

INFORMATION NOTE

Title: Affordable Housing Strategy Update

Date Prepared: July 20th, 2020

Report To: Affordable Housing Working Group

Councillor and Role: Deputy City Mayor Sheilagh O'Leary

Ward: N/A

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.

CHTC

We spoke with CHTC in July regarding the two proposed partnerships: matched Catalyst funding and the development of a shared facilitator resource. CHTC confirmed that they maintained interest in these projects and were now able to move forward. We have our next meeting with them on August 17th

Community Response Fund

The City of St. John's is a recipient of the COVID-19 Community Response Fund for Vulnerable Populations- A collaboration between the Federation of Canadian Municipalities and the Canadian Medical Association Foundation. This funding allows for recipients to support vulnerable populations struggling with the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The City will use the Community Response funding it received to establish public wifi access points. This project would help close a digital divide that has emerged in the Pandemic. Many low-income individuals rely on public internet but due to COVID-19 closures, libraries, coffee shops and cafes are no longer accessible. We have chosen two open space park areas that are near non market housing and outreach service locations. These locations are owned by the City and have the infrastructure required for wifi to be set up.

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A limited call RFQ for Internet services has been issued and will close on July 29th. The RFQ asks for 1, 3 and 5 year pricing options.

Any remaining funding from the wifi project will be used to set up handwashing stations in the same areas.

Land

Eric Street project- Habitat for Humanity submitted a rezoning application, however some revisions were required. Staff recently received a revised site plan from Habitat for Humanity which is being evaluated. Following staff review, the application will be brought forward to Council for direction on the proposed rezoning. Should the rezoning application move forward, public consultation will be held.

Concerns from the neighbourhood were recently raised to the City that there is sewage leaking on the property. To the best of our knowledge, there is no sanitary sewer leaking underground at the property. A fast facts page has been developed on the project and has been posted to the main City of St. John's website <http://www.stjohns.ca/media-release/fast-facts-eric-street-development>

Workshops

Planning for an affordable housing workshop series in partnership with CMHC has resumed. We continue to work on logistics together so that this series can be put off in the fall virtually.

Property Standards

We held the 'Safe and Healthy Housing' presentation for Stella's Circle staff. Inspection services has agreed to resume presentations virtually if there is interest.

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. This has been postponed for the time being, but we may consider launching in the fall.

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

Attachments: N/A