

Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing

Final Report and Recommendations, January 26, 2016

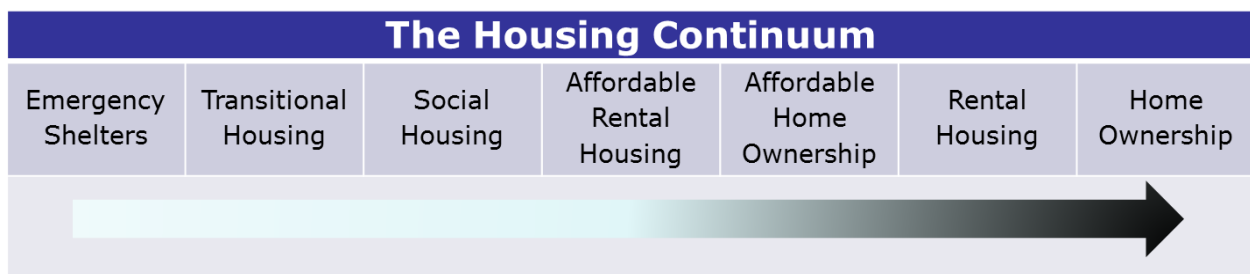
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1 Introduction and Executive Summary

‘Affordable’ housing is an issue that has quickly moved to the forefront in recent months. Strathcona County Council chose to build on previous work and to explore the concept in depth through the use of a Mayor’s Task Force that met through most of 2015. The group quickly realized that ‘affordable’ housing was somewhat of a misnomer for its work, since the Task Force was charged at looking beyond what is merely ‘affordable’, and the word ‘affordable’ has many meanings in the housing environment.

The Task Force updated its terms of reference to change its name to the ‘Mayor’s Task Force on Community Housing. This title reflects the fact that housing requirements in Strathcona County are broad, while the term ‘community’ means all non-market housing that occupies the continuum of housing.



Research, consultation, meetings and conversations indicated that the issue of community housing is extraordinarily complex, requiring political will while needing to address market forces that drive developers’ decisions and purchasers/renters abilities and choices. Ultimately, the task force wanted to continue to strive towards making Strathcona County into “*Canada’s Most Livable Community*”.

Any work on addressing community housing in such a shifting economic, social, political, cultural and environmental situation is necessarily a point-in-time study that must acknowledge that the situation will change tomorrow, and responses must adapt to that changing situation.

The Task Force has made a series of recommendations for the consideration of Strathcona County Council, ranging from easy to implement changes to those which will require cultural adaptation, both on the part of the municipal government and the citizens of Strathcona County.

More than 100 people were involved in the work of the Task Force, from members of Strathcona County Council and administration, to community stakeholders and those who chose to connect with the Task Force through correspondence of one sort or another. Because of this, the Task Force is confident that it has captured the essence of wise current practice and has brought forward recommendations that address needs identified by the community and thought leaders from within and beyond the community.

Two of the Task Force’s recommendations (see 2.1 and 2.6 below) suggest that this issue will not be addressed once and for all, and that the County should consider keeping a formal eye on the shifting needs of housing within Strathcona County.

A summation of the 17 recommendations appears here, with supporting detail in Section 5 of this report.

No.	Recommendation
1.1	That Council continues to visibly tie community housing into the County's Strategic Plan, helping to make Strathcona County into <i>Canada's Most Livable Community</i> .
1.2	That Strathcona County facilitates the creation and hosting of a non-market Housing Registry that could also include a roommate registry component.
2.1	That Council directs the Community Living Advisory Committee (CLAC) to create a committee with responsibility for housing. This committee may include representation from housing suppliers, land owners (churches, school boards, developers) and social agencies
2.2	That Council directs the CLAC to set targets for the number and types of non-market housing units to be achieved by interim dates. These targets are to be approved by Council.
2.3	That Council directs County administration to work with the Heartland Housing Foundation to facilitate faith, community and business groups in supporting low income families.
2.4	That Council directs County administration to explore options for the development of an umbrella organization for the provision of all non-market housing within the County.
2.5	That Council directs County administration to prepare a report on options for increasing Habitat for Humanity development in Strathcona County.
2.6	That Council recommends to the CLAC that the committee hosts an annual community housing consultation similar to that hosted by the Community Housing Task Force on June 25, 2015.
2.7	That Council directs that administration explore options for using private/public partnerships to develop vacant public land into mixed use areas that may include non-market housing, market housing and siting for community-based organizations.
3.1	That Council directs administration to bring forward a report identifying possible planning policy tools that can be implemented to help ensure developers provide various multiple housing types within all new residential neighbourhoods.
3.2	That Council continues to support the Mature Neighbourhood Strategy as it adapts existing neighbourhoods to a changing environment.
3.3	That Council requests that administration conduct a review of the costs of getting community housing developments approved with the goal of increasing non-market housing development.

