

Submitted by Councillor Deborah
Ex 1.1.21
January 30th, 2019

Dear Mayor Tory and Members of Council;

The Housing Now program was approved by Executive Committee last week. Housing Now's goal is to develop 10,000 homes on 11 publicly-owned sites with 30% of them "affordable" and 3% of them "deeply affordable". As noted in many of the deputations made at the Executive Committee meeting, these targets fall far below the needs of the city. Much higher targets should be set. The process for evaluating applications to develop the sites should make maximizing the amount of affordable housing and especially deeply affordable housing on the sites the highest priority.

As organizations that support tenants facing the unmanageable cost of housing in this city, we recommend the following amendments to the motion now before Council:

Criteria that support greater affordability

The development process for Housing Now delegates the decision-making process for evaluating development proposals and selecting proponents to develop the sites to City staff. City staff should have very clear instructions from Council on how to evaluate the applications and which criteria to weigh most heavily in the evaluation. The motion before Council should be amended to include those instructions, by adding to the motion the following:

"That the City adopt specific criteria for the selection of preferred proponents, including the following:

- a) That Proposals that offer more units of affordable housing be given greater consideration than proposals that offer fewer affordable units*
- b) That Proposals that offer more units at deeper levels of affordability be given greater consideration over proposals that offer fewer deeply affordable units"*

A more substantial role for the non-profit sector

Many of the people who provided input on the Housing Now program at Executive Committee also noted the absence of a clear role for non-profit and co-op housing providers. Non-profit providers consistently optimize the proportion of their development that is affordable, as well as the depth of affordability, and have a strong track record of designing and supporting environments that serve low-income households well. This was recognized in developing the Pan Am and Thistle town sites, which ensured that non-profits would own and operate the affordable housing upon the completion of those projects. Unfortunately, no such provision is made in the Housing Now program.

The motion before Council should establish a clear role for non-profit and co-op housing providers by adding the following to the motion:

"That the Executive Director of the Affordable Housing Office report to the Planning and Housing Committee on how affordable units developed under Housing Now can be owned and operated by non-profit or cooperative organizations or TCHC, either through partnership in the development or as recipients of a transfer of the affordable units on the completion of the project"

A commitment to rent control

Finally, 33% of the homes built under Housing Now will be market rental units. Unfortunately, recent changes to provincial rent control regulations exempt new developments from rent control, so all market units developed under this program will be unregulated by rent controls. Just as the City will enter into agreements with developers to ensure that affordable units are affordable for 99 years, the market rental units should also be governed by agreements that ensure they are covered by rent controls through the following motion:

“That rent control be applied contractually to market-rent units for the duration of the Housing Now leases and agreements, including controls when units turn over from one tenant to another.”

We hope Council will make these amendments in order to ensure that more affordable housing is built in a city that desperately needs it.

Sincerely,

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