

Housing Accelerator Fund – Official Community Plan Amendments

APPLICATION SUMMARY

In 2023, City Council approved the Housing Action Plan (Action Plan) for the City of Saskatoon's (City) application to the Government of Canada's Housing Accelerator Fund. Several amendments to policies and regulations are required to implement the initiatives outlined in the Action Plan.

This report includes amendments to the Official Community Plan (OCP) to enable permitting as-of-right four dwelling units on a site in all residential zoning districts and four storey multiple-unit dwellings within 800 metres of planned bus rapid transit stations.

RECOMMENDATION

That a copy of this report be submitted to City Council recommending that at the time of the public hearing, City Council consider Administration's recommendation that the proposed amendments to Bylaw No. 9700, Official Community Plan Bylaw, 2020, as outlined in this report, be approved.

BACKGROUND

Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF)

The HAF is an incentive program provided by the Government of Canada that supports local governments in boosting housing supply by requiring them to undertake transformational initiatives, specifically:

- Encouraging Missing Middle Housing – Missing middle housing is defined as the gap between single family homes and mid-rise apartment buildings and consists of buildings up to four storeys; and
- Ending Exclusionary Zoning – Exclusionary zoning is a type of regulation that excludes or does not permit certain types of housing.

City Council, at its Regular Business [meeting](#) held on May 31, 2023, approved the [Action Plan](#) for the City of Saskatoon's application to HAF. The Action Plan outlines initiatives intended to increase housing supply at an accelerated pace and enhance certainty in the building approval process. City Council, at its Regular Business [meeting](#) on November 22, 2023, approved the amendments to the Action Plan.

INCREASING HOUSING SUPPLY

The initiatives in the Action Plan are a generational shift in what housing looks like in Saskatoon. They will make it easier to build various types of homes by expanding the types of housing in our communities. As noted in the OCP, a variety of housing choices provides options for residents, contributes to the long-term stability of neighbourhoods and creates a varied built form.

Growth Monitoring Report

The [Growth Monitoring Report](#) provides information on how the city is growing. In 2022, half of the city's housing stock was one-unit dwellings, with over 80% occurring in greenfield areas. Demand for residential land is estimated based on assumptions of population growth, household size and density of development. Demand can also be influenced by interest rates, general strength of the economy and affordability.

In 2023, Saskatoon grew by an estimated 12,500 to 15,300 people. Based on the 2021 Census and an average household size of 2.4 persons per household, 5,875 dwellings would have been required to match the growth experienced in the city. According to CMHC, there were 2,444 housing starts in 2023 with 2,032 completions.

The current and projected residential servicing over the next three years will accommodate approximately 25,140 residential units or 60,336 people. Of these, 21,335 units are existing inventory and 3,805 would be from newly serviced lots.

According to the [CMHC Rental Market Report – January 2024](#):

- The purpose-built rental apartment vacancy rate fell from 3.4% in 2022 to 2% in 2023. In the north, northeast and southeast zones of the city, the vacancy rates fell below 1%;
- Rent costs increased 9% from October 2022 to October 2023 with the average two-bedroom rent being \$1,360, and
- Available units for low-income families remain scarce, with only 5% of rental stock affordable to families in the lowest income quartile.

According to the [CMHC Housing Market Outlook Report – Spring 2024](#), Saskatoon is predicted to have stable housing market growth, supported by employment growth, a surge in housing demand from younger families and changes to government policy, such as those proposed through the Housing Accelerator Fund.

Changes to regulations, such as the OCP and the Zoning Bylaw, are intended to provide for increased housing development and additional housing types to meet the needs of more people.

Corridor Planning

The City has already started the process of densifying certain areas through its [Corridor Planning Program](#), which looks at how to transform Saskatoon's major transportation corridors into livable places. The initiatives included in the City's Action Plan are an expansion of this direction.

