



AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE MEMORANDUM

Page: 1
File:
Pending #:

TO: MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

FROM: CHAIR, MAYOR, J. LEHMAN, CHAIR, AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE

NOTED: M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RE: STATUS UPDATE: AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE

DATE: JUNE 21, 2021

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide members of Council with an update concerning the Affordable Housing Task Force per Council Motion 21-G-062 included as Appendix 'A' to the Memorandum.

On April 22, 2021, at the request of the Mayor, Council directed the creation of three task forces, including the Affordable Housing Task Force. The key mandate of the task force is to develop a plan to address affordable housing in the municipality. Mayor Jeff Lehman was identified as Chair of this Task Force.

Task Force Membership

- Mayor Jeff Lehman (Chair)
- Councillor Ann-Marie Kungl
- Andreea Campobasso, City of Barrie
- Michelle Banfield, Director of Development Services
- Sara Peddle, Chair, SCATEH
- Greg Bishop, County of Simcoe
- Andy Thomson, Thomson Architecture
- Ray Duhamel, Jones Consulting
- Tim Kent, Redwood Park Communities
- Ashley Polischuk, Chair, Barrie Housing
- Nina Brancaccio, City of Barrie (notetaker)

Task Force Mission/Purpose

The mission/purpose of the Affordable Housing Task Force is to develop a plan to co-ordinate housing projects and policies to aggressively expand the supply of affordable housing, with particular emphasis on addressing the hardest to house.

Meetings to Date

Two Affordable Housing Task Force meetings have taken place to date.

Meeting 1: April 21, 2021 - focused on getting the group familiarized with the project background and answering associated questions; conducted a wide-ranging discussion on potential actions that could help overcome barriers to getting more affordable housing built at scale. A roundtable discussion was held to identify key problems with respect to affordable housing. The major concerns and suggestions were outlined as follows:

- Looking at different ways of building to reduce costs – “affordable building” and looking at creative solutions from other places in the world.
- Difficulty with receiving capital funding quickly - Having a pool of funding through the municipality/County to help with projects.
- More streamlining with approvals is required.
- Problem with investors purchasing properties and driving the housing market prices upwards.
- Leveraging private and public sector partnerships, including the Home Builder’s Association.
- Donations of land through estate planning, community land trusts and providing tax incentives.
- Best practices for building alternative types of homes such as container housing.
- Providing opportunities to educate the public on what is being done in their community.
- Other supports such as basic income from other levels of government and advocacy from Ontario’s Big City Mayors.
- Setting up a land trust to keep rooming houses and other housing types affordable and allowing people to stay in their homes.
- Issue with accessing supports during the pandemic.
- Allowing for and/or expansion of an affordable down payment assistance program.
- Capital funding is required but operating funding is also needed to help sustain housing.
- Awareness around tenant rights.
- Create a media campaign/release to advise the public we are working on this issue and to clarify misconceptions.

Detailed notes from the meeting are included in Appendix ‘B’.

Meeting 2: May 26, 2021 – focused on upcoming City-initiated zoning by-law amendments and the public planning meeting on June 15, 2021; discussed two specific directions for the Task Force namely increasing the supply of available land/sites for affordable housing projects, and creating a local funding mechanism/fund to allow evergreen, locally controlled funding for affordable housing.

a) Housing Fund

The group discussed a number of matters related to the establishment of a housing fund that could be set up as an investment opportunity while creating additional housing in the community. Discussion took place regarding whether the five partners of the Health Accord (City, County, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, RVH and Barrie Police) could be involved while also providing an opportunity for people to get involved in their community. Several local initiatives are underway to develop investment funds to prevent homelessness, which can provide a permanent solution. It was agreed that this matter be discussed further at the next meeting including a possible presentation on how this fund could work and next steps.



b) Land Availability

The group discussed options to make use of the limited supply of land and noted that the Task Force should focus on this barrier. The following suggestions were discussed:

- The City co-developing with a landowner and including social or supportive housing.
- Help with the co-development process e.g. Minor planning matter assistance from staff.
- Working with faith communities to develop on their land, including help with feasibility assessments and/or providing seed funding to help some developments proceed.
- Allowing residential development in institutional zones.
- Possibility for city to work with affordable housing providers to identify strategic affordable housing plans to support multi-residential development i.e. creating a development plan.
- Building/Design Competitions.
- Converting commercial properties to mixed use in arterial corridors; e.g. Grey fields, commercial parking lots.
- Ability to present to potential developers what the vision is for the City.
- Approaching current landowners to determine if there is interest in partnerships e.g. Bradford Street.
- Concierge planning process for grey/brown fields sites.

