



COUNCIL – AGENDA REPORT

Meeting Date: 21 January 2025

Subject: Advancing Housing Solutions Through a Made-in-Airdrie Approach

Directorate: Community Safety and Social Services

Issue:

Council is being asked to endorse a set of non-binding recommendations developed through engagement with the Airdrie Housing Solutions Working Group (AHSWG).

Policy / Council Direction:

In response to this issue, Council has previously endorsed:

- [2024-2030 Affordable Housing Principled Action Plan](#) (June 2023): Outlines strategic objectives within municipal control aimed at increasing housing diversity, including non-market homes, as well as lower cost homes delivered by the private market.
- **Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) Action Plan:** Aims to increase housing supply and diversity, leveraging federal funding opportunities.
- **Housing-Enabling Policies:** Includes the establishment of the [Affordable Housing Reserve Fund \(AHRF\)](#) and the [Airdrie Housing Incentive Policy](#).

Council can allocate funds for affordable housing initiatives at any time.

Background:

Housing Challenges in Airdrie:

Availability of homes that serve the diverse needs of residents is foundational to achieving Council's vision of a caring and economically prosperous community. The municipality's role is not building homes at the scale required for serving community needs. Instead, private industry and non-profits are poised to build the types of homes needed for Airdrie's seniors, young families starting out, and newcomers building their lives to stay in Airdrie. Through using its municipal tools, the municipality can significantly enable the housing diversity that is needed to achieve a complete community.

Airdrie is grappling with significant housing challenges that impact a wide range of residents, including essential members of the labour force. The rising cost of rent and entry into home ownership, driven by inflation and wage disparities, are making it increasingly difficult for many to secure housing that is affordable on their household income. While some benefit from early market entry or generational

wealth, a growing number of low- to moderate-income earners in the workforce are struggling to keep up.

Airdrie Housing Solutions Working Group:

In recognition that “business as usual” has not been a successful strategy for addressing the growing affordable housing crisis, Administration convened the Airdrie Housing Solutions Working Group (AHSWG) in January 2024. The AHSWG included expertise from key housing interest-holders including:

- Industry Interest-Holders: Developers, builders, and landowners, led by an industry chair.
- Non-Profit Housing Providers: Airdrie Housing Limited, Rocky View Foundation, Habitat for Humanity, and other experienced non-profits, led by a non-profit chair.
- City of Airdrie Members: City Administration, participating as equal representatives alongside other interest-holders, to advance policy changes and municipal housing interests.

A central connector for the AHSWG members is recognition that bold, swift action is needed for countering the conditions that are causing deepening housing insecurity in Airdrie. With this principle at the forefront, the AHSWG underwent an intensive, collaborative process in determining a set of recommendations outlined below to meaningfully address Airdrie’s housing challenges.

Airdrie Housing Solutions Working Group Recommendations:

The following is an abbreviated summary of the AHSWG recommendations. The AHSWG’s full report is included in Attachment 1, and the group’s Terms of Reference is included in Attachment 2.

Recommendation 1: Establish a Formal Mechanism for Ongoing Engagement between City, Non-Profit Housing Providers, and Industry

Establish an ongoing mandate for the AHSWG to enhance collaboration between City, industry and non-profit housing interest-holders, supported by engagement mechanisms and progress reporting to Council.

Recommendation 2: Accelerate Implementation of Airdrie’s 2024-2030 Affordable Housing Principled Action Plan

Reaffirm Council’s commitment to implementing Airdrie’s *2024-2030 Affordable Housing Principled Action Plan* by maintaining financial support and prioritizing key actions, including:

- Continuing to allocate 1% of the annual tax base to the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund.
- Developing a "Rapid Response Process" for fast-tracking affordable housing approvals.

Recommendation 3: Facilitate Partnerships with Industry and Non-Profit Organizations

Recognize and strengthen partnerships between industry and non-profits to drive affordable housing solutions through initiatives like a matchmaking program for joint projects and a "Partner Priority" system for expedited approvals.

Recommendation 4: Adopt an Evidence-Based Approach to Community Building

Promote evidence-based, inclusive community development by aligning housing with economic and social goals, supported by tools to assess proposals that include diverse voices in decision making (example: "Community Champions" program).

Recommendation 5: Advocate for Airdrie's Interests with Other Orders of Government

Continue advocacy for Airdrie's housing and infrastructure priorities by uniting local voices and presenting needs via a comprehensive prospectus to other governments (example: Airdrie Housing Advocacy Alliance).

Key Considerations:

Council's continued commitment to implementing housing solutions is key, as a lack of follow-through risks damaging trust and engagement with community partners, potentially causing more harm than disengagement.

Council Committee Routed Through:

N/A

Administration Recommendation:

That Council:

1. endorses the recommendations of the AHSWG; and
2. directs Administration to find an appropriate path to implement the recommendations, with a report back to Council on updates.

Alternatives/Implications:

Implications:

Endorsing these recommendations demonstrates Council's commitment to housing solutions through a collaborative, community-driven approach, ensuring Airdrie's housing landscape evolves in line with community needs and values.

Alternatives:

1. Council could choose to accept the report for information only without an endorsement of the report recommendations, understanding that a decision to not endorse the recommendations will cause 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.
2. Council could choose to not endorse the recommendations but endorse the AHSWG process and acknowledge that Administration has engaged the housing sector including industry and non-profits, and direct administration to find a path thereby concluding the AHSWG's process on developing recommendations.

Budget Implications:

No immediate budget impacts are expected. Future implementation may require additional funding, subject to Council's approval during the budgeting process.

Communications and Engagement:

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.

Recommendation:

That Council:

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Jessica DeVreeze
Team Leader, Affordable Housing

Staff Presenter:	Jessica DeVreeze
External Presenter:	Dr. Alina Turner, HelpSeeker Technologies, Chris Rowe, CAO Rocky View Foundation and Kimber Higa, Director, BILD-CR
Department:	Community Safety and Social Services
Reviewed by:	
Attachments:	#1: Airdrie Housing Solutions Working Group Summary Report #2: Airdrie Housing Solutions Working Group Terms of Reference