

Terms of Reference for the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy

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Purpose

The Capital Region is one of the most expensive housing markets in Canada, which means that not only do those with limited, fixed or low incomes have difficulty finding and keeping decent housing that is within their financial means, but so do some households whose incomes are modest and who rely on the open real estate market. In future, limitations on the supply of available land and other factors (see Appendix A for background and justification) may exacerbate the affordability of housing for all residents of the Region.

The purpose of the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy is to ensure that all residents of the Capital Region, especially moderate and low income households, have a reasonable choice of housing by type, tenure, price/rent and location.

The Strategy will, with member municipalities, residents and other stakeholders:

- identify the current and anticipated future issues concerning market and non-market housing affordability for no- , low- and middle-income and special needs households in the study area;
- identify and analyze the extent of present and future problems;
- identify and recommend practical policies, and lay the foundation for gaining commitments to action and programs to address these needs and problems in the short and long term, across the region;
- involve a dynamic process to include the community in the development of the Strategy and recommended solutions; and
- act as a catalyst for substantial activities to deliver affordable housing in the region.

Scope

Geography - The study area for the Regional Housing Affordability Strategy will be consistent with that for the Regional Growth Strategy. That is, it will include all the Capital Region except the Indian Reserves and Gulf Islands. First Nation Councils are currently not formal participants in the RGS. The Trust Area is specifically excluded by legislation from the regional growth strategy, and come under the jurisdiction of the Islands Trust.

Timeframe - The Strategy should include long and short term goals and actions to be applied in the region to 2026, the term of the RGS.

Resident Groups - The Strategy will address housing affordability for both lower and middle income residents. Housing will be considered to be 'affordable' when decent, appropriate shelter is available for 30% of gross household income or less.

Sectoral Involvement - The strategy shall include recommendations for, and serve as a catalyst for action by, the public, private and non-profit sectors. The strategy will address both market and non-market housing.

Objectives

General:

- To see, on the ground, a significantly greater number of more affordable homes than if there was no strategy at all.
- To foster and achieve innovation and creativity in resolving housing issues.
- To develop a strategy that is integrated with the other regional strategic initiatives on transportation and economic development, and which recognizes the interrelationships between housing and these other aspects of the sustainable community.

Policy, Regulatory and Process Changes:

- To remove obstacles to the supply of affordably priced market and non-market housing, region-wide, consistent with the overall growth management goals of the RGS.
- To create policies and plans for future development in the CRD that will take into consideration the need for housing for people of all incomes and situations, abilities, genders, family structure and age.
- To develop a strategy that is flexible, that can be adjusted to meet the different needs of different parts of the region, and with solutions that are transferable to various jurisdictions.

Education:

- To provide reliable, widely accessible information that is a common base for the community and for public and private stakeholders when participating in creating housing solutions.
- To increase awareness of the hardships of living without safe and affordable housing, and of resulting effects on the whole region and its economy
- To develop policies and actions to increase awareness and change public attitudes:
 - to reduce unwarranted opposition to change in residential and other neighbourhoods, and to challenge this attitude at the individual, neighbourhood and municipal levels; and
 - to shift public attitudes towards "affordable" housing and multiple housing forms in general.

Participation:

- To encourage mechanisms for inclusive, efficient and effective cross-sectoral participation
 - to develop and maintain housing stock;
 - to coordinate related programs and services, and increase funding leverage; and
 - to develop lasting partnerships and cooperation among the stakeholders.

Process:

- To develop the strategy via an inclusive process that
 - involves the community, stakeholders, and all levels of government, and
 - encourages awareness of housing issues, and dialogue between the parties mentioned above

Action Orientation:

- To create buy-in for the solutions recommended, by municipalities, senior governments, housing providers, the home building industry and the public.
- To define specifically how the municipal level of government, and other stakeholders, will address housing affordability needs.
- To identify specific, immediate actions that can be taken by specified stakeholders in the short, medium and long term, to address housing issues and needs.

Accountability:

- To establish reasonable targets, measurable outcomes and the framework of a monitoring system with which to evaluate short and long term progress toward the strategy's goals, in each municipality of the region.

