



RESORT MUNICIPALITY OF WHISTLER

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STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: April 8, 2025 **REPORT:** 25-020
FROM: Planning Policy **FILE:** 0340-20-G30
SUBJECT: COUNCIL POLICY G-30: HOUSING NEEDS PRIORITY APPLICATION REVIEW

RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Climate Action, Planning and Development Services be endorsed.

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Council adopt *Council Policy G-30: Housing Needs Priority Application Review*, attached as Appendix A to Administrative Report No. 25-020.

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The development of a policy to prioritize the review of building and development applications that contribute to meeting Whistler's housing needs, especially as they relate to employee housing (EH), was identified as an action in the 2023 Resort Municipality of Whistler's (RMOW) [Housing Action Plan \(HAP\)](#) and the [Vulnerable Populations Housing Needs Assessment \(VPHNA\)](#). It is also an initiative in the RMOW's approved Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) [Housing Accelerator Fund \(HAF\) action plan \(HAF AP\)](#). The purpose of this report is to present *Council Policy G-30: Housing Needs Priority Application Review (Proposed Policy)* to Council for consideration of adoption and to meet the commitments of the CMHC HAF grant agreement. The Proposed Policy will formalize the current practice of advancing EH building and development applications, increase transparency and provide clear criteria for applicants.

Information Report

Administrative Report (Decision or Direction)

DISCUSSION

Background

The RMOW's Building and Planning Departments receive a high volume of building and development applications annually. The departments strive to process these applications efficiently in the order they are received. While being committed to providing fair and equitable service to all applicants, the RMOW recognizes that there are applications for development with significant community benefit by contributing to Whistler's housing needs. Currently applications advancing EH are prioritized for review on a case-by-case basis, with no formal prioritization policy in place.

Developing a policy to prioritize the review of building and development applications that contribute to meeting Whistler's housing needs, especially as they relate to EH, was identified as an action in the 2023 HAP and the 2024 VPHNA. It is also an initiative in the approved CMHC HAF AP. Each of these items are further described below.

RMOW Housing Action Plan

The HAP was endorsed by Council in [May 2023](#). The HAP is organized using six action categories to reflect the areas where the RMOW can respond to challenges and contribute to EH initiatives, and identifies recently completed, ongoing and in-progress actions. Completing the action to prioritize EH building permits is identified as a 2023 action under the HAP category "Remove Red Tape Barriers", with the following description: "Prioritizing EH building permits reflects the priority need for EH in the resort community and is intended to contribute to expediting the delivery of new EH units."

RMOW Vulnerable Populations Housing Needs Assessment

The VPHNA was received by Council in [March 2024](#). It identified the existing supply of, and the current and future community need for emergency, transitional, supportive and non-market rental housing. It was concluded that housing options for people experiencing vulnerability are needed now. Priority permitting to encourage the development of new housing was identified as one of the multiple potential actions the RMOW might consider meeting this community need.

CMHC Housing Accelerator Fund – Action Plan Initiatives

On February 20, 2025, it was announced the RMOW was a successful candidate of the CMHC HAF for the grant amount of \$2,550,853. Prioritizing workforce housing permit applications is an initiative in the RMOW CMHC approved HAF AP, as part of the CMHC HAF grant agreement, and is required to be completed by April 30, 2025.

Analysis

The Proposed Policy was developed to formalize the application review prioritization procedure of building and planning applications for developments contributing to Whistler's housing need, especially as they relate to EH. While the RMOW is not legislatively required to adopt a policy for this purpose, the Proposed Policy aims to increase transparency in the operation of the Building and Planning Departments' application review processes, provide clear criteria for applicants, and ensure staffing resources are appropriately allocated. For clarity, the Proposed Policy aims to reduce the wait time for prioritized applications to be reviewed by staff; it does not promise reduced processing timelines. As described below, under guiding principles, prioritized applications are not guaranteed permit issuance and will continue to be subject to the standard review processes. This section provides an overview of the Proposed Policy, including the recommended scope, guiding principles, prioritization criteria, application review criteria and General Manager of Climate Action, Planning and Development Services (General Manager) discretion.

Scope

The Proposed Policy applies to applications submitted pursuant to the "Building and Plumbing Regulation Bylaw No.1617, 2002", and the "Land Use Procedures and Fees Bylaw No. 2205, 2022" (both as may be amended, or replaced). Applications that meet the criteria described under the subsection titled 'Prioritization Criteria', will be prioritized over all other applications submitted per the noted bylaws. This includes the following building and development application types:

Building Applications	Development Applications
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Building permit <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ site alteration ○ excavation permit ○ foundation permit ○ plumbing permit • Demolition permit 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • development permit • development variance permit • modification or discharge of a section 219 covenant • temporary use permit • Official Community Plan (OCP) amendment • zoning bylaw amendment • floodplain exemption • licence / permission to occupy municipal lands

At this time, the Proposed Policy does not apply to applications submitted pursuant to the “Board of Variance Bylaw No. 2412, 2023”. Staff will continue to monitor the volume and timing of Board of Variance (BOV) applications, especially as they relate to small-scale multi-unit housing (SSMUH). Should prioritization of some BOV applications against other BOV applications appear beneficial, staff would provide recommended changes to the Proposed Policy for Council’s consideration.

