

Housing Accelerator Fund Initiatives

This appendix summarizes the initiatives planned for the City of Saskatoon's (City) application for the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) and forms the basis of the Housing Action Plan (Action Plan) for the City. The material in the HAF application will be more detailed but will align with the information provided in this report.

New Initiatives

To be eligible, all initiatives included within the Action Plan should be new initiatives that have not yet started. As advised by CMHC, the formal start of an initiative is when a municipality approves and adopts the specific bylaw, policy, program, measure, etc. All prior research, consultation and other work where changes could still be incorporated, would not trigger CMHC to consider that an initiative has started.

Evaluation of Initiatives

The evaluation criteria used by CMHC is to assess the application and to determine which applicants are selected to participate in the HAF. It does not dictate funding amounts. The evaluation criteria is the commitment to increase housing supply.

1. The relevance of the initiative outcome to one or more of the objectives of the HAF. The HAF objectives are:
 - a) Creating more supply of housing at an accelerated pace and enhancing certainty in the approvals and building process;
 - b) Supporting the development of complete communities that are walkable, consisting of appropriate residential density and a diverse mix of land uses providing access to a wide variety of amenities and services through public and active transportation;
 - c) Supporting the development of affordable, inclusive, equitable and diverse communities that encourage clear pathways to achieving greater socio-economic inclusion, largely achieved through the equitable provision of housing across the entire housing spectrum; and
 - d) Supporting the development of low-carbon and climate-resilient communities.
2. The effectiveness of the initiative on increasing the supply of housing (implementation, timeliness, supply impact and system impact); and
3. The need for increased housing supply (Housing Needs Assessment completion).

City of Saskatoon Initiatives Evaluation

Initiatives considered for submission by Administration were based on the following:

1. Alignment with the Official Community Plan;
2. Alignment with the City's Housing Strategy, currently in development, including supporting the development of affordable housing and support for organizations that work with vulnerable populations;
3. Alignment with projects that are currently underway or in development and that meet the CMHC's definition of new under the HAF;
4. Feedback from stakeholders;

5. Opportunity to embed partnerships, reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion into the initiatives; and
6. Administration’s assessment of the relative likelihood/ability to achieve the housing supply growth targets within the eligibility window.

City of Saskatoon Initiatives

Applicants of HAF are encouraged to select from a list of twenty-five initiatives provided by CMHC that align with the objectives of the HAF. A minimum of seven initiatives are required for the HAF application; however, CMHC advised that all units which result from these initiatives are eligible for consideration under the HAF program.

There are 12 initiatives selected for inclusion in the City’s application. For each initiative, we have provided:

1. A description of the initiative;
2. The CMHC identified initiative the proposed initiative relates to;
3. How the initiative supports the objectives of the HAF;
4. Duration (time it will take to complete the initiative) and timeliness (time it will take to start to achieve additional permitted units as a result of the initiative); and
5. Supply impact (extent to which the initiative will improve housing and community outcomes) and system impact (extent to which the initiative increases stability and predictability in the housing system).

A note has been provided for each initiative indicating if it is currently underway or in development. All initiatives meet CMHC’s definition of new under the HAF. Initiatives may be refined based on feedback received from CMHC in advance of the final HAF application deadline. Administration will report back to Council for the appropriate approvals as each initiative proceeds.

Initiative 1: Accelerate Housing Development in the Downtown (under way)
Description: The Downtown Event and Entertainment District Plan (Plan) will implement land use and zoning amendments and public realm enhancements intended to promote housing development in the City’s Downtown.
CMHC Initiative: Promoting high-density development without the need for rezoning (as-of-right zoning), e g., for housing developments up to 10 stories that are in proximity (within 1.5 km) of rapid transit stations and reducing car dependency.
Supports Objectives of the HAF: The new Downtown Event and Entertainment District will bring new life and energy to Downtown by incorporating a mix of uses that support a complete community. A vibrant downtown attracts more people to live Downtown by creating a sense of community that provides a place for people to come together.
Duration and Timeliness: The Plan will be completed and brought forward for City Council consideration by mid-2024. Development within the Plan area may begin sooner than Plan completion, provided development approvals are in place.
Supply and System Impact: The City’s Growth Plan identified the Downtown as a strategic infill opportunity. The Downtown Event and Entertainment District will be a critical component to achieving the City’s strategic infill targets.

Initiative 2: Implement new High-Density Mixed-Use Land Use Designation in the Official Community Plan (under way)

Description: Land designated as High-Density Mixed-Use in the Official Community Plan will have the potential for development that may include a broad range of residential, commercial, office, cultural and community uses. These lands will be served by collector or arterial streets, incorporate human-scaled, pedestrian-oriented and transit-oriented design and development principles and are within walking distance to Bus Rapid Transit station(s) and the Downtown. These lands may be located within the Downtown, City Centre and/or Strategic Infill Areas.

