

# Potential Role and Responsibilities for the City of Saskatoon in Housing

## ISSUE

The City of Saskatoon's (City) past and current role in housing, as defined through the Housing Business Plan and through existing funding, has been to provide a defined range of functions to support action in the community. As new challenges have been emerging, there is potential for the City's role and responsibilities in housing to change in order to respond to these challenges. This report provides a preliminary overview of options that could be considered.

## BACKGROUND

The following motion was approved by the Standing Policy Committee on Planning, Development and Community Services, at its [meeting](#) held on April 12, 2022:

"That the Administration provide an update report to the appropriate Committee or Council regarding the state of the Housing Continuum in Saskatoon as background to ongoing discussions relating to the City's support of related services and strategic partnerships. This report should include:

- Background information about the housing continuum in Saskatoon including definitions of key terms and concepts (i.e., transitional housing, wrap-around supports, etc.) and models of local housing services
- Updates relating to housing and sheltering availability across the continuum
- Updates relating to known pressures across the continuum and any trends in the funding or other sources of those pressures
- Connection to existing and planned City strategies and working groups with Civic involvement/support."

At the May 24, 2022 City Council meeting, [an information report](#) was provided that addressed the first and second bullet points of the motion.

At the June 27, 2022 City Council meeting, [an information report](#) was provided that outlined the City's current role in housing, as well as addressed portions of both the third and fourth bullet points of the above motion.

## CURRENT STATUS

The City's current [Housing Business Plan](#) (Plan) expires at the end of 2022. A new Plan is required to reflect the current needs in Saskatoon and outline the appropriate role of the City in addressing these needs, as well as new and emerging funding and program opportunities created by senior levels of government, such as the National Housing Strategy and the Rapid Housing Initiative.

Administration has not yet begun development or engagement for a new Housing Business Plan due to other existing priorities in 2021 and 2022, most notably, administration of Rapid Housing Initiative projects.

### **DISCUSSION/ANALYSIS**

The City's Housing Business Plan has focused on five key areas:

- 1) Policy Support;
- 2) Financial Incentives;
- 3) Community Based Support;
- 4) Research and Monitoring, and
- 5) Education and Awareness.

Through these tools, the City has worked with a wide variety of partners to encourage and support an environment where the market is more likely to supply housing that is attainable, inclusive and available in a range of locations throughout the City.

#### Information from Other Municipalities

Municipalities in Canada have a wide variety of housing related programs, policies and initiatives developed in response to the local and unique conditions in each municipality. Programs range from the direct operation and responsibility for housing units (most notably in Ontario) to focusing on policy tools, incentives and land use planning efforts. There is no standard approach to what each municipality provides. Ontario municipalities have additional requirements and provide much more direct housing services due to a past shift from provincial to municipal responsibility.

The Canadian Urban Institute prepared a Municipal Comparison of Affordable Housing and Homelessness in 2021, which provides a useful Overview - Part 1 (see Appendix 1), as well as [Municipal Profiles - Part 2](#) from municipalities across the country.

#### Potential to Assess and Adjust the City's Role in Housing

Given the current pressures in Saskatoon, and the upcoming expiry of the current Plan at the end of 2022, there is a potential for the City's role in housing to change and adapt. Assessing the City's role in housing will also support the goal from the [City's 2022-2025 Strategic Plan](#) to "align internal housing plans to reflect community gaps, community-level housing, homelessness plans, and Federal and Provincial investment strategies."

#### Options to Consider

There are a variety of actions which could be added to the current role of the City, that would serve to support the affordable housing and homelessness sector in Saskatoon. As a preliminary collection of options, there are actions that could be taken under each of the following categories:

- a) Data Gathering, Monitoring and Sharing;
- b) Land Use Planning;

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- c) Facilities Operator/Owner;
- d) Financial Incentives;
- e) Advocacy to Government;
- f) Housing Expertise/Training Support;
- g) Community Convenor;
- h) Development Support; and
- i) Housing Operations.

Certain actions could be led by the City, while others would allow the City to support the action. In some cases, either approach could be taken. Appendix 2 outlines a high-level overview of these actions. Appendix 3 provides descriptions of the collection of options. Further direction on these actions is needed to guide Administration in preparing future reports and budget submissions.

### Engagement to Create a New City of Saskatoon Housing Strategy

The current Housing Business Plan expires at the end of 2022. Due to the work on the Rapid Housing Initiative, Administration has not yet begun discussions and engagement on a new housing strategy for the City. Through the engagement process, Administration anticipates other actions may also be identified, and priority actions will be developed. Upcoming discussions as part of the Saskatoon Housing Initiatives Partnership (SHIP)-led Housing Solutions Lab are also anticipated to lead to potential inputs into a new housing strategy.

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS**

As of 2021, the Attainable Housing Program receives \$420,000 from the mill rate, which funds the implementation of the Housing Business Plan. This includes staffing costs, certain incentive programs, creation of the Housing Handbook and the service contract with SHIP. Additional one-time funds have been allocated to the program, typically from the Neighbourhood Land Development Fund dividends, which have been used to fund capital grants for new attainable housing units of various types.

Allocations for the Innovative Housing Incentive capital grants for 2022 were made and supported through a report to the Standing Policy Committee on Planning Development and Community Services (SPC on PDCS) at their [June 13, 2022 meeting](#). No further incentives will be available in 2022, including secondary suite permit rebates and new applications for the Mortgage Flexibility Support Program (MFSP) as the Affordable Housing Reserve is depleted. A number of Legalizing Existing Suite applications are still in progress, as well as one existing MFSP project. These will continue to be supported, although new applications are suspended until funding is available.

No allocation was made for 2023 through the Multi-Year Business Plan and Budget to support capital grants and other financial incentives. No further incentives will be available in 2023 unless a budget allocation is made to the program during the 2023 Budget Deliberations process.

### **OTHER IMPLICATIONS**

There are no other financial, communications, Triple Bottom Line, policy, privacy, legal, social or CPTED implications or considerations emerging from this report.

### **NEXT STEPS**

Administration is preparing a report to respond to the motion approved by the SPC on PDCS at the June 16, 2022 meeting:

“That at the appropriate time, the Administration report back about the risks of not having Innovative Housing Incentive funds in 2023 and options for a contribution to the Affordable Housing Reserve for capital in 2023 and a phased in and indexed operating contribution going forward for Affordable Housing work.”

### **APPENDICES**

1. Municipal Comparison of Affordable Housing and Homelessness – Overviews (Canadian Urban Institute – October 2021)
2. Potential Housing Options to Consider
3. Overview of Potential Roles in Housing

### **REPORT APPROVAL**

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