

# Advisory Committee of Council Staff Report



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To Accessibility Advisory Committee  
Date Tuesday, October 15, 2024  
Subject **Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP)**

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## Recommendation

1. That the AAC receive the Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan report; and
  2. That the AAC recommend the inclusion of an additional grant, up to \$20,000 per affordable unit, as part of the Affordable Housing CIP Vacant Residential Unit and Vacant Space Conversion Grant.
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## Executive Summary

### Purpose of Report

The City of Guelph has identified affordable housing as a municipal priority and has been awarded \$21.4 million in Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) funding from the Federal Government to support a number of housing acceleration related projects. \$3.2 million of the HAF is being used to develop a new Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP) to incentivize the development of new affordable housing in Guelph. The Additional Residential Dwelling Unit (ARDU) program is another City housing program funded by HAF that has proposed additional accessibility funding. On August 20, 2024 staff gathered feedback from the Accessibility Advisory Committee related to the new accessibility features that would be funded by the Additional Residential Dwelling Unit (ARDU) incentive program. A memo provided to AAC for October 15, 2024 serves to present and confirm the final accessible design features list that will be included in the ARDU Incentive Program.

The feedback of the committee and accessible design features for the ARDU program has been used to inform similar eligibility requirements under the new Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP).

The purpose of this report is to present the new Affordable Housing CIP and receive committee feedback on additional considerations related to accessibility eligibility requirements given the medium to high density nature of the dwelling units being incentivized through this program.

# Strategic Plan Alignment

The Affordable Housing CIP is one tool that moves the City toward meeting our housing pledge. The objectives of the program align with the City’s Affordable Housing Strategy and addresses gaps in Guelph’s current housing supply as identified in the 2023 State of Housing in Guelph report.

## Report

### What is a Community Improvement Plan (CIP)?

A Community Improvement Plan is a tool under the Municipal Act and Planning Act that municipalities can use to incentivize private development focused on local needs and priorities. Since 2004 Guelph has implemented CIPs that support brownfield redevelopment, downtown renewal and the conservation of designated heritage assets. This is Guelph’s first Affordable Housing CIP.

### Program Objectives

Objectives of the Affordable Housing CIP are based on identified shortfalls in Guelph’s current housing supply in the Housing Affordability Strategy: State of Housing in Guelph (2023).

- **Increase supply of primary rental units**  
Over half of the rental units in Guelph are in the secondary market, which is not as stable as the primary market as these units can be sold or otherwise occupied.
- **Increase supply of small units**  
One-person households are one of the fastest growing household types. Smaller units will be needed in Guelph to meet the increased demand, as household sizes decrease.
- **Increase non-market rental housing options**  
The vacancy rate in Guelph was at 1.5% in 2022, which is below a healthy rate of 3%. More primary rental units are needed to meet the increased demand.

### Affordability Benchmarks and Time Commitment

The City of Guelph definition of affordable housing will follow the rental rates posted by the Ontario Provincial Government Affordable Residential Units for the Purposes of the Development Charges Act, 1997 Bulletin, and any subsequent to updates to these rates for the duration of the program. Any units that receive funding under the Affordable Housing CIP must remain affordable by this Provincial benchmark, and any subsequent updates to it, for a minimum of 25 years.

**Table 1 - Affordable monthly rental rate and ownership benchmarks, Guelph (April 5, 2024)**

Unit type	Rental Bachelor	One bedroom	Two bedroom	Three bedroom	Ownership Apartment
Affordable rate	\$1,160	\$1508	\$1646	\$1695	\$398,000

[Source data for rental rate and ownership benchmarks.](#)

## **Proposed Incentive Programs**

### **Program 1: Vacant Residential Unit and Vacant Space Conversion Grant**

A \$100,000 per-unit capital grant to encourage the development of affordable primary rental units from existing vacant and uninhabitable building stock. Applicants may be awarded up to an additional \$20,000 for units that provide accessibility features beyond minimum building code standards.

#### Eligible Projects

- Renovation of existing vacant residential units in a multi-unit building that are not currently habitable.
- Conversion of vacant existing commercial or office space in a multi-unit building into affordable residential units.

There is \$3.2 million in funds available through the Housing Accelerator Fund for this program. Grants must be awarded by December 31, 2026.

### **Program 2: New Affordable Residential Unit Grant**

To encourage the development of new purpose-built affordable rental or ownership units. Eligible projects would receive an upfront rebate for ten years on the annual City portion of municipal property taxes the property valued at \$25,000 per unit.

#### Eligible Projects

- New multi-unit residential development projects that include purpose-built affordable rental or affordable ownership dwelling units.

