



Development Services Staff Report

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Report Title: Woolwich Housing Needs Assessment, Consultant Report
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Reviewed By: Deanne Friess, Director of Development Services
Final Review: Senior Management Team

Recommendation:

That the Council of the Township of Woolwich, considering Report DS34-2024 respecting Woolwich Housing Needs Assessment, Consultant Report, receive the findings of the Housing Needs Assessment and direct staff to incorporate the recommendations into future development initiatives.

Background:

In 2023, the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation introduced a funding program for municipalities across Canada, known as the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). This program aims to support efforts that expand housing availability and foster the creation of affordable, diverse, and inclusive communities while prioritizing low-carbon and climate-resilient development.

In February 2024, we were informed by CMHC that our funding request was approved for a total of \$6,724,742.20, allocated over the next three years.

The Housing Needs Assessment was undertaken to provide a comprehensive understanding of the housing challenges and opportunities within the Township. Tim Welch Consulting (TWC) was retained to lead this initiative, bringing expertise in data collection, analysis, and stakeholder engagement. This assessment provides key insights into housing demand, affordability, and future growth, offering a roadmap to address these critical issues. As we move forward with other initiatives, the findings from the Housing Needs Assessment will be key in ensuring that a range and mix of housing is available, to help create inclusive, resilient communities.

Comments:

The Housing Needs Assessment underscores the urgent need to diversify the housing stock due to population growth, demographic shifts, and rising costs. The Township's housing market is under pressure, with limited types of housing causing affordability issues, especially for renters and seniors. This assessment seeks to align future growth with the needs of current and future residents by expanding the housing continuum. The following are the recommendations from the report.

1. Utilize the development liaison committee to gather feedback and share housing resources, fostering collaboration with developers.
2. Host a "Meeting of the Minds" summit, facilitating cross-sectoral engagement for supportive housing and development.
3. Collaboration with the Region of Waterloo to address housing needs in partnership.
4. Develop a surplus lands disposal policy, optimizing land for residential development.
5. Adopt a municipal capital facilities by-law to encourage investment in housing.
6. Create a community improvement plan focused on affordable housing and brownfield redevelopment.
7. Promote and accept a range of housing models, encouraging diversity in housing options.
8. Implement an e-permitting system, streamlining building permit and planning application processes.
9. Develop tracking tools to monitor housing goals and progress, ensuring a return on investment and continued reporting

Interdepartmental Impacts:

While not substantial, departments will need to allocate resources as needed to implement the report's recommendations.

Financial Impacts:

There are no financial impacts at this time related to the receiving of the recommendations. However, some of the proposed recommendations may have financial implications if staff choose to proceed with specific initiatives. If these initiatives move forward, a detailed financial assessment will be conducted, and the associated costs will be presented to Council for consideration and approval.

Community Strategic Plan Impacts:

The Housing Needs Assessment is a foundational step toward achieving the Township's Strategic Plan goals by addressing key community priorities:

- **Supports Economic Sustainability:** By identifying current and future housing needs, the assessment ensures that housing supply aligns with community growth and

economic development, making Woolwich an attractive place for businesses and workforce retention.

- **Enhances Community Well-being:** The assessment promotes diverse housing options, including affordable and rental housing, which improves quality of life for residents across various income levels and life stages.
- **Fosters Community Engagement:** Public input and stakeholder consultations during the assessment reflect the Township's commitment to transparent and responsive leadership, ensuring that housing strategies meet the evolving needs of the community.
- **Promotes Inclusivity and Resilience:** The focus on housing accessibility, affordability, and sustainability helps build a resilient and inclusive community that is prepared to adapt to changing demographic and housing market demands.

Conclusion:

The Housing Needs Assessment provides a detailed analysis of current and future housing needs in Woolwich Township, identifying key gaps and opportunities to guide planning and policy decisions. It aligns with the Township's strategic goals of promoting economic sustainability, enhancing community well-being, and fostering inclusivity. It is recommended that Council receive and endorse the Housing Needs Assessment, enabling the Township to develop policies that engage community housing developers, support diverse and affordable housing, and address the evolving needs of residents, ensuring a resilient and inclusive community.

Attachments:

Attachment 1: Woolwich Housing Needs Assessment 2024