

REPORT TO: Council
REPORT FROM: Development Services (Planning)
PRESENTED: April 1, 2013
SUBJECT: Affordable Housing Framework for Squamish

FOR: Committee of the Whole
FILE: Affordable Housing

Recommendation:

THAT the District of Squamish endorse the Squamish Housing Option Group's 2013 *Affordable Housing Framework for Squamish*;

AND THAT the District of Squamish:

1. Support in principle and direct staff to develop Terms of Reference for an Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group;
 2. Provide a District staff liaison for the Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group, to assist in a supportive role, to a maximum in-kind equivalent contribution of \$5000/year;
 3. Provide funds for minute-taking and use of District facility for bi-monthly Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group function; and
 4. Allocate \$5000 from 2014 Council Contingency to support this project, with ongoing funding source for 2015 onwards to be determined.
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1. Purpose:

To present the Squamish Housing Options Group's *Affordable Housing Framework for Squamish* to Council and present recommendations for an Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group.

2. Background:

On October 18, 2011, the District of Squamish allocated funds to a 'Housing Action Plan' project (now titled the *Affordable Housing Framework for Squamish*) to be carried out by the Squamish Housing Options Group (SHOG), with the following motion:

THAT \$20,000 allocated in the 2011 Budget for "Social Planning Review," be awarded to the Squamish Housing Options Group to carry out the project outlined in their September 2011 proposal, entitled "Housing Action Plan for the Community of Squamish".

The purpose of the housing plan was to update and supplement the 2005 *Affordable Housing Strategy* with current information regarding community housing need, and coordinate efforts between a range of community interest groups with common affordable housing goals.

Project Timeline

- February 2012: RFP issued
- March 2012: Contract award
- October 2012: Draft completion
- October 2012 - December 2013: Draft review and revisions

- February 17, 2014: Public information session
- April 1, 2014: Present *Affordable Housing Framework* to Council Committee of the Whole

3. **Project Information:**

Project information is presented in two parts: the *Affordable Housing Framework for Squamish*, followed by the next steps Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group.

Affordable Housing Framework for Squamish

- a) The Squamish Housing Options Group (SHOG) is a collective of local community groups that share information and coordinate housing initiatives. SHOG membership includes:
1. Squamish Social Planning Council;
 2. Helping Hands Society;
 3. Squamish Climate Action Network;
 4. Sea to Sky Community Services;
 5. Vancouver Coastal Health;
 6. Howe Sound Women's Centre;
 7. Squamish Nation;
 8. Squamish Senior Citizens Housing Society;
 9. Squamish Public Library;
 10. District of Squamish; and
 11. Builders and interested citizens.

A local social planning consultant, Margaret Forbes, was contracted by SHOG to develop the *Affordable Housing Framework*.

- b) The intent of the *Affordable Housing Framework* is to facilitate the creation of affordable and non-market housing options in the District through the combined efforts of a broad range of concerned citizens including non-profit organizations, developers, community sustainability and healthcare organizations, local businesses and governments.

The *Affordable Housing Framework* emphasizes the non-market portion of the housing continuum, and is anticipated to serve as a critical tool for project fundraising. The *Affordable Housing Framework* is supported by best practice research in British Columbia to determine how best to address identified housing needs.

- c) The *Affordable Housing Framework* provides:
1. A snapshot of housing needs within the community (the 2012 *Need and Demand Survey*);
 2. Consensus on what the priority housing issues are (the Community Stakeholder Consensus Meeting); and
 3. A framework to address the priority issues (the 2013 *Affordable Housing Framework for Squamish*).

- d) The following is a summary of the identified gaps based on information from the *Need and Demand Survey* and outcomes from the community consensus meeting:
- A Housing Coordination function;
 - Low Barrier housing for individuals who are homeless and /or on fixed income;
 - Attainable Housing for Low Income Adults;
 - Attainable Housing for Low Income Families;
 - Attainable Home Ownership for Moderate Income Families;
 - Supportive Seniors Housing;
 - Supportive Housing for Developmentally Disabled Adults;
 - Support for Homeless Youth; and
 - Aboriginal Off-Reserve Housing.
- e) Affordable and social housing projects delivered over the years have been largely spearheaded by local service groups and non-profit organizations. Recent moves to address local housing needs include the Sea to Sky Community Services Society's Centrepont project on Fourth Avenue which aims to provide units for people with developmental disabilities. The Squamish Helping Hands Society is working towards creating transitional housing and a shelter. Other organizations such as the Squamish Senior Citizens Housing Society and the Howe Sound Women's Centre wish to establish additional housing for those in need.
- f) Squamish has a variety of non-profit groups, District initiatives and private sector expertise related to affordable housing, but historically these entities have not pooled resources. This lack of coordination has affected the community's goals and ability to secure grants. The current lack of a formal coordination mechanism between local government, private development and the not-for-profit sectors made past affordable housing projects more cumbersome and less efficient, and was viewed as the largest barrier to meeting the community's current and future need for affordable housing.

Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group

- a) The *Affordable Housing Framework* recommends a solution involving collaboration among government, community organizations, and agencies. Ultimately, the *Affordable Housing Framework* recommends that an Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group be formed in order to coordinate affordable housing initiatives in the District. An advisory working group would coordinate local stakeholder expertise to pursue opportunities that would allow the community to achieve the affordability goals described in the Official Community Plan.

The *Affordable Housing Framework* identifies proposed objectives and provides a 4-step process to guide the advisory working group, in order to set it up for success:

- Establish group;
- Set the stage, set objectives, scope out projects;
- Implement projects; and

- Report and monitor.

b) Benefits of the Working Group to the Community and District of Squamish -

- Coordination and collaboration for funding: *A community with 'its act together' is more successful receiving funding and support for affordable housing projects.* The advisory working group would bring groups together to collaborate, maintain contacts and connections, and provide options and solutions based on community need and priority.
- Support: *The District and the community have many roles and jobs to fulfill. The Affordable Housing Framework recommends creating a knowledgeable working group to advance affordable housing.* The advisory working group brings together a qualified, motivated, and organized local team to seek information, provide advice, advocate, support, and act on affordable housing in Squamish.
- Economic development: *Employers invest in communities that have adequate housing for their employees, and people with adequate housing are contributors to their community.* The advisory working group can provide resources, research and information to interested parties regarding housing in Squamish. The advisory working group can also support groups to plan and take action to meet affordable housing needs.

c) Advisory Group Roles - The advisory working group would:

- Initiate affordable housing projects and coordinate efforts between community service groups, development representatives, financial lending experts, and the District;
- Make the District aware of opportunities, recommendations and solutions for affordable housing;
- Be a resource for housing and community organizations - help them with planning, information, support and advice for processes (community engagement, funding, etc.);
- Network with BC Housing, innovative housing groups, etc.;
- Accept referred questions, research projects, etc. from Council and provide responses and advice as required; and
- Research and evaluate options and alternatives that lead to affordable housing.

The advisory working group would not review individual development applications made to the District or voluntary affordable housing contributions.

d) Composition - The Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group would involve shared community leadership; capitalizing on community expertise and developing made-in-Squamish solutions. The *Affordable Housing Framework* recommends that this multi-sector working group be supported with a District staff member. Representatives may include the following:

- Housing-related community agencies (local);
- Resident representative(s);

- Developer/ building industry;
- District of Squamish staff (could be Planning, Real Estate, Economic Development or other);
- District of Squamish Council member;
- Squamish Nation; and
- Pull in others for specific projects as needed.

e) Function – This may include:

- Advisory working group members and their organizations will carry out the tasks and activities of the working group; and
- Hold 6 meetings per year.

f) Resources – The *Affordable Housing Framework* presents a number of avenues for District support:

- Staff representative or coordinator;
- Council representative;
- Funds for minute-taking services; and
- Meeting space at District facility.

g) Accountability – The Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group would:

- Provide minutes to Council following each meeting; and
- Deliver a two-year work plan to Council within two months of formation, and progress reports twice a year (and when requested).

4. Department Comments:

The Squamish Housing Options Group was tasked to work with stakeholders to determine the current need and demand for affordable housing in the District. The result was a synchronized voicing of the need for a housing coordination role tasked to coordinate housing initiatives. Recent experience has shown that funding opportunities often have short timeframes to coordinate initiatives and show District support. A working group with a District presence on it may help ensure that the community is well positioned to capitalize on future affordable housing opportunities. Without a working group, affordable housing initiatives may not be well addressed at a District level.