Next Steps

The next full Affordable Housing Task Force meeting will be held on June 23, 2021. There is a “quick win” potential step related to seed funding for potential affordable housing projects on institutional land which the Mayor will bring forward to Council as an immediate step to try to increase the number of potential projects. Work is ongoing on projects at both the County and participating service providers such as Redwood Park Communities with support from the Mayor’s office, to land Federal funding in the near future.



**AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE
MEMORANDUM**

Page: 4
File:
Pending #:

APPENDIX 'A' – Council Motion 21-G-062

**21-G-062 MARKET PRECINCT TASK FORCE, PERFORMING ARTS CENTRE TASK FORCE,
AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE**

WHEREAS revitalizing the west end of Downtown Barrie and the creation of more affordable housing are urgent priorities for Council; and

WHEREAS the recent decision to close Georgian Theatre and not to proceed with renovating Fisher Auditorium has highlighted the urgent need for a large performing arts facility in Barrie; and

WHEREAS helping the City's residents, business community, and cultural community recover from COVID includes addressing these three key issues, which can be part of a strong recovery for Barrie; and

WHEREAS Council directed City staff to develop a funding strategy by April for strategic projects, as part of the 2021 Business Plan;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED as follows:

1. That three Task Forces; a Market Precinct Task Force, a Performing Arts Centre Task Force, and an Affordable Housing Task Force be established.
2. That each Task Force be mandated to report to General Committee by the end of 2021 with a plan to accomplish the following:
 - a) Market Precinct Task Force - a plan for investments in the economy and in public spaces in the west end of Downtown Barrie;
 - b) Performing Arts Centre Task Force - a plan to construct a modern performing arts facility in the city core to replace Georgian Theater and Fisher Auditorium; and
 - c) Affordable Housing Task Force - a plan to co-ordinate County, City, and charitable/not-for-profit housing projects and policies, to aggressively expand the supply of affordable housing, with particular emphasis on addressing the hardest to house.
3. That each Task Force be comprised of interested members of Council, stakeholder organizations from the downtown, cultural, and housing communities as identified by the Chairs, and staff as identified by the Chief Administrative Officer and/or the Executive Management Team.
4. That the Market Precinct Task Force be chaired by Deputy Mayor, B. Ward, the Performing Arts Centre Task Force be chaired by Councillor, J. Harris, and the Affordable Housing Task Force be chaired by Mayor, J. Lehman.
5. That the Mayor's Office provide administrative (minutes, scheduling) support to the Task Forces, and technical support (mapping, feasibility expertise, etc.) be

provided by the following Departments:

- a) Market Precinct Task Force - Development Services;
 - b) Performing Arts Centre Task Force - Recreation and Culture Services and Economic and Creative Development; and
 - c) Affordable Housing Task Force - Development Services.
6. That each Task Force provide updates via memorandum to Council in June, 2021 and September, 2021.
 7. That each Task Force identify any funding requirements associated with their activities, which will be submitted to General Committee as part of the June update, and funded from the Council Strategic Priorities Account if less than \$20,000 for the year.
 8. That each Task Force develop an open public consultation portal (online and by phone) and provide for any additional specific public consultation opportunities as deemed appropriate.
 9. That given potential Federal and Provincial funding programs may be available in support of COVID recovery, City staff be delegated authority to apply for grants generally in line with the objectives of the Task Force, with funding agreements to be subject to Council approval prior to execution if a grant application is successful. (Item for Discussion 8.1, March 8, 2021)

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE**NOTES****APRIL 28, 2021**

Attendees:

Mayor Jeff Lehman
Councillor Ann-Marie Kungl
Andreea Campobasso, City of Barrie
Michelle Banfield, Director of Development Services
Sara Peddle, Chair, SCATEH
Greg Bishop, County of Simcoe
Sandy Tuckey, Simcoe County Homebuilder's Association
Andy Thomson, Thomson Architecture
Ray Duhamel, Jones Consulting
Tim Kent, Redwood Park Communities
Ashley Polischuk, Chair, Barrie Housing
Nina Brancaccio, City of Barrie (notetaker)

1. WELCOME AND INTRODUCTIONS

Mayor Lehman welcomed attendees to the first meeting of the Affordable Housing Task Force. Council has approved the creation of this Task Force to provide a report back at the end of 2021. The goal is to collectively provide input and develop the action plan to address homelessness, economic recovery, increase the supply of housing and identify broader issues. As we all need to be acting together to solve these issues, this group will suggest solutions to the housing issue in the City with the goal of building a housing system not just procuring grants.

