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To: Mayor and Council

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RE: Affordable Housing Policy Development – Next Steps

Report No.: PDS 2018-021

AIM

To provide Council with a summary of the affordable housing survey, comments received at the Mayor's roundtable discussion and to outline the next steps in the development of an affordable housing policy for the Town of Kingsville.

BACKGROUND

On February 6, 2018 the Mayor and administration hosted the second of a number of ongoing roundtable discussions. The topic of this particular discussion being affordable housing in Kingsville. The goal of these roundtables is to initiate discussion with the residents of Kingsville in the hope of providing a clear direction forward in a number of different areas. As follow-up to the roundtable discussion an online survey was prepared and made available. The survey asked 11 questions and a total of 15 responses were received. Both the question and a summary of the replies are outlined as part of the discussion section.

DISCUSSION

When a proposed development is for "affordable housing" it unfortunately seems to conger up many negative associations. Much of this is due in part to past terminology such as social housing or gear-to-income. In reality there are actually many forms of affordable housing based on what the Ministry of Housing actually considers "affordable".

At present Kingsville has 162 dwelling units that are considered affordable housing. This housing is provided by a mix of public agencies and funded private ownership.

The questions included in the survey were as follows:

What is your definition of Affordable Housing?

The general answer from all of the respondents focused on the monetary ability to afford housing that was consistent with one's income level be it ownership or rental.

Comment: This is in line with the Ministry of Housing definition but should not solely focus on low to moderate income. Much of the housing built in the Town in the last 5 years has been increasing in value making home ownership for even middle-income earners difficult.

What types of initiatives should the Town of Kingsville implement to assist in the growth of affordable housing?

Replies included that the Town build affordable housing, reduce fees and tax rates, identify locations for affordable housing, altering the Town's secondary dwelling policies, grant or supplement programs and encourage conversion of underutilized buildings.

Comment: Municipal run housing has not proven to be particular feasible or affective in the past and is one of the main reasons why the housing authorities have moved toward a private model with supportive funding. Municipal support through reduced fees, tax rates and development charges is very common and Kingsville does provide some reductions in this area. In 2015 the Town implemented secondary dwelling unit policies in both the zoning and official plan but have not seen any significant uptake on utilizing these policies nor has there been any feedback noting the policies as particular restrictive.

What types of tools does the Town require to assist in streamlining the approval process for affordable housing?

The will to do so. A social service hub to increase access as different services are located in different offices. More community engagement particularly with the younger population. Removal of development fees. Pre-zoned areas or properties. Fast track approvals, better pre-consultation, computerized applications and extended business hours.

Comment: Community engagement coupled with a better understanding of the need for affordable housing through education is an important step toward providing what is required. This aspect is also particularly important leading up to the potential support of pre-zoning sites. Affordable housing is not a use permitted in the zoning by-law what zoning can do is provide a wider array of housing types and densities which in turn can accommodate smaller homes and more homes in a greater variety of styles.

Many of the suggestions related to the application and approval process are actually already in place or available to individual developers.

Would an affordable housing community improvement plan be useful?

The reply was a resounding yes to this type of program.

Comment: A CIP would likely not be an initial step as part an affordable housing strategy. Without clear direction on location it is difficult to focus the program where it is needed. One suggestion would be a CIP which targeted existing affordable housing to support maintenance and improvements, another could relate back to earlier comment about conversion on underutilized buildings including certain properties. Maintenance and improvement of existing housing stock must be an integral part of any housing program and not just a focus on new housing.

Should the Town investigate the development of an affordable housing advisory committee?

Overall the reply to this was yes.

Comment: One of the replies that was yes was qualified with the idea that while a committee would be good at the start it should not be something that is permanent. i.e. establish the committee to develop the program, initiate the program then administration of the plan would fall back to the Town.

What is a notable barrier to affordable housing?

Overregulation at all levels of government, lack of funding, high land cost, no return on investment, NIMBY, development fees and overall cost to build, no alternative housing styles, lack of maintenance and enforcement.