No.	Recommendation
4.1	That Council direct administration to bring forward a report outlining current policies with regards to land use planning and engineering, and how current policy supports transit service routes within the Sherwood Park Urban Service Area.
4.2	That Council direct administration to bring forward a report that outlines the perceived barriers by the development industry with respect to community housing (i.e. servicing standards, parking regulations) and recommend solutions and possible incentives to encourage community housing development.
5.1	That Council requests that County Council and administration continue to seek provincial and federal funding to continue with affordable housing programs, either alone or in conjunction with Capital Region Board partners.
5.2	That Council directs County administration to ensure that the municipal census includes a permanent question on income so that aggregate numbers and ages of low income people are known and services can be tailored to them.
5.3	That Strathcona County offers to host a Capital Region Housing Symposium in 2016 or 2017.

The Task Force found that the issue of community housing is complex and resolutions require the coordinated effort of many stakeholders.

Healthy discussion by County Council with administration and others involved in the housing community, both providers and users, has occurred through the life of the Task force, and it is likely continue as the recommendations are implemented. Working towards resolution of this issue requires that decisions be made and work continue.

Respectfully Submitted;

Councillor Fiona Beland-Quest
Co-Chair

Councillor Carla Howatt
Co-Chair

2 Background

2.1 Terms of Reference

In February 2015, Strathcona County Council chose to establish the Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing. This short-term task force was intended to review the current state of housing in Strathcona County and to make recommendations to County Council to address any gaps that the group identified. The Task Force was set up under terms of reference that appear here.

2.1.1 Purpose

Within the Task Force's Terms of Reference, the purpose was intended to be as follows:

The Mayor's task force will investigate the current state of affordable housing in Strathcona County. Once having attained a good understanding of the current state, the task force will, using their varied subject matter expertise and background, recommend a desired future state, including an action plan for this community to Strathcona County Council.

2.1.2 Desired Outcomes

A set of five desired outcomes were provided to the Task Force by Council. These included:

- A. A common understanding of the current state of community housing within Strathcona County;
- B. The role of the municipality in community housing;
- C. An inventory of all stakeholders in the community housing portfolio;
- D. How to leverage partners in the community housing portfolio; and
- E. Innovative ideas and practices for Council's consideration.

2.1.3 Composition

To ensure as much diversity as possible while still requiring the Task Force to be agile, Council set these requirements for the composition of the Task Force:

- A. Public members at large: two with previous experience within the housing portfolio
- B. Local developer/builder
- C. Strathcona County Chamber of Commerce
- D. Council Members: two as co-chairs
- E. Strathcona County (department resources deemed appropriate)

2.1.4 Members

Membership on the Task Force was drawn from a variety of expertise present in the community and beyond, and followed the requirements outlined in the Terms of Reference above. To best complete the task, individuals who could bring multiple perspectives were recruited. To that end, members of the Task Force Included:

Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing Members

	Name	Representing
1	Carla Howatt	Co-chair, County Council
2	Fiona Beland-Quest	Co-chair, County Council
3	Rudy Koop	Public
4	Mike Shellenberg	Public, Sherwood Park Ministerial
5	Jason Rumer	Developers, Builders
6	Jeff Lorenz	Chamber of Commerce, Realtors
7	Kelly Rudyk	County Administration – Corporate Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs
8	Stacy Fedechko	County Administration – Planning and Development
9	Jackie Winter	County Administration – Family and Community Services
10	Haley Ewasiuk	County Administration - Administrative Support
11	Ian McCormack	Project Management – Strategic Steps Inc.

3 Task Force Activity

Since their appointment in February 2015, members of the Task Force embarked on several activities that were intended to provide members with history, knowledge and advice. The high-level activities of the Task Force appear below.

3.1 Meetings

The Task Force met six times over the course of 2015, with each meeting having a specific focus. In addition, three other events that included task force members were used to gain insight into the community's housing needs and to consult with experts in related fields. These three events were:

- Consultation with Community Groups referenced later in this section;
- Interim presentation to Strathcona County's Priorities Committee; and
- Attendance at the Capital Region Board's Housing Symposium in Fort Saskatchewan.

In addition to attendance at events, members researched housing issues and were provided with documentation of work that had already been done regarding 'affordable' housing in Strathcona, and research into housing practices encountered in the Capital Region and beyond. Much of this documentation appears on the Task Force's website.

3.2 Public Consultation

A half day public consultation was hosted by the Task Force on June 25th, 2015.

When considering the mandate of the Task Force, consideration was given to inviting organizations which have a direct impact on housing in Strathcona County. The Task Force wanted to create a diverse group that makes use of the full continuum of housing. With that in mind, the Task Force invited different age groups, from students to seniors; different organizations, from business to faith groups; and different focuses from for-profit to non-profit. The attendees were primarily from Strathcona County, however where they were from elsewhere, that is noted below.

