

Community Impact Lab Update

Affordable Housing

February 2023

Exploring Access to Market Rental Data

The Affordable Housing Community Impact Lab, a community co-design initiative supported by Social Innovation at Georgian College, is focused on exploring how we might leverage technology to expand access to local rental market data and enable community leaders to make informed decisions on appropriate and affordable housing strategies in Simcoe County.

Lab outcomes to date have identified a lack of reliable and detailed data gathered in a standardized and continuous method about the local rental market in Simcoe County. Information from the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is published regularly but

does not include the full or nuanced local rental market data-set, particularly in rural contexts. Current data collection methods are labour-intensive and are conducted ad hoc, based on available staff resources.

The framework for the Affordable Housing Community Impact Lab, uses a generative design process and participatory action research methods to co-explore with community actors the scope of the issue. Together diverse Lab participants work iteratively to prototype community co-designed approaches to new service delivery, policy or cooperative models as part of the Lab's exploration of the issue.

Outcomes being explored with the Affordable Housing Lab include:

1. **Improved access to quality data about the local rental market:** To support program design, system planning, and local reporting
2. **Improved access to rental unit listings:** To support people and housing support workers access local rental listings
3. **Community collaboration:** Utilizing a participatory approach, convene actors around a local opportunity
4. **Student Benefit:** students are contributing to creating a sense of community belonging.

Community Impact Labs provide a way for students, faculty, and local community partners to collaborate on solutions to complex community challenges. Each Community Impact Lab is established in collaboration with a community actor or actor group and employs a social research approach informed by systemic design to co-design, test, and launch innovate community-based solutions.



Affordable Housing Lab Stewardship Committee Membership:

- Georgian College Social Innovation
- Housing Services Corporation
- Community Connection 211
- County of Simcoe (Community Partner lead)
- Community Data Program

Community Conversation: October 27, 2023

A workshop with a small group of community partners was held on October 27, 2023. Using a Journey Map framework, participants considered the use of rental market data from the perspective of four different actor groups: 1) a student looking for a new home; 2) a housing coordinator working with a student looking for a new home; 3) research interns at the County of Simcoe collecting rental market data in Simcoe County; and, 4) policy and decision makers using local rental market data.

Key Findings

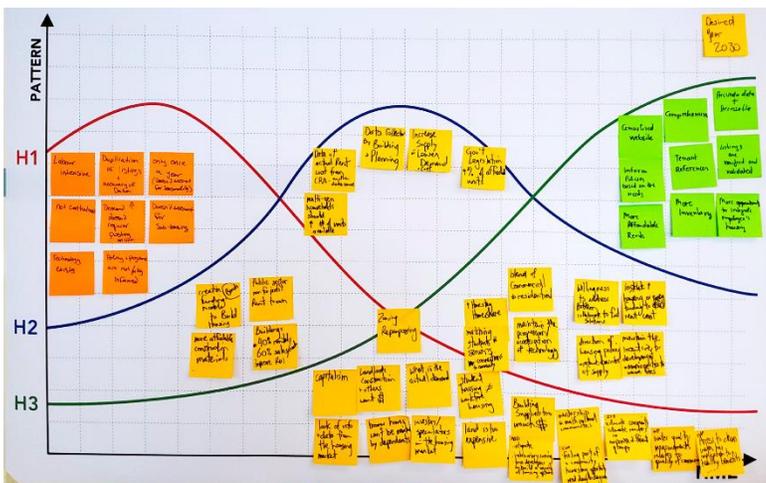
- Searching for a new home requires rapid, aggressive, high-energy action
- There are a lot of issues in data collection (e.g. duplicate entries for rent ads)
- There are unequal power dynamics in the system (e.g. landlord/tenant dynamic)
- There are opportunities to engage with new partners and end users
- There is a shift of feelings from negative to positive during a new home search

Journey Maps are a visual framework of a person's process and actions to achieve a specific goal or task. Mapping the choices, activities, and emotions of a user/group allows for identifying pain points and areas of improvement within that journey or experience.



Community Conversation: November 16, 2023

A second workshop was held on November 16, 2022, during [Changemaker in Residency Week 6.0](#) to discuss expanding access to rental housing market in Simcoe County. A diverse range of participants explored how new technology could assist different actors from community, non-profit, for-profit, and municipal government examine average market rents and explore new tools to better understand the rental housing market in Simcoe County. A Three Horizons framework was used to guide the discussion.



The **Three Horizons** framework is a strategic foresight tool that helps integrate complete systems within a long-term timeframe. As a visual collaboration tool, the Three Horizons framework helps identify the current state, where we collectively want to go, and factors that support a transitional state to get there.

Key Findings

Current State

- Lack of accurate, timely data
- Data access is not coordinated or equitable
- Collected rental market data is a labour intensive process
- Policy/legislation change is slow and based on outdated data
- Lack of sense of community
- NIMBY (Not In My Back Yard)

Desired Future State

- Accurate, accessible, reliable data
- Policies/legislation based on good data and what people need
- Diversity of housing options
- People have choice in housing
- Housing is affordable
- People are connected to their community; Trust
- Mixed income neighbourhoods
- New housing design concepts

Transition State → how do we get to the desired future state?

- Digital equity: access to good data, equitable use of technology
- Flexible data sharing policies
- Multi-generational housing
- Purpose-built rentals in rural areas
- Financial incentives to develop affordable units
- Creative funding; financial incentives/grants
- Policy/bylaws to support innovative housing options
- Mixed market builds (luxury and affordable units)
- Balance power dynamics by connecting community
- Community input on housing
- Better partnerships, less siloed
- Education and awareness
- Community conversations, raising awareness, education
- Shifting mindsets: consumerism, capitalism, profit over people
- Addressing discrimination in housing
- Need to consider good transportation and access to Living Wage



What's Next:

- As part of their Capstone project, Georgian College Computer Studies students are developing a technical prototype to automate the process of collecting market rental data in Simcoe County.
- The Affordable Housing Lab Stewardship Committee is considering sustainable operating models for better access to market rental data.

Follow us on [LinkedIn/Social Innovation Georgian College](#) to stay informed about this Community Impact Lab!