CMHC Initiative: Allowing increased housing density (increased number of units and number of storeys) on a single lot including promoting missing middle housing forms typically building less than 4 stories.

Supports Objectives of the HAF: This initiative will support infill development by providing a policy framework for high-density mixed-use sites within walking distance of a rapid transit station and/or the Downtown. This, in turn, creates a complete community with a diverse mix of land uses that supports a low-carbon community.

Duration and Timeliness: The new land use district will be considered by Council for approval by mid-2023. Immediately following Council approval of the amendments, the new policies would be implemented.

Supply and System Impact: The new High-Density Land-Use Designation will provide flexibility and certainty for developers who wish to develop within a mixed-use high-density development in a location other than the Downtown, provided the criteria are met.

Initiative 3: Implement new Corridor Zoning Districts (under way)

Description: New zoning districts enabling Transit-Oriented Development are being introduced as part of the Corridor Planning Program. The City will be implementing these new zoning districts by rezoning properties within the Corridor Areas to provide for development as-of-right.

CMHC Initiative: Promoting high-density development without the need for rezoning (as-of-right zoning), e.g., for housing developments up to 10 stories that are in proximity (within 1.5 km) of rapid transit stations and reducing car dependency.

Supports Objectives of the HAF: This initiative supports the objectives of the HAF by creating a zoning framework for development in proximity to the City's planned Bus Rapid Transit system. This change will help shift the balance of development towards infill which supports climate resilience, will help to support Transit and our city to grow in a more efficient way, thereby providing for affordable, inclusive, equitable and diverse communities.

Duration and Timeliness: The new zoning districts will be considered by Council for approval in mid-2023. Administration is developing a framework to appropriately rezone properties within the Corridor areas.

Supply and System Impact: The new zoning districts will increase stability and predictability. The as-of-right zoning provides developers access to properties that do not require rezoning, thereby increasing certainty for the development community and decreasing potential time delays.

The new zoning districts will encourage growth and redevelopment along major transportation corridors to reduce outward growth pressures, provide more housing options close to employment areas and enhance transportation choices throughout the city. Development within the Corridor areas will provide more housing options for people who want to live a more urban, walkable lifestyle with nearby jobs and readily accessible amenities and services.

Initiative 4: Reduce Parking Requirements with a Focus on Affordable Housing Development (in development)
<p>Description: This initiative will be approached in two phases:</p> <p>In phase 1, Administration will propose reductions in parking requirements for affordable housing projects. Proposed parking reductions will be based on criteria including promoting development in priority areas in the City.</p> <p>Phase 2 will consist of a broader review and gradual reductions of overall parking requirements.</p>
<p>CMHC Initiative: Implementing revised parking requirements such as reduced or eliminated parking spaces for new developments</p>
<p>Supports Objectives of the HAF: The affordable housing parking reductions will be based on specific criteria to incentivise affordable housing as well as development in priority areas of the City.</p> <p>Parking reductions will create more housing supply by providing additional units where there are site constraints as a result of parking requirements. Reduced parking requirements also reduce developer costs, which in turn are passed on to homeowners/renters.</p>
<p>Duration and Timeliness: Research, engagement and proposed amendments to the Zoning Bylaw for affordable housing may be completed within the year. Immediately following Council approval of the amendments, new parking requirements would be implemented. Phase 2 is anticipated to begin this year with completion anticipated for 2025.</p>
<p>Supply and System Impact: Changes to parking regulations will allow for efficient use of land, which reduces the cost of development and provides for more units developed on a site. It is also anticipated these changes may encourage new affordable housing by providing developers additional flexibility for site design without the requirement for an additional development approval process, such as contract zoning, particularly on smaller infill sites, increasing affordability and reducing sprawl.</p>

Initiative 5: Remove Barriers to Accessory Dwellings Development (under way)
<p>Description: Propose Zoning Bylaw amendments for accessory dwellings to remove barriers including, but not limited to, the potential to allow for up to two accessory dwellings on a site and two-storey garden and garage suites in newer neighbourhoods.</p>
<p>CMHC Initiative: Encouraging Accessory Dwelling Units - a second smaller unit on the same property as a primary unit.</p>
<p>Supports Objectives of the HAF: The amendments to the Zoning Bylaw will promote accessory dwelling units in existing neighbourhoods which help to limit sprawl and reduce greenhouse gas emissions by providing for new units in areas with existing infrastructure.</p>
<p>Duration and Timeliness: The review of accessory dwellings will begin immediately and is anticipated to complete in 2024. Immediately following Council approval of the amendments, the new policies would be implemented.</p>
<p>Supply and System Impact: Promoting the development of accessory dwellings increases the supply in existing neighbourhoods without dramatically changing the form and character of a neighbourhood. This can optimize the use of municipal infrastructure and services. In addition, accessory dwellings require fewer resources to build than a single-family home and tend to have lower operating and energy costs.</p>

