

Public Engagement Process in the Affordable Housing Siting and Development Process

Recommendation:

That the July 4, 2017, Sustainable Development report CR_4108, be received for information.

Report Summary

This report provides an overview of recent engagement processes for affordable housing developments, identifies best practices and lessons learned, and introduces the upcoming Affordable Housing Public Engagement Charter.

Previous Council/Committee Action

At the September 27, 2016, Executive Committee meeting, the following motion was passed:

That Administration provide a report back on:

- a. any lessons learned from the City's perspective on the consultation exercise around the sale and development of Station Pointe
- b. lessons learned from the Housing Initiative and the Public Engagement Initiative
- c. any other relevant information on best practices or important partnerships that would help more clearly define the City's role in supporting the public engagement process in the affordable housing siting and development process
- d. recommendations for changes in practice and/or policy, if warranted and report back to Committee in the Second Quarter of 2017

Report

Launched in 2014, City Council's Public Engagement Initiative has set a new course for the City's approach to public engagement. This approach is guided by the new Public Engagement Policy, Procedure and Framework (see the April 11, 2017, Sustainable Development report CR_4486 for more information).

In support of the Public Engagement Initiative, Sustainable Development is working collaboratively with the Communications and Engagement Department to ensure that our approach to public engagement for affordable housing aligns with the City's new Public Engagement Policy. This report provides an overview of best practices and

preliminary lessons learned from City involvement in public engagement processes for affordable housing. Additional work will be initiated in late 2017 and 2018 and will culminate in the development of the Affordable Housing Public Engagement Charter (described below).

A. Station Pointe Development

In September 2016, Administration brought forward an offer from Homeward Trust Edmonton to purchase a City-owned site in Station Pointe for a mixed-market (affordable, permanent supportive and market housing) development. Administration prepared a conditional sales agreement for the site that required Homeward Trust to complete a “Community Information Process” on or before September 30, 2017. The Community Information Process is defined as “informing the local community with regard to the form of the Buyer’s proposed Development” in the sales agreement.

In early 2017, Homeward Trust developed a public engagement plan that Administration commented on. The engagement process includes two public open houses and a key stakeholder meeting. City housing staff have not participated in the engagement sessions held to date, although City staff from the City Planning Branch in Sustainable Development have attended to answer general questions.

Based on the limited City involvement in the engagement process, lessons learned include:

- Administration should inform the local ward Councillor regarding potential City land sale agreements for non-market affordable housing projects.
- Engagement requirements defined in sales agreements should be consistent with the City’s Public Engagement Policy, and should be developed with input from the Communications and Engagement Department.

B. Lessons Learned from the Housing Initiative

The City has played various roles in supporting public engagement for affordable housing. Recent engagement initiatives have included a pilot engagement process for two surplus school sites (Keheewin and Ogilvie Ridge), the Lendrum Community Consultation Panel, and engagement in support of the Londonderry Social Housing Regeneration project. Administration has identified the following preliminary learnings based on these and other recent public engagement processes:

- Continuous improvement and flexibility are important components of public engagement. Project proponents must be responsive to stakeholder feedback about process design and activity formats. Adjustments to timelines, meeting formats, and other process components may be necessary as the project progresses.
- Public engagement processes should be transparent so the community understands when, how, why and to what extent they will be engaged. A key

- component of transparency is being clear about the role of stakeholder input in decision making for each project.
- An impartial, third party facilitator for public meetings can help establish greater process fairness and credibility.
 - Effective community engagement is resource intensive. The larger the role of the City, the more resources are required to support the process.
 - Public engagement requirements should be balanced with the need to achieve City affordable housing objectives in a timely manner.
 - While community engagements may be related to housing initiatives, community feedback is often about a broader range of pre-existing concerns or issues, such as traffic. Housing staff are expected to follow up with other areas of administration (such as transportation, parks, and engineering) and report back.
 - To enable a broad range of stakeholder perspectives, it is important to reach out to a range of stakeholders within a neighbourhood. Project proponents should promote engagement activities through formal and informal neighbourhood networks.
 - Communication with stakeholders must be timely, and communication methods should be informed by stakeholder communication needs and expectations.
 - The City should apply a human rights lens when defining expectations for public engagement. Affordable housing projects should not be held to a higher public engagement standard than market housing developments.

C. Information on Best Practices

In 2015, the City completed the Finding Common Ground report, a review of best practices in completing public engagement for affordable housing projects. For more information on Finding Common Ground, see the February 3, 2015, Sustainable Development report CR_1871.

A key finding of Finding Common Ground was that there is no optimal approach for completing public engagement for affordable housing developments. The report argued that stakeholders, especially experienced social housing providers and private developers, generally favour early consultation, although the form of consultation varies.