The intention of the group would be to have six or seven meetings with a draft report to be presented to Council in the fall which will be supported by the work on the Health Accord. The report will be developed alongside the Planning Department.

2. DEVELOPMENT SERVICES BRIEFING

Michelle Banfield, Director of Development Services provided a presentation to the group highlighting the progress of the City's Affordable Housing Strategy. The Affordable Housing Strategy (2015) aims to create 840 affordable units by 2024. To support the strategy, the City of Barrie has:

- Made it easier to build second suites and provide other forms of affordable housing by amending the Zoning By-law
- Adapted the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to include an Affordable Housing Development Grant
- Helped several purpose-built rental projects, including some with affordable units, with the development approvals process.

Currently, 872 new units have been created. However, only occupied units are included in the count as 409 of these units are unfunded second suites; using the adjusted affordability percentage for unfunded second suites (a Simcoe County metric), the total current amount of affordable housing units in Barrie would actually be 619. In addition, only 14% are units in new affordable rental developments (there is a need for more of this type of housing in Barrie).

In 2020, through the CIP, a total of \$1,777,780 was awarded in Affordable Housing Development Grants to support future affordable housing projects. In 2020, the City of Barrie was also ranked by the Building Industry and Land Development Association (BILD) as #1 in the GTA for contributing to housing affordability (based on planning features, government charges and approval timelines).

In order to continue its work on affordable housing initiatives, Development Services is currently continuing to provide continued support to those applying to the Rapid Housing Initiative (or any others); revising affordable housing policies/strategies in the new Official Plan, based on public feedback; continuing to process applications for CIP Affordable Housing Grant; and updating affordable housing statistics. In addition to creating this Task Force, next steps will be to:

- Solidify the Task Force purpose and vision.
- Create an Affordable Housing Report Card.
- Create Policy/Mechanism to Collect Affordable Housing Cash Contributions (in lieu of units from developers)
- Define the Task Force Scope.
- Create a Goal Driven Project Plan to Guide the Task Force.
- Hold public meeting for further proposed amendments to the Zoning Bylaw.
- Waive as many City fees as possible for affordable housing projects.

A reading list for background materials will be circulated with the next meeting dates.

3. OPEN DISCUSSION – PROBLEM SURFACING

A roundtable discussion was held to identify key problems with respect to affordable housing. The major concerns and suggestions were outlined as follows:

- Looking at different ways of building to reduce costs – “affordable building” and looking at creative solutions from other places in the world.
- Difficulty with receiving capital funding quickly. Resources are spent on how to pull a project together. Having a pool of funding through the municipality/County to help with projects.
- More streamlining with approvals are required. Strides in this area have been made but further changes are needed to make the process smoother.
- Problem with investors purchasing properties and driving the housing market prices upwards.
- Have builders in the Home Builder’s Association offer some suggestions on how to solve the housing issue.
- Leveraging private and public sector partnerships.
- Donations of land through estate planning, community land trusts and providing tax incentives.
- Best practices for building alternative types of homes such as container housing.

- Providing opportunities to educate the public on what is being done in their community.
- Other supports such as basic income from other levels of government and advocacy from Ontario's Big City Mayors.
- Setting up a land trust to keep rooming houses and other housing types affordable and allowing people to stay in their homes.
- Opportunities in site plan control to allow housing and if there is a planning trigger.
- Issue with accessing supports during the pandemic. Is there a universal number for those that are experiencing housing crisis due to the sale of rental properties?
- Education of Real Estate agents through BDAR to ensure they are providing accurate information to clients selling their rental properties.
- Is there a regulatory mechanism through the province that can help with the eviction/rental property sale situation? Can MPP Downey help in this regard to help with this immediate issue?
- Allowing for and/or expansion of an affordable down payment assistance program.
- Capital funding is required but operating funding is also needed to help sustain housing. The federal and provincial national housing strategy hasn't created any new funding in this area.
- Awareness around tenant rights. Do tenants understand their rights and the problems they may encounter in the long term?
- Create a media campaign/release to advise the public we are working on this issue and to clarify misconceptions.

