

# Brief to the Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee

Re: City of Winnipeg Housing Policy  
Implementation Plan

April 10, 2014



Right  
to Housing



# Right to Housing

## **Brief to the Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee Re: City of Winnipeg Housing Policy Implementation Plan**

### **Introduction**

Right to Housing is a Winnipeg-based coalition of individuals and 50 organizations that advocates for affordable housing for low-income households. The Coalition lobbies all three levels of government to address the current lack of affordable housing and recommends program and policy solutions to increase its supply. The lack of decent affordable rental housing has been the focus of our advocacy efforts in recent years.

The Coalition was pleased that the City's housing policy approved by Council last September identified affordable housing development as a key issue and priority and that it established a leadership role for the City in working with other levels of government, housing developers and community organizations to meet the need.

In its July 2012 brief to the Housing Steering Committee the Coalition recommended that the City adopt a comprehensive city-wide affordable housing strategy and action plan that included specific elements. The Coalition's comments in this brief focus on affordability and housing supply provisions within the policy and implementation plan and their alignment with the Coalition's earlier recommendations.

### **Development of more affordable housing**

The Coalition recommended that the City's strategy include an incentive package for purpose-built rental housing.

The Housing Policy for the City listed incentives that the City may use. The plan provides for the development of housing incentive programs in the next two years. Given the urgency of the problem in our city the Coalition was disappointed that the implementation plan did not contain more specific incentive program information.

The Coalition was pleased that the City set a healthy rental vacancy rate in its plan and set out a target for purpose built rental development. The Coalition believes that the 750 unit target is too low given the loss of rental units over the last decade and current need for affordable rental units. If 10% of the units are affordable (the minimum amount), only 15 new affordable units will be added on average per year.

### **Municipal assets**

The plan refers to surplus land and its use for housing development. The Coalition recommends that the City leverage its land assets to increase the supply of affordable rental housing by dedicating proceeds of sales from City owned lands to addressing the issue of affordable rental housing supply or providing City owned lands at discounted prices to be used toward the creation of affordable rental housing. Action in this area should be taken within the first year of the plan.

## **Coordination and Collaboration with the Province**

The plan outlines several areas of coordination/collaboration with the Province

- . additional supports for secondary suites
- . development of an affordable housing strategy with the province
- . contribute to affordability criteria and incentives.

The Coalition strongly supports the need for coordination and collaboration with the provincial government. Stacking of incentives offered at the city and provincial level will encourage development.

## **Advocating with Federal Government**

The Coalition recommended that the City formally advocate for increased federal involvement in affordable housing. The implementation plan indicates that the City will advocate for changes to federal legislation to create a more enabling environment for rental development.

The Coalition strongly supports the City's advocacy role with the federal government.

## **Funding and Personnel**

The Coalition identified the need for appropriate financial and human resources as a necessary component of an affordable housing strategy. There are no financial targets included in the implementation plan to support the level of activity listed in the plan.

The plan to review development fees to support affordable housing activities needs to be prioritized and completed by the first year of the plan rather than in the next 2 – 3 years as indicated in the plan.

The Housing Development Division is the lead on many of the areas in the plan. The Coalition believes additional resources will be needed for the Division to carry out the implementation plan activities. For example, the plan indicates a role for the City in "helping to build the capacity of not-for-profit housing organizations". There is no indication of how the Division will undertake this and what resources will be needed.

Strong leadership will be needed in the Planning, Property & Development Department to ensure that all the partners listed work effectively to ensure the key areas are addressed and goals achieved.

## **Implementation Plan Consultation**

The Coalition appreciates the communication by the Housing Development Division staff as the plan was being developed and receiving the draft plan in time for members of the Coalition to review it properly before being tabled at the Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee Meeting.

The Coalition recommends that the City consider increased involvement of interested organizations including market and non-profit housing developers, housing advocates and neighbourhood associations as the plan is further developed and implemented.

Right to Housing Coalition  
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