Initiative 6: Streamline Supportive Housing Zoning Bylaw Regulations (under way)
Description: Develop a standardized and consistent approach for supportive housing zoning regulations as well as identify and potentially implement tools that would enable additional flexibility for these uses.
CMHC Initiative: Promoting and allowing more housing types that serve vulnerable populations.
Supports Objectives of the HAF: Supportive housing has many community benefits and is integral to building complete communities. Supportive housing provides on-site support to ensure people can achieve and maintain housing stability and have the choice to live in neighbourhoods they have a connection with.
Duration and Timeliness: The review of supportive housing zoning regulations will begin immediately and is anticipated to complete in 2024. Immediately following Council approval of the amendments, the new policies would be implemented.
Supply and System Impact: Research has shown that supportive housing can be highly effective in achieving better health outcomes and helps people in need maintain stable housing. Providing for additional flexibility for these uses provides developers and operators more certainty to develop supportive housing projects.

Initiative 7: Create a New Development Incentives Program (in development)
Description: Create a new development incentives program that aligns with the City's priorities for growth and development.
CMHC Initiative: Implementing incentives, costing or fee structures, for example density bonusing, to encourage such things as affordable housing and conversions from non-residential- to residential.
Supports Objectives of the HAF: This initiative supports the objectives of the HAF by creating incentives for developments that align with the City's priorities including affordable housing, missing middle development along rapid transit corridors, development of the Downtown into a complete community and brownfield redevelopment.
Duration and Timeliness: The review of incentives will begin immediately. If deemed appropriate, some incentives may be brought forward for consideration prior to completion of the entire review in order to allow developers to start taking advantage of them, once those incentives are confirmed.
Supply and System Impact: Through engagement during the project, Administration will seek input on proposed incentives to ensure they align with the needs of industry stakeholders, thereby increasing the potential for a positive impact.
While incentives can provide some support, housing results would still be dependent on private development interests. System impacts would be dependent on the type and scale of the incentives the City is able to provide.

Initiative 8: Develop a Disincentive Program for Underutilized Properties (in development)
Description: Saskatoon Fire is developing a Bylaw which will disincentivize vacant lots/underutilized properties. The goal is to help with the availability and affordability of housing stock on the market by creating a disincentive for homeowners to keep their properties vacant for the long term.
CMHC Initiative: Implementing disincentives, costing or fee structures to discourage such things as unit vacancy, underdeveloped/idle land and low-density forms of housing
Supports Objectives of the HAF: Vacant and derelict properties have the capacity to negatively impact and damage the quality of surrounding neighbourhoods and communities. The development of these sites can act as a catalyst in revitalisation. It can help make these areas attractive places to live, work and socialise in, supporting economic and social growth and contributing to the creation of more sustainable communities.
Duration and Timeliness: It is anticipated that the new Bylaw will be presented to Council by January 2024. It is expected that owners will be incentivized to start developing their sites in a timely manner following approval of the new Bylaw.
Supply and System Impact: The Bylaw is intended to encourage owners of currently vacant properties to develop their properties into housing and improve the housing supply.
The Bylaw is expected to not only encourage development of currently vacant properties but also encourage current property owners to maintain their properties to ensure they do not fall into disrepair and become uninhabitable.

Initiative 9: Co-locating Fire Halls and Housing (in development)
Description: Saskatoon Fire will be co-locating new fire halls with affordable housing and/or supportive housing.
CMHC Initiative: Enable mixed-use redevelopment of city-owned properties, while, where appropriate, maintaining the current government use, e.g., building housing on top of a library or office space
Supports Objectives of the HAF: This initiative supports the HAF objectives by optimizing the use of land through co-location of housing and fire halls. These new units would be for affordable housing and/or supportive housing.
Duration and Timeliness: While preliminary planning for the development of supportive and/or affordable housing in conjunction with fire halls has begun, it is anticipated that the first fire hall(s) that co-locate affordable housing and/or supportive housing will be available for occupancy in or after 2026.
Supply and System Impact: The number of potential units which could be built with a fire station will depend on location and size of the proposed fire hall. Location and site constraints will determine the number of units that may be appropriate for inclusion with the new fire hall(s).

