



MEMORANDUM

TO: Mayor Bonnette and Members of Council

FROM: Damian Szybalski, Director of Economic Development, Innovation and Culture

DATE: June 14, 2022

MEMO NO.: ADMIN-2022-0007

SUBJECT: Next Steps in Advancing Housing Affordability

PURPOSE OF THE MEMORANDUM:

The purpose of this Memorandum is to provide Council with an overview of the realigned approach being implemented by Town staff to continue to deliver on Council's Strategic Plan priority of ensuring that housing is accessible to all residents at any age and stage in life.

BACKGROUND:

In a relatively short period of time, the Town has made important progress towards implementing Council's Strategic Plan priority of ensuring that housing is accessible to all residents at any age and stage in life. This progress recognizes the Town's relatively limited scope in delivering affordable housing versus Halton Region and other levels of government, and the Region's role as the service provider of affordable housing. Although more remains to be done, highlights of progress include:

- Including affordable housing directives, policies, goals, objectives and/or initiatives into the Town's Official Plan, Secondary Plans, Strategic Plan, workplans and budget(s);
- Establishing strong relationships with key housing affordability stakeholders, including Halton Region, for-profit and non-profit housing providers, and government agencies such as CMHC;
- Helping to advance a number of affordable housing projects and proposals;
- Increasing permissions and awareness for two-unit house creation;

- Supporting affordable housing construction by waiving, reducing and/or deferring Town fees and charges for the development of affordable housing, on a case-by-case basis;
- Forming the Affordable Housing Working Group to develop, recommend and guide actions that respond to the Town's affordable housing needs;
- Assigning staff resources to coordinate affordable housing initiatives;
- Gathering and analyzing data to understand local affordable housing needs;
- Assessing and advancing Town-owned surplus properties to facilitate the provision of additional affordable housing, including the proposed development for 17 Guelph Street;
- Incorporating affordable housing as a focus area in the update of the Town's Community Improvement Plan (CIP), with associated financial supports;
- Approving capital funding to prepare the Town's first-ever Affordable Housing Action Plan;
- Launching and implementing an [affordable housing engagement and awareness strategy](#), developed with in-house resources, which included public consultation through Let's Talk Halton Hills (over 800 visitors aware), Virtual Open House (over 90 participants), logo and brochure/flyer development, media releases, online polls, creation of a dedicated affordable housing webpage, engagement of high school students, media coverage (e.g. COGECO, Metroland), and social media and conference coverage; and
- Establishing a cross-departmental Town staff team to review opportunities, policies and legislation related to affordable housing.

Council has been provided with updates on the work of the Affordable Housing Working Group, including about the above mentioned accomplishments, through multiple reports/presentations. Most recently this has included the [2021 Invest Halton Hills Annual Report](#), and reports [ADMIN-2022-0018](#) and [PD-2021-0047](#). This is in addition to project-specific updates related to the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) and 17 Guelph Street. Regular updates were also provided to the Affordable Housing Working Group.

COMMENTS:

1. Town and Regional Context

Recognizing that housing is a shared responsibility between all levels of government and the private and non-profit sectors, the Town is committed to maintaining momentum in responding to the housing affordability challenge, while recognizing the Town's role.

Unlike Halton Region, which is responsible for the creation and protection of government assisted housing¹ in Halton, the Town does not have this role. Under the

¹ "Assisted housing mostly relates to rental accommodation operated by non-profit and co-operative housing providers (community housing). The assistance may come in the form of capital programs, operating subsidy to housing providers and rental subsidy to eligible households." - Halton State of Housing Report, 2020

Housing Services Act, Halton Region is the Municipal Service Manager responsible for housing and is required to develop and implement a 10-year Housing and Homelessness Plan. The Region has in place a [Comprehensive Housing Strategy](#) with a focus on meeting the housing needs of Halton residents. Under the provincial *Housing Services Act*, the Region is required [to review the Strategy every five years](#). The Comprehensive Housing Strategy is supported by a multi-year financial plan which includes over \$100 million in Regional social infrastructure investments. Halton Region is also required to manage a community housing waiting list, referred to as the “Halton Access to Community Housing (HATCH)” waitlist. The Strategy’s actions are focused on:

- Creating a range and mix of new housing to meet the needs of the Halton community;
- Protecting existing rental housing so that it continues to be available to Halton residents; and
- Providing coordinated services to residents who need support to obtain or maintain their housing.