Guiding Principles

To provide transparency and manage applicant expectations regarding the application review process, the Proposed Policy includes the following guiding principles:

- All applications will be treated fairly and consistently;
- The RMOW will review applications in the order they are received, except for applications meeting the specified criteria described in the Proposed Policy;
- Prioritization of application review is not a guarantee of permit issuance; and
- Prioritized applications will be subject to the RMOW’s standard application submission requirements and review procedures and do not guarantee reduced processing timelines.

Prioritization Criteria

The following Policy Criteria are proposed to prioritize the review of building and planning applications that are in the public interest with significant community benefit by contributing to meeting Whistler’s housing needs. The Policy Criteria themselves are listed in priority. For example, an application in category one will be prioritized over an application in category three. The following tables identify the criteria an application must meet to be prioritized, in the order of priority, with corresponding rationale.

<p>1. Applications resulting in new emergency housing, supportive housing or transitional housing.</p>
<p>The VPHNA concluded that housing options for people experiencing vulnerability are needed now. Therefore, recognizing that these housing types serve Whistler’s most vulnerable populations, applications for new emergency, supportive and transitional housing are recommended to be the highest priority application for review. Prioritizing the review of these applications is one action the RMOW can take to support community partners working to meet this housing need.</p>

2. Applications submitted by Whistler 2020 Development Corp (WDC)

WDC is a wholly owned subsidiary of the RMOW, which facilitates the development of EH on municipal lands.

Currently, WDC is developing Cheakamus Crossing Phase 2 (Lots 3 and 5). In alignment with the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan key initiative under Housing, to complete Cheakamus Crossing Phase 2 (Lots 2, 3, 5) by 2026, WDC applications for these projects are currently prioritized for review.

Considering WDC applications facilitate the delivery of RMOW initiated EH projects, where typically 100 per cent of the units are dedicated to EH, and therefore provide significant community benefit, it is recommended these applications are formally prioritized for review. While WDC applications would also meet Policy Criteria #3 described below, it is recommended the review of these applications are further prioritized to contribute to expedite the delivery of EH projects on municipal lands and support the RMOW Strategic Plan initiative.

3. Applications resulting in, amending, associated with, or subject to housing agreements that result in new dwelling units being built.

It is recommended that all applications contributing to the development of new EH be prioritized. EH is typically secured in new developments through a housing agreement. This is exemplified through the private sector EH initiative projects. In alignment with the 2023-2026 Strategic Plan key initiative under Housing, to advance private sector EH initiative projects, applications described in this criterion are currently and recommended to continue to be formally prioritized for review. It is noted it is typical for private sector EH initiative projects to also include the development of new market housing, that would be included in the application review process.

4. Applications for development to be constructed pursuant to Part 5, Section 35 – SSMUH of the “Zoning and Parking Bylaw No. 303, 2015” (Zoning Bylaw), as amended or replaced.

To comply with provincial legislative requirements, on June 11, 2024, Council adopted “Zoning Amendment Bylaw (Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing) No. 2440, 2024”. This amendment allows for three to four dwelling units on residential parcels, where applicable, to encourage infill housing. Additionally, two associated amendments to the Zoning Bylaw were adopted on March 11, 2025. A proportion of SSMUH dwelling units are required to be either residential rental tenure or upon subdivision or stratification, dedicated for EH use subject to a housing agreement. To encourage and support the uptake of SSMUH development, it is recommended that SSMUH applications, which may result in new residential rental tenure units, be prioritized for review. It is noted that SSMUH applications with associated EH agreements will meet Policy Criteria #3 described above.

Application Review Process

To provide clear direction for RMOW staff and clarity to applicants, the Proposed Policy includes the following application review process. Upon receipt of an application, the applicable department will:

1. Consider the nature of the application and, in its sole discretion, determine if the proposed application meets one Policy Criteria described above;
2. Advise the applicant that the application will be prioritized for review, where they have met one of the Policy Criteria;
3. When an application is prioritized for review, coordinate within the Building and Planning Departments to ensure all related building and development applications are prioritized; and
4. Carry out the review of the prioritized application(s) using standard department procedures.

