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April 23, 2014

Chair and Members
Executive Policy Committee
The City of Winnipeg
510 Main Street
Winnipeg MB

Re: Executive Policy Committee – 9:00 a.m. Wednesday, April 23, 2014

Report #1 City of Winnipeg Housing Policy Implementation Plan

Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development – April 15, 2014
Report #11 Complete Communities Checklist and Toolbox

I am appearing this morning as a private citizen, to speak briefly about my concerns regarding certain aspects of the above EPC agenda items:

Report #1 City of Winnipeg Housing Policy Implementation Plan

Last September, Council adopted a new Winnipeg Housing Policy (ED-006), over the objections of Councillors Fielding and Wyatt.

As I understand it, the new policy relied on the federal and provincial governments to fund social and specialty housing, but accepted municipal responsibility to achieve a supply of affordable, adequate and suitable housing throughout the City, and meet the "Core Housing Need" of our citizens who are presently unable to obtain such affordable, adequate and suitable housing.

More specifically, the City identified the encouragement of residential development in the Downtown as a key priority. The City is committed to encourage an increase in the supply of rental units, in more dense and affordable housing throughout Winnipeg, and especially in the "Reinvestment Areas, which are a subset of the Mature Areas located around Downtown, but which are not yet designated officially. The Housing Policy does support the development of comprehensive neighbourhood housing assessments and plans by community partners, and the continuation of the City's Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve Fund.

While the Policy "acknowledged" the ongoing value of the Winnipeg Housing Rehabilitation Corporation in providing housing for persons with low or modest income, it did not otherwise suggest a significant role for the City in the delivery of the federal Homelessness Partnering Strategy.

The Policy identifies some specific indicators to measure and evaluate the performance of the City's new policy, such as the number of affordable housing units developed, the number of neighbourhoods that have a greater variety of housing types, and the number of homes renovated in Mature Communities,

When the Housing Policy was adopted in September, Council asked for the development of an implementation plan within four months. Seven months later, we now have a proposed Implementation Plan.

Frankly, this is little more than a restatement of the Housing Policy, with a few new wrinkles.

An implementation plan should be a comprehensive outline that defines scope and goals, resources required, scheduled activities, scheduled activity durations, and actual project status. It should make clear what the specific objectives are, how they will be achieved, and when we may expect the desired results.

The only specifics I can find in all these pages are these:

a) Facilitate the development of 750 new rental units;
b) Facilitate the development of 500 new mixed use/mixed income home ownership units
c) As Delivery Agent of the Homelessness Partnering Strategy for the Government of Canada:
    a. Determine the number of chronically homeless people in Winnipeg during 2014-2015
    b. Assist community organizations and agencies to house 80% of the chronically homeless people by 2019
d) Continue to fund neighbourhood housing plans
e) Continue to deliver a comprehensive routine vacant buildings inspection program and keep the number below 390 buildings.
f) Advocate for increased federal and provincial investment in housing to meet priority needs of marginalized individuals.
g) Develop criteria and indicators for "Reinvestment Areas."

I would have thought that the requested Implementation Plan would have recommended the boundaries of the priority Reinvestment Areas, and identified the specific steps to be taken to meet Winnipeg's "Core Housing Need," estimated to be 20,915 households according to *The State of Homelessness in Canada 2013*.

I imagine the Community Task Force to End Homelessness and the Social Planning Council could have helped define Winnipeg's needs for emergency shelters, supportive housing, and transitional housing. At any point in time, there are probably at least 1,500 homeless within our City, and the majority are Aboriginal.

However, if the City of Winnipeg is now finally willing to play a major role in leading the development and implementation of specific multi-level housing strategies with federal, provincial, community and industry partners (Policy Item 3D2), let's get on with it. We need a financial commitment far beyond the $1.2 million in the Housing Rehabilitation Investment Reserve Fund. We need to identify specific neighbourhoods, building and rehab sites, minimum affordable housing policies, concrete details of financial incentives, and the public commitment required to assure private owners and developers that the community visions will be realized.