The Region also publishes an annual [State of Housing Report](#) to review Halton’s housing supply and demand.

Overall, Halton Region is positioned as being the “steward of the local housing system”.

2. Advancing Housing Affordability

Building on successes achieved thus far, acknowledging where the Town can make the most impact versus Halton Region’s role, recognizing the status of existing affordable housing projects, reflecting on current staff resource limitations and pre-existing needs, and recognizing the Town’s limited financial capacity, now is the appropriate time for the Town to adopt a new and realigned approach to housing affordability initiatives. Specifically, it is recommended that the Town adopt a cross-departmental approach and maintain momentum by:

- Leveraging the Region’s designated role and expertise as the lead in housing affordability, especially its responsibility for funding, planning, delivering and administering government-assisted housing programs and services.
- Shifting from an advocacy role by Town staff to a support, liaison and coordinator role with Halton Region and any other appropriate stakeholders.
- Realigning and continuing to embed relevant housing affordability functions within appropriate Town departments by leveraging their existing functions, processes and expertise. This will support a cross-departmental approach and recognize the status of the Town’s housing affordability initiatives. As illustrated in Figure 1, Economic Development will advance housing affordability through the new financial incentive(s) offered by the new Community Improvement Plan (CIP). In addition, by leveraging the existing Business Concierge program, a scoped ‘Housing Affordability Concierge’ service will be provided for select

projects. Recognizing the Town's role and resource limitations, on an as-needed basis, the latter will assist proponents in navigating the development process and provide tailored project management/coordination assistance. The focus will be on strategic housing projects that generate significant community benefits. This may include purpose-built affordable rental and/or ownership housing on Town-owned/surplus lands, financial benefits related to the sale of surplus lands, social benefits by providing support services, mixed use development, downtown revitalization and/or brownfield redevelopment related to CIP incentives. Staff will monitor this new service and report back to Council as appropriate. Land use policy and development tools, including the Official Plan and Zoning By-law, as well as making recommendations to Council on development applications with an affordability component will continue to be done through Planning and Development, per normal practice. Planning tools will continue to be used to encourage the private sector to provide a broad mix of unsubsidized rental and ownership housing. Any development issues will be addressed through the regular Development Review Committee process. Recreation and Parks staff will assist by leveraging any Town-owned and/or surplus lands for affordable housing opportunities, and by representing the Town on any projects located on municipally-owned lands. Halton Region will remain the lead for government-assisted housing. As appropriate, the Region may also lead/coordinate Requests for Expression of Interest (REOI) processes for affordable housing projects. As needed, a cross-departmental team of Town staff will monitor, review and report on relevant housing announcements, legislation, funding opportunities and other matters.

