

**Affordable Housing Working Group
Agenda**

September 24, 2019

12 Noon

**Conference Room A, 4th Floor,
City Hall**

ST. JOHN'S

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Affordable Housing Working Group

September 24, 2019

12:00 p.m.

Conference Room A, 4th Floor City Hall

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ST. JOHN'S

Affordable Housing Working Group Minutes

June 26, 2019

12:00 p.m.

Carnell Room, 4th Floor Annex, City Hall

Present:

- Judy Tobin, Manager of Housing, Acting Chair
- Councillor Hope Jamieson
- Jill Snow, CMHC
- Gail Thornhill, Stella's Circle
- Grayson Kelly, NLHC
- Emily Timmons, Poverty Reduction, Gov NL
- Andrew Harvey, First Light
- Doug Pawson, End Homelessness St. John's
- Ayon Shahed, Choices for Youth
- Karen Chafe, Supervisor – Office of the City Clerk

Regrets:

- Simone, Lilly, Affordable Housing & Development Facilitator, Chairperson
- Victoria Belbin, Canadian Homebuilders Association

1. CALL TO ORDER

2. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Moved By Andrew Harvey

Seconded By Grayson Kelly

That the agenda be adopted as presented

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

3. ADOPTION OF MINUTES

3.1 Adoption of Minutes – May 16, 2019

Moved By Andrew Harvey

Seconded By Grayson Kelly

That the minutes of the Affordable Housing Working Group held on May 16, 2019 be adopted as presented.

CARRIED UNANIMOUSLY

4. BUSINESS ARISING

4.1 Information Note: Update and Discussion on Affordable Housing Initiatives

The Acting Chair updated the Committee on the following ongoing initiatives, the details of which are outlined in the above cited Information Note included within the agenda:

- Housing Needs Study Update:
 - This report is finally completed and will be referred to the July 10th Committee of the Whole meeting for recommendation of approval and subsequent final approval by Council.
 - The Committee's direction was requested as to how this should be presented publicly, and it was suggested that the Communications Division be consulted in this regard. As well, sessions could be held to provide further focus. Though the November forum is months away, it could also be highlighted during that time.
- Land Inventory:
 - The City has identified four parcels of land for potential redevelopment.
 - A recommendation is being prepared for one of those and a meeting will be set up in early fall to discuss potential options for the other three parcels of land identified.
- Planning and Building Approval Processes
- Central Housing Waitlist
- Evolution of Non-Market Housing Project:
 - Suggestion was made that this work might be done by someone in the MUN Geography Department and/or find other ways to partner with MUN on this project. Emily agreed to check into potential prospects.
- Social Marketing Strategy:
 - The next meeting for this initiative is July 11th. The Committee will be kept apprised of updates.

- Energy Efficiency Retrofit Project:
 - Ayon referenced his thermal engineering background and experience with conducting energy audits. He suggested that if there's any kind of advisory role, he would be willing to share his experience.
- Non-Market Housing Tool:
 - The City's LIS Division has been consulted in this regard and are keen to assist.
 - The development of this tool could also be leveraged as an asset that other City depts could use in their planning processes.
- Nimby toolkit:
 - Emily noted that she has two summer students to help with projects this summer and one can take on updating the toolkit. She has contacted Simone in this regard, and they will consult with Victoria as to how this should unfold.
- Successful tenancies:
 - A presentation on the reporting of property standards violations through community groups is being worked on by Randy Carew, Manager of Regulatory Services with the City's Dept. of Planning, Engineering & Regulatory Services. He will consult with various community groups and agencies in this regard and he is currently working on his presentation which will be ready in the Fall.

4.2 Information Note: Rental Control Legislation:

The Committee discussed the above noted and the following points are noteworthy:

- Council has received very little feedback on this matter, and it does not appear to be a major area of concern requiring further Council action.
- The information prepared by Sherwin Flight can be considered as information at this point and should remain an internal document providing one perspective on the matter.
- Should Council direct future reconsideration, it is important to have accurate and objective information in addition to the above cited report, including legislative considerations as outlined in the provincially governed Residential Tenancies Act under which the City is governed.
- Affordable housing, as opposed to rent control is the real issue and it was the Committee's consensus that this is where the City's focus

should remain, particularly in terms of its commitment as outlined in its Strategic Directions.

