



CITY OF BARRIE AFFORDABLE HOUSING STRATEGY

Report Card

Prepared by City of Barrie's Development Services Department
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Introduction

In 2015, the City of Barrie published its **10-year Affordable Housing Strategy, A Place to Call Home**; designed to foster more affordable housing in Barrie, it provides a range of actions to encourage, stimulate and increase the supply and range of affordable housing options. The strategy was created just after the County of Simcoe published its own 10-year affordable housing plan; as the County of Simcoe is Barrie's housing service provider, it was important that each plan overlapped.

The central goal of Barrie's strategy is to provide 840 affordable units; this target aligns with the County's plan and was deemed an appropriate target to start to bridge the gap in affordable housing availability. Since then, the City has provided yearly monitoring reports on this target to demonstrate progress. While the target has been met, with 965 units being created as of the end of 2021, there is more work to be done.

Since 2015, the need for affordable housing has increased significantly and demand outpaces progress as the price of housing continues to rise year-over-year. At this time, with access to affordable housing becoming an increasingly critical issue not just for Barrie but for the whole country, it is important to take stock of the affordable housing actions taken by the City to help inform our path for the future.

This report card is intended to do just that. The City's Affordable Housing Strategy offers more than 20 recommendations to not only meet the target set, but to encourage more affordable housing overall. This report card categorizes those recommendations by affordable housing priority and documents the steps the City has taken to support each one. Following this assessment for each recommendation, a ranking is provided according to the following four categories:

- **CELEBRATE**
- **STAY THE COURSE**
- **IMPROVE**
- **NEW DIRECTION**

Those recommendations that have received the ranking of **CELEBRATE** represent actions fulfilled by the City. Recommendations receiving the ranking of **STAY THE COURSE** are items for which progress has been made and work should continue. If a recommendation has received the ranking of **IMPROVE**, renewed attention is needed. In some cases, recommendations have received the ranking of **NEW DIRECTION** – for these, either the policy context has changed or it has become clear that a revised approach may be more effective. Finally, an overall ranking for each priority category has also been given.

While the City's current Affordable Housing Strategy is intended to oversee progress into 2025, by taking stock of our actions today, City staff, Council and stakeholders will be in a better position to adapt to the rapidly shifting context of affordable housing needs in Barrie. It is important to note achievements made; however, what is most important is that we continue to work, adjust and do our part to provide affordable housing in a way that best meets the needs of our community.

Priority #1: Making it Easier to Build Affordable Housing

CELEBRATE

Affordable Housing Strategy Action	Result	Evaluation
#1. Establish a built form task force	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>The built form task force met regularly in 2015 and provided eight recommendations</i> ✓ <i>Some recommendations have been implemented (e.g., amending zoning standards, encouraging infill housing and creating incentives)</i> • <i>The City is also revisiting the task force recommendations through its comprehensive update to the Zoning By-law and its City-wide Urban Design Guidelines</i> 	CELEBRATE
#2. Increase permissions for second residential units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Policies have been introduced to increase permissions for second residential units; currently, there are more than 1,800 units across the city</i> ✓ <i>While originally these policies excluded the Georgian College area, this area is now included</i> ✓ <i>Zoning standards have additionally been updated to remove unnecessary barriers to the creation of second suites</i> 	CELEBRATE

Above and Beyond: Other Actions Taken Since 2015

- The City **now permits detached accessory dwelling units** (e.g., laneway houses and coach houses) and provides standards for these units through the Zoning By-law.
- A policy was added to the recently adopted Official Plan **permitting additional residential dwelling units as-of-right** in detached houses, semi-detached houses, and street townhouses, as well as in structures accessory to these forms of housing.
- The new Official Plan also **increases permissions for housing-focused intensification** across the city's growth areas.

- The Zoning By-law was updated to **allow housing, including accessory residential units, in institutional zones** and to increase flexibility in residential zones for institutional forms of housing, such as assisted living facilities.
- **Definitions were updated in the Zoning By-law to create better clarity** for affordable housing applications.
- **The City currently provides a key affordable housing staff contact** in Development Services.

Priority #2: Incentivizing Affordable Housing

STAY THE COURSE

Affordable Housing Strategy Action	Result	Evaluation
#1. Allow for the provision of affordable housing as a community benefit in exchange for increased height and density (pursuant with Section 37[1] of the Planning Act and Barrie's Official Plan)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Council approved an amendment to allow public community benefits, such as the provision of affordable housing, to be negotiated in exchange for increased height and density</i> • <i>Height and density bonusing have been investigated and used, with limited success under the former Section 37(1) of the Planning Act. Recent changes to the Act now require the establishment of a community benefits strategy and by-law</i> 	NEW DIRECTION
#2. Amend the Community Improvement Plan (CIP) policies of the Official Plan to specifically reference affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>A new CIP has been created to provide a grant and incentivize the provision of affordable housing</i> ✓ <i>In 2020, a total of \$1.77 million in CIP funding was awarded as affordable housing grants; in 2021, a total of \$418,530 was awarded as affordable housing grants (tax-increment based grants and the waiving of application fees were also applied)</i> 	CELEBRATE

