



MEDIA RELEASE

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MR# 2022076

DATE: 18 November 2022

RE: Amherst working to address housing issue

AMHERST, Nova Scotia – The Amherst town council and staff are well aware of the housing shortage affecting the Town of Amherst.

“Businesses, economic development agencies and others have made it clear to us that there is housing shortage in our community that crosses the entire spectrum of the housing market,” Mayor David Kogon said. “The council has already taken action in some areas and have directed staff to explore other ways in which the town can help address the shortage.”

Pointing to the market housing sector as an example, the mayor noted the town traditionally contributes to the capital costs of new streets and services in new subdivisions by paying for the curbing, final asphalt paving and sidewalks where appropriate.

More recently staff, at the direction of council, have been talking with property owners and developers about other ways the town could help facilitate the development of new subdivisions in order to bring more building lots to market. One of the measures discussed has been the possibility of constructing or financing the construction of streets and services for new subdivisions, with the costs being recovered by the town from the developer over a period of time.

The town has also released a request for multi-unit residential development proposals on a town-owned property located off South Albion Street (formerly known as Blaine Street). Council is also considering a proposal for three, 55-unit apartment buildings on property next to E.B. Chandler Junior High School and a separate proposal that could result in sixteen town house units built just south of Fleming Drive.

In addition, the town is reviewing its municipal planning strategy and land-use bylaw. This review will include examining ways to streamline approvals for small dwelling unit





infill opportunities like garden suites as well as identifying areas where large-scale residential development could take place such as upper floors of buildings in established commercial zones.

In the below market housing sector, the town has purchased properties on Prince Arthur Street and Sackville Road and offered them to non-profit organizations as locations for affordable and/or supportive housing.

Town staff have also met with provincial representatives whose departments provide programs that fund or support below market rental opportunities. The information gleaned from these talks is shared with developers when they enquire about development opportunities.

Transitional housing is supported by the town via its annual \$10,000 grant to the Cumberland County Transition House Association, which operates Autumn House. The town is also willing to consider financial requests from other organizations that provide a similar service.

A local youth centre that provides basic supports to youth experiencing housing and/or homelessness receives funding from the town and the council recently approved a development agreement that allows the creation of a second youth support housing facility on West Pleasant Street.

The town is also working on a number of fronts to provide a permanent, short-term transitional shelter. As part of that effort, it has entered into a memorandum of understanding with Cornerstone that will allow Cornerstone to hire an executive director. The \$95,000 provided by the town under the memorandum will cover the executive's salary, start-up costs, travel and employee training for a period of one year.

Council expects this position will help Cornerstone get off the ground and allow it to develop funding strategies that will enable it to develop a much-needed, permanent, short-term, transitional shelter in the town as well as multiple affordable housing projects in the future.

In addition, town staff and councillors have been participating in a public taskforce that is working towards providing a short-term emergency transitional housing shelter in this community this winter. While the town is not leading or funding this project, it is fully





supportive of the provision of this service that will provide shelter to those in need this winter.

-30-

Direct enquiries to:
Tom McCoag,
Corporate Communications Officer
902-694-6265
tmccoag@amherst.ca

