

If this information is required in an accessible format, please contact 1-800-372-1102 ext. 2564



The Regional Municipality of Durham Information Report

From: Chief Administrative Officer, Commissioner of Social Services
Report: #2024-INFO-15
Date: March 15, 2024

Subject:

“Blueprint for More and Better Housing” - Overview of the Task Force Report for Housing and Climate

Recommendation:

Receive for information.

Report:

1. Purpose

1.1 The purpose of this report is to provide an overview of the Task Force for Housing and Climate Report – [Blueprint for More and Better Housing](#), released on March 5, 2024.

2. Background

In 2022 CMHC stated that Canada needs 5.8 million new homes by 2030 to restore housing affordability. The Task Force for Housing and Climate is an independent, cross-partisan Task Force made up of 15 housing experts from across Canada who developed a national policy “blueprint” for how federal, provincial, and municipal governments can work together to build the required 5.8 million homes right, meaning that they are affordable, low-carbon and resilient to the impacts of climate change.

2.1 The Blueprint Report contains 10 recommendations and 140 individual policy actions that highlight the importance of all levels of government working together to fix Canada’s housing crisis and provide Canadians with homes fit for a climate crisis.

3. Overview of Blueprint Recommendations

3.1 The Task Force set four goals to guide the creation of more and better housing in Canada:

- Goal 1 - Make it Low-Carbon: Reduce Canada's housing related emissions to meet Canada's 2030 climate targets.
- Goal 2 – Make it Resilient: Every home built from 2025 onward should stand up to worsening climate hazards, supporting National Adaptation Strategy goals
- Goal 3 – Make it Affordable: Cut the number of households spending more than 30% of their income on shelter costs to zero by 2031.
- Goal 4 – Make it at Scale: Increase the scale and productivity of the homebuilding sector to build 5.8 million homes between 2022 and 2030.

3.2 The Blueprint Report cites five deciding factors for developing a coordinated policy framework and lists a series of actions for each level of government:

- a. Where we Build – This is identified in the report as the single most powerful opportunity for building more and better housing. This means building new housing in existing cities and communities to make more efficient use of land and infrastructure.
 - Legalize Walkable, Accessible, Inclusive, Transit Rich Climate-Friendly Neighbourhoods.
 - Value and Conserve Nature to Protect Homes and Reduce Emissions.
- b. What we Build – Building energy efficient, climate resilient homes, while eliminating red tape that slows housing growth and increases costs.
 - Call on provincial governments to adopt the highest tiers in the National Model Building Codes, and for those codes to be revised to incorporate climate resilience features.
- c. How we Build – Streamlining regulatory barriers and accelerating innovations to increase productivity and scale (including modular and pre-fabrication), ensure that taxes, fees and charges do not render projects unfeasible and that the available workforce has the required skills.
 - Address Resource, Labour and Capital Constraints.
 - Streamline Approval Processes to Accelerate Approvals on Worthwhile Projects.
 - Create the Financial Conditions for Climate Friendly Building.
 - Accelerate Clean Innovation and Productivity to Build Climate-Friendly Housing at Scale.

- d. Why we Build – Every Canadian has the right to live somewhere in security, peace and dignity.
 - Facilitate the Acquisition or Construction of 2.3 million Non-market and Below-market Homes by 2030 and Cut the Number of Households Spending More than 30% of Their Income on Shelter Costs to Zero by 2031.
 - e. Foundations of Success – Achieving Canada’s housing goals will require better data, information, maps, government collaboration, and the infrastructure that supports housing.
 - Enhance Policy Coordination, Data Collection, and Sharing and Mapping.
 - Align Incentives to Minimize Unintended Consequences.
- 3.3 The Blueprint provides 41 specific policy recommendations for Municipal governments which can be summarized in the following 8 Key Takeaways:
- a. Legalize density by:
 - eliminating unit maximums for all forms of residential housing,
 - abolishing parking minimums on residential, commercial and industrial properties,
 - legalizing the construction of CMHC pre-approved housing designs as-of-right; and
 - adopting ambitious as-of-right density permissions adjacent to transit lines.
 - b. Create a more permissive land use, planning and approvals system by:
 - Repealing policies, zoning or plans that prioritize the preservation of the physical character of the neighbourhood; and
 - Exempting from site plan approval and public consultation all projects that conform to the Official Plan and/or require only minor variances.
 - c. Revise and update zoning laws to:
 - Allow establishment of small-scale retail spaces in residential areas (especially highly accessible by public transit and walkable locations); and
 - Waive office space requirements in all downtown building conversions/ redevelopments.

-
- d. Accelerate innovation in homebuilding by:
- Encouraging collaboration between local governments, technology companies, research institutions, and buildings on sustainable construction practices; and
 - Facilitating local pilot projects and demonstrations of new building technologies and methods.
- e. Create the conditions to scale up homebuilding by:
- Prioritizing the use of existing municipally-owned land and public funding,
 - Identifying and allocating suitable municipal land for the development of non-market housing (including supportive housing, student residences and affordable rental properties),
 - Implementing land banking strategies to secure and preserve land for future non-market housing; and
 - Collaborating with local Indigenous organizations to enable Indigenous-led housing development opportunities that meet the unique needs of First Nations, Métis and Inuit Peoples living in urban environments.
- f. Increase coordination and evidence-based decision making by:
- Enhancing data collection,
 - Developing consistent definitions of terms such as “affordability” and “affordable housing”,
 - Writing zoning by-laws in BIM-readable matrices and tables, and
 - Ensuring that zoning bylaws are up to date with official plans.
- g. Utilize hazard maps to ensure new housing is not built in high-risk areas prone to climate impacts.
- h. Consult local Indigenous Rights Holders on housing projects early on to:
- Request their involvement to help better understand the needs and wants of their communities, and
 - Support the sharing on Indigenous Knowledge related to climate and ecology.

4. Strategic Plan

4.1 This report aligns with/addresses the following strategic goals and priorities in the Durham Region Strategic Plan:

- a. Goal 1.4 – Demonstrate leadership in sustainability and addressing climate change.

- b. Goal 2.1 – Revitalize existing neighbourhoods and build complete communities that are walkable, well-connected, and have a mix of attainable housing.
- c. Goal 4.1 – Revitalize community housing and improve housing choice, affordability, and sustainability.

5. Conclusion

- 5.1 The majority of the recommendations of the Blueprint Report align with the Region’s approach for community housing revitalization, improving affordable housing supply, support for climate resiliency, advancing innovation, improving engagement with indigenous communities and the broader objectives of the Regional Strategic Plan.

Respectfully submitted,

Original signed by

Elaine Baxter-Trahair
Chief Administrative Officer

Original signed by

Stella Danos-Papaconstantinou
Commissioner of Social Services