



COUNCIL – AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date:	2 April 2024
Subject:	Advancing Airdrie's Housing Journey
Boards Routed Through:	N/A
Date:	N/A

Issue:

Summary of municipal actions that will support housing diversity and inclusion in Airdrie for Council endorsement.

Background:

How the City of Airdrie Can Support Better Housing Outcomes:

Council's vision of achieving a complete community requires significant, bold action to improve housing diversity and choice in Airdrie. This report outlines the progress made to date and proposed municipal policy actions necessary to achieve this vision.

Housing Solutions are Coming Online:

As a result of Council's dedication to better serve Airdrie's vulnerable residents, unprecedented policy action aimed at improving the supply of non-market housing occurred in 2023. Council's unanimous endorsement of Airdrie's [2024 - 2030 Affordable Housing Principled Action Plan](#) firmly established Airdrie's housing program, driving onward housing-enabling policies such as the [Affordable Housing Reserve Fund](#) and the [Affordable Housing Incentive Policy](#).

Evidence provided by [Airdrie's Housing Needs Assessment](#) and the [Housing Landscape Opportunity Report](#) bolstered Council's steadfast advocacy for achieving partnerships with the federal and provincial governments to open new homes serving low income residents. These efforts resulted in increased funding for the Rent Assistance and Temporary Rent Assistance benefits allocated to Airdrie families and external capital contributions for two new housing projects operated by Airdrie Housing Limited (AHL) and the Rocky View Foundation (RVF). Council increased AHL's annual operations funding in recognition of the additional residents that will be served through their new project.

Also in 2023, Council directed Administration to apply for federal funding provided by the [CMHC Housing Accelerator Fund \(HAF\)](#) using Airdrie's [2024 - 2030 Affordable Housing Principled Action Plan](#) as the basis for the proposal. As of February 2024, Airdrie's application has been accepted by CMHC with a contribution funding totaling \$24.8M. This is the largest external contribution ever awarded to the City of Airdrie. HAF funding is conditional on the City achieving the milestones outlined

in Airdrie's HAF Action Plan and achieving permitted housing targets (please see summary in Attachment 1).

Significant onward work will be required of Council in order to continue progress towards an improved housing landscape that serves the community. These actions include (1) Allocating city-owned land for affordable housing and (2) Policy actions within municipal control that will enable better housing diversity and choice.

1. Allocating City-Owned Land for Affordable Housing:

Land is the linchpin component for initiating an affordable housing projects. Securing land is often the first step towards attracting affordable housing providers to open urgently needed below market housing projects.

In 2023, Administration conducted a thorough investigation of all City-owned vacant land that met best practice criteria for affordable housing, resulting in identifying two parcels that have potential for residential development and have no new or emerging civic uses:

- **2819 Chinook Winds Drive SW:** This parcel is the only vacant parcel currently zoned for multi-family residential development in the City's inventory.
- **40th Avenue Interchange Remnant:** This parcel is the remnant land from the 40th Avenue Partial Interchange Project and requires additional steps to be development-ready. The boundaries and parcel size will be established following the Province's work to register a Road Plan for the south-bound on-ramp.

Council is being asked to consider allocating the Chinook Winds and 40th Avenue parcels as contributors to affordable housing, accomplished either through project development on site or sale of the parcel(s) with proceeds used to invest in an alternate site as soon as feasible.

2. Policy Actions for Housing Diversity and Choice Within Municipal Control:

Achieving Council's vision of a complete community where everyone can access housing that is achievable on their income will require participation of private industry and non-profit groups to build homes that serve community needs and contribute to the viability of Airdrie's labour force. Specifically, homes that are more affordable than single family detached mortgage-based homes are required. Purpose built rentals, secondary suites, attached homes (duplexes, row homes, low rise condos), other multifamily homes and homes in proximity to transit / active transportation will all contribute to improving housing options for Airdrie residents.

How can the City encourage housing diversity?

The City is not a home builder. Instead, the City's job is creating the *enabling environment* for private industry and non-profits to build the types of homes that meet the needs of the local labour force and the broader community. Through following the established legislated process, the City can use regulatory oversight, targeted funding and strategic partnerships to incentivize builders to open more of the types of homes that will make the community more inclusive, equitable, and resilient. In order to get this work done, the City will need to take action in the following areas:

- Improving zoning efficiency and flexibility by revising zoning and land use policies to accommodate a broader range of housing types in new and established communities (example: more broadly permitted use of secondary suites)
- Achieve efficiencies in the permitting process
- Enable more housing in strategic areas with reduced car dependency, including downtown and along transit corridors
- Accelerate Airdrie's downtown development incentives, including Community Revitalization Levy projects
- Fully implement Airdrie's [2024 – 2030 Affordable Housing Principled Action Plan](#)

- Robust public engagement on appropriate housing solutions

All actions that require legislative steps such as Public Hearings or Amendments to Bylaws will be brought to Committee and Council as per the regular legislated process.

