



City of St. Albert
CITY COUNCIL POLICY

Affordable Housing

AUTHORITY	APPROVED	Res. No.	mm dd	REVISED	Res. No.	mm dd
City Council		C127-2013	04 15			

Purpose

1. To encourage the development of affordable housing in St. Albert.
2. To define the City's role, responsibility, and involvement in the delivery of affordable housing programs and services.
3. To support affordable housing in St. Albert within the regional context.

Policy

Vision:

St. Albert is an inclusive, family-oriented community that promotes a high quality of life for all its residents regardless of income. Council recognizes that affordable and entry-level housing options in a variety of dwelling forms are needed to support business and industry, resulting in an economic and socially sustainable community for future generations. The involvement of numerous partners and stakeholders will be required to achieve this goal.

Mandate:

The City of St. Albert will encourage and facilitate the development of entry-level, affordable, and special needs housing through the use of municipal planning tools that include research, policy initiatives, financial incentives, regulatory changes, administrative measures, advocacy, partnerships, community education and the direct provision of housing programs and services when it is deemed appropriate for the City to undertake them.

The City will explore the creation of a sustainable funding source to strategically contribute municipal resources to incent affordable housing development and delivery within its role, with considerations for:

1. Partnerships with relevant stakeholders, not-for-profit and for-profit entities to build and operate housing;
2. The use of development incentives such as municipal fee rebates to Eligible Affordable Housing Projects;
3. The use of municipal incentives, programs, or services to attract private sector investment, promote housing diversity, and improve affordability;
4. The use of municipally owned land as a source of housing sites where practical;



5. The sale or lease of municipally owned land to Eligible Groups for the development of Eligible Affordable Housing Projects; and
6. The inclusion and integration of affordable housing units in redistricting or redevelopment applications.

Definitions

1. “Affordable Non-Market Housing” is defined as rental or ownership dwellings that are targeted toward modest income groups or household types with control over the unit rental or ownership costs. This includes dwellings defined under the following forms:
 - a. “Affordable Non-Market Ownership or Attainable Housing” is defined as dwelling units that are affordable to households earning 65% - 80% of the Median Total Income for all families. Ownership housing costs should not exceed 32% of the household’s income, including mortgage payments, heat, taxes, and 50% of condominium fees where applicable. Ownership or resale value must be controlled for a minimum 10 year period within this definition
 - b. “Affordable Non-market Rental Housing” is defined as dwelling units that are targeted toward low to moderate income households earning less than the Core Need Income Threshold in St. Albert for the household size. Affordable rents shall be maintained at a minimum of 10% below the Average Market Rent as reported by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) for a 15 year period from the date of occupancy under this initiative. Rental housing costs should not exceed 30% of the household’s income including the cost of heat, water, and sewer.
 - c. “Eligible Affordable Housing Project” is defined as a project that conforms to the following criteria:
 - i. Helps St. Albert residents become self sufficient;
 - ii. Is accessible to persons with disabilities, is affordable and inclusive;
 - iii. Is constructed within targets of the Province of Alberta’s Modesty Assurance Guidelines for unit sizes and amenities;
 - iv. Demonstrates a partnership where the City of St. Albert is one of a number of sources of funding; and
 - v. Meets the definition of Affordable Ownership, Attainable Housing, or Affordable Rental housing.
2. “Affordable Housing Development Fund” is defined as an amount identified in the City of St. Albert budget that is available for non-market affordable housing to enhance the viability and affordability of a specific project, or to implement a Housing Incentive, Program, or Service.
3. “Average Market Rent” is defined as the average monthly market rent for units within a similar structure, size, and bedroom type as reported through Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s Rental Market Report published every fall for the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area.



4. “Core Need Income Threshold (CNIT)” is defined as the annual income needed to pay the Average Market Rent in any given community or market area based on the household’s size, utilizing no more than 30% of their before-tax income towards the cost of housing including the cost of heat and water. Households with annual incomes equal to or less than CNIT are said to have insufficient income to afford the on-going costs of suitable and adequate rental units in their area. This calculation is utilized to establish eligibility for provincially supported housing programs and services.
5. “Eligible Group” is defined as:
 - a. an organization that is a registered non-profit society as defined under the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) Section 241(f), housing cooperative, management body, or charitable organization whose operational model conforms to the requirements of an Eligible Housing Project; and
 - b. A for-profit housing developer who meets the requirements of the Eligible Affordable Housing Project.
6. “Entry-Level Market Housing” is defined as dwelling units that are affordable to households earning 80% -125% of the Median Total Income for all families and are modest in size and amenities. Ownership housing costs should not exceed 32% of the household’s income, including mortgage payments, heat, taxes, and 50% of condominium fees where applicable.
7. “Housing Incentive, Program, or Service” is defined as a municipal incentive offered to encourage development of a specific housing type, or to meet the needs of households in a specific income bracket or user group.
8. “Market Housing” defines dwellings that are sold or rented without restriction as to occupancy, rental rate, or price.
9. “Median Total Income” is determined from the Edmonton Census Metropolitan Area (CMA) Tax filer data for the most current year. Incomes separated into “all family” designations take into consideration the incomes of couple and lone parent families.
10. “Substandard Housing” is defined as housing that is not in good repair and/or does not meet the requirements of the *Alberta Safety Codes Act* or Alberta Health Services regulations.
11. “Surplus land” is municipally owned land not required for municipal purposes, public parks, public recreation area or school board purposes as defined under the *Municipal Government Act* (MGA) that may be used as Community Services Reserve for affordable housing development.
12. “Unsuitable Housing” is defined as housing that does not meet the required number of bedrooms for the household’s size or composition as defined under the *Alberta Social Housing Accommodation Regulation*.