Project Tasks

Pending development of a detailed work plan, the following tasks have been identified:

Phase 1

Develop the process and secure involvement of participants
 Develop and finalize a Request for Quotes from consultants
 Secure sufficient funding for the development of the Strategy

Phase 2

Refine and confirm strategy objectives with stakeholders including CRD decision-makers
 Define and undertake necessary research and analysis:

- baseline data
- identify local needs, issues, assets, resources and capacities
- undertake an analysis of demographic projections in order to determine the potential demand for various sorts of housing
- a housing market analysis to identify and explain the particularities of this market
- gather information on other jurisdictions' strategies and successes and distill for use

Consultation with stakeholders (see below) - throughout
 Develop and begin to implement communications strategy for project participants and wider community
 Refine focus of strategy if appropriate, based on consultation and information obtained

Phase 3

Develop the strategy

- identify options and technically evaluate them
- identify actions to be taken, and their priority

Circulate draft for comment
 Revisions

Phase 4

Presentation to RPC, Municipalities, and Board

Next Steps:

- Strategy implementation
- Preparation and execution of implementation agreements with municipalities, agencies, and senior governments as required
- Setup of monitoring program and review process

PARTICIPANTS, ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

The Strategy will be developed as a partnership of regional and provincial bodies: the Capital Regional District, the Capital Health Region, the Regional Hospital District, BC Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. and the Capital Regional Housing Corporation. These parties will engage in an agreement under Section 176 of the Local Government Act, which allows for the establishment of agreements with public authorities respecting activities, works or services within the powers of a party to the agreement.

The structure for the development of the Strategy will include:

- Project Management by either CRD Regional Planning Services;

- Establishment of a Steering Committee composed of the funding partners;
- Hiring of a consultant or team to do research, develop the strategy and carry out the wide-ranging consultation program;
- Establishment of a cross-sectoral Advisory Committee consisting of representation from:
 - The Housing Affordability Partnership (HAP)
 - Municipalities
 - Provincial agencies involved in housing (other than BC Housing)
 - Federal agencies (e.g. HRDC)
 - Lending institutions
 - Real Estate industry
 - Business organizations (e.g. Chambers of Commerce)
 - Representatives from RGS Economic Development and Transportation Strategy teams
 - Note that Committee members may represent more than one category where appropriate. The Advisory Committee will provide advice to the Steering Committee, project manager and consultants on matters of process and substance. As representatives of a sectoral group, members should also take on the responsibility for communicating to their constituencies about the Strategy.

In terms of implementation of the Strategy once complete, the Local Government Act allows, under Section 868, for coordination of activities related to the implementation of a growth strategy with federal and provincial governments and agencies, local authorities, and other agencies, through the establishment of implementation agreements. Implementation actions could also be handled through the execution of agreements under Section 176 of the Local Government Act.

Consultation

Development of a practical, dynamic Strategy will require that there be buy-in and support for its goals and actions from the entire community. In order to involve the community in the preparation of the Strategy and to ensure its success, it is essential that the work plan include a focussed consultation component. The details of this process will be provided by the consultant, in consultation with the Advisory Committee. Preliminary work has identified the following groups and individuals:

- Regional Residents (of all income levels) including those who typically have no voice
- Housing Agency Clients
- Agencies (public, private, non-profit including CHR/CRDHP)
- Municipalities - Councils, Planning, Engineering, Taxation
- Business organizations (general - economic development aspects)
- Building industry
- Real Estate industry
- Neighbourhoods and associations
- Financial institutions

- Churches

Consultation may include the following: Open Houses, Focus Groups, Workshops, publications and use of the internet.

Desired Outcomes and Deliverables

The following desirable outcomes and products have been identified through consultation with HAP:

- Actions, responsibilities, timelines, and priorities for meeting the objectives
- Policies and Regulations: Alternative development standards; local recognition of housing issues and policies to facilitate solutions; drafts of Implementation Agreements for the completed housing strategy; indicators for measurement of progress toward strategic goals and program evaluation.
- Design: Alternative forms of development; design suggestions for both market and non-market solutions
- Processes: new models for processes (funding, planning, building, delivery); improved planning/rezoning processes/approaches
- Financial: Investment Strategy to meet Core Housing Need; identification of funding sources/methods; changes in taxation to improve feasibility of development and affordability
- Education: Communication with community about housing issues, strategy results and future actions; increased political and public awareness of and support for affordable housing issues and solutions for all income levels
- Partnerships: Enduring partnerships
- Transferable solutions: solutions usable throughout the region and elsewhere
- Action: Political Will to make decisions to increase housing supplies

Budget

The project budget includes:

- \$50,000 from the Capital Health Region
- \$50,000 from the Capital Regional District
- \$25,000 from the Regional Hospital District
- \$25,000 from the BC Housing Management Commission

Non-monetary support is also being provided by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corp. in the form of provision of data and the use of a computer model application.

These funds will be used to:

- Hire knowledgeable and experienced consultant(s);
- Support the consultation process; and
- Provide secretariat and administrative resources for advisory committee and consultations.

Existing CRD staff will provide project management and control to document, track and report on expenditure of budget.

The in-kind contributions made through the time and effort put in by members of the Advisory Committee and government staff is also considered as valuable assistance to the process