

Priorities Committee Meeting_May11_2021

STRATEGIC INITIATIVE AND UPDATE

Affordable Housing Options May 2021

Report Purpose

To provide the Priorities Committee with a report on recommendations arising from the 2020 housing needs and demand assessment.

Our Prioritized Strategic Goals

Goal 1 - Build strong communities to support the diverse needs of residents

Goal 6 - Provide facilities and services that are available and accessible to residents

Goal 8 - Foster an environment for safe communities

Report

Community Impacts of Affordable Housing

Access to affordable housing has a positive social impact on community cohesion, household stability, education attainment and health outcomes; affordable housing is also a critical component to support community safety and wellbeing.¹²

Affordable housing is defined as housing that requires less than 30% of a household's income and addresses the housing continuum from homelessness to market housing.³ A household is said to be in core housing need when housing is unsuitable, inadequate or unaffordable, and when alternative housing is unaffordable.

Housing Needs and Demand Assessment

In August 2020, the Rural Development Network (RDN) completed a housing needs and demand assessment for Strathcona County. The assessment underscored that housing is unaffordable for many residents in Strathcona County and low-income households may face challenges finding and maintaining suitable housing.

The assessment concluded with the overarching recommendation to initiate a community-led approach to affordable housing, with four specific recommendations:

1. A review of best practice strategies to mitigate housing gaps;
2. Prioritization of the Land Use Bylaw amendments for the Urban Service Area;
3. The results of an estimation of homelessness, by way of conducting a homeless count, to better understand housing needs; and
4. Building local and regional partnerships to respond to housing and homeless needs.

Heartland Housing Foundation (HHF), Planning and Development Services (PDS), and Family and Community Services (FCS) partnered to address recommendations from the assessment and explore considerations for the full spectrum of affordable housing.

¹ <https://tqsoi.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/03/On-the-benefits-of-affordable-housing.pdf>

² <https://southdevonrural.co.uk/userfiles/file/JC-JC13-Social-impact-of-poor-housing.pdf>

³ <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/professionals/industry-innovation-and-leadership/industry-expertise/affordable-housing/about-affordable-housing/affordable-housing-in-canada>

Priorities Committee Meeting_May11_2021

Recommendation Actions

Recommendations 1 and 2: Review of best practice strategies to mitigate housing gaps/Land Use Bylaw amendments for the Urban Service Area

PDS has completed an Affordable Housing Options Recommendation Report (Enclosure 2) in response to Recommendations 1 and 2 of the RDN's 2020 housing needs and demand assessment. The report proposes immediate to long term actions for Council's consideration. The report also summarizes previous actions completed by the County which support these recommendations. It should be noted that proposed actions within this report may require integration into County workplans and assignment of budget funding in order to move forward.

Recommendation 3: Affordable housing estimate

From November 1-30, 2020, Strathcona County joined 25 communities across Alberta to participate in the RDN's 2020 Fall Estimations project and conducted the first local affordable housing estimate. The estimate helps build an understanding of rural experiences of housing insecurity and homelessness and was conducted using a service-based approach designed specifically for rural communities. Community partners and County departments promoted the survey, targeting residents seeking support services who were at risk of, or experiencing, housing insecurity or homelessness. The County had among the highest response rates in the province, with 126 responses. A report of the results can be found in Enclosure 3.

Recommendation 4: Local and regional partnerships and affordable housing strategy

HHF is working collaboratively with community partners, including the Social Framework Leadership Table, to develop an affordable housing strategy.

Next Steps

Recommendations 1 and 2: The Affordable Housing Options Recommendation Report completed by PDS proposes immediate to long term actions for Council's consideration in response to Recommendations 1 and 2 of the housing needs and demand assessment. In order to action items in the report, such as PDS supporting the affordable housing strategy, Council would need to provide direction to proceed. This direction is needed due to the impact these projects would have on PDS workplans and the need for budget funding for several of the proposed action items.

Recommendation 3: Results from the housing estimate establish a profile of those experiencing housing insecurity and offer insight into local experiences. This information complements data from the housing needs and demand assessment and will provide important direction on community needs, inform service delivery and support future funding opportunities. Affordable housing estimations will be repeated every several years to track community trends over time. Next steps on the housing estimate will be developed by the community and incorporated into both the affordable housing strategy and community safety and wellbeing strategy.

Recommendation 4: HHF will continue to leverage the Social Framework Leadership Table to lead future action on the affordable housing strategy and community partnership development.

Priorities Committee Meeting_May11_2021

Council and Committee History

- October 27, 2020 Council approved: THAT administration prepare a report for Council's consideration by the end of Q1 2021, on a community-led approach to affordable housing that addresses four specific matters:
1. A review of best practice strategies to mitigate housing gaps;
 2. Prioritization of the Land Use Bylaw amendments for the Urban Service Area;
 3. The results of an estimation of homelessness, by way of conducting a homeless count, to better understand housing needs; and
 4. Building local and regional partnerships to respond to housing and homeless needs.
- May 23, 2017 Council approved the Social Framework, which included the outcome of affordability.
- January 26, 2016 The Mayor's Task Force on Community Housing final report was presented to Priorities Committee.

Other Impacts**Policy:** N/A**Legislative/Legal:** N/A**Interdepartmental:** Planning and Development Services, Communications, Intergovernmental Affairs**Master Plan/Framework:** Social Framework**Communication Plan**

Various communication tools and channels will be used to communicate engagement opportunities for the affordable housing strategy to the public and stakeholders as appropriate. An information release will share the results of the affordable housing estimate and it will be available on the County website.

Enclosure(s)

- 1 Affordable Housing Options Presentation
- 2 PDS Affordable Housing Options Recommendation Report
- 3 Strathcona County 2020 Housing Estimate Community Report