The Provincial government is responsible at a legislative level for addressing housing needs, and the Province has contributed substantially to housing projects in Squamish, including: the recent Riverstones rental housing project, assisting with funding for second stage housing research, and most recently with the Helping Hands Home Instead project. A District presence, and coordination at the District level with local service groups, may best ensure success on housing projects and gaining additional provincial funding. Many communities in BC have affordable housing task forces or housing authorities and/or have dedicated staff to address

affordable housing matters. These housing-related groups and staff commitment show local government support for coordination on affordable and social housing initiatives.

Recognizing the Provincial role in providing housing, the best chance of success for provision of affordable and social housing in our community still relies on some form of local coordination and direction. This may be a working group directly linked to the District, or an arm's length working group.

Currently, and since 2012, a District Planning staff member has participated on the Squamish Housing Options Group with the role of District review of the *Affordable Housing Framework*. This has been a time commitment requiring management among other District priorities. Staff requires Council direction to define the priority, scope and budget commitment of a staff member to support a potential Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group. In addition, staff is seeking Council direction on whether the Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group should instead be a Select Committee of Council with a Council member on it.

5. Implications:

a) Budget:

Budget implications would include staffing resource for an Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group. The cost would depend on the role that the staff member plays – from general administrative or policy advice on one end of the spectrum; to coordinating organization of meetings; to what could be a wide range of tasks assigned by the advisory working group on planning and real estate matters related to affordable housing in the community; to a full administrative function such as a Housing Coordinator position.

Staff recommends that a minimum of 125 hours/year or 10 hours/month of staff time is directed to an Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group. In this case, staff role would be a technical member of the working group with attendance at meetings and high-level support. This translates to \$5000/year; neither the time nor the cost has been budgeted. Council would be required to redirect priorities or budget to accomplish this, particularly because in the 2014 budget, Council contracted administrative support directly related to committees. Alternately, Council could increase staff commitment such as to an Affordable Housing Coordinator position (potentially a 0.5 FTE to 1.0 FTE, also not included in the 2014 budget), to assist with a greater role in an Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group.

Other budget implications may include funds for minute-taking services, and in-kind cost of meeting space at District facility.

b) Policy:

- A portion of the OCP Community Vision states: In 2031, we are a well-balanced community where residents of all ages, cultures, and incomes enjoy the highest quality of life. Diverse, affordable housing options coupled with an efficient transportation system allow residents to live, learn, work and plan within our borders.

- 1 of the 10 Guiding Principles: **Housing Diversity** - A wide range of housing types and tenures will be encouraged to help ensure that people of all ages, abilities, household types and incomes have a diversity of housing choice.
- There are a range of principles, objectives and policies that relate to ensuring a sufficient supply of affordable housing in the community. District policy related to affordable housing includes support for an Affordable Housing Reserve Fund, secondary suites, density bonusing for provision of affordable housing, no net loss of affordable housing stock, land banking, and development guidelines for adaptive housing. Two policies to highlight include:
 - 17 - 18 Recognizing that affordable housing is central to community livability, the District will implement the Affordable Housing Strategy.
 - 17 - 25 The District will work in co-operation with the provincial and federal governments, the real estate community, developers, social service agencies, faith-based organizations, service clubs and other community groups to develop and maintain affordable housing and foster support services for those groups that have the least choice in the housing market.

c) **Environmental:**

n/a

d) **GHGe:**

n/a

e) **Council Priority and Strategic Plan Alignment:**

Yes, this meets 2013 Strategic Initiative (Social Sustainability), Housing Diversity – Update the Affordable Housing Plan.

6. **Attachments:**

1. 2012 *Need and Demand Survey* (developed by Margaret Forbes for the Squamish Housing Options Group);
2. 2013 *Affordable Housing Framework for Squamish* (developed by Margaret Forbes for the Squamish Housing Options Group); and
3. Terms of Reference for a Housing Action Plan for the Community of Squamish.

7. **Alternatives to Staff Recommendation:**

THAT the District of Squamish **not** endorse the Squamish Housing Option Group's Affordable Housing Framework for Squamish;

AND THAT the District of Squamish **not** support in principle and direct staff to develop Terms of Reference for an Affordable Housing Advisory Working Group;

And/or another course of action as determined by Council.

Elaine Naisby, PIBC Candidate Member, BCSLA
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CAO Recommendation:

That the recommendation of the Planning Department be approved.

C. Speaker, CAO