I know it is not easy. Long ago I was a member of the board of the Manitoba Housing and Renewal Corporation when the Province was building family and elderly persons housing as fast as we could, and much later I had the privilege of helping the citizens of Flora Place, the West Broadway Community Land Trust, Kekinan, and the North End Community Renewal Corporation.

If the City now works with the many interested parties, it should be possible to construct a real implementation plan and budget which we can all understand and believe in.

This is not it.

Since members of EPC may not have seen the written submissions presented to the Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee when this document was adopted nine days ago, I am enclosing copies of both. The authors may not have been as blunt as me, but I think their messages were essentially the same. Council should have no illusions about this document being an adequate implementation plan. And Council should now insist that the "tiny" Housing Division be given the resources necessary to provide the leadership desired.

Standing Policy Committee on Property and Development – April 15, 2014
Report #11 Complete Communities Checklist and Toolbox

Now speaking of budgets, I am wondering what the City has spent on the production of this proposed Complete Communities Checklist and Toolbox. So far I have been unable to find the contract award, or up-to-date quarterly consultants reports.

Note that the recommendation this morning is to endorse the implementation of a pilot project, and that is not the same as endorsement in principle of this document.

The Administration's Report recommends that work commence on individual tools, such as a Local Area Planning Handbook and a Planning Department Concierge Service for "Gold Card" holding developers, and that "background work commence on a number of other tools that require further exploration in advance of implementation."

But EPC is not being asked to approve those specific recommendations, or is it?

I would be in no rush to award new consulting contracts based on this Checklist, which is really just an index to the policy statements in OurWinnipeg and Complete Communities, and this Toolbox, which does not yet contain any usable "tools."

And since this appears to have been based primarily on industry consultation, perhaps it is time to seek community input on these matters.

Thank you,



David M. Sanders, M.A., LL.B.
River Heights-Fort Garry

Winnipeg

WINNIPEG HOUSING STEERING COMMITTEE
DISPOSITION OF ITEMS
APRIL 14, 2014

MEMBERS PRESENT: Councillor Gerbasi, Chairperson
Councillor Pagtakhan
Councillor Vandal

WINNIPEG PUBLIC SERVICE: Mr. W. Yee, Manager of Housing Development, Planning, Property and Development Department
Mr. D. Dessens, Housing Policy Coordinator, Planning, Property and Development Department

SENIOR COMMITTEE CLERK: Mr. A. Poitras, City Clerk's Department

WINNIPEG HOUSING STEERING COMMITTEE
OCTOBER 15, 2013
DISPOSITION OF ITEMS

Item	Subject/File	Recommendations	Action Required
		DELEGATIONS	
The following persons were heard with respect to the City of Winnipeg Housing Policy Implementation Plan: • Christina Maes Nino, Social Planning Council, and submitted supporting documentation • Nancy Testar and Clark Brownlee, Right to Housing Coalition, and submitted supporting documentation • Chris Cassidy, Community Housing and Grants Coordinator, Daniel McIntyre / St. Matthews Community Association (DMSMCA)			See Item 1
		REPORTS	
1.	City of Winnipeg Housing Policy Implementation Plan	The Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee concurred in the recommendation of the Winnipeg Public Service and recommended to the Executive Policy Committee: 1. That the attached City of Winnipeg Housing Policy Implementation Plan (Appendix A) be adopted. 2. That the Proper Officers of the City be authorized to do all things necessary to implement the intent of the foregoing.	Executive Policy Committee
2.	Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee 2013 Fourth Quarter Report and 2014 First Quarter Report	The Winnipeg Housing Steering Committee received as information the 2013 Fourth Quarter Report and the 2014 First Quarter Report and forwarded the matter to the Executive Policy Committee.	Executive Policy Committee

Brief on Winnipeg Housing Policy Implementation Plan
April, 2014

The Social Planning Council of Winnipeg is a charitable organization working in Winnipeg for 95 years to provide leadership in improving social conditions through effective solutions, progressive public policy, community development and partnerships. One of our four strategic priorities of work is to increase the availability and improve access to safe, healthy housing. This priority comes from the urgency of the housing crisis our community partners raise at every meeting, consultation, working group, and committee we have. It also comes from awareness that housing in central to the quality of life of individuals, neighbourhoods, and Winnipeg as a whole.

