

DATE OF MEETING June 7, 2021

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SUBJECT UBCM HOUSING NEEDS REPORT GRANT APPLICATION

OVERVIEW

Purpose of Report

To obtain Council support for a grant application for \$50,000 from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities' Housing Needs Report program for the purpose of updating Nanaimo's housing needs assessment with 2021 Census information. |

Recommendation

That Council pass a resolution of support for the proposed funding application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities to update Nanaimo's Housing Needs Report.

BACKGROUND

In April 2019, the Province of British Columbia's Ministry of Municipal and Community Affairs introduced a requirement that local governments develop a Housing Needs Report at least once every five years. The report must include approximately 50 distinct data sets, including current and projected population, household income, significant economic sectors, and currently available and anticipated housing units.

In June 2020, the Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) completed a region-wide report on housing needs and conditions. The majority of the statistical data is presented up to the year 2018 for the region, along with community housing highlights for the seven unincorporated Electoral Areas and four partner municipalities (Nanaimo, Lantzville, Parksville, and Qualicum Beach). This report (Attachment A) has been received by the RDN Board of Directors and fulfills the City's requirement to submit a housing needs report until 2025.

Since 2019, the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) has offered a bi-annual funding program that supports local governments in undertaking housing needs reports in order to meet the Provincial requirements. The amount of money that each municipality is eligible to apply for is linked to population. Because the regional housing needs project was already underway when the funding was announced, the RDN funded the Regional Housing Needs Assessment and did not apply to UBCM. As such, the City is still eligible to apply for \$50,000 to create or update our housing needs report.

Staff are seeking a Council resolution to support the application as this is an application requirement. Note that the City may not be successful in applying as the existing Housing Needs Assessment is relatively recent; however, as this is the last time this funding will be offered and new Census data will be available in 2022, it is advisable to apply at this time. |

DISCUSSION

Housing needs reports are a means to better understand communities' current and projected housing requirements. These reports can help to identify existing and future gaps in the housing supply by collecting and analyzing quantitative and qualitative information about local demographics, economics, housing stock, and other factors. The Regional Housing Needs Assessment draws on a number of datasets, including Statistics Canada Census information, to discuss overall housing needs and trends across the region.

The 2021 Statistics Canada census is currently underway. If the 2021 Census Program release schedule follows a similar timeline to previous census years, the Population and Dwelling count data will be released during Q1 2022, and housing by Q3 2022. Updating the housing needs report with the most recent data would allow the City to more accurately understand the housing situation in Nanaimo, and better understand the impact of COVID-19 on our housing needs. An updated Housing Needs Report would be able to build on the analysis accomplished through the REIMAGINE process. Also, by submitting an updated report to the Province in 2022-2023, the City would not be expected to submit again until 2027-2028. The current round of the UBCM program is the final in-take and is not likely to be offered again in the near future.

If successful, the \$50,000 grant would cover consultant costs to update the Housing Needs Report, using existing and new publicly-available data. The consulting contract would also include engagement with partners. This project is not currently budgeted for, so if the grant is not awarded, the City would not be undertaking this update until the next housing needs assessment is due to the Province in 2025.

The program agreement does state the project is expected to be complete within one year following the grant award (Fall 2022), with the potential for an extension of up to one year subject to the discretion of the program officer. It is anticipated that if successful, the City would apply for an extension in order to make full use of the 2021 Census product. This would also allow Staff to complete the REIMAGINE NANAIMO project prior to commencing the Housing Needs Report update. It would be the City's intent to work with Snuneymuxw First Nation and other government partners as well as the non-profit sector to complete an updated Housing Needs Report.

OPTIONS

1. That Council pass a resolution of support for the proposed funding application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities to update Nanaimo's Housing Needs Report.
 - Advantages: If successful in obtaining the grant, Nanaimo would be able to update our housing needs report with the latest data at no cost to the City, and delay the need to produce the next housing needs report until 2027-2028. This would also allow for better understanding of the COVID-19 pandemic on housing needs and the City's ability to adjust policy approaches and implementation of plans as needed.
 - Disadvantages: The grant application may be unsuccessful. Even if the City is successful in obtaining the funds, Staff time would still be required to manage the consultant contract to update the housing needs report, which may delay other projects. Also, the UBCM program manager may be unwilling to grant the extension,

- which would mean the update would only be able to make partial use of the new census data.
- Financial Implications: If successful in obtaining the UBCM grant, no additional financial resources would be required to update the Nanaimo Housing Needs Report.
2. That Council deny support for the proposed funding application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities to update Nanaimo's Housing Needs Report.
- Advantages: Requires no additional Staff resources to implement.
 - Disadvantages: If no application is made this year, the City will miss the opportunity to apply to this fund, which will not be offered again next year.
 - Financial Implications: None identified.
3. That Council provide alternative direction.

SUMMARY POINTS

- The City met its requirement to provide the Province with a Housing Needs Report by participating in the 2020 Regional Housing Needs Report project with the Regional District of Nanaimo.
- The Union of British Columbia Municipalities offers a grant program to local governments to create or update housing needs reports, to which the City of Nanaimo is eligible to apply for up to \$50,000 to update its housing needs assessment.
- The current round of the UBCM program is the final in-take and is not likely to be offered again in the near future.

ATTACHMENTS:

ATTACHMENT A: Regional Housing Needs Report – Regional District of Nanaimo (June 2020)

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