

THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF GEORGINA

REPORT NO. DS-2024-0049

**FOR THE CONSIDERATION OF
COUNCIL**

August 14, 2024

SUBJECT: HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

1. RECOMMENDATIONS:

- 1. That Council receive Report DS-2024-0049 prepared by the Development Services Department dated August 14, 2024 respecting the preparation of a Housing Needs Assessment in order to access funding through the Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF) and the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF); and,**
- 2. That Council approve a budget of up to \$50,000 from the Town's Tax Rate Stabilization Reserve to retain a consultant to prepare a Housing Needs Assessment in compliance with the requirements of the federal government, for approval by Council and submission to the Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) by March 31, 2025.**

2. PURPOSE:

The purpose of this report is to seek funding to retain a consultant to prepare a Housing Needs Assessment to satisfy funding requirements through the federal Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF) and Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF).

3. BACKGROUND:

At its meetings held on June 19 and July 10, 2024, Council received separate Briefing Notes respecting infrastructure funding and an agreement with the federal government through the renewed Canada Community-Building Fund (refer to Attachments 1 and 2 respectively). The Briefing Notes collectively contained a description of the fund including historical and future allocations to the Town, a recommendation for the Town to execute a new 10-year Municipal Funding Agreement (2024-2033) with the federal government, and an overview of changes to the program including a requirement for municipalities with a population of 30,000 or greater to prepare and submit a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) by the end of March 2025 in order to be eligible for funding.

The preparation of a HNA is also a requirement to obtain grant funding through the federal Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). In this regard, a separate staff report respecting Intake 2.0 of the HAF is scheduled for Council's consideration on September 11, 2024.

4. OVERVIEW OF A HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT:

A Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) is generally described as a study/report informed by data and research that describes the current and future housing needs of a municipality and includes both quantitative and qualitative research and analysis.

The federal government intends to use HNAs as a key tool in its evidence-based long-term approach to addressing housing needs across the country. HNAs are intended to help all levels of government understand the local housing needs of communities and how they may relate to infrastructure priorities by providing the data necessary to determine what kind of housing needs to be built and where. The stated intent is to promote systematic planning of infrastructure that takes into consideration current and future housing needs.

A standard HNA template has been developed based on best practices from jurisdictions across Canada, consultations with experts, and engagements with provinces and territories (refer to Attachment 3). The stated benefits of a federal standard are described as follows:

- Providing the necessary evidence to inform local housing policies, investments and planning practices, grounded in the current and projected needs of a community;
- Fostering the widespread development and adoption of a recognized best practice;
- Ensuring an evidence-based, equity-focused and long-term planning approach to determining the housing needs of Canadians;
- Encouraging integrated, systems thinking by linking HNAs to federal infrastructure programs and planning for future population growth;
- Allowing for comparability across jurisdictions and facilitating roll-up of data to ensure an informed, evidence-based, long-term planning story at the municipal, regional and ultimately national level;
- Supporting local governments in fulfilling the HNA requirement for federal infrastructure funding; and,
- Ensuring local governments have a tool that they can leverage for their own evidence-based long-term planning needs.

The research methodology to be used to inform the assessment is outlined in the HNA template and includes both quantitative research (economic data, population and household forecasts) and qualitative research (interviews, policy analysis, stakeholder engagement). The guidance document requires the following information:

- Development and use of Housing Needs Assessments
- Community profiles and trends

- Household profiles and economic characteristics
- Priority groups
- Housing profiles
- Projected housing needs and next steps

Municipalities are required to engage with key stakeholders in the housing sector, including non-profit housing providers, developers and the community, to develop a comprehensive HNA.

5. **NEXT STEPS:**

The preparation of a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) is a new requirement for municipalities to be eligible for federal funding through the Canada Community-Building Fund (CCBF). Although a HNA was also identified as a requirement of the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) in 2023, municipalities were provided up to three (3) years to complete the study as part of that program. Since the Town was unsuccessful in its attempt to obtain grant funding through the first round of the HAF program, no steps have been taken to advance the preparation of a HNA. Consequently, the preparation of a HNA is not currently on any departmental work plan, no budget has been allocated, and there is no in-house capacity or expertise to complete the required study by the new deadline of March 31, 2025.

