



## SOCIAL SERVICES DIVISION

<b>REPORT TO:</b>	<b>CHAIR AND COMMITTEE MEMBERS</b>
<b>DEPARTMENT:</b>	<b>HOUSING SERVICES</b>
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<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	<b>April 17, 2024</b>
<b>INFORMATION ITEM:</b>	<b>Affordable Housing Update 2</b>

### **BACKGROUND**

Lambton County Council, at its meeting on August 17, 2023, received an update regarding the affordable housing work underway.

This report is to provide Council with a further update on this work.

### **DISCUSSION**

Staff have been working to advance the goal of having more homes built faster in the community given the urgency of the affordable housing crisis.

An application for funding to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (“**CMHC**”) under the Housing Accelerator Fund was submitted in July of 2023. If approved, this application would have resulted in Lambton receiving approximately \$5M in funding to advance the following eight initiatives:

- Develop an Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan to promote and encourage the development of affordable housing in the County.
- Update the Official Plan which will include updating urban boundaries to allow for more growth and updating population growth projections based on current data.
- Create a Seed Funding Program, similar to the fully depleted CMHC seed funding program, to support Non-Profit developers in completing the necessary work to get a project shovel ready.
- Hire an Affordable Housing Development Project Coordinator to work with internal and external stakeholders to promote the development of affordable housing, assist with the completion of funding application, connect funders with non-profit agencies and to help guide the development process from rezoning, design, site plan, construction and occupancy.

- Attract a Supportive Housing build as this has been identified as an internal priority for the community.
- Create an affordable housing development toolkit to provide information on the context for affordable housing creation in Lambton County, with step-by-step guides, tools and other resources to support projects.
- Create a committee to develop a database of available and appropriate land for future affordable housing projects which would include location, size, price, zoning and studies that need to be completed.
- Create a registry of affordable housing developments to promote successful affordable housing developments and encourage future projects.

Unfortunately, on February 29, 2024, CMHC advised that our application had not been selected for funding and that the County of Lambton does not qualify to apply for the fund as the applicant must be the organization that has planning and development approvals authority, including zoning authorities.

Regardless of this lack of federal funding, efforts have been made to advance some of the above initiatives. Through funding from the County's Affordable Housing Reserve, the Affordable Housing Seed Funding program was launched in Fall 2023 and work is underway to attract a supportive housing building through the issuance of a Request for Proposal for a supportive housing partnership. The goal of this partnership is to create between 150 and 300 supportive housing units in Lambton.

In addition, despite the unsuccessful application for Accelerator funds, work continues to increase the affordable housing supply in Lambton as follows:

- Strategic Plan - February 2024 Council endorsed a multi-year portfolio-scale strategic development plan to address affordable and supportive housing that when fully implemented, would see the creation of 490 new units, including 300 supportive units.
- Kathleen Avenue - March 2024 Council endorsed the Kathleen Avenue project that could see between 30 and 50 units added to the vacant land on Kathleen Avenue.
- Victoria Street – July 2023 City of Sarnia endorsed a motion to donate a portion of the Victoria Street parking lot for use of affordable housing. In February 2024, County staff provided City staff with the proposal for this property that included the preliminary plans from the Strategic Plan indicating utilization of the full parking lot and await a decision on the portion of the property which will be donated.
- Affordable Housing Seed Funding program was launched in 2023 providing \$794K to five projects that could see between 152 and 177 new units created.
- Completed units – 2 units were added to the Community Housing portfolio in 2023 through the purchase and renovation of the duplex on Devine Street.
- Under construction – 24 units are under construction at 993 Maxwell Street which will be added to the Community Housing portfolio once completed.
- Construction start 2024 – the project at 940 Confederation Street by Ontario Aboriginal Housing is expected to begin in May which will add 40 rent geared-to-income units to the community. In addition, work will begin shortly to repurpose

non-residential space in existing community housing building to create 2 additional units.

- Additional Dwelling Unit Program – the additional dwelling unit program was launched in March 2024 which offers a grant to homeowners to construct an additional dwelling unit on their property.

If all of these projects advance to completion, this could see the addition of between 712 and 757 units in Lambton County.

Much work is happening to support the creation of affordable housing in the community. To further advance these projects, funding from all levels of government will need to be secured, including capital dollars from both the Provincial and Federal government as well as operating dollars from the Province. Advocacy work is ongoing to attract the required investments from other levels of government.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

There is no impact to the levy.

### **CONSULTATIONS**

Consultations have taken place with the CAO; General Manager, Social Services; Assistant County Solicitor/Deputy Clerk; and Manager, Procurement and Projects.

### **STRATEGIC PLAN**

Providing safe affordable housing is in keeping with the County's Mission to promote an enhanced quality of life through the provision of responsive and efficient services accomplished by working with municipal and community partners.

The activities of the Division support the Community Development Area of Effort #3 in the County of Lambton's Strategic Plan, specifically:

- Advocating in a manner that raises the profile of the County and its needs in order to secure improved government supports, funding, grants, and other resources.
- Developing programs and initiatives that address poverty reduction and promote social belonging.
- Planning for and responding to the ever-changing needs of an aging population, homelessness and retaining young people in the community.
- Actively pursuing joint opportunities with community partners that contribute to the well-being of the Lambton Community.

## **CONCLUSION**

The County of Lambton Housing and Homelessness Plan 2020 - 2024 sets a strategic direction for housing and homelessness work. Adding to the affordable housing stock is a key component of this plan. There is much progress being made towards this goal however funding from other levels of government will be required. Adding additional affordable housing units in the County is a priority with all avenues being explored.