4.3 Upcoming Federal Election

The Committee considered the information note dated May 9, 2019 in relation to affordable housing advocacy as it pertains to the upcoming federal election in October, 2019. The Canadian Housing and Renewal Association (CHRA) has formally launched their election campaign – *A Home for Everyone*, outlining key election messages which can be accessed at this website: <https://www.ahomeforeveryone.ca/>

The Committee discussed whether this campaign should be reinforced by any efforts of this Committee and/or if its own position should be prepared. The following feedback was received from Committee members as a result of the May meeting:

- Not enough purpose-built affordable and supportive housing solutions (e.g. seniors, youth, indigenous, disability etc.)
- Limited integration of housing and homelessness policies with social determinants of health. Continues to be an afterthought vs. part of the start point.
- Stigma around affordable housing; lack of community integration efforts and/or a broad-based communications strategy to de-stigmatize affordable housing.
- Affordability
- Availability/Supply
- Continuum of types (lack of 24 hour staffed facilities for example)

Councillor Jamieson felt the AHWG should outline the issues it sees as important and to question federal candidates on what they can do to address and support those issues. This exercise would be particularly worthwhile if it is tied to the Council approved strategic directions and ten-year strategy on affordable housing. It was agreed that a letter be drafted for the Mayor's signature and that such be presented around mid-September which is timely for the October 19th federal election.

5. NEW ARISING

5.1 Housing Forum - November 22nd

The following ideas were outlined as potential focus topics for the housing forum in November:

- Sessions on homeless people and other vulnerable groups;
- Delve into housing needs assessments around indigenous and seniors - what are the needs for those groups;
- Landlords – how can they work with the organizations that are available to support affordable housing – creating partnerships, etc.;
- Developers – how can they create developments that are marketable as well as affordable;
- Should housing forum be bigger to accommodate more indepth breakout sessions and focus groups? Some felt that the half day format is enough, noting it is tough to keep people engaged beyond that timeframe;
- Efforts should be made to attract people to the forum who would not usually attend but who would have important input. It was suggested that Sherwin Flight’s Facebook page would be an effective tool to assist in spreading the word about the forum;
- Need to focus on success stories outlining a diversified cross section of scenarios/examples;
- Learning topics should be presented such as the Housing Strategy Act and how to interpret it for municipalities, etc. The Provincial Housing and Homelessness report is hopefully coming out this summer and that could be an area of focus.

Jill agreed to assist Simone with the forum’s planning. It is anticipated that a meeting would be scheduled in late summer for this purpose.

6. DATE & TIME OF NEXT MEETING

To be determined.

7. ADJOURNMENT

The meeting adjourned at 1:15 pm.

Judy Tobin
Acting Chairperson

INFORMATION NOTE

Title: Affordable Housing Update

Date Prepared: 09/17/2019

Report To: Affordable Housing Working Group (AHWG)

Issue: Affordable Housing Update

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

Here is an update on some of the main areas of work:

CITY OF ST. JOHN'S HOUSING NEEDS STUDY UPDATE: The final housing needs assessment report was introduced through an information note at the July 10th Committee of the Whole meeting and published on the City of St. John's. A presentation will be held on Housing Need in St. John's and new research and practices to respond to housing trends. Our Housing Need consultant David Harrison is an urban planner, housing advocate and economic development consultant based in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia. David will present on the data as well as his findings and analysis associated with his oversight of the City of St. John's Housing Needs Assessment Report. Following David's presentation, René Babin, Outreach specialist, Canada mortgage and Housing Corporation will speak. René will introduce best practices in housing for communities. He will discuss how we can set up mechanisms to encourage aging in place and will share recent CMHC research and resources. This presentation will help attendees think about housing in a different way and to consider different housing models that meet the needs identified in the Housing Needs Assessment. This event is taking place on Oct 4th and is hosted by the City of St. John's in partnership with CMHC. We hope the AHWG members can be present for this event and contribute to sharing it within their networks

LAND INVENTORY (of City owned land): Work has been underway to identify further parcels of City owned land for potential projects. A new list is being circulated to relevant internal departments for comment in order to add additional parcels to our inventory list.

Plans for one parcel of land will be discussed at the AHWG meeting.

ADVOCACY LETTER:

An advocacy letter has been prepared for Federal Election candidates urging them to make affordable housing a campaign priority. Specifically, to include within their campaign the need to increase access to capital for new social and nonprofit housing developments, provide ongoing funding for repairs and increase federal investments to social supports and supportive housing solutions. The advocacy letter is currently with senior City executive for review. We expect to be able to update the AHWG on this at our September 24th meeting.