We believe some of the commitments for action in the Housing Policy Implementation Plan will allow The City to play a stronger role in supporting an increase in affordable housing in Winnipeg. The goals fit with our initial recommendations, although the commitment to coordinate programs to achieve these goals remains to be seen. The Social Planning Council is supportive of this Implementation Plan, and we have suggestions for strengthening it as programs and initiatives are developed.

We appreciate that the new policy and implementation plan allows for The City to support affordable housing development outside of the core areas, as two thirds of low income Winnipeggers currently live outside of the core areas and they need healthy places to live. Revitalization has shown success in core neighbourhoods, which has limited the availability of land for affordable projects in these communities. It has also meant that places where low-income families used to live, though they were often in extremely poor condition, are now in better condition but no longer affordable. Research shows that "mixed income" developments are effective when they provide opportunities for low-income people to live in neighbourhoods that they were traditionally excluded from rather than bringing high income people into lower income communities, which displaces low income families.

In our work on the Centennial Neighbourhood Housing Plan, we saw how effective funds targeted to community-led revitalization have been. In seven years in one small community, 32 vacant lots were filled, many with affordable homes for newcomer and Aboriginal families. Though some properties declined, a higher proportion improved in that time and assessment values increased dramatically. It is important for this work to continue, while increasing coordination for affordable housing development across Winnipeg.

We are pleased to see targets to achieve a healthier rental market, and in particular, a commitment to programs until a healthy vacancy rate is achieved. A healthy vacancy rate is important, however it does not necessarily address the need for affordable rental housing. We therefore appreciate that The City is focusing its housing incentives on development which include affordable housing, though we would like to see a more ambitious target than 15 affordable rental units per year. The Province will be directly funding the development of 600 affordable and rent-geared-to-income units per year in the same period, though not all of these will be in Winnipeg. The City should work with The Province and not-for-profit housing organizations to support all of these affordable developments in some way. This support does not

need to be financial as there are many other tools that can be used to lower the cost of these developments, thereby speeding up the development and increasing the number of units that can be built with the same amount of money.

Focusing housing resources on projects that include affordable housing is something we fully support. With limited funds available, these resources should be utilized as effectively as possible and we would like to see programs designed to encourage a range of affordability levels, as median market rent is out of the range of possibility for low-income individuals and families. Beyond funding, we would like to see other residential development incentives from the Planning, Finance and Real Estate Divisions targeted to affordable housing as well.
We recognize that The City has limited funding available for housing given its other priorities. There are a variety of tools other cities have used to increase the funds available for affordable housing. Given that Council has recently considered utilizing development charges, this may be an opportune time to consider inclusionary zoning. If Winnipeg is to have truly complete communities, there must be a mechanism to encourage all developers to include affordable housing in their residential projects.

We believe there is potential in the implementation to develop programs and work with partners to meet multiple goals at the same time. For example, goal number three is to reduce homelessness in Winnipeg. Though social services and social housing are not municipal responsibilities, The City can leverage what is already doing to more effectively reduce homelessness. We have heard time and time again that Housing First, which The City will be administering Federal HPS Funding for, has been challenging to implement in Winnipeg because there is no appropriate housing for people to move into. The City should take leadership in re-initiating the comprehensive rooming housing strategy with The Province and other important stakeholders like the Development Corporations. Additionally, downtown revitalization strategies which involve purchasing poorly-run single room occupancy hotels should be aimed at improving these homes rather than displacing existing residents to the streets or into emergency shelter. This has been successful with The Bell Hotel, and there are many more existing hotels than can be improved. Both of these initiatives would increase affordable housing, revitalize communities, and reduce homelessness.

Many cities in Canada have developed comprehensive affordable housing strategies which put together a package of incentives, planning tools, and regulatory incentives to encourage affordable housing development based on the needs of the existing and anticipated population. Such a strategy requires political commitment to prioritizing affordable housing and providing adequate staff resources. This is not such a strategy, but is an important first step. We appreciate the work of the tiny Housing Division to develop a new housing policy and this implementation plan, and look forward to working with The City on this important program area.

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 indentified 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's 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 priorized 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
April 10, 2014