

Housing crisis to dominate September as Council returns from summer break

Finding solutions to the ongoing housing crisis will be top-of-mind for local lawmakers this week as Council returns to Town Hall following the summer recess.

Among the issues set to come to the table is bringing forward a formal Housing Pledge, which, once submitted to Queen's Park, will see Premier Doug Ford grant Aurora "Strong Mayor" powers by October 31, as well as a motion from Mayor Tom Mrakas later this month that could see some moves to accelerate housing development.

The Housing Pledge before Council will commit the Town to "facilitating" the construction of 8,000 new homes by 2031.

"The Town of Aurora recognizes the importance of addressing the current housing crisis and has demonstrated leadership and commitment to promoting housing supply and affordability by adopting a motion that directs staff to include modernized housing policies in the Town's updated Official Plan that clearly articulates and defines the Town's strategies and actions on affordable and attainable housing," reads the draft, with Mayor Mrakas as the signatory. "The Town is committed to the intensification of its Major Transit Station Area (MTSA) and Downtown Promenade core and aims to provide diverse housing opportunities for residents.

"Aurora also acknowledges it has an important role in facilitating the construction of 8,000 new homes by ensuring we have an updated municipal planning framework to guide development. We undertake to provide efficient and streamlined processes to facilitate the timely review and approval of development applications and permits. The Town of Aurora has made and commits to making investments in technology and process improvements, all to meet the housing target. Achieving the target relies on partners that are integral in reaching this goal and delivering housing. To be successful, more initiatives and partnerships are required between all levels of government, the home building industry, and the trades sector to increase the supply of housing."

To meet the goals of the housing pledge, the draft document calls on developments currently in the pipeline, as well as those that are proposed, to "follow through to construction, which requires accelerated action and funding from all levels of government to support the delivery of complete communities" through upgrades to infrastructure, rapid transit, schools, hospitals, and social services.

"Locally, we need to create a robust network of community amenities, parks, trails, active transportation, and fire protection services to meet the needs of residents as the community grows. The Town is committed to the development of a complete, healthy, and balanced community and looks forward to working with partners across all sectors to achieve this common goal.

"Aurora Council promises to continue to advocate for a framework to deliver the infrastructure needed to build complete communities and meet Aurora's municipal housing target. This framework must reflect the principle of growth paying for growth and not shift the burden of growth to property taxpayers."

Building on this pledge is a motion from Mayor Mrakas set to come before Council on September 26, calling on the Town to move towards "pre-zoning" some pockets of land to facilitate their development, in concert with the anticipated approval of the Town's refreshed Official Plan.

"The Town of Aurora is making a commitment to the Province by pledging its active role in facilitating the construction of 8,000 new homes by the year 2031," says the Mayor in his motion, tasking the Town to "engage in pre-zoning of lands situated along key thoroughfares."

In this case, those key thoroughfares are identified Leslie, Bayview, Yonge and Wellington.

"This initiative will extend to cover Strategic Growth Areas, such as The Promenade and the MTSA."

He calls for these corridors and designated growth areas to be pre-zoned "with due consideration for suitable building heights and

densities. This pre-zoning shall be designated 'As of Right,' thereby streamlining the development process for residential units.?

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