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**REPORT TO PLANNING AND TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE
MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, JULY 22, 2009**

SUBJECT: REGIONAL HOUSING AFFORDABILITY STRATEGY REVIEW

PURPOSE:

To outline the status of activities and challenges of implementing Regional Housing Affordability Strategy (RHAS) and establishing new directions to improve the effectiveness of future Capital Regional District (CRD) Housing Secretariat initiatives.

BACKGROUND:

- The CRD adopted the RHAS on March 7, 2007. This strategy's vision is to partner with municipalities, the private development industry and community housing stakeholder organizations to achieve a goal that all residents of the capital region have safe, adequate housing they can afford.
- In May 2007, the CRD Planning and Protective Services department created the Housing Secretariat with a mission that;
 - the quality of life of those in core need is substantially improved,
 - the availability and affordability of housing is compatible with the community health, education, transportation plans and strategies, and,
 - improve housing affordability will substantially reduce costs of health, education and provision of public safety services.
- The Housing Secretariat is addressing the following approved 2009 Services Summary;
 - a. Provide affordable housing development advisory services to municipalities, community organizations and non-profit housing societies.
 - b. Administration of the Regional Housing Trust Fund.
 - c. Implementation and administration of Regional Housing Affordability Strategy.
 - d. Identification and delivery of homelessness initiatives.

Progress Report on 2009 Housing Secretariat Current Services

Providing Affordable Housing Development Advisory Services:

- Participated in the development of the Affordable Housing-Smart Growth Toolkit for BC municipalities, in partnership with Smart GrowthBC.
- In partnership with approximately 30 private sector developers (involving over 2500 units) investigated the possibility of developing market and non-market rental housing as a result of the significant condominium market downturn. Presently seven projects are proceeding to the concept development stage in partnership with regional non-profit housing societies.

Administration of the CRD of Regional Housing Trust Fund:

- As of July 1, 2009 the trust fund has provided funding or commitments to 16 projects involving \$3,141,000 since its inception in March 2005. Please find attached a copy of the April 2009 RHTF Progress Report (Attachment 1).
- To address the recent strong competition for limited funding the RHTF Commission resolved on May 5, 2009 to target the funding as follows:
 1. That no less than 50% of the 2009/10 RHTF funding targeted to proposed affordable housing projects where support services have been pre-identified for households and individuals within the core need income thresholds;
 2. That funding in the 2009/10 also be considered for project proposals that target tenants with incomes above core need income thresholds that are less than median incomes for the region, that also have strong community support, significant financial leveraging, and multiple funding partners, and,

3. That staff be directed to prepare policy guidelines, letter of intent requirements and program evaluation criteria that reflect the above two recommendations.
- At the June 2, 2009 meeting the RHTF Commission gave approval to the revised letter of intent, evaluation criteria and policy guidelines for the future RHTF operations.
- In September 2009, an in-depth RHTF five-year evaluation report will be prepared, as prescribed in CRD Bylaw 3266, for the Regional Planning and Transportation Committee. This report will include recommendations regarding the major bylaw funding parameters for the funds future operations and suggested bylaw amendments.
- To address the first four strategies of RHAS the Housing Secretariat is focusing its efforts on the following two priorities:
 - providing secretariat and administration services to the CRD Housing Action Team, a multi-stakeholder housing organization that has been established to facilitate and produce affordable housing results.
 - assist and encourage CRD municipalities to incorporate affordable housing policies and initiatives within their official community plans and community plans. Presently the Housing Secretariat is working with municipal officials from Victoria, Esquimalt, View Royal, Salt Spring Island, Saanich and Sidney on such initiatives.

Identification and Delivery of Homelessness Initiatives:

- The delivery responsibilities of RHAS strategy #5 has been assumed by the Greater Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness (the Coalition). In May 2009, this organization established the governance framework as outlined in the attached organizational chart (Attachment 2).
- In June 2009, the Coalition Leadership Council adopted the Housing Procurement Action Plan, dated April 2009, as prepared by CitySpaces Consulting. Please find attached copy of this plan (Attachment 3).
- To assist the housing stakeholders and larger community to understand the funding and delivery responsibilities of homelessness, the Housing Secretariat has developed the attached Homelessness Delivery Framework Chart (Attachment 4).
- The CRD Housing Secretariat has been identified to assume the administration services on behalf of the Coalition for the federal 2009/10 Homelessness Partnership Initiative (HPI) Funding. This funding has approximately \$1.1 million available over the next two years of capital to create additional permanent affordable accommodations.

ALTERNATIVES:

1. That this report be received for information and staff be directed to continue to implement RHAS as presently structured.
2. That this report be received for information and staff be directed to initiate activities to update the RHAS Strategies, with focus on:
 - Providing an updated business case report for the continuation of the Regional Housing Trust Fund beyond the March 2010 mandate.
 - Prior to year-end providing an update on the relationship of CRD Housing Secretariat, Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness and BC Housing in our efforts to address Strategy #5 of RHAS and the new economic conditions.
 - Develop regional affordable housing policies within the Regional Growth Strategy with strong emphasis and focus on transportation and densification.
 - Prepare analysis and proposed CRD Service Bylaws for Land Banking and Housing to replace Letters Patent allowing for consideration of new authorities for housing project underwriting through the Capital Region Housing Corporation and administration of federal homelessness funding.

SUMMARY:

The Housing Secretariat is making significant progress in its efforts to implement the RHAS strategies. In particular, several significant partnerships have been developed with community, housing stakeholder and with the Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness. At present there is a significant operational

challenge due to minimal capital funding levels from senior governments and the local health authority to embark on an aggressive affordable housing and homelessness development program.

The Housing Secretariat will undertake to prepare a comprehensive evaluation and business case report of the Regional Housing Trust Fund and targets to provide a revised RHTF recommended bylaw for the Regional Planning and Transportation Committee in September 2009.

The Housing Secretariat will undertake to improve partnerships with local housing stakeholders, municipalities, the Coalition, private development industry and the non-profit housing sector to facilitate and secure additional capital and operating funding to address the critical shortage of affordable housing and homelessness accommodations.

RECOMMENDATION:

That the Planning and Transportation Committee received this report for information and staff be directed to initiate activities to update the RHAS Strategies, focusing on:

1. Providing an updated business case report for the continuation of the Regional Housing Trust Fund beyond the March 2010 mandate.
2. Prior to year-end providing an update on the relationship of CRD Housing Secretariat, Victoria Coalition to End Homelessness and BC Housing in our efforts to address Strategy #5 of RHAS and the new economic conditions.
3. Develop regional affordable housing policies within the Regional Growth Strategy with strong emphasis and focus on transportation and densification.
4. Prepare analysis and proposed CRD Service Bylaws for Land Banking and Housing to replace Letters Patent allowing for consideration of new authorities for housing project underwriting through the Capital Region Housing Corporation and administration of federal homelessness funding.

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