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10 updated Housing Accelerator Fund best practices

Explore the 10 best practices from successful Housing Accelerator Fund applications.

Updated July 2024



We've updated the 10 best practices from successful [Housing Accelerator Fund](#) applications!

Only applicants who weren't approved in the 2023 application window can apply for funding from this round of the Housing Accelerator Fund. If you are eligible and reapplying, use this information to guide your application.

We encourage all municipalities to explore these proven strategies and integrate them into their plans to help boost housing supply and affordability.

10 Housing Accelerator Fund best practices

1. **End exclusionary zoning**
2. **Make municipally owned lands available for housing**
3. **Increase process efficiency**
4. **Prioritized/enhanced development approval process**
5. **Comprehensive review of development charges and fee schedules**
6. **Reduce or eliminate parking standards**
7. **Eliminate restrictions**
8. **Develop affordable housing community improvement plans**
9. **Design and implement guidelines**
10. **Develop grant programs**

1. **End exclusionary zoning**

- Stop low-density zoning and regulation that excludes housing types, such as affordable and social housing and which limits the variety of housing typologies in residential areas.
- Encourage mixed-use and high-density residential development by allowing as-of-right zoning within proximity to urban centres and rapid transit.
- A proactive approach includes adopting by-laws with as-of-right zoning measures to increase height and density.

Additional guidance for applications to the second round of the Housing Accelerator Fund – successful implementation strategies from the initial application window.

- Allow 4 units per residential lot as-of-right* to support infill development in low-density neighbourhoods municipality-wide (**minimum program requirement for Large/Urban stream**).
- Increase as-of-right building height and density near transit to a minimum of 4 storeys within 800 metres of main transit routes, increasing to high-density development near high-frequency rapid transit (**strongly recommended for Large/Urban stream**).
- Increase as-of-right height and density near post-secondary institutions to a minimum of 4 storeys (**strongly recommended where applicable**).
- Expand as-of-right permissions for corner lots and large lots by allowing 6 to 8 units per lot, for example.
- Expand as-of-right permissions in urban cores and along key corridors to promote mid-rise development.
- Expand mixed-use zoning to increase housing options in commercial areas and near services and amenities.
- Assess infrastructure capacity and review policies such as fire flow requirements and on-site stormwater management to promote infill and higher-density development.

**As-of-right zoning (also known as pre-zoning) improves predictability and shortens approvals timelines by removing the need for rezoning applications*

2. **Make municipally owned lands available for housing** through strategies such as disposition, acquisition and/or pre-development.
 - Complete an inventory and assessment of surplus and underused municipal land.
 - Develop policies and guidelines to allow the municipality to acquire strategic land parcels for redevelopment, including affordable housing.
 - Pre-zone and/or pre-service priority sites to facilitate as-of-right redevelopment.
 - Engage the private sector and non-profit housing providers on acquisition and partnership opportunities.
 - Consider long-term lease strategies to non-market housing providers as an alternative to disposition.
 - Develop a framework for co-locating community facilities and housing.

3. **Increase process efficiency** by implementing new technologies or software to speed up development approvals, such as e-permitting.
 - Expand e-permitting to all development and building permit types (**strongly recommended**).
 - Develop systems to monitor and publicly report on application processing times, with emphasis on continuous assessment and improvement (**strongly recommended**).
 - Digitize case management and automate workflows to speed up reviews.
 - Expand delegation of authority to staff for development permits and minor variances based on established thresholds or parameters.
 - Leverage digital tools like artificial intelligence (AI) and automated compliance checks to focus internal resources on more complex development applications.
 - Digitize regulations and bylaws to support future iterations of e-permitting.
 - Consider building information modeling (BIM) and 3D digital twins to support long-term land use and infrastructure planning.

4. **Prioritized/enhanced development approval process** for rental and affordable housing.
 - Fast-track development and building permit reviews for non-market housing and purpose-built rental developments.
 - Eliminate rezoning, public hearing and urban design review panel requirements for affordable housing municipality-wide.
 - Increase as-of-right density permissions for affordable housing.
 - Implement inclusionary zoning to require a minimum number of affordable units in new developments near transit.
 - Consider rental-only zoning.
 - Create a concierge service to help non-profit providers navigate the development and building permit process.

5. **Comprehensive review of development charges and fee schedules** including waivers for affordable housing.
 - Ensure that development and amenity charges are clear, transparent and pre-determined (not subject to negotiation).

- Waive application and/or permit fees for priority housing types including non-market housing and/or purpose-built rentals.
- Reduce or eliminate development cost charges for non-market affordable housing.
- Implement disincentives or other strategies to encourage development of vacant, underdeveloped or idle land.

