



WHISTLER

REPORT | ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: October 6, 2020
FROM: Resort Experience
SUBJECT: APPLICATION FOR UBCM MUNICIPAL HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT
FUNDING PROGRAM

REPORT: 20-095
FILE: 0230-00

COMMENT/RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Resort Experience is endorsed.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council authorize staff to submit a grant application to the Union of BC Municipalities (UBCM) Housing Needs Reports Program and provide overall grant management in order to update the analysis of Whistler's housing needs, to help inform plans, policies and development decisions.

REFERENCES

Appendix "A" – UBCM 2020 Housing Needs Report Program & Application Guide

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this Report is to request Council authorization to apply for a grant through the UBCM Housing Needs Report Program, such that an updated analysis of Whistler's housing needs may be conducted to include a current and projected need for at least the next five years, and further provide additional input to policy planning and development considerations, in particular as progress is made to implement Whistler's new Official Community Plan. Council support of the funding request is a required part of the grant application.

DISCUSSION

Background

The Mayors Task Force on Resident Housing (MTFRH) was established in November 2016, consisting of two community members-at-large together with representation from 10 key stakeholder groups within Whistler. The primary objective was to analyze Whistler's employee housing needs and to make recommendations to Council based on its findings. Extensive research and analysis of the current situation at that time was undertaken, including; detailed analysis of the residential inventory, consideration of the relevant factors affecting supply and demand of that inventory, and an in depth community housing needs survey designed to understand the housing situation and affordability of housing for various demographic groups in the community; and community support for initiatives to address affordability for employee housing.

In December, 2017, Council approved the seven initiatives as proposed by the Mayor's Task Force on Resident Housing, outlined as the following:

1. Tourism accommodation review
2. Home run program
3. Development cost charge update
4. Build additional employee restricted housing
5. Allow private employee housing developments
6. Infill housing opportunities
7. Refine employee restricted eligibility

The Housing Needs Report outlined within this report will further support and build on the above initiatives, which seek to improve the utilization of existing homes and support an increase in the supply of new employee restricted homes to meet the needs of the resort workforce.

UBCM Housing Needs Report Program

In April 2019, new Provincial legislation amended the Local Government Act and now requires local governments to collect data, analyze trends and present a housing needs report that describes current and anticipated housing needs by April 2022 and every 5 years thereafter. To support this mandate, UBCM has initiated a funding program to assist local governments with this work in order to meet the new requirements.

The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has provided UBCM with \$5 million over three years to support local governments undertaking housing needs reports. The funding available for each application is based on population as identified within the 2016 Census data. With a population of between 5,000 and 14,999, Whistler is eligible to apply for an amount of \$20,000 in grant funding. The funding is administered through UBCM's Housing Needs Report Program which stipulates that applications must include a Council resolution that supports the undertaking of the housing needs assessment.

The RMOW is preparing an application for the UBCM Housing Needs Report Program to cover the cost of executing a housing needs assessment that will both satisfy the provincial requirements, and provide additional data and analysis to inform evaluation of other RMOW initiatives such as those described above for the MTRH. Grant applications are due on October 16, 2020 and the RMOW will have one year to complete the report upon approval of the UBCM grant. This also supports the Provincial requirement for Whistler to complete a Housing Needs Report by April 2022.

Requirements of the Housing Needs Report under the Program

Local governments are required to collect information about:

- current and projected population;
- household income;
- significant economic sectors; and
- currently available and anticipated housing units.

The above information will support a qualitative analysis to produce statements about key areas of local need, including focus on affordable housing and rental housing which are especially relevant for Whistler. The completed report will be presented to council and published on the RMOW website so that it is available to the public.

Updating Whistler's Housing Needs

With the adoption of Whistler's OCP in June 2020, staff have commenced development of a plan to model interrelationships between Whistler's economy and resort community, which will assist in better understanding Whistler's carrying capacity and drive for balancing economic and resort community needs. The Housing Needs Report will be conducted in parallel to this work and will provide an update to the previous housing assessment completed by the MTRH. By building off this existing work, the RMOW can look forward to the next 5 years and beyond to better inform a proactive approach to Whistler's housing needs, including the impact of changing population demographics (renters vs. owners and workforce vs. non-workforce residents) and a review of existing inventory and its current use.

COVID-19 has presented Whistler with a number of unique challenges including many that will directly impact the housing needs of the community. Challenges surrounding housing security and affordability will be heightened as the tourism sector is likely to lag the overall provincial economic recovery. The pandemic also presents a potential shift in the utilization and availability of housing within Whistler which will be explored to assess impacts locally as remote working becomes more common, and city dwellers locate in lower density communities.

By completing an update to Whistler's housing needs assessment, staff will be able to analyse these impacts on housing within the community, and better inform recovery planning by addressing the changing community needs over the coming years.

Staff will perform the majority of the analysis through data collection from various internal and external sources including, but not limited to; Whistler Housing Authority (WHA) waitlists, Statistics Canada data (including source of income by family type and by family size), and through a survey of property owners of all residential housing types.

The proposed Housing Needs Survey would review the current situation of households in Whistler and analyse how Whistler's inventory is being used. The survey will be a crucial tool in anticipating future demand for housing and the housing stock that would be required to support this. Staff would undertake an RFP process to engage a consultant firm to complete the Housing Needs Survey, and it is anticipated that the survey will be completed within 12 months of receiving UBCM funding approval.

POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The recommendations are aligned with policies relating to Employee Housing.

OCP POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

The housing needs assessment will move Whistler towards its community vision by providing detailed analysis to support its vision characteristics pertaining to Whistler's quality of life and accessibility of affordable housing.

The assessment moves Whistler towards its goals outlined within its land use and development plan under the following residential accommodation goals in (Chapter 5):

- Meet Whistler's long-term housing needs consistent with the growth management policies and land use designations in this OCP.
- Promote diversity in housing price ranges to maintain affordability for the varied needs of different workforce groups and retirees within the community.

- Promote a diversity of housing forms, tenures, residential uses and densities to support the resort community's needs.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

If the maximum grant amount of \$20,000 is secured through the UBCM Housing Needs Report Program, it is anticipated that the funding will be sufficient to cover the consulting costs to complete the Housing Needs Survey and source the relevant data from external providers. The survey will then serve as a foundational piece for updating the prior work done by the MTRH, which will be completed by staff. The \$20,000 grant, with the corresponding costs, will be incorporated into the RMOW's 2021 budget and work plan.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

Community members will be engaged through the Housing Needs Survey and with the final report to be received by Council and made available to the public, including any data, survey results and statements of need for Whistler.

SUMMARY

Staff are seeking Council's authorization to submit an application to the UBCM Housing Needs Reports Program to obtain a maximum grant of \$20,000. This funding will be used to complete a Housing Needs Report, the results of which will then be used to guide progress against policies adopted in the OCP. Given the changing landscape due to COVID-19, this work will be essential in helping understand not only the current state of housing needs, but also the projected needs over the next few years, to better inform housing plans and policies.

Respectfully submitted,

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ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT ANALYST

for
Toni Metcalf
INTERIM GENERAL MANAGER OF RESORT EXPERIENCE