

Council endorses principles of Affordable Housing Action Plan

On December 2, Council voted unanimously to endorse the Town's first-ever Affordable Housing Action Plan, a comprehensive roadmap designed to address the growing housing needs within the community.

The Affordable Housing Action Plan, which is expected to be ratified at Council this week, follows a motion made in February 2023 to address the housing challenges in Aurora.

Planning and Development Services spearheaded the project and collaborated with local organizations like Aurora Cares ? Housing for All, a group dedicated to advocating for people experiencing homelessness in our community, and to develop ways to tackle Town housing issues.

The finalized Action Plan is intended to be a practical, long-term tool that will help guide the Town in municipal housing policy. It sets out six key objectives with 26 action items aimed at improving housing access and affordability.

Among these objectives are increasing housing supply, promoting housing affordability and stability, streamlining zoning and building permit processes, and committing to the ongoing monitoring of the housing climate to regularly reassess and update the plan when needed.

The complete plan is available for review at <https://engageaurora.ca/affordablehousing>.

Amidst some questions about implementation strategies and accountability going forward, Councillors expressed their support for the plan, highlighting it as an important step forward.

Mayor Mrakas thanked the community members and Planning Team for their work on the Action Plan, highlighting the local nature of its goals as its biggest asset.

?York Region has an Affordable Housing Plan, but this one is designed and geared towards implementation in an Aurora context. And I think that's the important thing?that we're building for Aurora for the future,? he said.

The plan was met with some criticism towards the beginning of the meeting, however, by Len Bulmer, a representative of Aurora Cares ? Housing for All who gave feedback on a draft of the plan earlier this year.

He reiterated concerns that it did not provide enough support for those most at risk in our community, stating the group felt that it was too focused on homeownership and did not pay enough attention to providing solutions for those in dire need of housing.

?Efforts need to be especially concentrated on those who need immediate shelter?We endorse the direction and intent expressed in this plan but we remind the Council, we remind the community, that we have to use any and all tools and partnerships?many delineated in this strategy?to achieve our full range of goals,? said Bulmer. ?We need to jump at any opportunity to have emergency transitional housing below market rental housing, homes for people with special needs as well as truly affordable home ownership.?

By Selena Loureiro