6. **Reduce or eliminate parking standards** to increase project viability, density and reduce carbon footprint.

- Eliminate minimum parking requirements near rapid transit and in downtown centres.
- Reduce or eliminate parking requirements for accessory dwelling units and multiplexes.
- Implement policies to reduce car dependency and promote active transportation, such as bike parking and storage and car sharing.

7. **Eliminate restrictions and add flexibility** related to height, setbacks, building floor area and other regulations to allow greater variety in housing types and density, including accessory dwellings.

- Reduce and streamline urban design guidelines such as height restrictions, visual character requirements, view cones, setbacks and angular planes to support higher density and improve project viability.
- Increase allowable floor area (FAR/FSR) for new developments.
- Update policies to facilitate the conversion of vacant and underused commercial properties to residential and mixed-use.
- Explore form-based zoning as an alternative approach, that focuses on the form and scale of residential buildings in relation to the lot. This approach focuses on the physical characteristics of the building instead of the number of dwellings inside the building.

8. **Develop affordable housing community improvement plans** or strategies/plans for the rapid deployment of affordable housing.

- Develop an affordable housing strategy or Community Improvement Plan (for Ontario municipalities).
 - Introduce or enhance density bonusing policies to allow increased density in exchange for affordable housing and/or community amenities.
 - Ensure the affordable housing strategy links together all available tools. These include zoning reform, municipal lands, regulatory and process improvements, fee reductions and financial incentives (see other Best Practices). This comprehensive approach makes it easier and faster to develop affordable housing.
9. **Design and implement guidelines** or pre-approved building plans for missing middle housing or specific accessory dwelling such as laneway housing or garden suites.
- Develop design guidelines for low-rise infill developments including accessory dwelling units and multiplexes to support as-of-right zoning permissions.
 - Develop and/or promote standardized designs and pre-reviewed building plans, including the adoption of the federal design catalogue.
 - Introduce a fast-tracked review process for standardized designs to allow projects to proceed directly to building permits.
 - Expand certified model programs to include additional low-rise building types such as multiplexes, row houses and townhomes.
10. **Develop grant programs** encouraging the development of housing types that align with the Housing Accelerator Fund such as missing middle, row homes, purpose-built rental and/or that promote innovative construction techniques.
- Develop incentive programs to promote construction of accessory dwelling units, suites and other missing middle housing types.
 - Offer incentives to enable the conversion of vacant or underused non-residential buildings to housing.
 - Promote innovation through incentives for pre-fabricated, modular housing and mass timber construction.
 - Introduce targeted financial incentives for affordable housing and purpose-built rentals.

Note: Provincial enabling legislation may be required to fully implement certain measures such as eliminating rezoning requirements for affordable housing, inclusionary zoning, rental-only zoning and development charge waivers. In these cases, we encourage municipalities to ease planning and approval processes to the greatest extent possible. This includes eliminating public hearings and urban design review panels for affordable housing.



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The logo for Canada, featuring the word "Canada" in a serif font with a small crown above the letter 'a'.

SCHEDULE A

Approved Action Plan

Section A - Initiatives	
Initiative 1	Reduce or Eliminate Parking Requirements
Start Date	2024-08-15
Completion Date	2025-12-31
Expected Results	35 estimated permitted units that the Initiative will incent.
Milestone 1	Zoning By-law Amendment
Start Date	2024-08-15
Completion Date	2025-02-03
Milestone 2	Cash-in-Lieu of Parking Policy Update
Start Date	2024-08-15
Completion Date	2025-06-30
Milestone 3	Initiate Pilot Project for On-Street Parking Permit
Start Date	2025-01-31
Completion Date	2025-12-31
Initiative 2	End Exclusionary Zoning Through As of Right Housing Policy and allow 4 Units As-of-Right City-Wide for all Urban Serviced Areas and Incentivize Missing Middle Housing
Start Date	2024-08-15
Completion Date	2025-11-01
Expected Results	40 estimated permitted units that the Initiative will incent.
Milestone 1	Zoning Bylaw Amendment Approval
Start Date	2024-08-15
Completion Date	2025-02-28
Milestone 2	Create a Community Improvement Plan to rebate Development Charges for 2nd, 3rd and 4th units on a low-density residential lot
Start Date	2024-09-02
Completion Date	2025-03-30
Milestone 3	Create a public-facing registration system for all new rental units
Start Date	2025-01-31

