

May 3, 2022

MEMO TO: Implementation Committee for the Affordable Housing Strategy

FROM: Kelvin Kwan
Commissioner of Planning and Infrastructure

SUBJECT: Prioritization of Action Plan for the Affordable Housing Strategy

At the inaugural meeting of the Affordable Housing Strategy Implementation Committee, staff propose to provide Committee members with an overview of the proposed prioritization of actions to implement the Affordable Housing Strategy. In support of this agenda item, this memorandum provides an overview of the City of Richmond Hill's Affordable Housing Strategy (herein referred to as the "Strategy") and the proposed prioritization of the Action Plan in the Strategy for the Committee's review and comment.

Background

The City's [Affordable Housing Strategy](#) was developed in conjunction with SHS Consulting, Council, key stakeholders, and the general public. In addition, the City worked with a Technical Advisory Committee (TAC) comprised of City staff, the Region of York, the Province, and the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The TAC provided guidance throughout the development of the Affordable Housing Strategy. A major milestone in the process was the completion of a [Background Report](#) that was released in March 2021. This Background Report assessed socio-demographic trends, changes in employment in the local and regional market, as well as barriers and opportunities in the housing industry. The housing gaps and consultation feedback garnered in the Background Report form the basis for the creation of the City's Affordable Housing Strategy, which was endorsed by Council in November 2021.

Goals of the Affordable Housing Strategy

As a recap, the goals of the Affordable Housing Strategy are to:

1. Create a range of housing options for seniors to age in place and for younger households to settle or remain in the community.
2. Increase the number of rental and specifically purpose-built rental housing options that are in a good state of repair and affordable to moderate- and- low-income households.
3. Attract new accessible and supportive housing options to Richmond Hill that are suitable for seniors and households with a member with a disability or mental health issue.
4. Increase the number of ownership options that are affordable to moderate-income households.

The Strategy includes an Action Plan with 7 categories containing a total of 44 actions that can assist in the facilitation of affordable housing. It is anticipated that the implementation of the actions proposed in the strategy can occur within the next 2 – 3 years. However, the realization of the strategy's goals will likely occur over a much longer period of time and is largely dependent on the individual homeowners / landowners and developers as to when and where they are prepared to create these desired units. Undertaking the strategy, however, ensures that the City is well prepared to facilitate their development.

Implementation of the Affordable Housing Strategy

Generally, the Strategy will be implemented through three steps:

1. The first step involves staff bringing forward to Council each specific tools/actions for its consideration and approval for use. Each tool/action when brought forward will be accompanied by an analysis that could include various criteria, including: the degree of effectiveness, cost/benefit analysis, and partnership or cost sharing opportunities with other levels of government.
2. Following Council approval to implement such actions, staff will put into effect and administer the applicable policies, by-laws, standards and/or programs.
3. The final step would be the measuring and monitoring of the tools/actions to assess their effectiveness, and to determine if such tools/action should be revised or expanded.

Prioritization of the Action Plan

Staff has prepared a draft prioritization of the Action Plan to set the order for how these actions should occur over the next few years. The proposed prioritization is based on of the following rationale:

Apply Logical Sequencing

Firstly, some action items are dependent on the completion of certain action items, and hence their orders are predetermined. For example, the action items under zoning cannot proceed until there are enabling policies in place in the Official Plan. Similarly, the creation of incentives through rebate or waive of fees / levies cannot start until a community improvement plan is established to permit such financial programs.

Respect Ongoing Work Plans

Secondly, the prioritization of action items is proposed to align with the timing of other City initiatives. Accordingly, some of the action items in the Strategy will be undertaken as a part of other City projects that are currently underway. For example, the City's Transportation Master Plan (TMP) will include a review of parking standards, and as a part of this review, the TMP will also consider alternative parking rates for affordable housing. Likewise, the City's Comprehensive Zoning Review is undertaking a number of studies, including the use of alternative planning tools such as a Community Planning Permit System (CPPS). These two examples demonstrate that there is merit in coordinating some of the action items with the work plans of associated City projects. Doing so would help to leverage the operating budgets of these projects and make efficient use of staff and resources.

Allow time to Complete Necessary Research and Analysis

Lastly, some of the action items in the Action Plan require further exploration and will not proceed until year 3 of the Action Plan. For instance, the development of a vacant homes tax or a property tax levy for affordable housing may be quite complex, and hence they would require additional research and analysis before they are ready to be presented to Council.

The draft prioritization of the Action Plan is found in Appendix A (by chronological order of implementation time) of this memo.

Recommendation

That the prioritization of actions to implement the Affordable Housing Strategy as outlined in this Memorandum and its appendix be endorsed by this Committee and Council.