Invited attendees for the event included (in alphabetical order):

- | | |
|--|--|
| • A Safe Place | • Members of the Legislative Assembly (3) |
| • Alberta Seniors (Housing) | • Robin Hood Association |
| • Brittany Lane Housing Co-Op | • Schizophrenia Association |
| • Capital Care | • Seniors United Now |
| • Davidson Creek Housing Co-Op | • Sherwood Park +55 Club |
| • First Time Home Buyers' Program | • Sherwood Park and District Chamber of Commerce |
| • Habitat for Humanity | • Sherwood Park Elks |
| • Heartland Housing Association | • Strathcona Ministerial Association |
| • Canadian Home Builders' Association (Edmonton) | • University of Alberta Students' Union |
| • Home on the Range | • Urban Development Institute (Edmonton) |
| • Hope in Strathcona | |

From the group of invited attendees, an overwhelming response was received and almost all invitees chose to attend the session.

Participants were consulted on four questions

1. What programs that currently exist address community housing needs, now and into the future? Where do you see gaps?
2. What sort of 'community' housing types would benefit citizens of Strathcona County?
3. How can organizations that work on housing collaborate with one another to add value?
4. Within 20-30 years, what does an ideal housing mix in a community look like?

Table leaders and facilitators from the Task Force and Strathcona County Family and Community Services recorded the participants' comments on the four questions, and that information was synthesized for the use of the Task Force during the rest of the year.

Of considerable assistance during the consultation was background analysis on the current state of housing in Strathcona County that was provided by Economic Development and Tourism. The data gave participants a very good overview of identified issues that are present within the County and the Capital region.

Specific documentation on the outputs from the public consultation is available for review. For reasons of space, the full consultation document is not included in this report; it was however a key document for the Task Force in the generation of its principles and recommendations.

3.3 Interim Report

The spokesperson for the Task Force, Rudy Koop, provided an update to Strathcona County's Priorities Committee on July 14th, 2015. Rather than providing interim recommendations, the focus of that report was on process. The Task Force identified work that had been done to date, provided context for identified housing issues, gave an overview of the consultation process and indicated work that was yet to be done.

3.4 Website

With public engagement in mind, the Task Force chose to maintain a web presence within the Strathcona County website. This page included many of the reference documents that the Task Force used, as well as providing a way for any interested person to contact the Task Force. This web page can be found at:

<http://www.strathcona.ca/departments/corporate-planning/affordable-housing-plan/mayors-task-force/>

4 Principles

Prior to developing a series of recommendations, the Task Force chose to design a set of principles from which the recommendations would emerge. The principles are shown below. In some cases, within each principle there is a set of examples of how that principle may be seen in action.

4.1 Housing principles must tie into the County's Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan

- Strathcona County's role is to build partnerships between people and organizations involved in providing housing within the community.
- Strathcona County recognizes the holistic benefits of community housing as represented in the five pillars of the strategic plan leading to a diverse housing portfolio.
- Strathcona County's business plan is a four year plan, so Council's priorities may be for up to four years.

4.2 Housing is a community issue that requires active partnerships

- Strathcona County will continue to engage with housing-related stakeholders to identify needs, trends and solutions to housing issues after the work of the Task Force is complete.
- Homelessness among those who do not want to be homeless is not acceptable.
- Communities should be integrated in terms of age, income and other demographics.

4.3 Strathcona County supports the entire continuum of housing

- Strathcona County recognizes that people do not necessarily want to move along the continuum of housing.
- A variety of housing options in terms of size, cost and amenities in the community is preferred
- Rental housing is an important part of the continuum of housing.
- Strathcona County may be willing to provide some funding, incentives or cost-reductions or offsets in order to encourage a variety of housing.
- New neighbourhoods must incorporate several densities of housing that represent at least a portion of the continuum of housing.

4.4 Access to public transportation is a key attribute of community housing locations

- Required access to local public transportation is often an issue for those on a fixed income.

4.5 The municipality will work with regional neighbours and other orders of government to encourage innovation in housing types and locations

5 Recommendations

Through the research and consultation conducted over the course of 2015, the Task Force developed the following set of recommendations for Strathcona County Council to consider. Some of these recommendations can be implemented quickly, however some represent a culture change and will require more time to be implemented.

Members of the Task Force were encouraged to be ‘courageous’ in their thinking, and as a result, some of the recommendations that follow will challenge Strathcona County’s visioning for a sustainable future while still keeping in mind that the County desires to be ‘*Canada’s most livable community*’.

The recommendations are aligned to the principles introduced in the previous section of this report.

