

## Affordable housing in focus through draft Official Plan

As the affordability crisis continues, Aurora's draft blueprint for community development will focus on fostering a range and mix of housing to serve a diverse community.

A range of housing is a key tenet of the draft Official Plan (OP) which, once approved, will serve as a document to guide growth within Aurora through 2051.

An appropriate range and mix of housing types and densities are required to meet the needs of current and future residents, reads the draft. In addition to the more conventional housing types such as single detached dwellings and townhouses, the provision of an appropriate range of housing includes buildings geared to seniors, as well as emergency shelters, affordable housing and special needs housing.

In addressing the needs of what has been described as 'the missing middle,' the draft OP defines this sector as housing options that accommodate multiple units at a low-rise scale and built form that are compatible with lower density housing types such as single and semi-detached dwellings.

These housing types are often 'missing' from established neighbourhoods. The provision of a range of housing types, including 'missing middle' housing types, tenures and forms enables people to live in the community as they progress through the stages of life, and helps to address affordability and access to housing.

The draft OP admits that the number of dwelling units to meet the long-term growth targets the document is designed for could vary over time due to market and demographic factors and is written to be flexible in terms of the mix of housing types recommended in the document.

Council shall endeavour to ensure an adequate supply of housing by: maintaining at all times the ability to accommodate residential growth for a minimum 15 years through residential intensification and, if necessary, lands which are designated and available for residential development; maintaining at all times where new development is to occur land with servicing capacity sufficient to provide at least a year supply of residential units available through lands suitably zoned to facilitate residential intensification and redevelopment, and land in draft approved and registered plans.

The construction of new rental units with a full mix and range of unit sizes is encouraged in the draft OP as is a reduction of rental housing by demolition and/or conversion to condos or non-residential use. It shall not be permitted if such demolition or conversion would result in a rental vacancy rate of less than three per cent in the Town.

It is a goal of this plan that a minimum of 35 per cent of all new residential development within the Aurora GO Station Major Transit Area and 25 per cent of all new residential development in the rest of the Town meet the definition of affordable housing.

Goals include higher density and compact housing forms where housing is more affordable due to reduced per unit land costs; ground-related multi-unit housing of various forms to provide affordable family-sized units where housing is more affordable due to both land costs and construction costs; a range of unit sizes in higher density housing forms and building smaller units where housing is more affordable due to lower development and/or redevelopment costs; affordable housing units within subdivisions and large scale developments; and the development of secondary residential dwelling units.

If the draft OP is approved, the new Council will maintain an up-to-date report on Aurora's current residential market and progress towards the achievement of affordable housing objectives and targets.

The Town shall strive to achieve the construction of a minimum of 1,000 purpose-built rental housing units, including family-sized units, within the planning horizon of this Plan in line with a minimum of 500 units between 2021 and 2031; a minimum of 250 units

between 2031 and 2041; and a minimum of 250 units between 2041 and 2051.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter