

INFORMATION NOTE

Title:	Housing Division Update
Date Prepared:	February 23, 2021
Report To:	Committee of the Whole
Councillor and Role:	Deputy Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary, Housing
Ward:	N/A

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

As per the recommendation of the 2016 Housing internal audit, the following Housing Division 2020 annual update is provided. This update highlights some of the activities happening in the Housing Division. There will be a separate report to highlight the activities of the Affordable Housing Strategy.

1. As of December 31, 2020, the vacancy rate for Housing was 19.7%. 38% of these units were 3-bedroom units.
2. Rent Gear to Income (RGI) units saw a 98% occupancy rate, followed by a 92% occupancy rate in our Affordable Housing (AH) portfolio.

The Housing Division continue to support the housing needs of our community. As of February 1, 2021, the Housing Division had 200 people on the waitlist. 80% of this waitlist qualified for an RGI unit or an affordable housing unit based on family income. 45% of these were waitlisted for a one-bedroom RGI unit.

3. In 2020, 48 units were vacated, while 44 new households found homes within our NPH units.
4. Housing staff continue to make the changes with the Lower End of Market (LEM) Housing units as the properties come out of their 35-year operational agreements. To date we have had 2 agreements remaining: Sebastian Court and Infill 1985. They will come out of operational agreements in 2021.
5. As a result of higher vacancy rates, we are exploring creative partnerships to fill units. In November 2020 we partnered with Connection for Seniors and entered a MOU. This partnership provides needed supportive housing to seniors in a couple of our 3-bedroom units. Based on the success of this partnership, we will continue to explore additional creative partnerships in 2021.
6. In July 2020, the Housing division was approached by Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) to explore how the City could be part of a pandemic response to

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help vulnerable people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness. This resulted in the City receiving \$60,500 from Canadian Medical Association Foundation through FCM.

This funding allowed the City to install free wifi in capability Bannerman and Victoria Park for 3 years. Between September 2020 and January 14, 2021, we had a total of 866 unique users. We are also exploring installing handwashing stations in these parks.

7. End Homelessness St John's (EHSJ) left the Housing Division and became its own not for profit entity on April 1, 2020. They have transformed into a system planning organization that will continue to partner with the City and other groups to help advocate and reduce homelessness in our community. The City continues to support this group by providing office space at the St. John's Recreation Center in Buckmasters Circle.

Key Considerations/Implications:

1. Budget/Financial Implications:
Continue to explore various funding streams available to housing providers and creative solutions to repurpose some of our housing stock that is no longer in high demand
2. Partners or Other Stakeholders:
NHLC, Various community groups in the City of St. John's
3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans:
Neighborhoods Build our City and Culture of Cooperation
4. Legal or Policy Implications:
N/A
5. Privacy Implications:
N/A
6. Engagement and Communications Considerations:
N/A
7. Human Resource Implications:
N/A
8. Procurement Implications:
N/A
9. Information Technology Implications:
N/A
10. Other Implications: N/A

Conclusion/Next Steps:

At Council's direction, the Housing Division will continue to provide affordable housing options to the residents of St. John's.

Report Approval Details

Document Title:	Yearly Housing Information Update for 2020.docx
Attachments:	
Final Approval Date:	Mar 4, 2021

This report and all of its attachments were approved and signed as outlined below:

Judy Tobin - Mar 4, 2021 - 4:55 PM

Tanya Haywood - Mar 4, 2021 - 5:52 PM