

City of Kenora's Enabling Affordable Housing Action Plan 2018



Lake of the Woods
KENORA



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Introduction

The City of Kenora's *Official Plan* and *Strategic Plan: 2015 to 2020*, has made affordable housing a key principle and priority in guiding community development into the future. Both of the strategic documents speak to the City supporting housing in an integrated manner within new or existing development. They also reflect on a mix and range of housing types that meets the physical and financial needs of all current and future residents.

To help inform these commitments, City staff have completed multiple studies including the 2014 *Affordable Housing Study* and the *State of Housing Report*. Through the latter, core housing need in the community was determined and a series of problem statements in Kenora's housing market were formulated. These statements have been used as part of the assessment process for policy tools to be included as part of an *Enabling Housing Action Plan*.

"There is a lack of multi-residential stock that creates a challenge in improving the standard of living for those with low to moderate incomes and adapting to the growing prevalence of lone-parent households and ageing demographics."

"The combination of high rental rates and housing prices in private developments and a long waiting list for subsidized housing, creates a risk of homelessness for low income households."

"Kenora's existing housing stock is ageing resulting in higher energy costs and repairs that affect affordability."

-City of Kenora's State of Housing Report (2017)

To reiterate the *State of Housing Report*, the action plan serves to complement Kenora District Services Board's (KDSB) *Ten-year Housing and Homelessness Plan* with its homelessness and assisted non-market housing focus. The action plan is not meant to duplicate the roles and/or responses from the KDSB/non-profit housing providers, rather it serves to make some changes to inform, influence and assist the market with meeting community's housing needs.

Action Plan

Focus Area: Financial Incentives

Action #1: Incent new rental housing construction by maintaining a “New Multi-Residential” tax rate for Residential properties.

Priority: Immediate (1 year)

Lead: Finance

Action #2: Create arrangements to provide affordable housing through Municipal Housing Capital Facilities Agreements.

Priority: Short-term (1-2 years)

Lead: Economic Development/Special Projects

Action #3: Enhance financial incentives available for affordable housing and energy efficiency in the City’s Community Improvement Plans (CIPs).

Priority: Medium-term (2-5 years)

Lead: Planning/Economic Development/Special Projects

Focus Area: Policies and Procedures

Action #1: Complete a Comprehensive Review – Vacant Land and Growth Analysis

Priority: Short-term (1-2 years)

Lead: Planning

Action #2: Establish a policy to increase the utilization of municipal lands for affordable housing where appropriate and make housing providers aware of lands being disposed of by the City.

Priority: Short-term (1-2 years)

Lead: Economic Development/Special Projects

Action #3: Establish a Local Improvement Charge (LIC) procedure to potentially support developers that seek to address housing needs in the community.

Priority: Short-term (1-2 years)

Lead: Economic Development/Special Projects

Action #5: Develop/acquire affordable housing using a Municipal Service Corporation, i.e. Lake of the Woods Development Commission

Priority: Medium-term (2-5 years)

Lead: Economic Development/Special Projects

Focus Area: Regulatory

Action #1: Review regulations and by-laws to identify unnecessary barriers/disincentives to the creation of affordable housing, in particular small units (e.g. tiny houses, bachelor, one bedroom units) and primary rental housing units and make recommendations for changes to policy and regulations.

Priority: Short-term (1-2 years)

Lead: Planning/Economic Development/Special Projects

Action #2: Create a Development Permit System (DPS) to streamline applications to minimize cost and time for potential housing developers and staff.

Priority: Medium-term (1-2 years)

Lead: Planning

Focus Area: Communication and Education

Action #1: Work with the KDSB as Service Manager on the development of an incentive toolkit and promote any affordable housing programs provided by all levels of government

Priority: Short-term (1-2 years)

Lead: Economic Development/Special Projects

Action #2: Research innovative housing with partners to create a resource document that could be used with other tools to support the development of affordable housing

Priority: Medium-term (1-2 years)

Lead: Economic Development/Special Projects

Action #3: Initiate or support a housing forum in which projects and available incentives are showcased alongside networking opportunities among stakeholders.

Priority: Immediate (1 year)

Lead: Economic Development/Special Projects

Focus Area: Advocacy

Action #1: Incorporate issues related to affordable housing into corporate advocacy efforts.

Priority: Immediate (1 year)

Lead: CAO's Office

Conclusion

The intent behind the *Enabling Affordable Housing Action Plan* is to be a living document over its 5-year time horizon and complementary to on-going updates to the *State of Housing Report*. While recognizing that the housing market is often dictated by trends beyond the local context, it is nonetheless important to measure progress in implementation according to the health of this market. In conjunction with housing starts, progress can also be measured through a number of qualitative indicators including:

- number of housing specific inquiries by developers
- customer satisfaction via survey instruments
- number of days to process applications (zoning, site plan, CIP, etc..)
- number of new housing units meeting affordable criteria

As a non-exhaustive list, there may be new measures that emerge to effectively communicate Kenora's success in incentivizing housing development. As previously indicated, this will be done in conjunction with the KDSB's *Ten-year Housing and Homelessness Plan* with its homelessness and assisted non-market housing focus. Doing so will ensure that Kenora has housing for all members of the community in the present and in the future.