Within this section, Implementation Leads and some comments in the Rationales contain acronyms. These acronyms are:

- CLAC Community Living Advisory Committee
- CMHC Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation
- CPIA..... Corporate Planning and Intergovernmental Affairs
- CRB..... Capital Region Board
- FCM Federation of Canadian Municipalities
- FCS..... Family and Community Services
- MDP Municipal Development Plan
- PDS Planning and Development Services
- SCT Strathcona County Transit

5.1 Principle 1: Housing principles must tie into Strathcona County's Vision, Mission and Strategic Plan.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
1.1	That Council continues to visibly tie community housing into the County's Strategic Plan, helping to make Strathcona County into <i>Canada's Most Livable Community</i> ¹	CPIA	Annual, December
	Origin: community consultation.		

Rationale: Each year, County Council reviews its own priorities and expresses new or ongoing priorities for the coming year through its strategic plan '*Strathcona County 2030, Powering our New Tomorrow*'. The County business plan and budget are informed by Council's priorities, so ensuring that housing is a priority for Council provides public direction to administration to include housing-related strategies within the County business plan, and to further indicate that housing is a priority by putting a budget to housing.

As the master document for Strathcona County's long-term vision and sustainability, tying housing issues into the various pillars of the strategic plan provides an indication of the importance of the issue. Housing issues are currently incorporated in the Social, Cultural and Economic pillars.

¹ Excerpted from Strathcona County's Vision Statement, Page 2 of the County's Strategic Plan

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
1.2	That Strathcona County facilitates the creation and hosting of a non-market Housing Registry that could also include a roommate registry component.	FCS	Report to Council by September 2016
	Origin: community consultation.		

Rationale: Consultation participants suggested that a current gap in housing is knowing what types of housing stock is available. With the creation of a central registry of community housing, those looking for housing, whether families or brokers, will be provided with a one-stop shop. Because of pressures that families feel when looking for non-market housing, it would be useful to them to have some of the pressure removed by the presence of one location where they can find housing information.

The Task Force does not see this as a brokerage, but more so a registry of available housing options that individuals or families can consult prior to seeking a specific housing type or location.

Within the context of a registry may come the need for a housing navigator role. This is the local expert who is able to work with client families to find the best housing fit.

Several community agencies were suggested as possible hosts for the registry, however the Task Force suggests that the County not be the host of the registry. None of the suggested community agencies have been formally approached, though some were present at the Task Force's community consultation as participants.

5.2 Principle 2: Housing is a community issue that requires active partnerships.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
2.1	That Council directs the Community Living Advisory Committee (CLAC) to create a committee with responsibility for housing. This committee may include representation from housing suppliers, land owners (churches, school boards, developers) and social agencies.	CLAC	Housing committee created by April 2016
	Origin: Task force discussion		

Rationale: The new CLAC is a significant advisory body to Council. Since representation is likely to span a significant breadth of County citizens, it is likely that many members will be aware of housing and related issues. As a standing committee of CLAC, housing issues and ideas will be a significant part of the committee's ongoing scan on local issues.

The Task Force suggests that some members of the full CLAC be appointed to its Standing Committee on Housing; however other Standing Committee members may be recruited from the wider community, either by virtue of individuals' interests or their subject matter expertise.

Since CLAC reports to Council, housing issues and resolutions identified by the Standing Committee on Housing would be heard by Council on a regular basis. Since the Standing Committee's meetings and other events would be somewhat less formal than Council meetings are, the conversation that occurs within the committee, and between the committee and other stakeholders, would potentially be more flexible and robust than if Council was debating the same topic.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
2.2	That Council directs the CLAC to set targets for the number and types of non-market housing units to be achieved by interim dates. These targets are to be approved by Council.	CLAC	Targets presented to Council by October 2016
	Origin: Review of CLAC terms of reference.		

Rationale: CLAC has the opportunity to research and project ongoing housing needs. It also has the ability to conduct research into the full spectrum of housing, both market housing and non-market housing.

Setting goals allows CLAC and the County to be aware of progress and barriers on a regular basis. It also allows CLAC to suggest policy options to Council. The Task Force debated whether recommending targets as numbers or percentages and decided to recommend numbers of units because it is an understandable absolute number that would correspond to a percentage if desired.

The Task Force is aware that, ultimately, decisions about housing in terms of statutory documentation rest with Council.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
2.3	That Council directs County administration to work with the Heartland Housing Foundation to facilitate faith, community and business groups in supporting low income families.	FCS	Low income adoption program presented to Council by November 2016
	Origin: community consultation.		

Rationale: This is a potential quick win that emerged during the community consultation. This is a way that existing groups within Strathcona County can aid their neighbours in a fashion that aligns to their own mandates. Faith groups initially proposed this concept, and it was rapidly adopted by other community-based organizations. The potential of a program that emerges from this recommendation allows these groups to serve their communities by assisting families in need for a limited period of time. This assistance is concrete and easily measurable.

The Task Force suggested that the Heartland Housing Foundation be involved as a key community connector because they are the relevant subject matter experts and have deep connections to both Strathcona County's housing community and its social community.

