



COUNCIL – AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date: 1 October 2024

Subject: Update on Implementation of the 2024-2030 Affordable Housing Principled Action Plan

Directorate: Community Safety and Social Services

Issue:

Council is being presented with an update on implementation of Airdrie's 2024-2030 Affordable Housing Principled Action Plan, for information.

Policy / Council Direction:

Implementation of Airdrie's [2024-2030 Affordable Housing Principled Action Plan](#), ("the Action Plan") is creating a pathway for sustainable affordable housing in Airdrie and addressing two key focus areas of Council: Caring Community and Economic Prosperity. The Action Plan formed the basis of Airdrie's proposal to the federal government to bring housing solutions online faster through the CMHC Housing Accelerator Fund program (HAF).

As of February 2024, the federal government accepted Airdrie's proposed housing solutions with an investment of \$24.8M. In alignment with enabling greater housing choice serving the needs of the community, Council directed Administration to investigate efficiencies within municipal processes, program improvements, and policy actions (in April 2024).

Background:
Putting People First

Airdrie's [2024 Housing Needs Assessment](#) and [Housing Landscape Opportunity Analysis](#) reports provided evidence that Airdrie is facing unprecedented pressure across the housing spectrum. Low inventory, lack of housing diversity, and high demand have led to significant price increases in the rental market, resale market and new construction market. This is placing pressure on Airdrie's small inventory of non-market housing, resulting in waiting lists that far exceed the total number of units in the city.

Housing affordability means that people have sufficient income to pay for housing costs and still have enough money left over for food, transportation, and other necessities. When housing becomes unaffordable, people can be forced into impossible decisions. Nearly 2,000

households in Airdrie are in core housing need and housing insecurity is expected to grow, especially for renters and low-income households.

This situation is eroding quality of life and could negatively impact Airdrie's long-term economic development. Airdrie has the opportunity to take control with policy actions that are critical to attracting and retaining the labour force, bolstering the economy, keeping essential services running, and building a well-rounded, thriving community. These are the building blocks of *live, work, play* and the cornerstone of the Airdrie advantage.

There are solutions underway. Airdrie City Council has a vision of a complete, caring, community where residents can access appropriate housing now and in the future. Administration and Council are taking action to achieve this vision.

The City of Airdrie's Role in Housing Solutions

Addressing housing affordability requires the participation and collaboration of all three levels of government, the community, the housing sector, and local industry. Municipalities hold significant power to advance housing solutions through successfully fulfilling roles that impact the entire housing system.

Through its role as a REGULATOR, the City creates 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. As the approving authority, Airdrie City Council has the opportunity to direct policy actions that will allow for greater housing stability for our residents. Without these actions, the fiscal and social implications for the municipality could include public money being wasted on intervention in the future instead of prevention now.

The City also supports housing solutions through its roles as a PARTNER, COLLABORATOR, FUNDER and OPERATOR.

Action Plan Implementation Progress

To support strategic and efficient implementation of both, Administration has integrated the 2024-2030 Affordable Housing Principled Action Plan with [Airdrie's HAF Action Plan](#). This approach achieves City priorities and meets HAF commitments concurrently. Airdrie's HAF Action Plan is based on the Principled Action Plan. Together, these constitute Airdrie's housing strategy over the next six years.

Implementation of the strategy is on track, with several actions already complete or underway. Administration is also on track to meet The City's HAF milestones. Some of the foundational work thus far includes:

Informing the community and encouraging public participation in the housing conversation:

Public facing messaging on the benefits of affordable housing is ongoing through the Affordable Housing Education Campaign, launched in November 2023. As part of the broader Campaign, Administration is also hosting community touch points including a booth at AirdrieFEST and several Airdrie Farmer's Markets to interact with and provide information to

the public. A wide variety of residents have approached Administration through these community events to share their perspectives and stories. Many people had positive reactions to what The City is doing on affordable housing. Many also shared that they are struggling. Examples include a young professional who shared that they are unexpectedly needing to rely on the food bank to feed their family, a senior who shared that they can't downsize in their community because there is nowhere to go, and a single person who is worried about their next rent increase and being forced out of the city or into homelessness. Administration is listening to these stories and providing information on The City's affordable housing initiatives. Administration does not currently have a method for capturing attendance and feedback from these events but is working on a method moving forward.

