



# Staff Report

## Administration

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**Report To:** Committee of The Whole  
**Meeting Date:** March 12, 2018  
**Report Number:** FAF.18.29  
**Subject:** Follow-up Report on Housing Needs Review  
**Prepared by:** Shawn Everitt, Interim CAO

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### A. Recommendations

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THAT Council receive Staff Report FAF. 18.29, entitled "Follow-up Report on Housing Needs Review"; and,

THAT Council direct Staff to consult with the appropriate Committees, Agencies, Counties, neighbouring municipalities, Private Sector and other Stakeholders to initiate a workshop(s) to focus on the municipal and regional housing needs as outlined in this report.

### B. Overview

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This report outlines what is currently being worked on and recommended next steps to consider the Town hosting a housing needs workshop(s) in 2018. The workshop(s) purpose being to establish clear goals and needs to build short/medium/long term plans with key stakeholders.

### C. Background

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A number of agencies, stakeholders, upper tier governments including Grey County, local municipalities, and The Blue Mountains have been working on a variety of activities related to Housing Needs. This issue has arisen due to a labour shortage that is occurring in the region, and an urgency on the part of the business community to attract workers to the South Georgian Bay Region. This has involved looking at public transit, services provided in the municipality/region, active transportation, work force education, child care, etc.

Council, by way of re-affirming priorities through the 2018 Budget process, identified that Attainable Housing remain as a priority for this Council.

At the January 29, 2018 Committee of the Whole meeting, the Town's Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC) presented an overview of their work in 2017. As part of this presentation, an update was also provided on the activities of the regional Tourism Labour Supply Force Task Force, of which the Town is a member, and EDAC is a strong supporter. This part of the presentation included information on the need to consider attainable housing opportunities to address the multi-tier tourism labour shortage study that is beginning in February/March 2018 with key stakeholders.

Staff Report PDS.18.08 "Bill 139, Building Better Communities & Conserving Watersheds Act" outlines the options for Inclusionary Zoning. Inclusionary Zoning is the creation of inclusive, complete communities with a broad range of housing types and could provide the tools needed to incent more attainable housing.

### **Actions Taken to Date**

Town Staff have been working with the business community and EDAC, throughout the past year, to study the labour supply issue. Work has been done across a number of departments, to look at:

1. The ability for Town's to create more diverse housing options
2. Creative solutions to rural Transit challenges
3. Gaps in child care services in the Town that may be keeping people who want to work, out of the workforce

### **1. Diverse Housing Options**

The Town has identified the need for diverse and attainable housing to allow individuals to start, succeed and grow in the Town. Bill 139 may provide the tools the municipality requires to create more inclusionary housing policies. While awaiting this new legislation, Town staff have worked to:

- i. Promote the Attainable Housing Corporation's two programs:
  1. Secondary Suite Program
  2. Down Payment Assistance Program

The Town continues to work with the Attainable Housing Committee to ensure that the public are aware of these programs.

The Secondary Suite Program may increase the amount of rental properties available to workers in the region at a more attainable rate. The Down Payment Assistance program is designed to help first time homebuyers purchase their first home in the Town. However, there continues to be minimal uptake on these programs, which is a challenge the Committee continues to work on.

ii. Membership on the Tourism Labour Supply Task Force

Given that the labour shortage is acute across the South Georgian Bay area, the Town has joined the Task Force to work collectively on this challenging issue and leverage scarce resources. In order to address these issues, the Task Force must first define the challenges and look at the opportunities to address these issues in the region.

The Town has provided \$3,500 from the Economic Development Initiatives budget to hire a consulting firm to study these issues with key stakeholders across the region, and then create the business case for attainable housing (dorms, apartment rentals, condos, starter homes, family homes) in the region. This study will include:

- Researching the current housing situation in South Georgian Bay (SGB)
- Determining the specific challenges faced by businesses by speaking with employers and employees
- Study best practices in similar economies
- Assessing municipal readiness (i.e. availability of properties, zoning, community willingness, etc.)
- Propose development incentives and frameworks to attract builders

iii. Research

The Town has worked with the Four County Labour Marketing Planning Board to promote their annual Employer One Survey. This survey will provide the Town and County with important information and trends related to workforce to assist in making strategic decisions within each community.

iv. The Economic Development Advisory Committee

The Economic Development Advisory Committee has identified the need for attainable housing in the region, and has expressed their support for this study.

v. Staff Report on Bill 139, Building Better Communities & Conserving Watersheds Act

Michael Benner, Director of Planning and Development Services, presented a staff report on Bill 139 at the February 21st Committee of the Whole Meeting that provided information to Council on what affect Bill 139 will have in the future.

**Next Steps: Diverse Housing Options**

1. Town staff are bringing a recommendation for a workshop or series of workshops to discuss the issue with key stakeholders.

**2. Childcare**

The Town is not responsible for child care. This is a County obligation and the Town's role has been to investigate and confirm the scope of the need.