Initiative 10: Development of City-Owned Properties (in development)
Description: This initiative will focus on increasing the supply of affordable housing in strategic areas by developing City-owned properties with a focus on providing affordable housing options.
CMHC Initiative: Create a process for the disposal of city-owned land assets for the development of affordable housing as-of-right (not requiring rezoning).
Supports Objectives of the HAF: By developing properties that are in City ownership, focus can be on developing properties that support City and Housing Accelerator Fund priorities. Development of these properties will be focused on increasing the supply of affordable housing.
Duration and Timeliness: A framework for the development of City-owned land with a focus on affordable housing will begin in 2023. Sites will be identified, and the City will work with partners to develop these properties in a timely fashion. Site identification will include, but is not limited to, sites that are shovel ready, underutilized City-owned land and other City-owned sites and buildings appropriate for additional development.
Supply and System Impact: Development of City-owned properties assists in the attainment of orderly urban growth. This initiative will focus on increasing the supply of affordable housing in strategic areas of the City.

Initiative 11: Implement Changes to the Development Approval Processes for Affordable Housing Projects that are Consistent with the Official Community Plan (in development)
Description: Determine opportunities to reduce uncertainty of approval, cost and time for affordable housing projects which are consistent with the Official Community Plan. This work will be supported through the development of the Housing Strategy.
CMHC Initiative: Waiving public hearings on all affordable housing projects that conform to the Official Community Plan
Supports Objectives of the HAF: This project would accelerate housing supply by removing barriers to affordable housing projects. By improving clarity for affordable housing projects, this initiative helps create inclusive communities and adds to the overall health and wellbeing of City residents. Increasing housing options also helps reduce demand on emergency services, hospitals and other community facilities by providing stable and affordable housing options for those most in need.
Duration and Timeliness: Waiving public hearings for affordable housing projects that confirm to the Official Community Plan would require a change to the Planning and Development Act and would take a number of years to be completed.
An internal review of the development review processes for affordable housing projects may be considered following completion of the City’s Housing Strategy. This could begin in 2024. Any changes to the development review process would be implemented immediately following Council approval.
Supply and System Impact: Development review processes, such as rezoning applications, can create barriers for the approval of affordable housing projects and create uncertainty for developers, as well as increase costs and time for the project to proceed. Changes which reduce these barriers would be expected to increase supply and create more predictability for developers to build new affordable housing.

Initiative 12: Partnering with Housing Providers to Preserve and Increase the Stock of Affordable Housing (under way)
Description: Create opportunities to embed partnerships, reconciliation, equity, diversity and inclusion to support housing providers in preserving and increasing the stock of affordable housing. This work will be supported through the development of the Housing Strategy.
CMHC Initiative: Partnering with non-profit housing providers to preserve and increase the stock of affordable housing.
Supports Objectives of the HAF: Building and elevating partnerships with housing providers and other stakeholders can yield innovative approaches that create more affordable housing options for residents. Creating more housing options helps create inclusive communities and adds to the overall health and wellbeing of City residents. Further, increasing housing options helps reduce demand on emergency services, hospitals and other facilities by providing stable and affordable housing options for those most in need.
Duration and Timeliness: The City will continue to build and elevate partnerships with housing providers and other stakeholders to preserve and increase the stock of affordable housing.
Supply and System Impact: Building strong partnerships can yield innovative approaches for preserving and increasing the stock of affordable housing as well as building capacity in the industry. Through this work, the City and its partners can identify and better address areas where change is needed to ensure that affordable housing projects succeed.

Initiative 13: Accelerate the Development of Complex Care Housing Through Partnerships (in development)
Description: Partner with all levels of government and community partners to develop complex care housing. This work will be supported through the development of the Housing Strategy.
CMHC Initiative: Promoting and allowing more housing types that serve vulnerable populations
Supports Objectives of the HAF: Complex care housing provides an enhanced level of integrated health and social supports for vulnerable populations. Increasing complex care housing options helps reduce demand on emergency services, hospitals, shelters and other facilities by providing stable housing options for those most in need.
Duration and Timeliness: The City will partner with the other levels of government and community partners to accelerate the development of complex care housing in Saskatoon. Joint commitment from all levels of government and community partners will be essential to the success of this initiative.
Supply and System Impact: Individuals with complex care needs such as mental health or substance abuse disorders are often left to experience homelessness or are at risk of eviction. Complex care housing addresses the needs of people who have complex challenges by providing safe and supportive housing that meets their specific needs. This, in turn, helps reduce the demand on other services such as shelters, hospitals and other community facilities.