NEXT MEETING

The next meetings were tentatively scheduled for May 26th at 9am and June 23rd at 9am.

The meeting adjourned at 10:48am.

AFFORDABLE HOUSING TASK FORCE**NOTES****MAY 26, 2021**

Attendees:

Mayor Jeff Lehman
Councillor Ann-Marie Kungl
Andreea Campobasso, City of Barrie
Michelle Banfield, Director of Development Services
Sara Peddle, Chair, SCATEH
Greg Bishop, County of Simcoe
Andy Thomson, Thomson Architecture
Ray Duhamel, Jones Consulting
Tim Kent, Redwood Park Communities
Ashley Polischuk, Chair, Barrie Housing
Nina Brancaccio, City of Barrie (notetaker)

Regrets:

Sandy Tuckey, Simcoe County Homebuilder's Association

1. INTRODUCTION AND SUMMARY FROM LAST MEETING

Mayor Lehman provided a brief status update of items from the last meeting. He noted that he had met with SmartCentres and that there is potential for partnerships as well as other property owners. We are still seeing the continued impact of the housing market on the supply of affordable housing in the City as there are now more aggressive cash buyers.

Michelle noted that a public meeting on June 15th will be held to discuss city initiated zoning bylaw amendments that are aimed at helping the development of affordable housing. Some proposed amendments are ideas that were discussed at the last meeting. Changes include allowing residential development in institutional zone which ties into the new official plan. The meeting can be viewed on the City's YouTube channel and the notices will be distributed for the group's information following this meeting.

The City has completed the second draft of the new Official Plan and over the 90 days of public consultation, the City received valuable feedback from a variety of stakeholders. The section that deals with Affordable Housing is included in Section 6.4.2 and incorporates stronger language. Among some of the amendments, the Official Plan aims to address the density issue by including a provision to allow 4 storeys and allowing extra density in low density neighbourhoods.

Council has also passed the Community Safety and Well-being Plan. A report will be brought back to Council in the early fall.

The Mayor noted that purpose built rentals are not as popular with developers and asked how this built form can be more attractive to builders. It was suggested that making an incentive-based program to encourage affordable housing such as discounted application fees and fast tracking of applications or streamlined approval processes for the inclusion of affordable housing within a development. It was noted that the addition of supply of rental housing was important in dealing with the high cost of market rent in the City.

2. DISCUSSION OF KEY ACTION ITEMS**a) Housing Fund**

The group discussed a number of matters related to the establishment of a housing fund that could be set up as an investment opportunity for the public while creating additional housing in the community. Discussion took place regarding whether the five partners of the Health Accord

(City, County, Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit, RVH and Barrie Police) could be involved while also providing an opportunity for people to get involved in their community.

Greg agreed to provide information regarding an investment group that recently presented at a County Council meeting. He noted that living wage is also very critical in the housing issue as market rents are becoming unaffordable. It was noted that a future problem could be home ownership and options like rent-to-own may be one possible solution.

It was agreed that this matter be discussed further at the next meeting including a possible presentation on how this fund could work and next steps.

b) Land Availability

The group discussed options to make use of the limited supply of land and noted that the Task Force should focus on this barrier. The following suggestions were discussed:

- The City co-developing with a landowner and including social or supportive housing.
- Help with the co-development process eg. Minor planning matter assistance from staff.
- Working with the faith communities to develop on their land. This is a challenge as many don't have members that don't have development background and are governed by volunteers. There is also a culture shift that needs to happen as members of the congregation may not be willing to give up land for other purposes.
- Mixed use prioritization
- Providing seed funding to help some developments proceed.
- Connecting with church groups to discuss the benefits of projects such as Lucy's Place.
- Allowing residential development in institutional zones.
- Possibility for city to work with affordable housing providers to identify strategic affordable housing plans to support multi-residential development i.e. creating a development plan.
- Example of London England using private investment for green initiatives. This can be adapted to affordable housing. Finding philanthropic dollars and impact investors; but must be careful not to make it so complex that the development could get bogged down.
- Building/Design Competitions
- Converting commercial properties to mixed use in arterial corridors; eg. Grey fields, commercial parking lots
- Ability to present to potential developers what the vision is for the City
- Approaching current landowners to determine if there is interest in partnerships eg. Bradford Street
- Concierge planning process for grey/brown fields

3. NEXT STEPS

A workplan will be distributed to be discussed at the next meeting.

NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is scheduled for June 23rd at 9am.

The meeting adjourned at 10:30 am.