

# INFORMATION NOTE

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**Title:** Affordable Housing Strategy Update

**Date Prepared:** December 18<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Report To:** Affordable Housing Working Group

**Councillor and Role:** Deputy City Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary

**Ward:** N/A

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**Issue:** Provide an update on the City of St. John's Affordable Housing Strategy 2019-2028 and main areas of work

## **Discussion – Background and Current Status:**

The City of St. John's approved the Affordable Housing Strategy, 2019-2028, in November 2018. The strategy will address the municipality's housing needs by working in step with partners, stakeholders and residents to create and maintain safe, suitable and affordable housing throughout the city. The following is an update on the main areas of work.

## **Housing Week**

National Housing Day, is meant to raise awareness about housing and homelessness and encourage events designed to focus on the needs of individual communities. This year, a film screening, a housing forum, a community art project and a housing 'coffee break' were held. Activities and events were well attended and reached a broad range of stakeholders and community members.

## **Annual Update**

An annual update on the Affordable Housing Strategy's first year and main areas of work was published on the City's website.

## **Workshop Series**

We are preparing to launch an affordable housing workshop series for 2020. It can be a daunting task for many to navigate funding, policy and process to move an affordable housing idea from concept to build. This workshop series would essentially give attendees a 101 guide on key topics and project steps in our sector. We hope to offer six sessions in 2020, the first being held in early February. Each session would include a topic expert and would be roughly one hour in duration. The proposed first sessions are:

1. Affordable housing 101 – key concepts, housing need, and addressing the gaps

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2. The development process – development application, the rezoning process and municipal incentives for affordable housing builds
3. NIMBY– Unpacking the Nimby toolkit

### **Successful Tenancies**

The Your Rights and Responsibilities as a Tenant document developed by the City and our affordable housing partners, has been updated to reflect the Residential Tenancies Act changes that came into effect in 2019. The document is currently being translated into French and Arabic.

### **Housing Catalyst Fund**

The application period for 2020 Housing Catalyst Fund grants is now closed. A selection committee has been formed and decisions are anticipated before the end of Q1.

### **Property Standards**

We have reached out to Eastern Health to see if they would be interested in the 'Safe and Healthy Housing' Presentation. We will be following up with them in January for a response. We are considering offering an open community presentation but would like to discuss with the AHWG first.

### **Land**

Habitat for Humanity will be applying for rezoning on the City owned Eric Street parcel of land. Internal consultations have been held throughout December to investigate any concerns raised with the proposed development to date. This information will be prepared as a report for Council as part of the rezoning process.

### **Social Marketing Strategy**

A social marketing campaign has been created to tackle the fears associated with affordable housing through increased information (awareness campaigns, success stories, etc.) and focusing on the benefits of affordable housing. A communications sub-committee has been struck to guide this work. Three short videos have been prepared with inanimate objects that are common to every home. The script is aimed at producing self-reflection for the viewer to chip away at the perceptions of affordable housing. A new affordable housing website page is being developed to support the videos when they are released. We hope to begin circulating them in Q1.

### **Key Considerations/Implications:**

1. Budget/Financial Implications: Funding is already allocated for 2020 Affordable Housing objectives.

2. Partners or Other Stakeholders: The City's Affordable Housing Strategy was built upon public and strategic stakeholder engagement, and the implementation continues to be guided and shaped by multi-stakeholder partnerships and processes.
3. Alignment with Strategic Directions/Adopted Plans: The Affordable Housing Strategy aligns with the Strategic Plan's vision and directions. Affordable Housing implementations actions work in tandem with the Municipal Plan and Development Regulations.
4. Legal or Policy Implications: No legal implications.
5. Privacy Implications: None anticipated at this time.
6. Engagement and Communications Considerations: The City's Communications and OPS departments are aware, involved and very supportive of the work being completed under the Affordable Housing Strategy
7. Human Resource Implications: None anticipated at this time.
8. Procurement Implications: None anticipated at this time.
9. Information Technology Implications: None anticipated at this time.
10. Other Implications: None anticipated at this time.

**Conclusion/Next Steps:** Work continues to progress initiatives in the Affordable Housing Strategy

**Prepared by/Date:** Simone Lilly, Affordable Housing and Development Facilitator

**Reviewed by/Date:** Judy Tobin, Manager, Non-Profit Housing

**Approved by/Date:** Judy Tobin, Manager, Non-Profit Housing

**Attachments:** N/A