



## TOWN OF GIBSONS

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### ***Backgrounder/FAQs – Affordable Housing Projects in Gibsons (November 2019)***

#### **Why does the Town of Gibsons need affordable housing projects?**

A lack of affordable housing has been a key community concern for more than a decade. In recent years, this issue has become even more urgent, as changes in the local housing market have led to a marked decrease in the number of available rental units. This has led to a significant increase in market rental rates, with many people paying substantially more than the recommended 30% of their gross monthly income for housing. The changing rental market and growing local population has also driven a need to increase the resources available to people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness.

A shortage of affordable housing within a community can lead to several negative outcomes, including:

- a lack of community diversity. High average housing prices can limit the ability of many people to move to (or remain in) a community. These include social groups that often contribute greatly to a community's social fabric, but who traditionally earn less, such as seniors, young people, artists and/or students.
- community members going without. When a significant portion of income goes to housing, people may be forced to forgo life essentials, including food, heating, health, and dentistry.
- a lack of workers. High housing costs can prevent young people, recent immigrants and students from moving into (or remaining in) a community, making it difficult for employers to fill entry-level, service, retail and part-time jobs at a viable wage.

#### **What has the Town of Gibsons done so far to develop affordable housing?**

The Town has been actively working on an Affordable Housing (AH) strategy for several years. In 2015, for example, the Town legalized Secondary Suites and introduced the Garden Suite program. At present, the Town is developing a Short-Term Rental policy, which aims to balance the needs of homeowners, their neighbours, long-term renters and tourists. The Town is also working with the Sunshine Coast Affordable Housing Society and BC Housing to pursue and develop Town-owned sites for affordable housing. These include:

*571 Shaw Road* – Situated on approximately four acres of land owned by the Town of Gibsons, the development will use approximately half of this land for the development of affordable family, workforce, and independent seniors rental housing. The first phase of the development will provide 40 new rental units, housing approximately 100 people in a mix of unit types, from bachelor to 3-bedroom apartments. A portion of the homes will be rented at (or near) market rents in order to cross-subsidize more affordable units. This will help ensure the long-term financial sustainability of the project, without dependence on ongoing operating subsidies.

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#### **TOWN OF GIBSONS**

*"Nature is our most valuable asset"*

*Franklin Road* – The Sunshine Coast Affordable Housing Society is in the process of building three rental units at a Town-owned site at Harmony Lane/Franklin Road in Lower Gibsons. It will provide new rental housing units suitable for two families, plus an individual or couple.

*The old RCMP site (749 School Road)* – BC Housing is proposing to building a 40-unit supportive housing development on this site and has applied for the appropriate bylaw amendments. On November 19, 2019, Council gave these amendments 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading and they were passed. Once the Town receives project approval from the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, the bylaws will be brought forward for adoption.

### **Who is the affordable housing for?**

The goal of the Town, the Sunshine Coast Affordable Housing Society and BC Housing is to develop a complete cross-section of affordable housing projects, which would serve the full spectrum of the community's housing needs.

### **How will we pay for these projects?**

In the case of 571 Shaw Road and the Franklin/Harmony Road projects, the Town of Gibsons has provided the land required under a long-term lease. The Town also agreed to provide the SCAHS with \$30,000 in 2019 and \$50,000 in 2020 so that an executive director and a project manager may be hired to lead the development of current and planned affordable housing projects. These funds came from the Town's Affordable Housing Reserve, which had a balance of \$478,000 prior to the funding request. The balance of the required funds for the Shaw Road and Franklin Road projects is expected to come from the PIAH (see below), Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation grants and various other fundraising measures.

In the case of 749 School Road, the land was provided to the Town by the federal government for the sum of one dollar under the *Surplus Federal Real Property for Homelessness Initiative* and on the condition that the site is used for the creation of a supportive housing project. If Council approves the required bylaw amendments on November 19, 2019, BC Housing will finance the construction and long-term operations of the 40-unit building.

### **Where does the money for the Affordable Housing Reserve (AHR) Fund come from?**

Town policy requires that new developments designate 10% of their total proposed units as affordable housing. Alternately, the developer may provide cash-in-lieu to the AHR Fund, which was created in 2007. To date, cash contributions to the AHR Fund have been received from the developers of the George Hotel, the Parkland neighbourhood, and the Eagleview Heights development project. Additional contributions from the Maplewood development project are expected in the near future. Eligible uses of the AHR Fund are outlined in the Town's [Affordable Housing Policy](#)\*

### **Who is the Sunshine Coast Affordable Housing Society (SCAHS)?**

The SCHAS is a group of local residents with experience and interest in housing. The Society aims to develop new housing units and act as a Community Land Trust, in partnership with tenants, the local building industry, municipal governments and others who recognize the importance of affordable, appropriate housing.

**What is the PIAH?**

In 2015, the Provincial Investment in Affordable Housing (PIAH) program was announced. This is a commitment of \$355 million to create more than 2,000 affordable housing units in BC. Moreover, the NDP government in BC has set out a goal of building 114,000 housing units in the next 10 years. The current availability of this dedicated provincial funding provides a strong impetus to move forward with local affordable housing projects in a timely manner.

**Where can I find out more about affordable housing in Gibsons?**

The Town provides regular updates on the status of its affordable housing projects at <https://gibsons.ca/services/community-development/affordable-housing-projects/>. The same web page provides links to separate webpages for each of the three projects under development, as well as numerous background reports and presentations.

