



TOWN OF SIDNEY

Report to Committee of the Whole

TO: Chair and Committee Members
FROM: Corey Newcomb, Senior Manager of Long Range Planning
DATE: October 28, 2019 **FILE NO.:** 5040-01
SUBJECT: Sidney Housing Needs Assessment – Final Report and Presentation

PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to provide an overview and summary of the Sidney Housing Needs Assessment Project to accompany the consultant's presentation and final report submission.

BACKGROUND:

In 2018 the Provincial Government amended the *Local Government Act* to make the preparation and consideration of a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) mandatory prior to the development of an Official Community Plan (OCP). With Sidney in the initial planning stages of a comprehensive OCP review, Council directed staff to proceed with the preparation of a HNA in May 2019.

Following an open Request for Proposals (RFP) process, in June 2019 Council awarded the contract for the HNA project to Urban Matters CCC, for a contract price of \$28,870. The Town was also successful in a grant application through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) for partial project funding of \$20,000. The remainder of the project balance is being funded through OCP Review project funds.

DISCUSSION:

Broadly speaking, Sidney appears to be facing similar housing challenges to other municipalities in the CRD (Capital Regional District). High demand for all housing types and limited supply have driven both prices and rents up substantially in recent years, and people across the housing spectrum have struggled to find suitable housing. In some cases household incomes are not high enough to find affordable accommodation, while in other cases income is sufficient but housing availability is lacking. This study highlights the variety of challenges that people face in the housing market, for owners and renters alike.

Staff highlight the following key points from the report:

- Broadly speaking, Sidney is well served in terms of the variety of housing types available in the community. With the exception of apartments over 5 storeys, Sidney compares favourably to the CRD in terms of the amount of each type of housing available.
- However, like other communities in the CRD, Sidney suffers from both high real estate prices as well as high rents, making many housing choices unaffordable across the entire spectrum of household types, for both renters and owners alike (based on average incomes vs. average prices/rents).
- In terms of home ownership, the average single-family home is considered unaffordable for every type of average household income, including the highest-earning group, Couples with children.
- The average renter in Sidney faces high rents as well; however, Couples, both with and without children, are still able to afford average rents. Lone-parent families and individuals face affordability challenges and a rent gap (i.e. average incomes are lower than average rents).

- Sidney appears to be building enough housing to meet its population growth expectations; however, the majority of housing being built is directed at wealthier households.
- The largest category of unmet housing demand currently is below-market rentals, at approximately 400 units (estimated). This does not include anticipated future demand.
- Lone-parent households in particular face affordability challenges.

The HNA also included the collection of “qualitative” data in the form of stakeholder interviews (these stakeholders are individuals or groups involved with housing provision, policy and construction in Sidney and the CRD) to provide some context and additional information that helps to inform the analysis in the final report. The consultant also sought to provide a range of best practices and recommendations for consideration as Sidney progresses with its OCP review and develops future housing policy.

NEXT STEPS:

The results of the HNA will further inform the Town’s approach to housing policy in several areas:

1. Development proposals

Staff see value in utilizing the HNA to identify specific gaps in the housing supply that need to be filled, and working with developers and non-profit housing providers to deliver this targeted supply to the market.

2. Comprehensive review of the OCP

As housing *supply* is a critical part of the solution to meeting future housing *demand*, the HNA will be analyzed as part of the upcoming comprehensive OCP review to evaluate the degree to which the Town’s land use plan can meet the housing needs identified by the HNA. Furthermore, recommendations in the HNA report will be analyzed for inclusion into a housing-specific section of an updated OCP to provide specific housing policy guidance for the Town going forward.

3. Ongoing monitoring of housing supply and demand

Provincial requirements stipulate that a HNA must be updated every 5 years. Keeping the HNA up to date will allow the Town to periodically take stock of housing demand and supply in the community, undertake a critical review of housing policy with those factors in mind, and adjust accordingly.

RECOMMENDATION:

- 1. That Council receive the Town of Sidney 2019 Housing Needs Report dated October 29, 2019 prepared by Urban Matters CCC.**
- 2. That the Housing Needs Report be posted on the Town’s website as per Provincial requirements.**

Respectfully submitted,

I concur,

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Planning

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Randy Humble
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Attachments:
Appendix A: Town of Sidney 2019 Housing Needs Assessment