Finding Common Ground provided the following recommendations:

- Establish a formal affordable housing policy framework to define the rationale and priorities for City involvement in affordable housing.
- Complete an affordable education and awareness campaign to raise awareness on the importance and need for affordable housing in the city.
- Establish a formal review process with transparent and objective selection criteria (including siting, design and operational aspects) via a funding approval process for affordable housing developments.

- Initiate early and low scale public stakeholder engagement (one-on-one, to build key stakeholder support).
- Where larger forum such as public meetings are used, ensure these are well planned and structured to avoid “open-mic” options, that can result in less productive and at times disrespectful discussions.
- Consider direct engagement and involvement via local advisory committee with opportunities to constructively discuss and work through legitimate concerns prior to making decisions or approving funding/development.

D. Prior Administration Work Relating to Affordable Housing Information, Awareness and Public Engagement

In recent years, Administration has made significant progress on achieving the major recommendations from the Finding Common Ground research report. For example in 2015, Council approved the City’s Affordable Housing Strategy, and later that year, in response to a major Finding Common Ground recommendation, the City launched its Affordable Housing and Information Strategy through the Office of Mayor D. Iveson. Included in the Strategy was a new website and a toolkit including a range of information on affordable housing, including frequently asked questions, the definition of affordable housing in the context of the overall housing spectrum, current needs and benefits associated with affordable housing, and related City policies and programs to respond to those needs. More recently, Administration has piloted multiple local advisory committees in conjunction with the surplus school site programs.

One particular area of recent City involvement relating to public engagement on affordable housing has been the support for the work of the Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative, formed in 2010 to support faith communities involvement in implementing the 10 Year Plan to End Homelessness. Early Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative achievements included the development of the “Welcome Home” Program, participation in Habitat for Humanity builds, creation of a Congregational Housing Action Guide (recently revised to incorporate EndPovertyEdmonton objectives), and sponsorship of numerous forums. Since 2016, the Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative has organized 4 regional (multi-neighbourhood) faith/community workshops to inspire constructive community conversations on affordable and supportive housing well in advance of specific development proposals. Included in those workshops has been the distribution of information from the City’s Affordable Housing Information and Awareness Strategy. Through Capital Region Interfaith Housing Initiative encouragement, Administration is pursuing a future social marketing campaign for affordable housing.

E. Next Steps and Recommendations for Changes in Practice

1. Affordable Housing Public Engagement Charter

A priority under the Public Engagement Initiative is the development of Public Engagement Charters. Affordable housing is being used as one pilot for the Charter approach and will allow Administration to test and refine the process.

The Affordable Housing Public Engagement Charter will define the decision making process for affordable housing, the decisions to be made, the decision makers, the information needed from the public, how their input will be used and the internal and external contexts which will impact engagement. It will define the various roles the City, and others, play (for example, landowner, developer, regulator) and the various realms of decision making (for example, policy, planning, concept, detailed design, rezoning, development, operation) as well as the roles of developers and the public within these scenarios. Within this, the Charter will also explore the City's role in supporting engagement processes led by those external to the City.

2. Engagement Evaluations

In late 2017, Administration will complete evaluations of the two pilot engagement processes at Ogilvie Ridge and Keheewin and the Lendrum Community Consultation Panel. The findings from this work will inform the development of the Affordable Housing Public Engagement Charter.

3. Engagement resources

To enable City staff to provide effective, ongoing support for affordable housing public engagement, additional dedicated resources are often required. Resource requirements should be identified through the Engagement Charter project.

4. Social Marketing Campaign

Building on the work of the City's Affordable Housing Information and Awareness Strategy, Administration is developing a social marketing campaign for affordable housing to strengthen the City's approach to informing and educating Edmontonians about affordable housing. Materials developed through this project will be used to support future public engagement processes.

Policy

The Way We Grow, Edmonton's Municipal Development Plan:

- 4.5.1.1 - Work proactively and in partnership with others to meet a wide range of affordable housing needs in all areas of the city with a focus on LRT stations and transit centres.

Corporate Outcomes

This report supports the corporate outcome "the City of Edmonton has sustainable and accessible infrastructure" as it will support the delivery of City affordable housing programs which create housing for Edmontonians.

Public Engagement

No direct consultation was completed for this report. However, this report was informed by the direction provided by the new Public Engagement Policy C593, which was completed with input from a wide range of stakeholders, as well as considerable community consultations preceding the Finding Common Ground report. Additional engagement will be completed in support of the Affordable Housing Public Engagement Charter in 2018.

Metrics, Targets and Outcomes

Metrics	Targets	Outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Affordable Housing to Market Housing Ratio as Percent (4.3% for 2016) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Up to 10% non-market affordable housing in all areas (e.g. by neighbourhood, by ward) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> All areas are more diverse, inclusive and complete through inclusion in their areas of a mix of market and affordable housing types

Others Reviewing this Report

- R. Smyth, Deputy City Manager, Citizen Services
- C. Campbell, Deputy City Manager, Communications and Engagement