

January 11, 2018

REPORT TO THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER
FROM THE PARKS, RECREATION, AND CULTURAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

ON

HOUSING COMMUNICATIONS

PURPOSE

To provide Council with a communications and public engagement strategy pertaining to how the City will achieve its goal of increasing the housing supply across the housing continuum throughout Kamloops.

COUNCIL STRATEGIC PLAN

This report supports Council's goals and objectives regarding:

- **Livability** - ensure Kamloops maintains a high quality of life while meeting the challenge of a growing community by securing land for the provision of housing within the community to ensure that all residents have access to safe, secure, and stable housing

SUMMARY

Housing is one of Council's key priorities, and the roles that the City and Council can play require a structured communication approach that offers a commitment to the public for how and when this housing goal will be achieved.

During the June 2017 Council Workshop, staff provided a presentation to facilitate understanding of the housing continuum, housing affordability, and the key roles the City can play in advancing the creation of much-needed affordable housing in the community. Those key roles were defined as Steward, Investor, Facilitator, and Communicator/Advocate.

As a result of that presentation, staff and Council have supported a number of various decisions over the past several months pertaining to addressing needs within the housing continuum through the reuse of community facilities and the acquisition of land for the purpose of developing those lands for housing. It is important for the community to understand the roles that local government can play in housing and that housing and public engagement are key priorities for Council and the City. The City will support the creation of housing across the housing continuum throughout Kamloops, as housing is within the mandates of KAMPLAN: City of Kamloops Official Community Plan, the Sustainable Kamloops Plan, and the Kamloops Social Plan.

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council authorize Administration to advance the Communications and Public Engagement Strategy outlined in this report.

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COUNCIL POLICY

- Council Strategic Plan 2015-2018

DISCUSSION

The City has a vision for the community where housing is available to and affordable for all residents and supports the availability of diverse housing options that enable people from all walks and stages of life to locate and secure housing that is safe, affordable, and appropriate.

The City's three housing goals are:

- Housing Affordability - ensure there is an adequate supply of housing to meet population growth and improve affordability across the housing continuum
- Housing Diversity - increase the diversity of housing types to create inclusive and complete neighbourhoods
- Housing for Vulnerable Populations - provide a range of housing options for persons with disabilities, seniors, low-income individuals and families, and those who require ongoing supports

Facilitating the development of affordable housing is highlighted in the City's Official Community Plan and is among Council's top five strategic priorities.

In order to reinvigorate the housing supply, maintain the existing stock, and support innovative solutions and partnerships, the City intends to respond in the following four key ways:

Stewardship

The City will support shaping the community and ensuring that a range of housing options are available to support diverse needs and incomes throughout Kamloops. The City has the ability to preserve land for housing and ensure, through ownership, that there is careful and responsible management of that housing infrastructure.

Investor

The City will acquire, sell, and provide land for the provision of housing across the continuum that supports affordability for a variety of incomes, is appropriately located throughout Kamloops, and connects residents to essential services and amenities.

Facilitator

The City will support housing providers in the community by keeping a finger on the pulse of the housing community, understanding other organizations' development pipelines, and making transparent decisions around land aligned to municipal priorities. This includes developing strong partnerships among the different housing sector partners and facilitating ideas in support of creating more housing.

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Communicator/Advocate

The City will convene the community in discussions about housing. Based on the project, this will fall within the various stages of engagement (inform, consult, involve, collaborate, empower). It is crucial that the City work collaboratively with all orders of government, as stable intergovernmental partnerships will allow municipal, provincial, federal, and Indigenous governments to secure housing and support existing programs and funding models.

Mobilizing these roles will provide further flexibility in responding to the opportunities of the other levels of government, the development sector, and the not-for-profit community to increase the affordable housing stock in Kamloops and the capacity of those best equipped to assist in any aspect of supportive program delivery.

SOCIAL IMPLICATIONS

Housing is crucial to the well-being of local residents, yet it can be one of the most difficult things for people to access and maintain. The national threshold for “affordable housing” is that no one should have to pay more than 30% of their income for housing, including utilities and taxes. For 47% of renter households in Kamloops, adequate housing is unaffordable, which leaves individuals and families in housing that does not meet their needs and with too little left over to pay for other necessities.

“Housing disadvantage” is not distributed evenly across the population. Tenants experience a much higher rate of affordability problems and overcrowding than homeowners. Women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, racialized communities, immigrants, refugees, youth, and older adults face a disproportionate risk of housing insecurity and homelessness. Systemic solutions to poverty depend on ensuring that people can access affordable housing and the appropriate supports to meet their needs.

In addition, the results for individuals involved in rehousing strategies and the prevention of homelessness go beyond cost savings. Reducing homelessness through prevention or rehousing strategies provides compelling evidence of improved health and quality of life and a reduction in mental health and addictions. These benefits support positive health and well-being outcomes for residents, which allows them to pursue and achieve their goals.

COMMUNICATIONS PLAN

As it moves forward with achieving this housing goal, the City is committed to community dialogue. When the City has invested in a specific project or parcel of land, removed all encumbrances, and obtained commitments from all partners, the City commits to engaging the community in the following ways:

- Website - list all engagement opportunities via the City’s website through www.kamloops.ca/letstalk and updates on progress toward our housing goal at www.kamloops.ca/our-community/building-strong-communities/affordable-housing.
- Social Media - provide information via the City’s social media channels as a way to communicate with residents who are not able to make it to an event or consultation in person.

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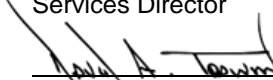
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- Stakeholder Meetings - host a minimum of two key partner meetings in advance of a public announcement to ensure our partners are informed, their concerns and hopes are heard and acknowledged, and they understand how their input has influenced decisions. These meetings may involve the RCMP, Kamloops Fire Rescue, Interior Health, non-profit organizations involved with or partnering in the project, local business improvement associations, the Chamber of Commerce, and other City departments as needed.
- Neighbourhood Information - provide a letter to the neighbourhood, either via Canada Post or door-to-door delivery, within 100 m of the development site and meet with applicable community associations in advance of a public announcement to provide them with accurate information to assist them in understanding the project and invite them to the public announcement.
- Media - send a media invitation prior to the announcement and distribute a press release to the media at the time of announcement with details pertaining to the development.
- Open House - host a public information session in the neighbourhood to provide further details, connect partners to the community, listen to and acknowledge concerns and hopes of neighbours, and answer any questions.



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