

Barrie Official Plan

PUBLIC MEETING STATEMENT

February 4, 2019

The Simcoe County Alliance to End Homelessness (SCATEH) is a local movement to prevent and end homelessness in Simcoe County. As such, the primary interest for us, the Barrie Chapter, as it relates to the Official Plan is that creation of affordable housing units with the goal of ending homelessness is part of the planning.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide input into Barrie's Official Plan. We emailed our thoughts directly to staff, and also participated in the OP Workshops in January.

We have 2 main points we would like to make to Council this evening:

Barrie has set a goal of creating 840 affordable housing units between 2015-2025. The latest tally that we were able to obtain was 441.

"Affordable Housing Unit" is a defined term, and it is our position that only new units that meet that definition should be counted.

This 441 number includes **179** privately created second suites, for which there is no mechanism in place to ensure that the units meet this definition, and in the current rental market it is almost certain that they do not. Furthermore, the **148** rent supplements, also counted as units toward the 441 total, do nothing to increase the actual stock - in a rental market with higher vacancy rates, it is possible that rent supplements could be counted, but again, given the current rental market in Barrie, it is our opinion that these should not be counted.

Breakdown of 441 units, as reported from the County

FUNDED

Rent Supplements	148
Homeownership Program	42
Funded Secondary Suites	50
New Rental Development	97

NON-FUNDED

Privately Created Second Suites	179
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We felt it was important for Council to be aware that conservatively, by our calculations, 3/4 of the reported 441 affordable housing units do not meet the definition of affordable housing units.



When the target of 840 was determined, the city of Barrie laid out a very different breakdown, found on page 14 of last year's [Affordable Housing Annual Monitoring Report](#):

Rent of \$192/month	200
\$192-344	123
\$344-462	171
\$462-778	47
Rent-Geared to Income	252
Purchase price of \$115K	47

Totaling 840.

The same monitoring report has flagged that the city has not yet created any units in the bottom two target groups, for household incomes below \$1149/month with a rent below \$344. The heavy weighting of private second suites and rent subsidies is not aligned with these targets set by the city.

Therefore, our first challenge to Council is to choose to ensure that we count our progress toward 840 affordable housing units using the detailed breakdown targets laid out in the Affordable Housing Strategy (found on p. 4 of the Affordable Housing Strategy as household incomes and p. 14 of the Monitoring Report as rent amounts, also listed above), **and to at minimum ensure that the progress toward 840 affordable housing units meet the definition of affordable housing unit.**

Council can then work backward to determine what tools are needed to meet these targets. One that we would like to highlight this evening is to amend bylaws to allow for micro built forms, such as tiny houses.

- Amending bylaws to permit tiny houses allows us to offer choice and options to some of our most marginalized.
- There is no one-size-fits-all solution to ending homelessness, and tiny houses are a better option than an apartment building for some of the people we serve, offering a greater degree of autonomy.
- Some people choose to sleep outside rather than stay in a rooming house for any number of reasons, such as not feeling safe or not feeling comfortable in shared spaces. Tiny homes offer an alternative at that same price-point, and even homeownership opportunities that are otherwise not available to these individuals.
- SCATEH recently shared through social media, a tiny home community in Detroit, built by volunteers, where the 250-400 square foot houses rent for the equivalent of \$1/square foot, and if tenants pay rent for 4-5 years, they can own the house. We received this comment:



"I've been on ODSP for many years. I'm single with no kids. My only experience sharing with roommates have been abusive. Right now I live in my brother's basement apartment because it's the only option for me. I would give just about anything to have a nice place like this that was my own and I felt safe."

Barrie's own Built Form Task Force recommended that bylaws be amended to allow for micro built forms back in 2015, yet this recommendation still has not been implemented.

Our second challenge to Council is to choose to implement this recommendation of amending bylaws to allow for micro built forms as soon as possible, as part of the Official Plan.

Once again, thank you for the opportunity to participate in this consultation. Barrie is a wonderful place to live, work, and play, and we look forward to seeing an Official Plan that ensures everyone in Barrie has a safe, affordable, and adequate place to call home.

A few additional notes on the definition of affordable housing unit, and concerns with the Monitoring Report:

The definition of affordable in the case of rental housing is the least expensive of:

1. a unit for which the rent does not exceed 30 percent of gross annual household income for low and moderate income households; or
2. a unit for which the rent is at or below the average market rent of a unit in the regional market area.

This is the definition found in the provincial, county, and city Affordable Housing Strategies, and so it is the definition I refer to in my opening comments. By this standard, only about ¼ of the reported 441 units should be counted.

Of concern is to see affordable housing redefined in the Affordable Housing Monitoring Report. On page 6, we read that "affordable rental housing is considered to be rents which are at or below average market price for rental units in the region," using only the second part of that "least expensive of" definition. In this rental market, the 30% calculation is clearly the least expensive of the two.

As well, regarding home ownership, the "low and moderate income household" piece of the definition is dropped altogether, replaced with the "Adjusted Median Total Household Income" which gives us a 2017 affordable housing purchase price of \$305,000. These rewordings of the definitions, either intentionally or unintentionally, drastically move the goal posts on what counts as affordable housing. We would like to see reporting that aligns with and shows progress on the targets shown on page 14.