Completion Date	2025-03-31
Milestone 4	Develop Grant and Loan Program
Start Date	2024-10-15
Completion Date	2025-11-01
Initiative 3	Increase process efficiency by implementing a public-facing e-permitting portal
Start Date	2023-02-01
Completion Date	2025-12-31
Expected Results	6 estimated permitted units that the Initiative will incent.
Milestone 1	Launch first phase of Amanda Portal system and Plan Build Peterborough
Start Date	2023-02-01
Completion Date	2024-05-17
Milestone 2	Launch of Second Phase of Amanda Portal System
Start Date	2023-12-19
Completion Date	2025-10-31
Milestone 3	Refine Plan-Build Peterborough and Amanda Portal
Start Date	2025-01-02
Completion Date	2025-12-31
Initiative 4	Community Planning Permit System
Start Date	2024-07-03
Completion Date	2026-06-30
Expected Results	40 estimated permitted units that the Initiative will incent.
Milestone 1	Community Planning Permit (CPP) Feasibility Study
Start Date	2023-07-03
Completion Date	2023-11-06
Milestone 2	Draft documents (Official Plan Amendment and CPP By-law) for circulation and stakeholder input
Start Date	2024-07-23
Completion Date	2025-03-15
Milestone 3	Community Planning Permit System By-law Adoption
Start Date	2024-07-23

Completion Date	2026-06-30
Initiative 5	Make City-owned Land Available and Partner to Develop Housing
Start Date	2024-12-01
Completion Date	2025-08-31
Expected Results	90 estimated permitted units that the Initiative will incent.
Milestone 1	Approve a Partnership Policy
Start Date	2025-01-03
Completion Date	2025-06-30
Milestone 2	Council Adoption of City Land Management and Development Policy and City Land Inventory
Start Date	2025-01-03
Completion Date	2025-08-31
Initiative 6	Modernizing the Affordable Housing Community Improvement Plan (AHCIP)
Start Date	2024-09-05
Completion Date	2025-04-30
Expected Results	70 estimated permitted units that the Initiative will incent.
Milestone 1	Research Analysis and Comprehensive study
Start Date	2024-09-05
Completion Date	2025-01-03
Milestone 2	AHCIP development and Council adoption
Start Date	2025-01-03
Completion Date	2025-04-30
Initiative 7	Housing Innovation and Alternative Construction Methods
Start Date	2024-09-04
Completion Date	2025-04-30
Expected Results	75 estimated permitted units that the Initiative will incent.
Milestone 1	Development of operational framework
Start Date	2024-09-04
Completion Date	2025-03-04
Milestone 2	Staff training

Start Date	2025-01-06
Completion Date	2025-04-30
Section B – Targets	
<p>i. The Recipient agrees to a Housing Supply Growth Target of 1,410 permitted housing units.</p> <p>ii. The Recipient agrees to the following Additional Targets:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 0 multi-unit housing units in close proximity to rapid transit • 515 missing middle housing units • 595 other multi-unit housing units • 17.32 percent of the Housing Supply Growth Target are affordable units. 	
Section C - Housing Needs Assessment Report	
<p>Select one applicable statement.</p> <p><input checked="" type="checkbox"/> The Recipient recently (within two years of the 2024 federal budget announcement (April 16, 2024)) completed a Housing Needs Assessment Report and there is a reoccurring scheduled review date included in the report. The Recipient requested that the Housing Needs Assessment Report requirement be waived. There is no requirement to complete or update a Housing Needs Assessment Report.</p> <p>OR</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The Recipient has recently (within two years of the 2024 federal budget announcement (April 16, 2024)) completed a Housing Needs Assessment Report, but it will need to be updated to include a reoccurring scheduled review date. The Recipient will add a reoccurring scheduled review date.</p> <p>OR</p> <p><input type="checkbox"/> The Recipient does not have a Housing Needs Assessment Report. The Recipient will complete one and include a reoccurring scheduled review date in the report.</p>	

SCHEDULE B

HAF Funding

Subject to compliance with the terms and conditions of this Agreement, the Recipient will be eligible for HAF Funding in the amount of \$ 10,690,354.00. HAF Funding will be disbursed in four separate advances as follows:

ADVANCES	CMHC FISCAL YEAR	AMOUNT
First Advance	2024/25 (Effective Date – March 31, 2025)	\$ 2,672,588.50
Second Advance	2025/26 (April 1, 2025 – March 31, 2026)	\$ 2,672,588.50
Third Advance	2026/27 (April 1, 2026 – March 31, 2027)	\$ 2,672,588.50
Fourth Advance	2027/28 (April 1, 2027 – March 31, 2028)	\$ 2,672,588.50