#3. Provide financial incentives for the development of brownfield lands for the purpose of affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>The CIP now offers financial incentives for the redevelopment of brownfield development</i> ✓ <i>In 2021, five tax-increment based grants were approved for brownfield sites (up to a maximum of \$230,000 per grant)</i> 	CELEBRATE
#4. Investigate municipal development charge incentives for affordable housing projects	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>The Province amended the Development Charges (DC) Act through Bill 108 and 138 in 2019, which City Council implemented through a staff report and updates to the DC By-law</i> ✓ <i>Changes include specific development charges exemptions for purpose built second suites and certain accessory dwelling units; a 50% development charges discount for non-profit institutions; and waiving interest charges for the first five years of development charges deferrals for non-profit housing projects</i> ✓ <i>Affordable housing projects can apply for development charges equivalent grants through the CIP</i> 	CELEBRATE
#5. Undertake a review of financial incentive opportunities for not-for-profit housing groups to develop not-for-profit affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Review of applicable financial incentives takes place on an ongoing basis in conjunction with other related initiatives (e.g., through the establishment of the CIP)</i> • <i>This work must be done in conjunction with the County of Simcoe, which is the housing service manager for Barrie</i> 	STAY THE COURSE

Above and Beyond: Other Actions Taken Since 2015

- For affordable housing projects, the City has **waived fees** such as pre-consultation review fees, Planning Act application fees, building permit fees, and any other associated or related administration/legal retainer fees.
- Emergency transition housing, as well as accessory dwelling units, are **exempt from any cash-in-lieu of parkland requirements**.

Priority #3: Mandating Affordable Housing

STAY THE COURSE

Affordable Housing Strategy Action	Result	Evaluation
#1. Set a target for 10% of all new housing units to be affordable, and support meeting the target by encouraging developers to plan for mixed-density neighbourhoods	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>A target of 10% of all new housing units per year to be affordable has been enshrined in the current Official Plan and the target was exceeded in 2018 and 2019 for home ownership units</i> ✓ <i>The recently adopted Official Plan raises the target to 15%</i> ✓ <i>Mixed-density neighbourhoods are also encouraged through policy</i> 	CELEBRATE
#2. Require all new housing developments to state their contribution to affordable housing as part of a planning justification report	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>The current planning justification report requires an explanation of how a development will contribute to affordable housing</i> • <i>Following implementation of the new Official Plan, the affordable housing terms of reference for the planning justification report will be revised to make contribution options clearer to ensure adequate justification is provided and that commitments are realized</i> 	STAY THE COURSE

Above and Beyond: Other Actions Taken Since 2015

- Specific affordable housing targets have also been set in the recently adopted Official Plan; at least **20% of new housing units in the Urban Growth Centre and Major Transit Station Areas will need to be affordable.**
- The new Official Plan requires all development and redevelopment to prepare an **Affordable Housing Report.**
- As per the new Official Plan, all development proposals with more than 40 residential dwelling units are required to **demonstrate the provision of affordable housing units.**
- The new Official Plan requires all development proposing ground-related housing, including single-detached, semi-detached, and street townhouse dwellings, to include design options that **provide purchasers the ability to have two residential units** within the main building and/or an additional residential unit in an ancillary structure.

Priority #4: Securing Affordable Housing Funding

STAY THE COURSE

Affordable Housing Strategy Action	Result	Evaluation
#1. Work with other levels of government to extend investment into affordable housing and consider the introduction of new programs	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Funding for repairs and maintenance of municipal not-for-profit housing in Barrie is allocated through the County of Simcoe</i> ✓ <i>There was a funding increase to the County of Simcoe for housing and homelessness prevention in City's 2022 budget (the operating budget contribution for non-profit social housing increased by more than 7% from 2021)</i> ✓ <i>Have reviewed opportunities for funding under the 2017 National Housing Strategy</i> • <i>Both funding and partnership opportunities should continue to be pursued</i> 	STAY THE COURSE
#2. Apply for Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) funding to support research into new built forms or alternative standards/construction materials in the provision of affordable housing alternatives	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>Models for CMHC funding have evolved since 2015, however CMHC continues to periodically provide funding for research and policy development</i> • <i>Staff have not applied for CMHC research funding; however, they are encouraged to do so when it becomes available</i> 	IMPROVE
#3. Fund the construction of new capital social housing projects through development charges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>The City collects development charges and provides a portion of those funds to the County of Simcoe to construct social housing projects throughout the county</i> ✓ <i>In 2022, the City put \$610,000 towards Simcoe County Housing Corporation capital projects</i> 	STAY THE COURSE

#4. Work to ensure social housing operating agreements with the Federal government are extended

- ✓ *The County of Simcoe advocates on behalf of non-profit housing projects to renew operating agreements with the Federal government*
- ✓ *The City continues to assist the County and housing providers with applications to various CMHC funding opportunities*

**NEW
DIRECTION**

Above and Beyond: Other Actions Taken Since 2015

- Council directed staff to explore the development of a process that allows for **cash contributions in lieu of affordable housing units** (with funds dedicated to affordable housing).
- The **City is preparing a Community Benefit Charge strategy** for approval in 2023; it will include funds for social and supportive housing projects.