PROPOSED AMENDMENTS

To enable permitting as-of-right four dwelling units on a site in residential zoning districts and four storey multiple-unit development within 800 metres of a planned bus rapid transit station, amendments to Bylaw No. 9700, The Official Community Plan Bylaw, 2020, are required. This report outlines these proposed amendments.

Proposed zoning amendments to permit as-of-right four dwelling units on a site in residential zoning districts and four storey multiple-unit development within 800 metres of a planned bus rapid transit station will be considered in separate reports.

The proposed OCP amendments are:

1. The “Low Density Residential 1” Land Use designation has the potential for one- or two-unit dwellings and community uses. The proposed amendment will consolidate all lands designated “Low Density Residential 1” and “Low Density Residential 2” under a single “Low Density Residential” land use which adopts the current description for “Low Density Residential 2”. A map of the proposed amendment is provided (see Appendix 1).
2. Add the Transit Development Area (TDA)
The TDA is an area that is approximately 800 metres from a planned bus rapid transit (BRT) station and encompasses the Corridor Growth Area. Boundaries are established along well-defined geographical features like arterial and collector streets and the river (for example) to avoid situations such as partial lots and split block faces.

A text amendment is proposed to provide a description of the TDA. The description will identify the TDA as an area that will enable medium density development within approximately 800 meters of a planned rapid transit station. In addition, an amendment is proposed to [OCP Map 3 – Planned Growth](#) and [OCP Map 5 – Urban Form and Structure](#) to include the TDA. An overview is provided in Appendix 2.

3. Text Amendment to the Corridor Mixed Use Land Designation description. Lands designated as Corridor Mixed Use are located on the BRT routes between station locations or on other major transportation corridors in proximity to the BRT routes.

Administration is proposing to increase the maximum height from “two to four storeys”, to “two to six storeys”. This change is to ensure the Corridor Mixed Use land use retains a relatively higher permitted density from surrounding residential uses to encourage development closer to the BRT. Also, as four storey development is proposed to be permitted within the Corridor Residential land use designation, this will provide a transition of density into the neighbourhood from six storeys along the high frequency transit corridors to four storeys within the neighbourhood.

IMPLICATIONS

City Council may choose not to approve the proposed amendments. Should this occur, this may impact funding available to the City that is contingent on the implementation of HAF initiatives as set out in the approved Action Plan. This would also maintain known barriers for housing development.

COMMUNICATIONS AND ENGAGEMENT

Information about the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) is available to the public on the City's Engage Page (saskatoon.ca/HAF), including a short video. Residents have been informed about HAF through a variety of communications methods, in 2024, including:

- A citywide unaddressed mailout the week of February 26;
- Social media promotions and information sharing with Community Associations (March 11, April 18 and April 29);
- Posts on Nextdoor platform (March 11, April 18 and April 30);
- Targeted e-newsletters to over 2300 subscribers; and
- Bus advertisements starting May 27.

A feedback form on the proposed amendments is available to residents on the Engage Page. The dates provided are as of the date of writing this report. Additional information sharing opportunities including Public Open Houses will occur in May and June in advance of a Public Hearing. Summaries of community feedback are provided on the Engage Page (saskatoon.ca/HAF).

As noted in previously reports, due to the constrained timelines of these amendments, an abbreviated approach to engagement was undertaken and feedback received has been considered in the proposed amendments.

Should these amendments be approved, communications will be developed to share information about changes to all affected stakeholders.

PUBLIC NOTICE

Public notice is required for consideration of this matter, pursuant to Section 11(a) of Council Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice.

Once this application has been considered by the Municipal Planning Commission, it will be advertised in accordance with Council Policy No. C01-021, Public Notice and a date for a public hearing will be set. A notice will be placed in The StarPhoenix a minimum of two weeks prior to the public hearing.

APPENDICES

1. Low Density Residential Land Use Designation Amendments
2. Transit Development Area

REPORT APPROVAL

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