

# INFORMATION NOTE

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**Title:** Affordable Housing Strategy Update

**Date Prepared:** April 15<sup>th</sup>, 2020

**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.

## **EHSJ**

As of April 1<sup>st</sup> 2020, the transition of EHSJ into a standalone nonprofit organization has formalized. An information Note was submitted to Council outlining the continued commitment to collaborate with EHSJ on issues across the housing continuum moving forward.

Council voted in favor of enhancing the link between homelessness and affordable housing initiatives following the departure of EHSJ from the City. To do so, an appendix will be added to the Affordable Housing Strategy and the Affordable Housing purpose statement in its Terms of Reference will change to reflect an expanded scope.

The City of St. John's has enjoyed a very positive working relationship with EHSJ and we look forward to continued partnership moving forward.

## **CHTC**

We have been in contact with CHTC regarding the two proposed partnerships: matched Catalyst funding and the development of a shared facilitator resource. The approach on both projects has been agreed upon with CHTC, we now wait to hear from them on the best way to proceed administratively on their end. Due to current circumstances, this may take longer than expected to move forward.

# ST. JOHN'S

## **Workshops**

The affordable housing workshop series we are putting together in partnership with CMHC have been postponed until regular City operations resume. We continue to work on logistics together so that this series can be put off as soon as we are able to.

## **Housing Catalyst Fund**

Housing Catalyst agreements have been signed with recipients and we will stay in touch regarding any delays to projects due to the Covid 19 Pandemic circumstances.

## **Property Standards**

We held the 'Safe and Healthy Housing' presentation for Stella's Circle staff. Further in person presentations will be paused until regular City operations resume.

## **Land**

Habitat for Humanity will be applying for rezoning on the City owned Eric Street parcel of land. Internal consultations continue to be held to investigate any concerns raised with the proposed development to date. Habitat for Humanity are preparing a potential design and until this design is submitted to the Planning Department, community concerns can't fully be investigated as they relate to the project (ex. impact on trees or traffic flow). We continue to check in with Habitat for their new potential design- things have been delayed due to current circumstances.

## **NIMBY**

The Affordable Housing Working Group determined there was value in updating the NIMBY toolkit to include new case studies, an updated contact list and revised CSJ Planning Process. The update is now complete. The new revised document has been uploaded on the Canadian Home Builders of Newfoundland and Labrador website and is linked on the City of St. John's Website under publications> housing. A workshop and relaunch event were being planned for May 2020- this has been postponed until regular City operations resume.

## **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. Three videos are complete and a revitalized website to accompany these videos is now being created. We hope to launch this social marketing strategy in tandem with the NIMBY workshop- this has been postponed until regular City operations resume.

**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: Many projects have been paused and others delayed due to current public health circumstances.

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

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

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

**Attachments:** N/A