WINNIPEG HUMANE SOCIETY

PET INCLUSIVE HOUSING (MUNICIPAL HOUSING GRANT CRITIERIA)

Background:

- 60% of Canadian households include cats and dogs; the companionship that a pet provides has far-reaching positive impacts on health, wellbeing and quality of life by reducing stress, depression and loneliness.
- However, there is a Canada-wide shortage of pet-inclusive housing options which disproportionately affects young people and vulnerable populations, including seniors and people with disabilities.
- This systemic barrier needs to be addressed, to put both homeowners and renters on an even playing field when it comes to pet ownership. Further information about such housing barriers caused by pet ownership can be found in the Government of Canada's Blueprint for a Renters Bill of Rights (Addressing Inequity and Discrimination) at Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada - Blueprint for a Renters' Bill of Rights
- In addition, the shortage of pet-inclusive housing is a major reason for surrenders of animals to shelters, who are already facing a capacity crisis nation-wide; keeping pets with their families will lessen the number of animals flowing through the shelter process.
- Lack of pet-inclusive accommodations is the second most common reason for people surrendering their pets to the Winnipeg Humane Society.

The Proposal:

- The WHS requests that the City of Winnipeg pass a policy requiring all developers accessing municipal grants or tax credits for housing developments to dedicate a minimum of fifty per cent (50%) of the total housing units as pet-inclusive.
- The Winnipeg Humane Society would work with developers and/or landlords to provide free responsible pet ownership courses for renters (if requested or required by the landlord).

Analysis:

- Landlords have raised the following objections to pet-inclusive housing, which can each be addressed:

    - Damage to Units – Manitoba's *Residential Tenancies Act* allows landlords to obtain a pet deposit from a renter in the amount of one month's rent, which can be used to fix any damage caused by the pet. According to research conducted in the United States in 2019, only 9% of pets cause damage in rental units, with the average pet damage cost being $191.00.

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  - Disruptive Animals – developers and/or landlords can implement a “pet policy” which allows for owners who have disruptive animals (whether from a noise or behaviour standpoint) to be evicted should the animal not be under control.
  - Allergies – with only certain units designated as pet-inclusive, renters with allergies can be accommodated in the non-pet-inclusive units.

- City enforcement of the pet-inclusive criteria can be accomplished as with any other grant criteria; namely, the grant agreement will contain reporting requirements for the term of the grant or tax credit, and will be registered on title to provide notice of the criteria to subsequent purchasers of the property.