

Comprehensive Housing Strategy - 2019 Annual Update

Date	June 16, 2020
To	Mayor's Housing Commission
From	City Planning & Community Development
Service Area	Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services
Item No.	MHC20-4

RECOMMENDATION

Mayor's Housing Commission recommends that City Council receive and file this report at its June 24, 2020 meeting.

ISSUE

City Council approved the Comprehensive Housing Strategy (CHS) and implementation plan in 2013. This report serves as an annual update on implementation for 2019 as well as an assessment of Regina's current housing conditions. A CHS implementation report is provided to the Mayor's Housing Commission (MHC) and City Council on an annual basis.

Note that the housing updates provided in this report are based on 2019 data and do not take into consideration the impact of COVID-19 on Regina's housing market. Administration is tracking the impacts of COVID-19 on housing and will update the Mayor's Housing Commission as data becomes available.

IMPACTS

Financial Impacts

In 2019, the City of Regina (City) committed \$2.5 million in capital grants and an estimated value of \$621,331 in new municipal tax exemptions under the Housing Incentives Policy (HIP). When considering the City's existing funding commitments, the balance of the Social Development Reserve (SDR) which funds the HIP's capital grant program is \$2,654,227. Administration expects strong uptake of the HIP's capital grant program again in 2020,

reducing the uncommitted balance of the SDR by another \$2.5 million to \$154,227 by the beginning in 2021. This means there is no funding available for this program in 2021. A budget request to establish a long-term funding source will be submitted as part of 2021 budget deliberations.

Environmental Impacts

Design Regina: The Official Community Plan Bylaw 2013-48 established a target of 30 per cent of population growth over the next 25 years to occur as intensification within the city's infill boundary. Ongoing monitoring of the infill/greenfield split and rental vacancy rates continue. The split for 2019 was 5.4 per cent infill and 94.6 per cent greenfield. Continued infill and multi-unit development will help the city decrease its environmental footprint with more concentrated population density requiring less expansion of streets, pipes and other infrastructure.

Incentives to encourage housing development where residents can benefit from proximity to jobs, services and be less auto-dependent, were considered with a review of the HIP in 2015. For 2019, 36 per cent of units receiving capital grants for affordability were located within the infill boundary. This is an increase from 2018 when 25 per cent of funded units were infill developments. The location of affordable and below market units will continue to be monitored with implementation of the HIP.

Policy and/or Strategic Implications

The strategies of the CHS align with the City's policy objectives as outlined in the housing policies of *Design Regina, The Official Community Plan Bylaw 2013-48* (OCP).

Administration intends to begin work on an update to the CHS beginning in 2021. The housing situation in Regina has changed considerably since the CHS was approved by City Council in 2013 and work is required to review and update the goals and objectives of the Strategy to reflect current housing conditions. Administration will update the Commission on the work plan before it commences.

Accessibility Implications

Development criteria established for eligibility in the City's housing incentives programs encourages development of accessible units. The scorecard used to evaluate applications for capital funding provides additional points for developments that include ten per cent accessible units. This is double the five per cent required as per *The Uniform Building and Accessibility Standards Regulations*.

OTHER OPTIONS

Mayor's Housing Commission can choose to receive and file this report.

COMMUNICATIONS

Regina.ca is kept up to date with all documents related to the CHS, as well as reports and information on housing data and new policy documents. Updates to the HIP can be found on Regina.ca along with a housing brochure and interactive map that allows users to search for incentives based on location and housing type.

Administration will continue to:

- Notify and communicate with the public and stakeholders on the strategies identified for public consultation in the CHS implementation plan.
- Receive feedback and engage non-profit housing providers, private developers and housing advocacy groups to build partnerships and discuss housing policies and programs of the City.
- Meet with Saskatchewan Housing Corporation and CMHC to discuss how the City's housing policies and incentive programs align with policies and incentives offered by the provincial and federal governments. The MHC provides a forum for discussion, advice and recommendations for the implementation of the CHS.

DISCUSSION

Background

In February 2013, consultants completed the CHS, a project to evaluate Regina's housing issues, to research and develop strategies to address these issues and to define the role of the City. Background research and the strategy framework were reviewed and vetted by a group of 19 industry stakeholders representing all sectors of housing as well as members of Administration. The CHS, along with Administration's recommendations, identified 28 strategies for implementation and six strategies for further consideration, with one strategy deemed unfeasible.

Annual Housing Update

The annual housing update for 2019 is provided in Appendix A of this report. The update includes information on:

- Actions taken to implement CHS strategies
- Ongoing housing challenges
- Uptake of the City's Housing Incentives Policy in 2019
- Housing statistics.

Implementation of the CHS

The following list contains highlights of implementation in 2019. A description of the strategies and implementation to date are included in Appendix B.

- **Housing Incentive Program (HIP).** In 2019 Administration undertook a comprehensive review of the City's Housing Incentives Policy (HIP) to identify revisions to City

incentive programs to focus incentives towards Regina's critical housing needs. These revisions were approved by City Council in January 2020.

- **Homelessness.** On June 20, 2019, a five-year Plan to End Homelessness for Regina was released. On April 29, 2020, City Council endorsed the Plan, committed \$20,000 to support its administration as recommended in the Plan, called on the provincial and federal governments to endorse and fully finance the Plan, and directed Administration to develop options on a new homelessness funding stream through the 2021 budget process.
- **Zone Forward.** In August 2019, City Council approved *The Regina Zoning Bylaw, 2019* (No. 2019-19) to regulate land uses and development consistent with the development goal and objectives of the OCP. The Bylaw came into effect on December 16, 2019. The new Zoning Bylaw removes regulatory barriers to the development of new multi-unit and group care housing.
- **Underutilized Land Improvement Strategy (ULIS).** The Underutilized Land Improvement Strategy was approved by City Council in July 2019. The Strategy identifies actions to start in the immediate, short-, medium- and long-term to address barriers to redevelopment of underutilized sites.

A description of each CHS strategy and implementation to date is included in Appendix B and C.

DECISION HISTORY

The CHS was approved by City Council on April 29, 2013.

Subsequently, a Housing Strategy Implementation Plan was approved by City Council on June 10, 2013 which included the preparation of annual reports monitoring the implementation of the CHS.

Respectfully submitted,



Laurie Shalley, Director, Parks, Recreation & Cultural Services

Respectfully submitted,



Diana Hawryluk, Executive Director, City Planning & Community Dev.

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ATTACHMENTS

- Appendix A - Annual Housing Report 2019
- Appendix B - 2019 Implementation Update
- Appendix C - 2019 CHS Scorecard