



Honouring the past,  
building hope for the future.



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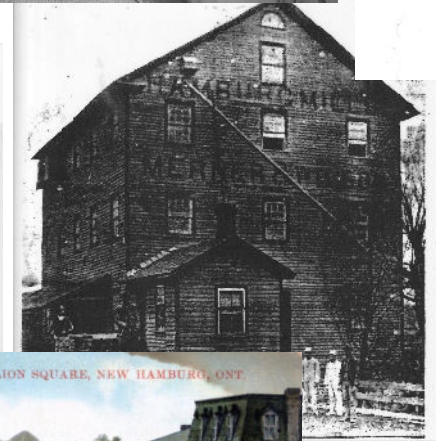
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# Honouring the Past

LYNC began in mid-August of 2020 when Jeff Van Gyssel gathered together a group of individuals with a common goal of creating affordable housing in Wilmot Township. In January of 2021 this group became a working committee of Wilmot Family Resource Centre (WFRC) known as the Wilmot Affordable Housing Collaborative (WAHC). In April 2021 WAHC learned that the New Hamburg Mill was listed for sale.



# Honouring the Past

With the encouragement and a letter of support from the WAHC, two members made an offer to purchase the Mill with the provision to transfer the property to a corporation to be formed in the future. The closing date was September 15<sup>th</sup>, 2022. The extended closing date provided ample time to balance our dream with the reality of creating an organization that could restore, renovate, and operate the Mill as an equitable housing community.

Five of the original WAHC committee members agreed to join the Board as Directors and Community Champions. These individuals were Glen Good, Jeff Van Gysell, Paul Ming, Jim Miller and Steve Wagler. Lisa Doherty joined the team in the summer of 2021 along with Jess Van Es who served as the volunteer Executive Director. We must acknowledge the work and efforts of Trisha Robinson from WFRC in organizing and leading WAHC during this period. The work that WFRC offers is vital to our community and a resource we will need to draw on in the future.

During the summer of 2021 we were chosen to participate in an accelerator program at York University for startup non-profits. We graduated from the program in February of 2022, and we are grateful to Jess Van Es for taking this on in a volunteer capacity and helping to create a framework for the formation of Love Your Neighbour Communities. In February of 2022 Jess informed us that she needed to step away from the regular meetings of LYNC but continues to support LYNC behind the scenes to this day. She referred us to Boris Emanuel who accepted our offer to join LYNC as our Executive Director. in March of 2022. Boris brought the experience and the leadership we needed as we prepared for the next phase of our journey – the purchase of the Mill.

We are so thankful for the community support, encouragement, and resources that have brought us to this point. At the same time, we recognize that in many ways the challenging work is just beginning.

Steve Wagler Chair of our Board,



# Why We Do What We Do

## Jeff's Story

Jeff Van Gyssel, one of the visionaries and co-founders of LYNC. and his family have called New Hamburg home for over 8 years. Jeff grew up in a loving home with hard working Christian parents in an area surrounded by farms. Jeff loved farming and building. He was often out in the bush building things, but he did not fit in with the other children and at a young age began to rebel. He was drinking and smoking pot at 12 and his life decisions took him down a path that would spiral out of control for the next 16 years.

Life was a constant party, doing drugs and get in trouble with the law. In grade 9 Jeff left home. and rented an apartment downtown Palmerston where he sold drugs while working the evening shift at a pallet factory. After being arrested and going hungry Jeff asked if he could return home. His parents took him and moved the family to Elmira. There he quickly made friends with the wrong people including a man and his family that encouraged Jeff in his destructive lifestyle and provided him with cocaine. Jeff admired the man, he had a nice house, and fun cars. Jeff married their daughter, and their own daughter Madi was born on April 29, 2008. It was a happy day for Jeff. He loved his daughter and believed she was going to change his life. Jeff and his wife joined a church but Jeff was not happy. He was often depressed and felt trapped in a horrible marriage. On Feb 22, 2011, Jeff and his wife had another child. Although Jeff loved his children, he was terrified, he had no love for life or himself.

One day his wife left him and their children. Jeff was so intoxicated that he was not even able to take care of his kids. This proved to be a breaking point. Jeff felt that he did not deserve to be a parent, nor did he deserve to live. Jeff got high on drugs and alcohol and took his hunting gun and went out to a bush, he was completely broken, and had no intention of coming back.

# Why We Do What We Do

## Jeff's Story



As he sat in his truck, he heard a message on the radio from Pastor Greg Laurie “Hope for Hurting Hearts”. He listened and a wave of hope washed through him. In that instant, he felt weightless and knew deep in his soul that God was real and that God had a plan for his life. Jeff called his parents who came and picked him up. Jeff stayed in bed for a couple of days and when he woke up everything had changed. God had taken away his need for drugs and filled him with hope. He started attending Celebrate Recovery and spent the next couple of years rebuilding his life. Unfortunately Jeff’s first marriage ended in a divorce.

Jeff then moved to Kitchener and started volunteering at a refugee transitional housing agency where he would hear stories of isolation and depression that comes with moving to a new country. Although his story was different, he understood their depression and isolation. One day while at church Jeff saw the most beautiful woman he had ever seen. Natalie had a little girl of her own named Lily and Jeff asked Natalie and Lily to go for a walk. Lily invited him in for some hot chocolate and the rest is history. Jeff and Natalie were married and are now a family of six.

In time, Jeff felt God was leading him to start Just Working Construction as a means of helping newcomers. He started with two guys building decks and doing bathroom renovations. Today Just Working Construction has 23 employees and specializes in affordable housing, energy efficient building and saving heritage buildings.

Jeff still felt something was missing. No one was helping rural communities or addressing the issues of isolation. Jeff tragically lost two friends to suicide. In the middle of covid Jeff got together with several community leaders and told them his story and vision to address the need for affordable housing, isolation and loneliness in rural communities.

A short while later the BW Feed Mill was put up for sale and Jeff and those in the group knew this was their opportunity. They made an offer which the owners of BW Feed graciously accepted. At that time the group still was not formally organized, nor did it have a name. Jeff and his daughter were running a fundraiser called, Love Your Neighbour. Love Your Neighbour fit perfectly with what God was telling the group to do and that’s how Love Your Neighbour Communities was born.

# Celebrating the Present



# Celebrating the Present



As we sat down to formulate a vision and dream for a new non-profit called Love Your Neighbour Communities, we did not realize just how strongly we would feel the love of our own neighbours. This year, you stood with us and said “yes” to equitable housing in our community. Thank you for listening and thank you for caring. Without your faith, our dream of purchasing the BW Feed and Seed Mill as our pilot project would not have happened. The impact of these foundational gifts and loans will be felt for years to come.

On August 30, 2022 our community champion, Jeff Van Gyssel was given the opportunity to present our project to an affordable housing roundtable with the federal housing minister, local MP’s and Prime Minister Justin Trudeau. We wish to give a special thanks to Matt Williams and his team at Louise Street marketing for donating web services and getting us launched quickly prior to this event.




An article in the KW Record led to increased interest in our project by the community. We were overwhelmed by the number of people, young and old, who joined us at Steinmann Mennonite Church for an information session hosted by the Peace and Justice Committee. We felt the strength and resolve of this community to address the housing crises in a real and personal way.

On September 13, 2022 we had the privilege of presenting to the 100 Men of Wilmot. They endorsed our project and donated \$11,000.00 toward start-up costs for the Mill Block Community. Presentations to the New Hamburg Board of Trade, Wilmot Council and Waterloo Region Staff rounded out our year.

Submitted by Lisa Doherty, Vice Chair Community Engagement Team

# Celebrating the Present

## *Seed to Feed Campaign Fundraising Results*

	400k	Impact Loans	Represents faith, hope and courage from a small community.
	160k	Donations and Pledges	Truly living out the ideal of Love Your Neighbour!
	48k	Seed Funding Grant	For vital start up costs.

# Bridging the Gap

<sup>1</sup> He said to the Israelites, “In the future when your descendants ask their parents, ‘What do these stones mean?’ tell them, ‘Israel crossed the Jordan on dry ground.’”  
Joshua 4:21, 22

It was a common practice for the children of Israel to build a memorial to honour the past and build hope for the future. In the book of Joshua God provided for the Israelites by parting the Jordan River so that the people could cross over to the promised land. God commanded them to collect stones and build a memorial. The memorial would be a constant reminder of where they had come from, the provision of God and a source of encouragement for future generations.

**“Honouring the past, building hope for the future.”**

The BW Feed Mill stands in the core of New Hamburg, a constant reminder of how this community was provided for through the supply of lumber to build homes and later, seed that would become a source of food for all. I am excited to partner with the board of Love Your Neighbour Communities as we seek to revitalize people and rural communities.

The Board is passionate about loving their neighbours. They have worked tirelessly to build an organization that will purchase and revitalize the old mill, creating an equitable, mixed income and intergenerational community. LYNC’s board of directors represent several families who have called Wilmot Township home for generations. Together the Board has over 200 plus years of lived experience in Wilmot.

The director’s passion for their community is evident in their desire and hard work to provide hope for future generations. I have been refreshed and energized by the members of this community; local businesses, individuals, families as well as civic and political leaders who have united to provide a road map for the success of LYNC. Although currently focused on purchasing and developing the Mill properties the leadership of LYNC is aware of the growing need for equitable housing across our region. Our hope is that the New Hamburgs Mill Block will be the first of many Love Your Neighbour Communities.