General Manager Discretion

It is recommended that, at the sole discretion of the General Manager, applications may be subject to further prioritization based on the anticipated contribution to meeting Whistler's housing needs. Additionally, it is proposed that the General Manager maintains full discretion to prioritize building and development application review in any manner they see fit to allow for applications with significant community benefit that may not be anticipated by the Proposed Policy to be accommodated.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

Relevant Council Authority/Previous Decisions

[May 16, 2023, Administrative Report No. 23-059](#): RMOW Housing Action Plan

[March 19, 2024, Information Report No. 24-026](#): VPHNA – Final Report

[August 1, 2023, Administrative Report No. 23-089](#): CMHC HAF Grant Application

2023-2026 Strategic Plan

The 2023-2026 Strategic Plan outlines the high-level direction of the RMOW to help shape community progress during this term of Council. The Strategic Plan contains four priority areas with various associated initiatives that support them. This section identifies how this report links to the Strategic Plan.

Completion of the HAP action to “prioritize EH building permits” supports the Strategic Plan key initiative to implement the HAP. Additionally, as described above, the application prioritization criteria support the following Strategic Plan key initiatives:

- Completion of Cheakamus Crossing Phase 2 (Lots 2, 3, 5) by 2026; and
- Advance Private Sector EH Initiative projects.

Strategic Priorities

Housing

Expedite the delivery of and longer-term planning for EH

Climate Action

Mobilize municipal resources toward the implementation of the Big Moves Climate Action Plan

Community Engagement

Strive to connect locals to each other and to the RMOW

Smart Tourism

Preserve and protect Whistler's unique culture, natural assets and infrastructure

Not Applicable

Aligns with core municipal work that falls outside the strategic priorities but improves, maintains, updates and/or protects existing and essential community infrastructure or programs

Community Vision and Official Community Plan

The OCP is the RMOW's most important guiding document that sets the community vision and long-term community direction. This section identifies how this report applies to the OCP.

Prioritizing the review of applications contributing to meeting Whistler's housing needs, especially as they relate to EH, is consistent with the goals, objectives and policies as expressed in the Residential Accommodation section in Chapter Five (Land Use and Development). Two particularly relevant items are:

- The Proposed Policy is consistent with objective 5.1.2.: *to house at least 75 per cent of Whistler's workforce within the resort community in livable, appropriate and affordable housing.*
- Prioritizing the review of applications for the development of emergency, supportive and transitional housing is consistent with Policy 5.3.1.4: *Collaborate with appropriate agencies and organizations to investigate requirements and provide, on an as-needed basis, affordable housing and special needs housing including emergency shelter, transitional housing or special care facilities.*

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

All costs associated with policy preparation were covered under the existing department budgets for the Planning, Building and Legislative Services Departments.

On February 20, 2025, it was announced the RMOW was a successful candidate of the CMHC HAF for \$2,550,853. The RMOW received a 25 per cent upfront advance to begin to implement the HAF AP. The remaining approved funding is to be disbursed in three annual installments and is conditional on CMHC's satisfaction with the progress and implementation of action plan initiatives by the targeted milestones. As noted above, prioritizing workforce housing permit applications is an initiative in the RMOW HAF AP, as part of the CMHC HAF grant agreement. As per the grant agreement, this initiative is required to be completed by April 30, 2025.

LÍŁWAT NATION & SQUAMISH NATION CONSIDERATIONS

The RMOW is committed to working with the LÍŁwat People, known in their language as *L'il'wat7úl* and the Squamish People, known in their language as the *Skwxwú7mesh Úxwumíxw* to: create an enduring relationship; establish collaborative processes for planning on unceded territories, as currently managed by the provincial government; achieve mutual objectives and enable participation in Whistler's resort economy. Should an application within the scope of the Proposed Policy be submitted on behalf

of Lílwat Nation or Squamish Nation, the Proposed Policy would apply, including the Policy Criteria and application review procedure.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

Level of community engagement commitment for this project:

Inform Consult Involve Collaborate Empower

No formal community engagement has been undertaken with regard to the development of the Proposed Policy, nor is any required. Should Council adopt the Proposed Policy, the RMOW Planning and Building webpages will be updated to inform applicants of the new priority application review procedure.

REFERENCES

Appendix A – *Council Policy G-30: Housing Needs Priority Application Review*

SUMMARY

Developing a policy to prioritize the review of building and development applications that contribute to meeting Whistler’s housing needs, especially as they relate to EH, was identified as an action in the 2023 RMOW HAP and the VPHNA. It is also an initiative in the RMOW’s approved HAF AP. The purpose of this report is to present the Proposed Policy to Council for consideration of adoption and to meet the commitments of the CMHC HAF grant agreement.

SIGN-OFFS

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