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NEWS

Not enough age friendly housing to meet needs in township

By Jennifer Vandermeer, Norwich Gazette/IngersollTimes
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Social Planning Council Oxford

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Members of the Oxford Social Planning Council are hoping the results of an age friendly housing study in Norwich Township will help guide future development of seniors housing in the municipality.

The council recently published the results of its study, that was completed with the help of the township's Health Visioning Committee. It shows the population demographics, the existing seniors housing, the anticipated future need and explains the status quo of available age friendly housing and community supports is not viable as the older adult population increases.

"I was surprised to see that the fastest growing cohort in Norwich Township was the 60 to 64 year old cohort," said Ashley Farrar, the council's social planning coordinator. "Although it is commonly known that Oxford County as a whole is an aging population, I have never heard Norwich Township identified independently in this way."

According to the report, the 60-64 year old cohort grew by 39%, or 95 residents, between 2006 and 2011.

Currently there are two private retirement homes in the township with a total of 28 beds and two apartments. Each of these homes is full but there is often not a waiting list because people tend to need the services immediately and have to go outside the township.

“The most significant information, I think, is that it is pretty evident that the demand for affordable, age friendly housing is not being met – and this gap will only continue to grow with time unless some changes are made,” said Farrar.

A health survey report conducted by the health visioning committee and the Woodstock and Area Community Health Centre in May 2012 indicates the top two community health care priorities as senior housing and senior support programs. The health visioning committee also reported that to meet the needs of older adults in the area, there is a need for a range of housing options, including seniors townhouses in Otterville, Norwich and Burgessville; handicapped-accessible housing; small apartments; and shared care accommodations.

“Two-thirds of survey respondents want to stay in the township as they age. As the report points out, it only makes sense, both from quality of life and a financial standpoint, to provide the appropriate housing and supports to allow this to happen,” said Farrar.

She said the council's report has been shared with the appropriate county officials and it's hoped the information will be used as the county moves forward in planning for age friendly affordable housing.

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