

February 15, 2012

EX12-5

To: Members,
Executive Committee

Re: Comprehensive Housing Strategy Work Plan

RECOMMENDATION

Item CR11-163 be removed from the list of outstanding items for the Executive Committee.

CONCLUSION

Housing is an important issue to the quality of life of current and future Regina citizens. It is imperative that the City clearly defines its role in housing in order meet the challenges that growth will pose to the City in the future with respect to housing affordability and availability. Having well balanced policy and programs, based on meeting future housing demands is essential in order to start addressing housing issues along the entire housing spectrum.

The comprehensive housing strategy work plan outlines the necessary research and engagement activities to be undertaken during 2012 to formulate the Strategy. During the first half of 2012 the focus will be on research, analysis and stakeholder consultation to clearly identify and understand the range of housing issues. The latter half of the year will involve drafting policies, culminating in a broader public engagement activity in approximately November/December. The final draft Housing Strategy will be presented to Council in early 2013.

The time line of this project has been discussed at length by Administration and the consultant (SHS Consulting). It has been determined that in order to properly conduct and research all of the necessary study components, the project would require the approximate 12 month time frame. It should also be noted that there are a number of other concurrent studies underway for the Official Community Plan (OCP) which also could inform this study and this preliminary information will be available in the later part of 2012. (e.g. Transportation Master Plan, Financing Growth Study)

BACKGROUND

City Council, at its meeting held on December 19, 2011, considered report CR11-163 regarding the Housing Incentive Program Adjustment and Update and adopted the following resolution:

“...That the Administration provide the work plan for the comprehensive housing strategy to Executive Committee in February, 2012.”

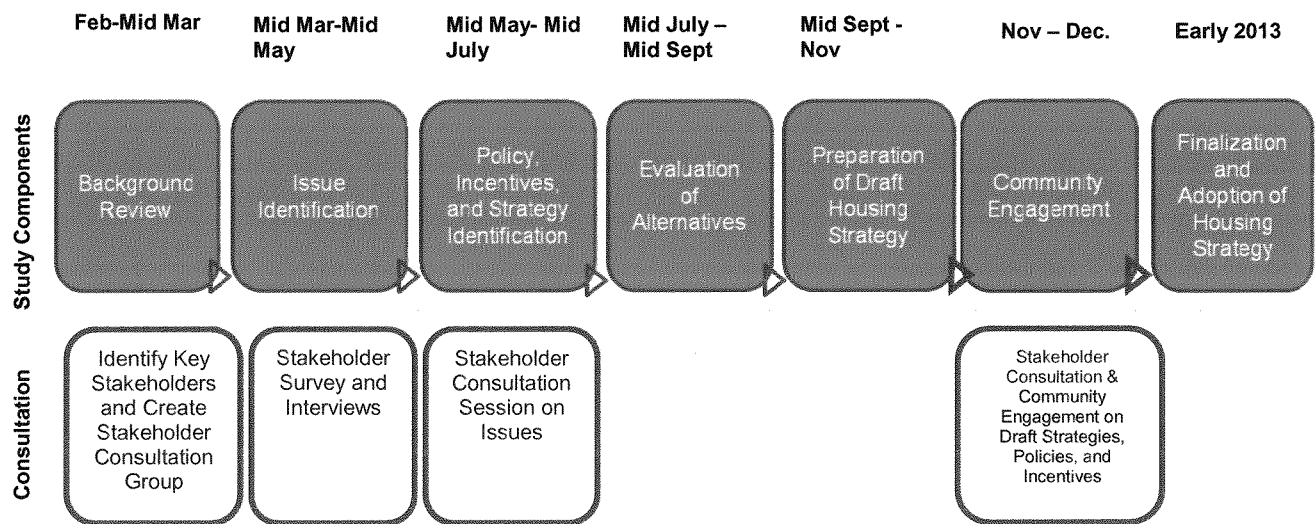
The purpose of this report is to provide further details regarding the work plan for the Comprehensive Housing Strategy.

DISCUSSION

As the City and Province continue to experience strong economic and population growth, housing has become one of the most important issues facing communities today. This growth has presented challenges in many communities with respect to both housing affordability, as average rents and housing prices have risen significantly over recent years, and availability as demand cannot keep up with supply (particularly in the rental market).

Recently, the Province released a housing strategy for Saskatchewan. The Provincial Strategy seeks many market based solutions with recognition that the issue facing the province is largely one of supply. In addition, to this Provincial Strategy, the City is undertaking a comprehensive review of the Official Community Plan (OCP) to set the direction for community growth and development over the next 25 years. In light of these initiatives, it is timely to undertake a comprehensive housing strategy which will clearly define the City's role and responsibility with respect to housing, assess the Provincial Strategy and align City policies and initiatives where feasible. The City's Housing Strategy will be utilized as input to the broader OCP process and policy development.