Comment: The current perception of affordable housing is commonly one of the main issues affecting development. Funding, although limited, has been available but lost due to a variety of reasons.

What recommendation could be made to improve access to affordable housing?

Build more affordable units, pre-approved lands, reduced development costs and taxes, more funding, streamlined approvals.

Comment: Any strategic direction on affordable housing will be a combination of several different things to increase supply. No single idea will resolve the issue completely.

What programs are available for affordable housing that you are aware of?

CMHC, rental supplements or housing allowances, renovation and housing improvement grants and loans, overall the respondents were unaware of available programs.

Comment: It is not surprising that there is a general lack of awareness of programs for affordable housing. It is common for most people to be unaware of what is available to help until help is necessary.

What affordable housing programs should be brought to Kingsville?

Additional rental housing, all available government funding, developer/builder encouragement, apartments and higher density smaller homes, tiny homes, alternative ownership.

Comment: Agreed

How can the Town improve communication surrounding affordable housing?

The roundtable was a good start, affordable does not always mean subsidized, information on website, develop and stick to plans, additional surveys and sensitivity to the non-computer users, focus and involve the younger generation more, use of social media, encourage open communication within neighbourhoods

Comment: The challenge in the communication part of this undertaking is to reinforce that “affordable housing” is not a “use” that can be controlled through exclusionary zoning. If the idea of mixing all forms and income levels of housing is to be a sincere part of the Town’s housing strategy the general level of acceptable by all neighbours and Council must also be sincere.

Do you have any other comments?

Greater lead-time on public input meetings, subsidized housing in Kingsville is a mistake because of the lack of public transportation and available services, make sure proposals serve the community and not the developers, home ownership and home rental are two separate things and require separate plans, interested in all forms of housing that is affordable, creation of 5, 10 and 20 year plans followed accordingly, work with developers to say what the Town wants not have them tell us what they want, Kingsville is not a town where affordable housing is best suited, need to keep in mind the type of housing that will be needed to house people that are in the community now as they age.

Comment: Despite the absence of some services in the Town, Kingsville is no alone in this, affordable housing is a need in every community. The provision of housing must include all forms, rental, ownership, higher density and alternative methods. While people in general do strive to move upward, rental to small house to eventual ownership not everyone has that ability or dream.

As part of the strategy moving forward to the formulation of policies affordable must be viewed in a very broad and flexible sense that allows for the provision of housing in all forms, styles, ownerships and price points across the demographic mix of the Town.

Next Steps

As a result of the roundtable discussion and survey input the Town now has some well rounded public input on which to start the development of an affordable housing strategy for Kingsville. This strategy will then form the basis of possible amendment to the Official Plan housing and residential policies as part of the 5 year review process.

Step One - The development of the housing strategy will be establishing a number strategic goals, objectives and actions based on the discussion which has occurred to

date. Planning staff will be doing the development of the strategy including consultation with management staff.

Step Two - Once completed the draft strategic goals, objectives and actions will be presented to the public in a similar format to the initial roundtable discussion. The draft will also be posted to the Town website and social media utilized to advise the broader public of the draft document and need for input.

Step Three – With public input in hand the draft strategy will be refined for presentation to and review by Council.

Step Four – Having all input received, if Council supports the draft document the housing strategy will be formalized in its final format.

Step Five – Presentation of the strategy to Council for final approval.

Step Six – The final strategy will then be forwarded to the consultant for the 5 Year Official Plan Review for consideration of possible refinement of existing housing and residential policy and development of new supportive policies. The final document will also serve as a reference guide to the Official Plan similar to the existing Kingsville Strategic Plan, Economic Development Strategic Plan and the various master plans.

LINK TO STRATEGIC PLAN

Manage residential growth through sustainable planning.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no financial considerations at this stage.

CONSULTATIONS

CAO, Management Team

RECOMMENDATION

It is recommended that Council receive the report on next steps regarding Affordable Housing Policy Development and direct administration to proceed with a draft of the Affordable Housing Strategic Plan.

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