Responsibilities

1. City Council is responsible for utilizing the framework of this policy to guide its decisions relating to affordable housing and to provide leadership in municipal policy direction.
2. Administration is responsible for utilizing the framework and standards of this policy to:
 - a. Research and monitor community housing needs,
 - b. Provide recommendations to Council on housing initiatives, incentives, programs, or services;
 - c. Research, develop, and implement municipal planning tools and resources to respond to the need for a broader mix of housing types and affordability ranges;
 - d. Research, develop, and implement Housing Incentives, Programs, or Services that respond to Council priorities; and
 - e. Work collaboratively with other departments, regional organizations and local groups to promote affordable development opportunities.
 - f. Report, monitor, and evaluate the City's progress on a biennial basis.

Standards

1. Research Policy and Regulation
 - a. The City will provide housing policy direction through municipal documents which include the Affordable Housing Strategy, Community Housing Plan, Social Master Plan, Economic Development Master Plan, and Affordable Housing Delivery Model.
 - b. The City will work within its regulatory role and collaborate with other stakeholders to develop effective policies and programs that support the sustainable development of affordable housing options for seniors, persons with disabilities, individuals, and families.
 - c. The City will research, monitor, and report on statistics that affect housing need every 3 years, dependent on available statistics.
 - d. The City will encourage the development of entry-level market housing and the integration of affordable housing within new market housing developments.
 - e. The City will establish internal systems to encourage developments that include affordable housing.
 - f. The City will consider Surplus Land for potential affordable housing sites.
 - g. The disposition, sale, or lease of Surplus Land will be conducted through the existing Land Sale Policy C-ED-01.
 - h. Proceeds from the disposition, sale, or lease of Surplus Land intended for affordable housing will be placed in an Affordable Housing Development Fund for future City-based housing initiatives.
2. Advocacy and Communication
 - a. The City will advocate to other levels of government for funding and amendments to legislation influencing housing cost and affordability.



- b. The City will work within the Capital Region to develop effective partnerships and long term regional housing plans.
- c. The City will encourage communication that strengthens understanding of the need for affordable and attainable housing and reduces preconceptions about individuals and groups relating to income.
- d. During public consultation and public hearing processes, and when considering applications that include affordable housing, the City will observe the rights of individuals and/or groups as set out in the *Alberta Human Rights Act*.
- e. The City will encourage the development of a diverse housing stock that includes market and non-market housing in a variety of built forms for households in various stages of life and income earning capacity.

3. Partnerships, Incentives and Direct Provision of Housing

- a. Administration will provide recommendations to Council on the use of available funding and staff resources toward affordable housing initiatives based on Council priorities and highest defined community needs as established through participation from community based organizations and groups, and statistical analysis.
- b. Municipal resources and funding utilized for housing initiatives will be evaluated considering the financial capacity of the incentive to leverage other resources through public, private, and not-for-profit partnerships.
- c. Eligible Groups requesting rebates, incentives, or adjustments to municipal fees, charges, and standards as would normally apply to development circumstances outside the affordable housing context will be evaluated based on the effect of the incentive to enhance affordability and conformance to the requirements of an Eligible Affordable Housing Project.
- d. Approval of fee rebates or relaxations to fees and standards that meet policy guidelines shall be the responsibility of the General Manager of Planning and Engineering Services Division and will be dependent on funding through the Affordable Housing Development Fund and Policy direction.
- e. After an Affordable Housing Development Fund is established, groups may make an application only once per calendar year and once per project.
- f. A total maximum rebate for all fees and charges shall not exceed 50% of fees calculated and shall be applicable only to the units meeting the definition of an Eligible Affordable Housing Project.

4. Housing Incentives, Programs, and Services

The City will consider the opportunity to offer municipally operated Housing Incentives, Programs, or Services that meet the following criteria:

- a. The incentive, program, or service is tied to municipal processes or can be monitored through municipal processes;
- b. The incentive, program, or service leverages other resources from the public and private sector;
- c. The incentive, program, or service involves municipally owned property;



- d. The incentive, program or service is directed to be municipally managed by other levels of government;
- e. The incentive, program or service is linked to Council priorities;
- f. The incentive, program, or service creates a sustainable funding source that can be utilized for future initiatives; and
- g. The administration and operation of the incentive, program or service is best suited for municipal delivery.

Legal References: *Municipal Government Act (MGA) Section 671 to Section 675, Alberta Human Rights Act, Alberta Social Housing Accommodation Regulation, Alberta Safety Codes Act*

Cross References: Policy C-ED-01, Land Sale, Municipal Development Plan Bylaw 15/2007