Study Components, Timelines and Consultation Strategy



Administration and SHS Consulting have met to discuss the project with the Steering Committee (senior administration), Project Team (City staff) and Council to reaffirm the key areas which the study will focus. Upon consultation with the Steering Committee it was decided that a Stakeholder Consultation Group should be created with representatives from Council and key stakeholder groups in the community. This Stakeholder Consultation Group will be consulted during key milestones of the project to garner feedback as the project takes shape.

The City's Housing Strategy work plan is broken down into five key component areas which will take place between February 2012 – to early 2013. The following is a summary of the Phases of work:

Phase 1 - Background Review

Phase 1 will be spent gathering background information including federal and provincial policies and legislation, relevant City policies (e.g. OCP and zoning policies, neighbourhood plans, the Regina Housing Incentives Policy, land disposition policies, condo conversion bylaw etc.) as well as other related research reports relating to Regina's housing market. A Background Review Report will be prepared and presented to City staff and the Stakeholder Consultation Group.

Phase 2 - Issue Identification

Utilizing a range of indicators a statistical analysis will be completed to determine current and future needs and demands for different forms of housing in Regina. This work will include a housing affordability analysis which will assist in evaluating the ability of the current stock to meet the affordability demands of the residents in the City of Regina along the entire housing spectrum. In addition to the above analysis, stakeholder surveys and interviews will be conducted to garner further input into the key concerns/issues facing the City.

An existing conditions report will be prepared and presented to the internal City working groups and to the Stakeholder Consultation Group.

Phase 3 - Policy, Incentives, and Strategies Identification

An analysis of current incentives, policy and programs will be conducted and suggested revisions and additions to the Official Community Plan principles, goals and objectives based on the needs and issues identified in the existing conditions report will be provided. The report will outline the constraints and opportunities for current City policies, including planning policies/frameworks, alternative development standards, financing strategies/models, land disposition policies, etc. In addition, a number of potential actions that can be taken to address housing issues outside of the planning framework, where the City could encourage or partner with others such as the Province, Regina Housing Authority, private builders, non-profit housing providers, etc. Potential actions will be identified for consideration by the Administration the Stakeholder Consultation Group followed by additional public stakeholder engagement.

Phase 4 - Evaluation of Alternatives and Preparation of Draft Housing Strategy

Following the feedback from Phase 3 an evaluation of the alternatives will be completed, including the economic ramifications of the implementation. An evaluation matrix of alternatives will be prepared for discussion between SHS Consulting and the Administration. During this time, the Draft Housing Strategy will be prepared for full review by the Administration and the Stakeholder Consultation Group.

Phase 5 – Community Engagement and Final Report

Once the Draft Housing Strategy is complete, the additional stakeholder and community engagement will take place to gain comments on the draft strategy. Based on the feedback a Final Housing Strategy will be prepared. It is anticipated that the final report will come before Council early in 2013.

Although Administration was anticipating to have this project originally completed by early fall, upon further reflection of the scope of the project it was determined that new timeframes were required for the successful completion of this project due to the upfront analysis and stakeholder consultation requirements. In addition, as this project will form the background documentation for the OCP, it would be practical to coordinate the timing of this study with other key reports which are being formulated concurrently, in order to optimize the information which will inform the recommendations of this Strategy and ultimately OCP policies.

RECOMMENDATION IMPLICATIONS

Financial Implications

The funding for the Comprehensive Housing Strategy has been approved by Council from the Social Development Reserve. This fund is used to fund the City's contribution to affordable housing in the community. The development of the Housing Strategy will better define where the City's resources are best allocated to meet current and future housing needs and to leverage programs of other orders of government or community agencies.

Environmental Implications

None at this time.

Strategic Implications

Housing is an important issue for the City and Province as a whole. To meet our expanding economic growth and labour requirements, a sufficient supply of housing is critical. In addition, addressing housing affordability is important to remain competitive as a City and for the quality of life for residents. Therefore, it is imperative that the Strategy clearly outlines the City's role in addressing these issues.

Other Implications

None at this time.

Accessibility Implications

None at this time.

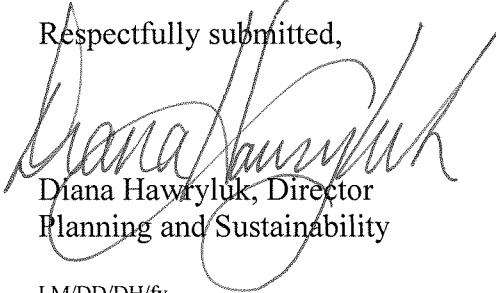
COMMUNICATIONS

The Comprehensive Housing Strategy has included a number of opportunities for public engagement into the process as noted above. A complete communications and education strategy is currently being formulated as part of the background review which will clearly outline the Comprehensive Housing Strategy work plan and the legislated framework of roles and responsibilities of housing by the various levels of Government.

DELEGATED AUTHORITY


This report is for the information of City Council.

Respectfully submitted,



Diana Hawryluk, Director
Planning and Sustainability

Respectfully submitted,



Jason Carlston, Deputy City Manager
Community Planning and Development

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