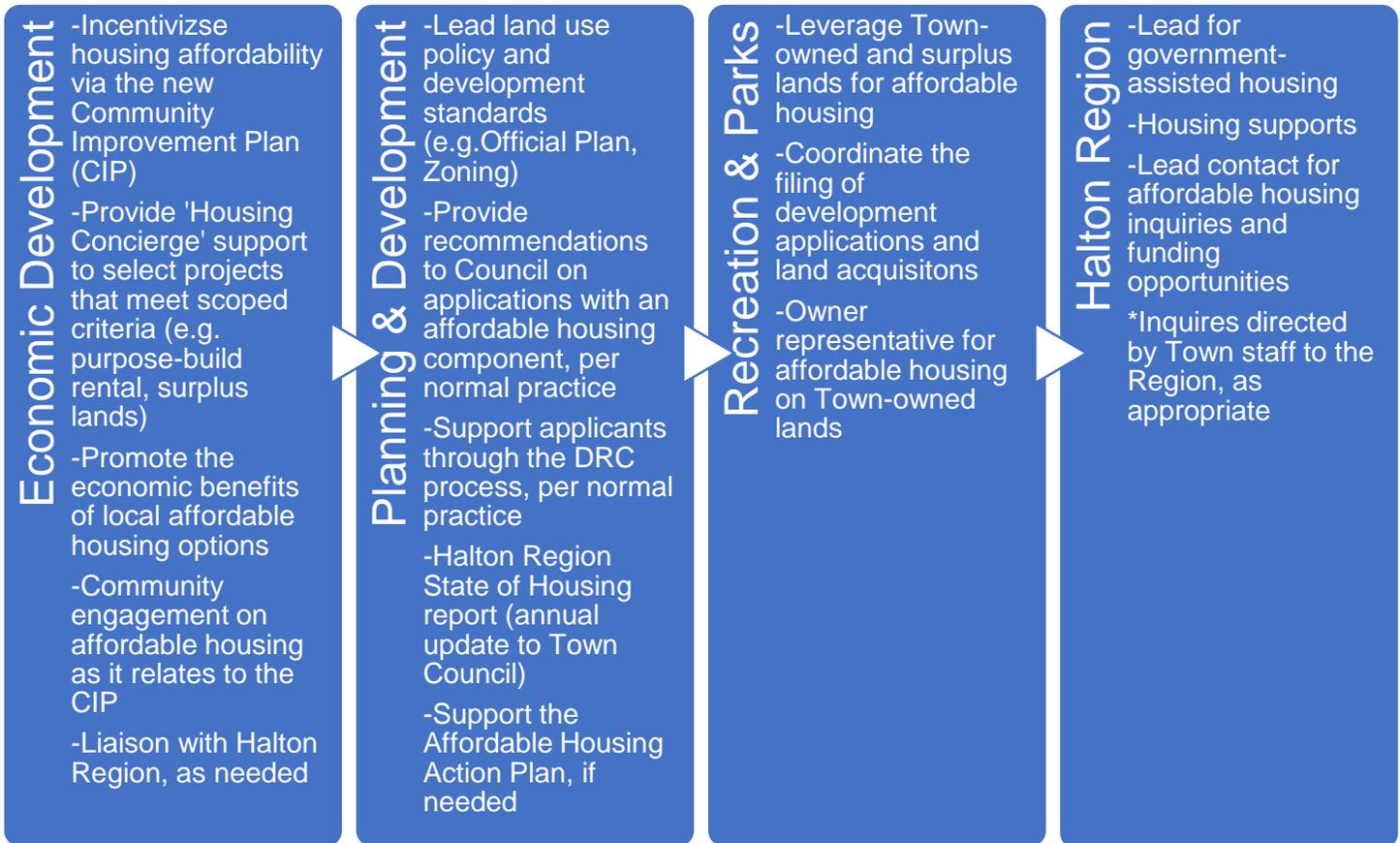
- Focusing on the "Non-Assisted" component of the Housing Continuum, which includes affordable and market rental and ownership housing (Figure 2). This would be supplemented by continued collaboration with Halton Region to advance the "Government Assisted" end of the housing continuum, which includes special needs and assisted housing (e.g. emergency shelters, supportive housing, community housing). The continuum recognizes that housing needs change as individual circumstances evolve over time. The government's role changes along the continuum, from direct funding (on the left) to a policy and planning role (on the right).
- Incentivizing local affordable housing projects through the Town's new Community Improvement Plan (CIP), which includes a 20-year Development Charge Deferral Program.
- Maximizing Town-owned and surplus lands for more affordable or "attainable" housing options, especially affordable rental options.

Further, it is recommended that, at this time, any additional housing affordability initiatives be tabled and considered as part of the preparation of Council's new Strategic Plan. Doing so will provide an opportunity to further assess the Town's role in affordable housing in the context of overall Council priorities, and available staff and financial resources. If needed, any direction arising out of the Strategic Plan, including the Town's role (recognizing Halton Region's role) and resource requirements, would be

explored through the preparation of the Affordable Housing Action Plan. As appropriate, any refinements to the approach for moving forward may also be made.