The County would likely need to provide some regulatory oversight to this program, likely through FCS, which is represented on the Task Force.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
2.4	That Council directs County administration to explore options to coordinate with the Heartland Housing Foundation for the provision of all non-market housing within the County.	FCS	Recommendation provided to Council by February 2017
	Origin: community consultation.		

Rationale: There is currently no single location for a person or family looking for non-market housing can go within Strathcona County. Establishing a housing and development corporation (or something similar) has been done in other Alberta communities, perhaps most noticeably in the Municipal District of Wood Buffalo².

The Task Force sees significant alignment between the work that Heartland Housing Foundation is currently doing and the effort required to implement the recommendation that is presented here. Should that alignment be correct, the Foundation's mandate may need to be expanded. The Task Force realizes that the Foundation acts at arms-length from County Council and that it is a partnership between Strathcona County and the City of Fort Saskatchewan.

² <http://www.wbhadc.ca/>

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
2.5	That Council directs County administration to prepare a report on options for increasing Habitat for Humanity development in Strathcona County.	PDS	Report presented to Council by October 2016
	Origin: community consultation, <i>CRB Strathcona/Fort Saskatchewan Sub-Region Housing Needs Assessment, 2015.</i>		

Rationale: Participants at the community consultation noted that the presence of Habitat for Humanity is lower in Strathcona County than in several other larger Capital Region municipalities. Participants felt that the County could encourage more Habitat builds in the County by identifying why the builds are not currently occurring and determining whether there may be the ability to remove roadblocks that are under the authority of the County.

The Task Force is aware that the primary impediment to builds is often the availability of land that can be used for construction of units. In some other Capital Region municipalities such as the Cities of Edmonton, Leduc and St. Albert, the municipality is often the entity that procures land on behalf of Habitat for Humanity.

While Habitat for Humanity was mentioned specifically at the community consultation, the Task Force is aware that other organizations may assist with community housing. Those organizations may also be involved in working with the County.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
2.6	That Council recommends to the CLAC that the committee hosts an annual community housing consultation similar to that hosted by the Community Housing Task Force on June 25, 2015.	CLAC	Consultation held in November 2016 (Housing Month)
	Origin: community consultation.		

Rationale: Feedback from community consultation participants was overwhelmingly positive because the event occurred prior to decisions being made, and participants felt their input was being taken seriously. Participants recommended that, because housing issues change with the shifting environment, it would be prudent to engage with community partners on an ongoing and regular basis.

Since the Task force will have concluded its work by the end of 2015, the Task Force recommends that CLAC be charged with hosting future consultations. Continuing to engage with the housing-related community in Strathcona County and beyond is likely to provide insights into future activities that the County could consider in encouraging solutions identified across the continuum of housing. Inviting subject matter experts and others with a stake in housing in Strathcona County to meet together on an annual basis shows that the County encourages engagement and courageous discussions.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
2.7	That Council directs that administration explore options for using private/public partnerships to develop vacant public land into mixed use areas that may include non-market housing, market housing and siting for community-based organizations.	PDS	Report presented to Council by October 2016
	Origin: task force discussion, community comments.		

Rationale: During the Community Consultation, and at other times since, task force members have heard the need for innovation in encouraging various housing types in Strathcona County.

The Task Force sees the opportunity for the County to lead in identifying ideal locations to test the community housing concept. An innovative partnership between the County, developer(s) and non-market housing providers to create various housing types, along with a location for (potentially) community organizations, an incubator for new community organizations, child care spaces, and commercial space would allow the County to demonstrate sustainable mixed-use development.

5.3 Principle 3: Strathcona County supports the entire continuum of housing.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
3.1	That Council directs administration to bring forward a report identifying possible planning policy tools that can be implemented to help ensure developers provide various multiple housing types within all new residential neighbourhoods.	PDS	To coincide with the MDP update – fourth quarter 2016
	Origin: Task Force discussion, CMHC's Guide for Canadian Municipalities for the Development of a Housing Action Plan, 2010.		

Rationale: The County controls much of the regulatory environment that either encourages or discourages housing types within the area it controls. Should the County desire to increase housing options, one way of moving towards that is to examine its regulations and determine which are necessary and which may comprise impediments to diversifying available housing types.

The continuum of housing identified in the introduction of this report spans from emergency shelters to home ownership. It is not a continuum that requires a person or family seeking a 'home' to move along until they reach home ownership. People are satisfied with occupying different locations across the continuum. It is also not uncommon for families to move 'backwards' on the continuum by making a choice to sell a home and rent in another location as they move through their lived experience.

Knowing about the continuum and understanding how individuals and families engage on that continuum lets the County best meet the needs of current and future County residents. As the Municipal Development Plan (MDP) is currently undergoing an update, considering new or updated planning policy tools associated with achieving community housing, the timing of that update coincides well with the work of the Task Force.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
3.2	That Council continues to support the Mature Neighbourhood Strategy as it adapts existing neighbourhoods to a changing environment.	PDS	Strategies presented to Council by September 2016
	Origin: community consultation, ongoing research.		