CENTRAL HOUSING WAITLIST: We continue to have conversations with CRA re. granting direct access to Option Cs for applicants and tenants. CRA requires legislation that states that we can collect this information. The City of St. John's Act (governing the municipal affairs of St. John's) outlines authority to acquire land, enter into housing agreements, provide housing, adopt Building Codes etc. but does not reference setting rents, collecting rent or verifying income. We have agreements signed with CMHC/NLHC that require us to verify income and dictate how we must calculate rent however these are agreements and do not provide the authority required. NLHC were granted permission under the Housing Corporation Act and the Intergovernmental Affairs Act. CSJ does not qualify under either of these. We are actively trying to address this in the review of the St. John's Act that is currently underway.

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SOCIAL MARKETING STRATEGY: A subcommittee was established with marketing expert representation from Stella's, Choices for Youth, End Homelessness St. John's and the City of St. John's. The most recent meeting was held on August 16th. The subcommittee reviewed and discussed the proposed communications and social marketing plan. Work is underway to develop fact sheets that will debunk some of the fears associated with affordable housing projects and the meeting emphasized the need to use the community engagement tools outlined in the NIMBY toolkit to tackle perceived fears of lowered property values, increased crime, increased traffic etc. A long-term social marketing campaign was proposed to the group with the goal of supporting mixed income and integrated neighbourhoods. Next step is to finalize design and copy during the month of September. This will be vetted through the community partners. There will also be an opportunity for our committee members to bring back information to their organizations for input.

ENERGY EFFICIENCY RETROFIT PROJECT: An energy audit was conducted on a vacant unit targeted for the energy retrofit project. Energy upgrades are now beginning to be implemented.

NON-MARKET HOUSING TOOL: All data for this project has now been mapped against intensification areas and transit routes. Mapping tool was vetted through the interdepartmental affordable housing working group and minor modifications are being made. Screen shot of the internal tool will be shared with the AHWG at our meeting.

NIMBY TOOLKIT: Partnering with Poverty Reduction, Department Children, Seniors and Social Development the NIMBY toolkit is being updated. Discussion on draft case studies that were circulated to the AHWG will take place as part of the broader AHWG agenda.

SUCCESSFUL TENANCIES: Some initial work has been done to connect with key service providers to deliver safe and healthy housing presentations again focusing on educating on the effective identification and reporting of property standard violations. The first presentation is taking place September 20th with Correction Services Canada. We are working to set up additional presentations with relevant stakeholders.

EVOLUTION OF NON-MARKET HOUSING PROJECT: Work on this project has paused. We will require assistance to identify a research avenue to develop this project further.

Conclusion/Next Steps: This update is to inform of progress as well as obtain further direction and guidance from the Affordable Housing Working Group.

Prepared by/Signature: Simone Lilly, Affordable Housing Development Facilitator

Approved by/Date/Signature: Judy Tobin, Manager of Housing Division

INFORMATION NOTE

Title: Housing Week

Date Prepared: 17/09/2019

Report To: Affordable Housing Working Group (AHWG)

Issue: Planning for November 18th- Nov 22nd

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

Planning is underway for the 2019 Affordable Housing Forum. This year additional events are being planned for the full week of the forum.

The following are the draft events being planned

St. John's Housing Week- Draft Public Events

Together. Towards Home.

November 18th

4:30pm

National Housing Day Proclamation at City Council Meeting

November 19th

6:00pm – 9:00pm

Film Screening

Event to include meet and greet, film screening and panel discussion

Film screening of "Push", a documentary film that follows Leilani Farha, the United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Right to Adequate Housing and Executive Director of Canada Without Poverty.

We will host this film screening to draw attention to the growing global housing crisis and to encourage thought and discussion about how the film relates to issues we are concerned about in St. John's. 'Push' documentary explores how housing prices are skyrocketing in cities around the world and incomes aren't keeping up. Although our municipality's context looks less severe, and we are not experiencing the financialization of housing, affordability and security of tenure are real challenges in St. John's. Currently, 1 in 4 are not living affordably.

This film will be used as a tool to discuss our own unique context following the screening. We hope that the evening's discussion will emphasize that

Affordable Housing is:

- a foundation for a safe, prosperous and healthy community;
- a vital part of the infrastructure of our City;
- a human right
- a key pathway out of poverty;
- a sound public investment that contributes to resident well-being and the economy.

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Infographic handouts will be available on the current CSJ housing context – snapshot of what housing need looks like in St John's ex. highlight living wage, vacancy rate, rental rates, affordability levels by income/ career.

Ultimately, we hope this film will inspire discussions about housing solutions and underpin the need for continued advocacy, partnerships and action at a local level- all of which we will unpack at the forum to follow the next day.