Additionally, communication plans are underway to update the community on recommendations coming forward to Council and opportunities for public participation; this is to ensure our citizens are informed about affordable housing initiatives, where they can learn more, and how they can participate in the process.

Engaging with housing partners to inform housing solutions:

In January 2024, Administration initiated a formal engagement process with industry and non-market housing providers through the Airdrie Housing Solutions Working Group. Thus far, the Working Group has identified several opportunities to achieve the type of homes that will serve the labour force and community, including simplifying the permit process, making amendments to the Land Use Bylaw to allow different types of homes as a permitted use, using new technology to improve the planning approvals process, providing City leadership in facilitating partnerships between non-profits and private industry, educating people about the benefits of affordable housing, and advocacy to the other levels of government for required investments in community infrastructure.

Helping affordable housing partners get building:

In September 2023, The City launched the Affordable Housing Incentive Policy, and in December 2023, City Council approved the establishment of an Affordable Housing Reserve Fund. Together, these initiatives provide meaningful municipal contributions to community housing partners, helping them to access funding from other levels of government and secure financing from lenders and other sources. In August 2024, The City provided a net contribution of \$100,500 from these funds to Habitat for Humanity to build housing in Bayview for families in need.

Building municipal capacity:

The City has established an Affordable Housing Department to work collaboratively with internal and external partners to achieve Airdrie's housing objectives. Administration has also initiated an internal team of subject matter experts that are responsible for the cross-corporate implementation required to achieve HAF implementation (called the Elite Team). An Administrative policy guiding cross-corporate collaboration and processes for support for community housing providers is currently in circulation with Airdrie Administration's Executive Leadership Team. Through these measures and other supports (including contracted services) the corporation is on track to boost its internal capacity in project management,

urban planning, technical support, financial analysis, community awareness, and partnership facilitation, all aimed at generating housing that serves our labour force and community.

Next Steps

Significant work and sustained vision will be required of Administration and Council to continue progress towards implementing the actions in Airdrie's housing strategy. These policy actions are required to achieve the housing outcomes for Airdrie residents that The City is pursuing. In the coming months, critical housing items will be coming before Council, including:

1. **Land Use Bylaw amendments on Accessory Suites** (i.e., Secondary Suites, Garage Suites, and Garden Suites): Council will have the opportunity to consider policy that makes it easier to create and legalize accessory suites. Accessory suites contribute to sustainable urban development by utilizing existing infrastructure and creating a different type of affordable housing that could benefit homeowners and Airdrie residents.
2. **Land Use Bylaw amendments for a new land use district:** Council will have the opportunity to consider new policy that allows for more flexible zoning. Airdrie's housing supply is relatively homogenous and is expensive for lower- and moderate-income residents. Single-detached housing constitutes over 60% of the housing stock in Airdrie, which is higher than the Calgary Census Metropolitan Area at 57%. Purpose-built rentals, "missing middle homes" (e.g., secondary suites, duplexes, row homes, low-rise multifamily, 4-plexes, etc.), and homes in proximity to transit / active transportation will all contribute to improving housing options and affordability for Airdrie residents.
3. **Council confirmation of HAF-enabled investments:** Council will have the opportunity to consider Administration's analysis of HAF investment opportunities through the annual budget process in every year starting in 2024. Successful implementation of the full Action Plan hinges on key Council decisions and meeting HAF contribution commitments for continued funding.
4. **Airdrie Housing Solutions Working Group recommendations:** Council will have the opportunity to support the Working Group recommendations.

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.

Council Committee Routed Through:

This report did not go through any Council Committees.

Administration Recommendation:

Administration recommends that Council accepts this report as an informational update on the implementation of the 2024-2030 Affordable Housing Principled Action Plan.

Alternatives/Implications:

Administration has no alternatives to propose.

Budget Implications:

Budget items supporting affordable housing initiatives will be presented to Council through the annual budget process or other process as requested by Council.

Communications and Engagement:

Ongoing Affordable Housing Education Campaign.

Recommendation:

That Council accepts the report and presentation as an informational update on the implementation of the 2024-2030 Affordable Housing Principled Action Plan.

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External Presenter:	N/A
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Attachments:	N/A