

Aurora looks to develop an affordable housing pledge to meet provincial objectives

To meet current and future housing needs, municipal staff will be looking to identify a locally appropriate Housing Target and develop a Municipal Housing Pledge that affirms the Town's commitment to accelerate housing supply in partnership with the province.

The motion was formed by Mayor Tom Mrakas in response to the provincial government's objective to try to achieve their target of building 1.5 million homes by 2031.

On June 16, 2023, the Town of Aurora received a request from Minister Steve Clark to demonstrate a commitment to accelerating housing supply through the development of a local Housing Target to 2031 and a Municipal Housing Pledge.

"They've allowed us to look at our housing target from what's locally appropriate for us, instead of giving us a number, and I think [we're] very appreciative of the Minister to allow us to pick the number, because now we can see what is appropriate for our community, and provide that number to the province and be confident that we can meet that number, as well," Mayor Mrakas said.

Around 28 municipalities across the province have provided local Housing Targets and Municipal Housing Pledges so far.

Mayor Mrakas said discussions that follow will also ensure that the pledge aligns with the Town's official plans and will be held before the year ends.

Ward 4 Councillor Michael Thompson said he is in support of the motion as he has seen other municipalities do similar things, but also wants to make sure that the Town has the right services and supports in place "so that we can maintain the needs and expectations of our residents.

"You cannot grow without also looking at the bigger picture and making sure all the other pieces are in place," he said. "So happy to have further conversations about that as part of that pledge to make sure that it's smart and responsible whenever we do grow."

Adding onto Councillor Thompson's point, Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese said he hoped that the definition of affordable housing could be clarified in the pledge.

"It's not surprising seeing the documents that we saw before the province haven't even identified what affordable and attainable housing is. And frankly, if you can't define it, you can't achieve it," he said.

"I'd like that in every document that we send back regarding housing, that we have some measure of affordable housing targets in there for ourselves, and maybe that'll come from the affordable housing action plan."

Mayor Mrakas agreed with Councillor Weese and noted that the current motion is strictly to direct staff to start the work.

"Those are the things that we'll be discussing as we work through developing that pledge," he said.

Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner said that an analysis on the range of prices of housing in Aurora may be beneficial, while adding that most of the housing currently being built is high end.

Director of Planning Marco Ramunno said that the purpose of the pledge is also to inform the Ministry about each municipality's local targets over a 10-year period.

The local Housing Target and Municipal Housing Pledge will be brought forward to Council for approval and be sent to the

province prior to the December 15, 2023 provincial submission deadline.

By Elisa Nguyen