Boris Emanuel, Executive Director

# Building Hope for the Future

The Facility Development Team (FDT) welcomed the formal acquisition of the former BW mill property on October 21, 2022. Prior to the closing date, we conducted several building tours for the LYNC board, other interested parties, and to complete a brief structural review with the assistance of a local engineer. Our team has been working with INVISIJ Architects, the project designer of record, and SHS, development consultants, to assemble the remaining project design team of technical experts. It is our desire to utilize local firms wherever possible. We are working towards engaging the full project design team by early 2023, with emphasis on the site plan, interior demolition, and general cleanup to facilitate a full structural review and design. The design team will begin working simultaneously on the building addition and interior renovation designs which will include 29 residential suites, ground floor commercial suites and shared “community space(s)”.



The LYNC board has retained Just Working Construction (JWC) as construction manager for the Mill Block Community Development, and we are looking forward to working with Jeff Van Gyssel and his team. JWC has completed several Invisij designed projects, bring a clear asset to the mill project. We have been surprised by the level of interest and offers from the community to assist with the mill demolition and new construction. JWC welcomes this interest and hopes to engage the community with the project wherever possible. Our team is very excited to move forward with this project which will provide a safe place from many to live and call New Hamburg and the Township of Wilmot their home.

Prepared By: Glen Good, Chairperson, Facility Development Team

# Where We Stand

## LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR COMMUNITIES -Balance Sheet

As at September 30, 2022

### ASSETS

<b>Current Assets</b>		
	Cash	\$415,897
	Deposit on Real Property	\$20,000
		<b>\$435,897</b>
<b>Long Term Assets</b>		
	Shares in Credit Union	\$25
	Capitalized Costs	\$17,408
	Incorporation costs	\$2,321
		<b>\$19,754</b>
<b>Total Assets</b>		<b>\$455,651</b>

### LIABILITIES

<b>Current Liabilities</b>		
	Accrued interest expense	\$378
	Loans Payable	\$435,000
		<b>\$435,378</b>

### ACCUMULATED SURPLUS

	Accumulated surplus	<b>\$20,273</b>
<b>Liabilities plus accumulated surplus</b>		<b>\$455,651</b>

## LOVE YOUR NEIGHBOUR COMMUNITIES-Income Statement

### RECEIPTS

	Donations	\$12,350
	Grants	\$28,000
	Misc Income	\$372
<b>Total Receipts</b>		<b>40,722</b>

### EXPENSES

	Executive Director	\$18,000
	Insurance	\$1,995
	Interest and bank charges	\$385
	Misc	\$69
<b>Total Expenses</b>		<b>\$20,449</b>

**Receipts over expenses (expenses over receipts)      \$20,273**



Finance Team Report  
Prepared by  
Thomas P. Doherty, CA



audited statement can be found on our website

# About LYNC

## *Our Mission*

Our mission is to revitalize people and rural communities through equitable housing and social enterprise. As an organization we wish to meet the needs of our neighbours for equitable and affordable housing, food security, social isolation and environmental responsibility.

## *Our Vision*

Love Your Neighbour Communities is a faith-based organization. What does that mean for us? What does that mean for you? For us it means that our desire to serve God and our neighbours underpins all that we do. Our mission is to reflect the character of Christ by revitalizing people and rural communities through social enterprise and intergenerational, affordable housing. It's as simple as that.

We ask that you put aside any pre-conceived ideas you may have about Christianity and people of faith. For us, our faith inspires us to act, and to love our neighbours, ALL our neighbours.

For you it means that we will act based on a vision of healthy, equitable and hope-filled communities where everyone feels they belong. Our values compel us to action. Here are our values and the action spurred by these values.

### Love Your Neighbour

**Action:** We believe that all people are unique, have value and are created for community. Based on this belief, we are inclusive to all.

LYNC exists to support diverse communities: people from every religion, creed, race, age, ethnicity, ability, sexual orientation, and gender identity. We actively work to identify and remove barriers that prevent people from accessing and participating in our services and the community around them.

### Community As A Foundation

**Action:** We create spaces and design programs for people to gather and support one another. Community is at the center of all we do. We will listen to our residents and local neighbours and together, build a community that is vibrant, relevant and meets needs.

### Serve One Another

**Action:** We provide opportunities for all people to grow together through knowledge and skills exchange. All residents will agree to partner with LYNC through a community partnership agreement.

### Stewardship

**Action:** We care and cultivate all things that have been entrusted to us, whether they are people's stories, a volunteer's time, the environment, or financial contributions.