaned and removed by the owner of a building.

2. No person shall occupy, or permit the occupancy of a building, or portion thereof, where an extensive accumulation of mould exists which could pose a health concern to any person who occupies the building, or portion thereof.

3. Any condition in a building, including but not limited to water penetration, humidity or inadequate ventilation, which relate to the creation and growth of mould, shall be repaired, replaced or removed by the owner of the building. The owner shall take all reasonable steps necessary to prevent reoccurrence of mould growth.

4. If the mould accumulation is moderate or extensive, the Property Standards Officer may order the owner to provide, at the owner’s expense, a report prepared by a Certified Air Quality Assessment professional, trained and knowledgeable in the field, detailing mould spore samples and related air quality.

(a) The report in section 4 will detail the extent of the mould contamination, and remediation of mould removal, and any other items as the Officer may deem necessary;

(b) The owner will provide a copy of the report to the Property Standards Officer;

(c) The owner will undertake the appropriate remediation outlined in the report; and,

(d) The owner will provide a follow-up report which confirms that air quality levels are consistent with a healthy environment, to the satisfaction of the Property Standards Officer.

5. Notwithstanding any other provision of this Bylaw, section 1 and 2 shall not apply if the presence of mould is minor in nature and relates to general maintenance and/or lifestyle.