November 20th

9:00- 2:00pm

Affordable Housing Forum

The following are draft components we have considered including as part of this year's forum

1. CSJ Strategy- reporting on progress
2. Keynote- Mixed income housing and communities- diversifying revenue and housing models
3. Launch of the NIMBY toolkit

November 21st

Open doors bus tour

Details TBD

November 22

National Housing Day

Tentative Official Opening of Convent Square -Nagle Manor

Conclusion/Next Steps: We would like to discuss with the AHWG members the above draft outline of events, areas of involvement and areas of support. We will be asking the AHWG at this meeting to save the date for event dates/ times

Prepared by/Signature: Simone Lilly, Affordable Housing Development Facilitator

Approved by/Date/Signature: Judy Tobin, Manager of Housing Division

Attachments: N/A

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INFORMATION NOTE

Title: NIMBY Toolkit

Date Prepared: 17/09/2019

Report To: Affordable Housing Working Group (AHWG)

Issue: NIMBY Toolkit Update

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

The Affordable Housing Working Group determined there was value in updating the CHBA NL NIMBY toolkit to include new case studies, an updated contact list and a link to the new Yes-In-My-Backyard video. Drafts of the three new case studies were circulated to the AHWG group for review.

Conclusion/Next Steps: We would like to discuss with the AHWG members their thoughts on the material that was circulated.

Prepared by/Signature: Simone Lilly, Affordable Housing Development Facilitator

Approved by/Date/Signature: Judy Tobin, Manager of Housing Division

Attachments:

Attachment A- Current Toolkit that we are updating can be found at <https://chbanl.ca/building-yes-a-not-in-my-backyard-toolkit/>

INFORMATION NOTE

Title: Housing Catalyst Fund

Date Prepared: 17/09/2019

Report To: Affordable Housing Working Group (AHWG)

Issue: Housing Catalyst Fund

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

The Housing Catalyst Grant is now open for applications. We are hoping to broaden the reach of this grant and the range of applications we receive.

The Housing Catalyst Fund allows the City to be a catalyst for practical and collaborative projects that produce tangible housing solutions. The City's role through this fund is to work collaboratively with community groups and other stakeholders (builders, developers, etc.) to facilitate and plan housing solutions that will enhance the quality of life for individuals and families and build a healthier community.

To be considered, projects must be solution focused and action oriented and must be in line with the City's [Affordable Housing Strategy 2019-2028](#).

Applicants can apply for up to \$10,000 per project. The application deadline is the last Friday in November. Then application can be found here: <http://www.stjohns.ca/forms/housing-catalyst-fund-application>

Conclusion/Next Steps: We would like to discuss with the AHWG members ways we can broaden the reach of this grant opportunity and discuss the 2019 selection committee.

Prepared by/Signature: Simone Lilly, Affordable Housing Development Facilitator

Approved by/Date/Signature: Judy Tobin, Manager of Housing Division

Attachments:

INFORMATION NOTE

Title: Land Project

Date Prepared: 09/23/2019

Report To: Affordable Housing Working Group (AHWG)

Issue: Eric Street Land Project

Discussion – Background and Current Status:

The City of St. John's has a long-standing relationship with Habitat for Humanity. One of the parcels of land that Council approved for potential redevelopment as affordable housing is 28 Eric Street. This parcel of land currently includes the Eric St. Community Garden.

City of St. John's staff have met with Habitat for Humanity and Eric Street Community Garden members to discuss a partnered project on this land. The project would see Habitat for Humanity NL redevelop a portion of the land for affordable home ownership and see the community garden revitalized and incorporated into the build.

A letter of Intent with Habitat for Humanity has been formalized which outlines the intended gifting of the property subject to successful rezoning, development approval and collaboration with the Eric Street Community Garden located on this site to either leave the garden undisturbed or to incorporate the garden into the design. The garden is to remain on this property owned by the City and retain open space zoning.

Should the rezoning be successful, the City will contribute \$2 500 towards the cost of materials to revitalize the garden. City staff will also support the garden apply for additional funding opportunities to enhance the Eric Street Community Garden.

A media release was circulated, and a letter with the above information was delivered to residents in the neighbourhood of the Eric Street Community Garden on Monday September 23rd.

For discussion:

The Affordable Housing Strategy outlines our commitment to identify land for affordable housing opportunities and to support our partners as they work towards affordable home ownership opportunities.

Land will only be gifted if the rezoning is successful. During the rezoning process, there will be opportunity to share concerns as well as support for this project. We would like to discuss with this group ways in which we can show support for this project and the next steps moving forward.

Conclusion/Next Steps: This update is to inform of the Eric Street land project and to gain guidance from the Affordable Housing Working Group.

Prepared by/Signature: Simone Lilly, Affordable Housing Development Facilitator

Approved by/Date/Signature: Judy Tobin, Manager of Housing Division