Priority #5: Government as Providers and Organizers

IMPROVE

Affordable Housing Strategy Action	Result	Evaluation
#1. Provide for the acquisition and sale of land by the City for the development or promotion of affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>A report with recommendations for disposition of two surplus City-owned parking lots in the downtown area was approved by Council</i> • <i>However, there has been limited success in dedicating City-owned land for affordable housing purposes</i> 	IMPROVE
#2. Encourage school boards, in the disposal of surplus school lands, to institute an “Affordable Housing First” priority	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>The City is making it easier to build affordable housing on surplus school lands through the recently adopted Official Plan</i> • <i>However, surplus school lands must be sold at fair market value in accordance with provincial regulations (O.Reg. 444/98)</i> 	NEW DIRECTION

Above and Beyond: Other Actions Taken Since 2015

- The City of Barrie recognizes the annual *Yes In My Backyard (YIMBY) Week*, including a flag raising ceremony.
- An **Affordable Housing Hackathon** was held in 2017 in partnership with the Barrie District Association of Realtors; participating groups competed to find short-term, five-year solutions for the provision of affordable housing.

Priority #6:

Increasing Supply of Affordable Housing Units (Target)

STAY THE COURSE

Affordable Housing Strategy Action	Result	Evaluation
#1. Create 840 units by 2025	<ul style="list-style-type: none">✓ As per the 2021 Affordable Housing Strategy Monitoring Report, 965 new affordable units have been created since 2015• However, many units created are unfunded second suites, for which there is no mechanism to ensure long-term affordability. This factor reduces the affordable housing count significantly (see the 2021 Monitoring Report for more details)	STAY THE COURSE

Above and Beyond: Other Actions Taken Since 2015

- The **New Foundations initiative**, which is currently underway, **funds feasibility studies** for non-profits interested in building affordable housing.
- The City continues to work with partners to support applications to the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation's **Rapid Housing Initiative** in order to further facilitate an increase in supply.


Priority #7: Increasing Supply of Deeply Affordable Housing (Target)

IMPROVE

Affordable Housing Strategy Action	Result	Evaluation
#1. Out of the 840 affordable housing units the City aims to provide, ensure that more than half of them (e.g., 420 units) are deeply affordable units	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> While there are more deeply affordable units today than in 2015, differentiating (through the current tracking mechanisms) between new affordable and deeply affordable units remains difficult The provision of deeply affordable unit is currently dependent largely on social housing, which is overseen by the County of Simcoe (the service manager for Barrie) 	IMPROVE

Priority #8: Protecting Existing Affordable Housing Supply

STAY THE COURSE

Affordable Housing Strategy Action	Result	Evaluation
#1. Initiate an Official Plan Amendment that allows for control of demolition or conversion of rental housing to condominium/other uses	 Have established policies in the recently adopted Official Plan for the conversion of rental units to condominium ownership, which aim to protect the City's limited primary rental unit supply	STAY THE COURSE
#2. Pass a by-law pursuant to Section 99.1 (Demolition and Conversion of Residential Rental Properties) under the Municipal Act to assist in the protection of the City's existing rental housing supply	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> This has not yet been initiated, however the newly adopted Official Plan sets out enabling policies for the creation of a demolition control by-law 	IMPROVE

#3. Revise the temporary use by-laws for garden suites to allow for their use for up to 20 years

- ✓ *The timeframe for permitting a garden suite by way of a temporary use by-law was extended by the Planning Act to 20 years*
- *The Zoning By-law was amended to allow both a second suite and a detached accessory dwelling unit, which is a permanent form of ancillary housing, which is encouraged instead of temporary garden suites*

**NEW
DIRECTION**

Priority #9: Monitoring Efforts

STAY THE COURSE

Affordable Housing Strategy Action	Result	Evaluation
#1. Develop a monitoring or tracking system using available sources of data to monitor development, availability and maintenance of affordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ <i>Have provided annual monitoring reports tracking actions from a variety of sources, including County, Provincial, Federal and local data</i> ✓ <i>Actively map all registered second suites and detached accessory dwelling units in the city</i> ✓ <i>Use digital application processes for building permits and planning applications to track and maintain affordable housing information</i> • <i>Due to data limitations and to be consistent with the County of Simcoe, the way the City counts units recently changed. Units are no longer tracked based on monthly rents, but instead are counted as affordable if they are rented at or below average market rent, as set by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation</i> 	STAY THE COURSE

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- *Challenges exist with tracking and monitoring pricing for affordable units that have not received funding support from the County of Simcoe*
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