Rationale: Strathcona County has embarked on its Mature Neighbourhood Strategy to review the urban form of 11 ‘mature’ neighbourhoods which were selected based on their age of build out primarily having occurred prior to 1980. A policy adopted by council identifies that:

“Strathcona County will review opportunities in older neighbourhoods of Sherwood Park to redevelop, intensify and create complete and sustainable communities with the support of the local residents”

The Task Force finds this ongoing work to be consistent with the principles that the Task Force has identified and with the desired outcomes expressed by the participants in the community consultation. To that end, the Task Force recommendation is that Council continue to move the Mature Neighbourhood strategy forward.

In part, the Strategy sees increasing densities in new neighbourhoods, in part by requiring a variety of housing options beyond single family residential houses. In existing neighbourhoods, regulations regarding secondary suites have the goal of making more efficient use of limited land for housing.

Research from CRB, FCM, CMHC and others has shown that there are numerous housing types available, some of which may be appropriate within Strathcona County.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
3.3	That Council requests that administration conduct a review of the costs of getting community housing developments approved with the goal of increasing non-market housing development.	PDS	Results of review provided to Council by September 2016
	Origin: community consultation, Task Force discussion, input from developers.		

Rationale: In the community consultation, task force members' discussion, and in correspondence from developers, the costs of approving permission for development within in Strathcona County was identified as being higher within Strathcona County than costs for similar development are in some other Capital Region municipalities. The Task Force recommends an analysis of costs for development, both in terms of permit costs, regulatory requirements and time required to shepherd development through the County's approval system.

Since developers and builders' products are fundamentally mobile until they are built, Strathcona County is competing with other regional municipalities for attraction of new residents. Because of the demands of growth in the region, housing may be built in one municipality rather than another. The costs and time associated with getting development and building approval from the municipality are one aspect of the cost that the developers and builders consider when deciding whether to work in a particular municipality.

5.4 Principle 4: Access to public transportation is a key attribute of community housing locations.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
4.1	That Council directs administration to bring forward a report outlining current policies with regards to land use planning and engineering, and how current policy supports transit service routes within the Sherwood Park Urban Service Area.	PDS/SCT	Any necessary legislative changes provided to Council by June 2017
	Origin: community consultation.		

Rationale: Housing is not the only cost barrier for people wishing to live in Strathcona County. Transportation adds significant costs for home owners, particularly if they need to own a vehicle to commute from their homes to work, school, shopping or to recreate. In addition, some families choose not to own a personal vehicle and this trend is likely to sustain or grow in the future.

While not a 'housing' cost per se, access to public transportation is very important to many people. Lack of accessible public transportation limits housing location options if it is not present and available. Planning and Development Services is accountable for conceptual planning associated with access to transit because it is the department that recommends Area Structure Plans. This occurs prior to Strathcona County Transit (SCT) actually planning new or revised transit routes within the Sherwood Park Urban Service Area. SCT has significant interest in this recommendation.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
4.2	That Council direct administration to bring forward a report that outlines the perceived barriers by the development industry with respect to community housing (i.e. servicing standards, parking regulations) and recommend solutions and possible incentives to encourage community housing development.	PDS	To coincide with the MDP update – fourth quarter 2016
	Origin: community consultation, task force research.		

Rationale: Related to the recommendation regarding public transportation, a significant barrier to the provision of non-market housing is the need for specified minimum parking spaces per dwelling unit. This is a particular issue in neighbourhoods which accept secondary suites and in new neighbourhoods with high single-family density and limited on-street parking.

In a similar vein, the servicing requirements for secondary suites often make the cost of creating legal suites prohibitive for home owners. A frequently cited example is the need for a second furnace in a secondary suite, a considerable cost to a homeowner when it may not be required to heat the secondary space because of its size.

The Secondary Suites program is designed to “*offer an innovative, cost-effective way to increase the amount of affordable housing options in Strathcona County*”³. Through grants, the program provides incentives to homeowners to consider adding a suite to their existing home.

The MDP is currently undergoing review and is due to be discussed by Council in mid-2016. Changes associated with encouraging community housing can be incorporated into the MDP update.

Other regulatory changes beyond the Secondary Suites program may also consider incentives as a tool to encourage desired development.

³ Excerpted from the purposes of Strathcona County’s Secondary Suites program.

5.5 Principle 5: Strathcona County will work with regional neighbours and other orders of government to encourage innovation in housing types and locations.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
5.1	That Council requests that County Council and administration continue to seek provincial and federal funding to continue with community housing programs, either alone or in conjunction with Capital Region Board partners.	CPIA	Ongoing with annual report to Council
	Origin: community consultation.		

