

# Town of Riverview

## COUNCIL REPORT FORM



Presented to: : Mayor & Council

Department: Economic Development

Date: December 6, 2023

Subject: Housing Needs Assessment and Affordable Housing Strategy

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### **BACKGROUND**

Council directed staff to complete a Housing Needs Assessment and an Affordable Housing Strategy for the Town of Riverview, in a show of commitment to better understand rising housing challenges and viable ways of responding to them.

This report presents the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment and outlines a proposed Affordable Housing Strategy for the Town of Riverview, prepared by Stantec, our retained professional consultation firm for this exercise. The assessment aims to identify the current housing needs within the community through private and public consultation and data analysis, and the subsequent strategy was developed to address affordability challenges. The recommendations and action plans presented herein are designed to promote inclusive and sustainable housing development in our community.

The past few years have shown rapid growth for our area; soaring immigration and inter-provincial migration rates, new housing starts not keeping up with population trends, scarce viable land availability, NIMBYSM, rising material and labour costs, changing home preferences, high average residential prices and interest rates, amongst other economic factors, have all contributed to what we know today as the national housing crisis. The purpose of the Housing Needs Assessment is to build a community profile informed by the specific needs of our residents identified through a public survey yielding 1,010 responses, private consultations with local developers, settlement agencies, large employers, and non-profit organizations, and census data. Key findings of the Housing Needs Survey delivered as part of the overall assessment are as follows:

- 51% of respondents feel that there is a critical need for affordable housing. Another 29% feel there is a high need.
- Rental housing was identified as a need by 29% of respondents.
- 66% feel that there is a critical need for housing of all types.
- 49% think that the current level of population growth is sufficient and hope it continues.

Subsequently, the Affordable Housing Strategy aims to provide realistic, appointed, and measurable actions to tackle one of the biggest challenges faced by the community that is home affordability. We are confident both strategic documents align with Council's objectives and priorities relating to housing

security and affordability in the community, playing into themes of sustainability, collaboration, accountability, and inclusivity.

The proposed action plan developed as a key component of the Affordable Housing Strategy outlines recommendations to improve housing conditions in Riverview, such as to make changes to the planning framework (Municipal Plan), to establish financial incentives to stimulate affordable housing, to reassess the availability and use of Town owned land and assess the availability of land acquisition, to prioritize renovation and maintenance, to diversify housing typologies, to ensure accessibility to amenities, to develop and strengthen partnership opportunities, to invest in a communications plan, to align the approach with other policies and strategies, and to evaluate and continually improve the strategy. If the action plan direction is approved by Council, the next steps for Town staff would be to develop a resource plan including budget estimates and present to Council at the next public meeting.

Lead Consultant Jamie Burke will present the assessment findings and strategy in a public presentation to Council on December 11, 2023, and a question-and-answer period will follow. It is of primordial importance, now more than ever, that we as a municipality work together to address housing needs and promoting affordable housing options, henceforth positively impacting the safety and inclusivity of residents, the local economy, and the overall community's well-being.

## **CONSIDERATIONS**

### **Legal:**

- Some action plan initiatives related to urban planning will need to abide to provincial building codes, and others related to financial incentives will need to consider legal safeguarding.

### **Financial:**

- A budget and resource plan will need to be established to carry out the action plan if its initiatives are agreed upon by Council.

### **Policy:**

- The new Municipal Plan will be considered in the context of housing infrastructure and development guidelines and will be updated in parallel with the action plan proposed as part of the Affordable Housing Strategy.
- Similarly, the new Community Economic Development Strategy will also consider the direction on the action plan, as well as findings from the Housing Needs Assessment will be leveraged to inform future economic development action plans.

### **Stakeholders:**

- Town Council; in advocating on behalf of the community's housing needs and in providing direction and alignment towards housing solutions.
- Town Administration; in communicating the strategy and carrying out assigned action plan initiatives related to Economic Development.

- Regional Players (i.e., Urban Planning as part of the Southeast Regional Service Commission); in carrying out action plan initiatives relating to Urban Planning and the Municipal Plan.
- Local Development Community; in taking into consideration residents' identified housing needs, in being receptive to new housing initiatives, and whose feedback was leveraged to inform the strategy and action plan.
- Riverview Community; in receiving the benefits of future housing development initiatives engendering increased local housing stock.

#### Strategic Plan:

Under the "Safe and Inclusive" pillar; the following objectives would be supported through this initiative:

- Trust is present in the community and all residents enjoy a good quality of life and sense of belonging.

Under the "Thriving Community" pillar, the following objectives would be supported through this initiative:

- Riverview is a desirable place to live, shop, visit and play.

Under the "Active and Engaged Community" pillar, the following objectives would be supported through this initiative:

- Healthy community
- Engaged community

#### Interdepartmental Consultation:

Internal departmental consultations have been ongoing throughout the strategic process, considering input and ideas from top leadership, urban planning, legislation, parks, recreation, community relations, and economic development representatives.

Furthermore, external private consultation with the non-profit, development, business, and immigration communities have informed the findings and recommendations of the strategy.

#### Communication Plan:

The Housing Needs Assessment and Affordable Housing Strategy projects have already been communicated through the development and business communities through private meetings and the Riverview Business Forum, and the formulation of a Communications Plan specific to housing is part of the key recommendations included in the action plan. The Town's Communications Department would be engaged in his exercise.

#### OPTIONS

- Accept the Housing Needs Assessment and Affordable Housing Strategy as presented and move forward with the development of resource plan supporting the action plan proposed.

- Accept the Housing Needs Assessment and Affordable Housing Strategy and move forward with the development of resource plan supporting the action plan proposed, with modifications to the specific initiatives.
- Abstain from moving forward in exploring the action plan proposed.

### **RECOMMENDATION FROM STAFF**

That Riverview Town Council approve the direction, and further resource and feasibility exploration of the recommended action plan informed by the Housing Needs Assessment and Affordable Housing Strategy, being proposed by staff as follows:

- Make changes to the planning framework (Municipal Plan);
- Establish financial incentives to stimulate affordable housing;
- Reassess the availability and use of Town owned land and assess the availability of land acquisition;
- Diversify housing typologies;
- Develop and strengthen partnership opportunities;
- Invest in a communications plan;
- Align the approach with other policies and strategies; and
- Evaluate and continually improve the strategy.

If the action plan direction approved, staff would explore the budget and resource requirements needed to execute and propose a resource plan to Council in Q1 2024.

**Prepared by:** Shanel Akerley, Manager, Economic Development Manager