This program is funded through the City's base budget.

## **Financial Implications**

The Vacant Residential Unit and Vacant Space Conversion Grant are Federally funded through the Housing Accelerator Fund grant. The New Affordable Residential Unit Grant program is funded through the City's base budget.

## **Consultations**

City departments consulted throughout the development of this program include Finance, Accessibility, Planning and Building Services, Legal and Court Services, Strategic Communication and Community Engagement, and Strategic Initiatives and Intergovernmental Services.

#### External engagement:

- Private and not for profit developers
- Guelph and District Association of Realtors
- Downtown Guelph Business Association
- Guelph Wellington Developers Association
- Guelph Home Builders Association
- Economic Development Advisory Committee
- General public

## **Attachments**

Attachment-1 Affordable Housing CIP Accessibility Projects Eligibility (DRAFT)

## **Departmental Approval**

Economic Development and Tourism

## **Report Author**

Allison Nap

## **This report was approved by:**

Christine Chapman

Manager, Economic Development

Infrastructure, Development and Enterprise Services

519-822-1260 extension 2823

christine.chapmen@guelph.ca

# Attachment 1

## Draft: Guelph's Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan Accessibility Funding

### Eligibility

Accessibility funding under the Affordable Housing CIP is eligible for renovation projects approved for the Vacant Residential Unit and Vacant Space Conversion Grant.

The funding amount awarded will be based on the estimated cost of accessibility projects up to a maximum of \$20,000.

Construction related costs associated with the following features as amended from the Additional Residential Dwelling Unit Incentive program:

- A barrier-free path of travel of at least 1,100 millimetres wide from the suite entrance door into the following rooms and spaces:
  - At least one bedroom;
  - At least one bathroom;
  - A kitchen or kitchen space; and
  - A living room or space.
- 1,500 millimetres wide wheelchair accessible entrance to the suite either by an at-grade suite entrance (if unit entrance uses a ramp, it should be permanent and it should not have a slope greater than a ratio of 1:12 and have a clear width of 1000 millimetres between handrails) or with a wheelchair lift (exterior or interior).
- The main bathroom of the unit shall have a clear transfer space at least 900 mm wide and 1,500 millimetres deep provided on each side of the water closet, be designed to permit a wheelchair to turn in an open space not less than 1,500 mm in diameter, and allow for a forward approach to the sink.
- The installation of grab bars in water closet, shower, and bathtub in accordance with Ontario Building Code.
- Minimum doorway sizes of 850 millimetres in fully open position throughout. Doors in barrier-free path of travel shall have a clear space on the latch side extending the height of the doorway and not less than:
  - 600 millimetres beyond the edge of the door opening if the door swings toward the approach side;
  - 300 millimetres beyond the edge of the door opening if the door swings away from the approach side, and
  - 300 millimetres beyond both sides of a sliding door.
- Exterior door threshold is level with the adjacent finished floor or a bevelled threshold not more than 13 millimetres higher than the adjacent finished floor.
- Open space under sink and cooktop to permit use while seated – 680 millimetres high by 750 millimetres wide by 250 millimetres deep.

Ineligible costs include:

Building features outside of the unit, including outdoor ramps and building elevators.

The building relating to the unit receiving the grant must already be considered barrier free under the Ontario Building Code to receive this additional funding.

Removed from ARDU design features:

- Accessible route of at least 1500 mm in width directly from the street/sidewalk which can be reduced to 1200 mm in width to serve as turning space where path connects to a ramp.

# Vacant Residential Unit and Vacant Space Conversion Grant

To encourage the conversion and rehabilitation of underutilized existing building stock into affordable rental residential units.

Eligible projects can receive \$100,000 per affordable unit and up to an additional \$20,000 for accessibility features beyond the building code requirements.

## **Eligible Projects**

- Renovation of existing residential units that are not currently habitable into an affordable rental unit.
- Conversion of vacant existing commercial or office space in a multi-unit building into an affordable rental unit.
- Unit in a multi-story, multi-residential or mixed-use building that is mid-rise.
- Unit must contain full private culinary, washroom, sleeping and living area space.

# Next Steps

- November 13 – Council Planning Meeting (public meeting)
- January 21 – Council Planning Meeting (approval)
- Early 2025 - Expected program launch

# Motion

That the AAC receive the report for the Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan.

THAT the Accessibility Committee recommend the inclusion of an additional grant, up to \$20,000 per affordable unit, as part of the Affordable Housing CIP Vacant Residential Unit and Vacant Space Conversion Grant .