Next Steps:

Collaboration and Partnerships – the Airdrie Housing Solutions Working Group:

Arriving at the right solutions will require collaboration between the public sector, private developers, and non-profit organizations. Administration has already started a formal engagement process with industry, non-market providers and internal teams through the Airdrie Housing Solutions Working Group. The Working Group intends to put forward recommendations to Council later this year related to improving housing diversity and longer term housing outcomes. Thus far, the group identified priorities in simplifying the permit process, changing zoning laws to allow different types of homes, and using new technology to make everything more efficient. City championship in facilitating partnerships between nonprofits and private industry, educating people about the benefits of affordable housing and getting support from the provincial government for community infrastructure improvements are also key issues identified by the group.

Building Capacity:

The City needs to boost its internal capacity in project management, urban planning, technical support, financial analysis, community engagement, and partnership facilitation. This expansion will require a multidisciplinary team working collaboratively across departments and with external partners to achieve Airdrie's housing objectives.

Allocating More Land for Affordable Housing:

Meaningfully reducing Airdrie's affordable housing deficit and delivering on Council's [2024 – 2030 Affordable Housing Principled Action Plan](#) will require allocations of land for affordable housing beyond the parcels identified in this report. Although Council's direction is not being requested for the required steps to accomplish onward land allocations at this point, it is pertinent for Council to recognize this work will include updates to the following plans:

- Corporate Land Acquisition Strategy
- 10-year Capital Land Plan budget
- Municipal Development Plan
- Airdrie's Sustainability Plan

The Affordable Housing Capital Development Strategy is scheduled to be completed in 2024 and will inform how affordable housing is considered within the above listed corporate plans, as well as form the basis of a recommended corporate policy for land and building asset acquisition / disposition for affordable housing.

Alignment with South Saskatchewan Regional Plan and AirdrieONE:

Increasing options for affordable housing is aligned with the community building framework described in AirdrieONE and the South Saskatchewan Regional Plan.

AirdrieONE highlights affordable housing within the context of Socially Sustainable Communities. The plan indicates addressing housing needs and enhancing affordability options by:

- Regularly analyzing population growth, development activity, housing stock and affordability needs to determine future housing needs in the City.
- Working collaboratively with the nonprofit agencies, the development community and public agencies to provide a broad range of housing choices for all income groups.
- Putting measures in place to retain existing affordable housing.

- Examining options and tools to increase affordability options.

The South Saskatchewan Regional Plan includes affordable housing in reference to strategies for land-use patterns that “provide the opportunity for a variety of residential environments which feature innovative designs and densities, and which make efficient use of existing facilities, infrastructure and public transportation.”

Boards Routed Through:

N/A

Administration Recommendation:

Regarding the 2819 Chinook Winds Drive SW parcel and 40th Avenue Interchange Remnant parcel of City-owned land:

That Council:

1. directs Administration to investigate and carry out further actions necessary for residential development on these parcels as required; and
2. directs Administration to take action to allocate the parcels as a contributor to affordable housing, either through development or sale as soon as feasible.

Regarding Policy Actions for Housing Diversity Within Municipal Control:

That Council:

1. directs Administration to investigate efficiencies within municipal process, program improvements, and policy actions that will enable greater housing choice serving the needs of the community and bring all items requiring Council confirmation through the regular legislated process.

Alternatives/Implications:

Implications:

- Funds for pre-development costs on parcels of allocated land, such as engineering reports and typology studies, may be required as an onward part of the below market project planning process. Once the cost and scope for these investigations are determined, they will be brought to Council for budget approval.

Alternatives:

- Choose not to endorse the recommendations, thereby causing ambiguity in how Administration will address community housing needs, which will in turn impede improving the current housing environment that has to date produced insufficient levels of affordable housing.

Communications Plan:

Public facing messaging on the benefits of affordable housing is ongoing through the Affordable Housing Education Campaign, launched in November 2023. Additionally, communications strategies will be developed and implemented to update stakeholders on changes coming forward to Council and public engagement opportunities; this is to ensure our stakeholders are continuously engaged and informed throughout the process.

Recommendation:

Regarding the 2819 Chinook Winds Drive SW parcel and 40th Avenue Interchange Remnant parcel of City-owned land:

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Affordable Housing

Presenter:	Jessica DeVreeze
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Reviewed by:	Kevin Weinberger
Attachments:	#1: Summary of Airdrie's Proposed Actions for Enabling Housing Choice
Appointment:	N/A