To conduct this investigation, the Economic Development Advisory Committee, with support from the Town, has engaged in a number of actions to learn more about the issue:

1. Supported EDAC by putting on a Child Care Forum in September, 2017 to discuss the issue with parents, caregivers, the County, and those interested in starting up a licensed home child care operation.
2. Followed up the Child Care Forum with a survey. Sixty-nine individuals in the community responded and a clearer picture of the need emerged.
3. Staff met with the County to share those findings and discuss what could be done to address the issue. It was determined that the only short-term possibility to address the child care shortfall, was to connect individuals wanting to start a home child care with the supports available to them from Grey County.

#### **Next Steps: Childcare**

1. The Town has invited Grey County to hold a small group session designed to help prospective home care operators learn about the many supports Grey County can provide.
2. The Town would support Grey by promoting the event in our e-blast and on social media. If the session did not attract 5 or more individuals, those that have signed up would connect with Grey directly for one-on-one sessions.

Beyond this, there is no role for the Town in the child care arena. However, on the Social Services page of the new website, there will be links to Grey County Social Services' One List and to 211 to assist those looking for child care.

#### **3. Transit**

The Town has been providing funding for a transit loop from Collingwood, through the Blue Mountain/Blue Mountain Village area, and finally through Craighleith and along Hwy 26. This pilot proved successful and the transit program was expanded by increasing the hours of service to accommodate a wider range of work shifts. The February 21, 2018 Committee of the Whole included a 2017 Transit update that provided yearly transit ridership numbers.

#### **Next Steps: Transit**

1. A regional approach to consider the future needs of transit is currently underway and has proven to be well received by a wide range of stakeholders including the two Counties, regional Municipalities and the Private Sector. Approximately 40 individuals participated in a workshop that looked at the current supply of transportation and considered the future transportation needs. Important to note, the workshop considered all forms of transportation including active transportation and not only the traditional conventional bus type transit services. The need to create a regional transportation task force/Advisory Committee was identified as a key outcome.

Staff suggest that an opportunity to align the Attainable Housing/Labour Force Housing workshops and the Regional Transportation stakeholders should be pursued and could prove to be very beneficial.

## **D. Analysis**

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Staff have considered how the Town can play a significant and appropriate role in moving the priorities forward that deal directly with the Attainable Housing and overall Housing Needs of the Town and Region, including the consideration of what the current and future abilities the Town and South Georgian Bay region Communities have to provide for multiple ranges of housing needs required and how “Inclusionary Zoning” could impact the Town’s strategy on housing moving forward.

The Province’s updated Long-Term Affordable Housing Strategy focuses on increasing the supply of affordable housing, supporting people and ending chronic homelessness by 2025.

Staff recommends facilitating a workshop or series of workshops to bring residents, stakeholders, partners, the development community, real estate community, agencies, Counties and neighbouring communities to look at the needs, concerns, opportunities and strategic next steps to finding opportunities and solutions, that incorporate the current and future needs of the Town.

Staff has identified late April 2018 to early June 2018 as potential timing for such workshop(s), providing adequate time to allow for appropriate scheduling, planning, communication and the availability of representatives.

Ultimately, staff recommend this option to address the real and perceived issues from a Town perspective, stakeholder perspective and a regional perspective.

Respecting and celebrating the great work already initiated by our committees, stakeholders, and partners, staff believe it is the appropriate time to bring these groups together and determine the next steps in a collaborative meaningful way.

### **Additional Information:**

A number of local municipalities were invited to complete an Expression of Interest to be considered for a Development Charges Rebate Program that is being driven by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs/Municipal Housing.

To be considered, a municipality was required to meet one of the following criteria:

Municipalities who levied multi-unit development charges and fulfilled one of the three criteria below were invited to submit an Expression of Interest for the DC Rebate Program.

The current rental vacancy rate is 3% or less; or

20% of all households in the Town are renter households; or

That there are opportunities to develop rental housing within 500-800 metres radius of a Major Transit Station Area (includes commuter rail (GO station), subway, light rail, or bus rapid transit).

The Blue Mountains did not meet any of the above criteria.

- Vacancy rate data was unavailable (2017 CMHC's Rental Market Survey);
- 15% of all households are renters (Census 2016)
- Does not seem to have a Major Transit Station Area.

## **E. The Blue Mountains Strategic Plan**

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### **Goal #1: Create Opportunities for Stable Growth**

**Objective #1:** Retain Existing Business;

**Action:** Explore the expansion of a Regional Transit Network

### **Goal #3: Support Healthy Lifestyles**

**Objective #2:** Increase the Range of Housing Choices and Promote Housing Affordability

**Action:** Make efficient use of existing municipal infrastructure by identifying preferred areas for increased density as part of the Growth Management Strategy.

**Action:** Support the Town of The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation as a vehicle to promote housing affordability.

## **F. Environmental Impacts**

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Consideration of Smart Growth on both a local and regional perspective.

## **G. Financial Impact**

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Staff suggests that having a strong facilitator is critical in ensuring the workshop(s) is successful and that real next steps are identified.

Staff have identified existing funding within the 2018 approved budget for the hiring of a facilitator.

## **H. In consultation with**

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- Senior Management Team
- Financial Services
- Economic Development
- Economic Development Advisory Committee
- The Blue Mountains Attainable Housing Corporation.

## **I. Attached**

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None at this time

Respectfully Submitted,

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