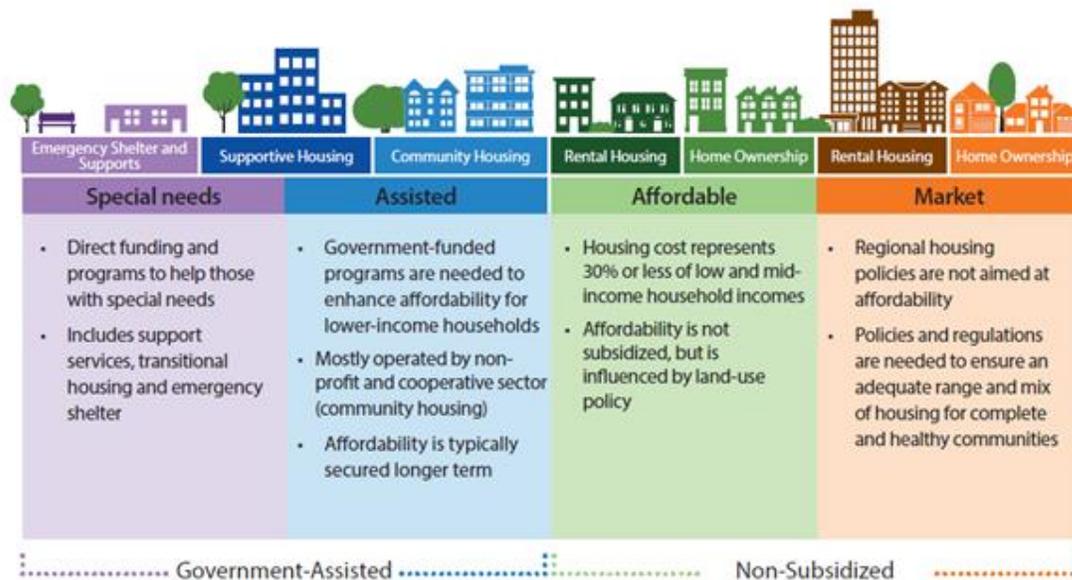
The realigned approach was discussed with the Affordable Housing Working Group at its June 7, 2022 meeting. The Working Group was in support.

Figure 1: Realigned and Embedded Delivery of Housing Affordability



**Supported by a cross-departmental team*

Figure 2: Housing Continuum



Source: Halton Region Comprehensive Housing Strategy

3. Next Steps

Key next steps in continuing to deliver on Council’s housing affordability priority include:

- Continuing to advance existing and pending affordable housing projects, which may be in the conceptual stage or at a more advanced stage and/or proceeding through the development review or construction stage.
- Pending development of the new Strategic Plan, determining the need to proceed with the Affordable Housing Action Plan and its Terms of Reference.
- Leveraging, as needed, the cross-departmental staff team to monitor and coordinate the review and response to any new announcements, partnership opportunities, legislative changes and/or funding sources related to housing affordability.
- Continuing to embed appropriate elements of housing affordability across the organization.

Recognizing successes achieved to date and the pending development of a new Strategic Plan, at its June 7, 2022 meeting, the Affordable Housing Working Group moved to sunset the Working Group. Since its establishment about two years ago, the objectives of the Working Group, which generally focused on building partnerships, research, identifying local housing needs, identifying barriers to the creation of affordable housing units and potential solutions, recommending actions and priorities, exploring incentives, and undertaking community engagement, have largely been accomplished. Anything remaining and further consideration, can be explored through the new Strategic Plan and/or the Affordable Housing Action Plan, as appropriate. The Working Groups’ accomplishments provide a solid roadmap for future initiatives.

The Working Group has been an excellent resource to help guide the Town's housing affordability initiatives. Its valuable contributions and dedication are very much appreciated. The need to re-establish a Working Group or a new advisory committee will be evaluated following the development of Council's new Strategic Plan.

CONCLUSION:

Expanding local affordable housing options for current and future residents is important to maintaining a high quality of life, creating a complete community, enabling existing residents to remain in the community, and attracting and retaining businesses. Through the approach outlined in this Memorandum, the Town will continue to effectively and efficiently advance the goal of having housing that is accessible to all residents at any age or stage of life.

Reviewed and approved by,

Chris Mills, Chief Administrative Officer