Rationale: Programs that have a goal of increasing non-market housing are introduced by various orders of government in response to needs that they identify. The County is good at seeking out these opportunities, and the Task Force recommends that they continue to maintain that vigilance.

It is noted that the Alberta government elected in April 2015 has identified regional growth nodes as a priority, and there may be funding available to support that priority. Keeping some innovative ‘shovel-ready’ projects available for quick implementation, particularly if coordinated with regional partners, would allow Strathcona County to take advantage of funding opportunities that may arise.

The province has also identified social housing and seniors housing as areas of interest, particularly given the growth in the population of seniors. Both types of housing would be encompassed along the continuum of housing, and so are relevant to this recommendation.

Regardless of age, growth is expected in Strathcona County. The Capital Region Board has suggested a population range for the County of between 138,000 and 160,000⁴ by 2044. Because the County and the City of Fort Saskatchewan work together on the Heartland Housing Foundation, their growth estimates are also salient, with the CRB predicting a city population of between 40,300 and 58,700⁵. Even if the percentage of people requiring non-market housing remains consistent over time, the total number of people who will need to be accommodated in non-market housing in the sub-region will grow over time.

⁴ CRB, Capital Region Population and Employment Projections to 2047, Page 14

⁵ ibid

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
5.2	That Council directs County administration to ensure that the municipal census includes a permanent question on income so that aggregate numbers and ages of low income people are known and services can be tailored to them.	CPIA	2017 Census
	Origin: task force research, <i>CRB Strathcona/Fort Saskatchewan Sub-Region Housing Needs Assessment, 2015</i> .		

Rationale: Accurate information is a key to the County being able to respond quickly and appropriately to emerging needs in the community. The Task Force recommends that obtaining aggregated data regarding household income will allow the County to make prudent choices about support for various housing options. This information, once collected, will provide baseline data that can be used to identify trends in service and housing requirements over time.

The granularity of the data collected through the municipal census is greater than that collected in the federal census, so the municipal census remains more appropriate to efficiently targeting programs to where they are needed. All County departments use data from the municipal census, and the collection and synthesis of that data into useable information allows the County to work across its departments to deliver services at the highest effectiveness possible.

	Recommendation	Implementation Lead	Key Date
5.3	That Strathcona County offers to host a Capital Region Housing Symposium in 2016 or 2017.	Mayor's Office	Council decision by March 2016
	Origin: task force discussion.		

Rationale: The CRB has hosted several housing symposiums in recent years. Should the County desire to be seen as responsive and progressive, offering to host an upcoming symposium would be an opportunity to learn about wise practices from Capital Region partners and to invite North American thought leaders into Strathcona County.

Should a symposium be hosted by the County, there is an opportunity to broaden the event and related activities to include other participants beyond CRB members in events that may proceed or follow the symposium itself. In this way, Strathcona County is not only working towards becoming Canada's Most Livable Community, it is also helping regional neighbours become the best they can be as well.

Recommendation 2.6 asks CLAC to host an annual housing gathering focused at and within Strathcona County. Hosting a CRB-wide symposium focuses outwards. Since the CRB Housing Symposium would not be hosted by Strathcona County every year, it might be possible to coincide the local stakeholder gathering with the CRB symposium every few years, should the County offer to accept to host the CRB Housing Symposium.

6 Conclusion

The 11 members appointed to the Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing consulted with many people and organizations through 2015 with the goal of investigating the current state of affordable housing in Strathcona County. Once an understanding of the current state was substantially complete, the task force turned its focus to consulting with many groups, devising a set of principles for itself, and then developing 16 recommendations designed to help achieve a desired future state of housing within the County.

Achieving an optimal mix of Community housing within a community is an extraordinarily complex, yet courageous, aspiration. The community must recognize that this issue is one that is constantly changing as new knowledge emerges and local and international market forces act.

Members of the Task Force are confident that they have provided County Council with useful insight in the recommendations included on previous pages, and they recognize that some of the recommendations are easier to implement than others are.

If Strathcona County is to achieve its vision of becoming *Canada's Most Livable Community*, it can accept that all contributing members of society are welcome, and that it can use the tools available to itself to encourage those people and their families to move to Strathcona County and remain here through as they age and multiple generations emerge.

The achievement of appropriate community housing is fundamentally an individual family's story of aspiration, knowledge and hard work. Strathcona County Council can play a big part helping those families' achieve their aspirations.

7 Glossary of Terms

These definitions comprise a sub-set of those found in the Capital Region Board's *Strathcona and Fort Saskatchewan Housing Sub-Region Housing Needs Assessment Report*, September 2014. These definitions were adopted during the work of the Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing.

Affordable Housing Program

The Province of Alberta's Affordable Housing Program provides one time capital grants for the construction/acquisition of rental housing units. Grant recipients are required to provide rents that are at least 10% below market. Units are targeted at households with incomes at or below CNITS. There are no operating subsidies for these units.

Co-Operative Housing (Co-Op)

Co-op housing is collectively owned and managed by its members (the people who live there). Co-op members actively participate in decision making and share the work involved in running the housing community. As a member of a co-op, you must volunteer and take part in the management of the building.

Core Housing Need

A concept developed in the 1980s to define housing need. It is based on a two-step assessment: First does a household experience any one or combination of housing problems covering suitability (crowding), adequacy (building condition) or affordability (paying greater than 30% for shelter). Secondly, is their income below a defined income threshold that varies by market/city and by household size?

Diversification of Housing Types

A range of housing types, including single-family dwellings, duplex, townhome, condominium and apartment types, mixed throughout neighborhoods to serve a broad range of residents of varied age and income.

Garage Suites

A garage suite is a self-contained dwelling located above a rear attached garage which is accessory to a single detached dwelling. It must have an entrance separate from the vehicle entrance, either from the interior or exterior of the structure and include cooking facilities, a bathroom and bedroom(s).

Habitat for Humanity Homes

Under this program housing units are built using cash and material donations as well as voluntary labour. When completed the units are sold to qualifying working low and moderate income households. The household is provided an interest free mortgage and the mortgage is amortized to 25% of the household's income. When the recipient household decides to sell the unit it is sold back to Habitat for Humanity and another qualifying household receives a place to live.

Housing Continuum

A conceptual framework used to describe a range of housing options from homeless supports through independent market rate housing.

Inclusive Communities

Inclusive communities have a variety of housing, commerce, recreational, institutional, social and public amenities within their boundary. Inclusive communities provide a physical and social environment where residents can live, learn, work and play without having to travel beyond the community boundary.

Infill Development

Development in the existing developed areas, occurring on vacant or underutilized lands, or re-development of a developed site to a higher density.

Intensification

The development of a property, site or area at a higher density than currently exists, e.g. redevelopment (including the reuse of Brownfield sites), development of vacant and/or underutilized lots, the conversion or expansion of existing buildings, and infill development, and may include Greenfield sites with development densities higher than historical norms.

Market Housing

Market Housing is defined as housing that is supplied by the private market, without direct government subsidies. Under Market Housing, one sub category has been further delineated:

Market Affordable Housing is defined as rental or ownership housing that is modest in form and specification and is capable of being produced for moderate income households without upfront or on-going direct government subsidies (e.g. through regulatory relaxations, efficient design, tax incentives, etc.). Generally applies to households earning moderate incomes between 100% and 150% of median income.

Multi-family Housing

A building constructed for residential purposes for use by two or more families, e.g. duplexes, townhome and row house development, multistory and high rise apartments.

Non Market Housing

Non Market Housing is defined as housing that is operated and funded or created through direct government subsidies and includes different categories of housing based on the associated services needed by the clients. Non Market Housing is further segmented into the categories of “Affordable Housing” and “Subsidized Housing”:

Affordable Housing is rental or ownership housing that generally does not require on-going (operating) subsidies, and is both affordable and targeted for long-term occupancy to households with incomes between 100% and 80% of the median renter income for their household size;

Social Housing is primarily rental housing that requires on-going operating subsidies to make it affordable on a long-term basis to households with incomes that are generally between 80% and 65% or less of the median renter income for their household size⁶.

Secondary Suites

A secondary suite is a separate and subordinate dwelling unit contained within a detached dwelling. A secondary suite must have a separate entrance from the entrance to the principal dwelling and include a cooking facility, bathroom and bedroom (s) that are separate from those of the principle dwelling.

⁶ "Non-Market Housing" also includes "Emergency Shelters", "Transitional Housing" and "Supportive Housing", and requires deeper capital and operating subsidies provided under government programs to enable affordability to households with considerably lower incomes or no incomes at all.

8 References

Many of the documents used by the Task Force during the course of its work are referenced on the Task Force's web page, however several documents were heavily referenced. All of these documents are available online and all are linked from the Task Force's presence on the Strathcona County website:

- Canadian Mortgage and Housing Commission, *Housing Action Plan for Municipalities*, 2010
- Capital Region Board, *Strathcona/Fort Saskatchewan Sub-Region Housing Needs Assessment*, 2015
- Capital Region Board, *Capital Region Population and Employment Projections to 2047*, 2013
- Federation of Canadian Municipalities, *Built To Last: Strengthening the Foundations of Housing in Canada*, 2015
- Metro Vancouver Regional Housing, *What Works: Affordable Housing Initiatives in Metro Vancouver Municipalities*, 2012
- Strathcona County, *Affordable Housing Implementation Committee Final Report*, 2011
- Strathcona County, *Affordable Housing Plan*, 2008

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 - Economic Development and Tourism
 - Family and Community Services
 - Planning and Development Services
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