Based on recent publicly available RFPs for the retention of consultants to complete HNAs in Ontario, a 6-to-9-month timeline for deliverables is typically required and budgets ranged from \$40,000 to \$130,000 depending on the scope of work. It is noted that the scope of work can vary as some municipalities have initiated HNAs for reasons other than simply satisfying federal funding requirements, including to address strategic priorities, to inform Official Plan reviews, to address the regulatory requirements for Inclusionary Zoning, or to develop Community Improvement Plans and/or a Community Planning Permit System.

As of the date of this report, the Town has less than seven (7) months remaining to complete the study in anticipation of an early March 2025 recommendation report to Council. Given the tight timeline to maintain eligibility for significant and crucial infrastructure funding through the CCBF, staff are recommending that Council approve a budget of up to \$50,000 from the Town's Tax Rate Stabilization Reserve to retain a consultant to prepare the required HNA.

Once a HNA has been completed as a federal program requirement, the Town will not be required to complete a new assessment for other Housing, Infrastructure and Communities Canada programs, other than to update it every five (5) years. Notwithstanding, the HNA is expected to serve as a "baseline" document or template than can be updated in the meantime if necessary, such as to access other funding sources or to meet other legislative requirements.

A single source (emergency acquisition) non-competitive procurement process is the most expedient means of retaining a consultant in order to maximize the amount of time to prepare the study and to minimize the risk of being unable to meet the deadline. Staff are also concurrently preparing a Statement of Work (SOW) to obtain quotations from consultants, and/or to proceed through a formal Request for Proposal (RFP) procurement process if deemed necessary or desired.

6. RELATIONSHIP TO STRATEGIC PLAN:

The recommendations of this report are aligned with several Strategic Pillars in the Town's Corporate Strategic Plan, including *Delivering Service Excellence*, *Ensuring Balanced Growth*, and *Creating a Vibrant, Healthy, and Safe Community for All*.

More specifically, the preparation of a Housing Needs Assessment will not only support targeted policies and decision-making to address the greatest housing needs in the community, but also serve to ensure that the Town is eligible for federal funding that has historically been relied upon to complete core infrastructure projects, including road reconstruction and resurfacing, bridge rehabilitation, replacement of playground equipment and pathway rehabilitation, and the installation of speed humps. A Housing Needs Assessment will also inform various action items coming out of the March 5, 2024 Special Council Meeting related to housing and homelessness.

7. FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY IMPACT:

Staff are recommending that Council approve a budget of up to \$50,000 from the Town's Tax Rate Stabilization Reserve to retain a consultant to prepare a HNA by the March 31, 2025 deadline. It is the intent to replenish the reserve with any grant funding awarded through the Housing Accelerator Fund, should the Town be successful in the upcoming second intake process.

8. PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND NOTICE REQUIREMENTS:

There is no requirement for public consultation prior to Council's consideration of this report.

9. CONCLUSION:

Recent changes to the Municipal Funding Agreement for the renewed Canada Community-Building Fund require the Town to complete and submit a Housing Needs Assessment by March 31, 2025 in order to be eligible for significant and crucial infrastructure funding. A HNA is also a requirement of the Housing Accelerator Fund. In light of current resource constraints and other ongoing Corporate priorities, staff are recommending that a consultant be retained to complete the required HNA and that Council approve a budget of \$50,000 for same.

APPROVALS

Prepared By: Denis Beaulieu, MCIP, RPP
Director of Development Services

Reviewed and Rob Wheeler, CPA, CA
Recommended By: Deputy Chief Administrative Officer/Treasurer

Approved By: Ryan Cronsberry
Chief Administrative Officer

Attachments:

Att. 1 – Briefing Note from the Deputy CAO dated June 19, 2024

Att. 2 – Briefing Note from the Deputy CAO dated July 10, 2024

Att. 3 – Federal Housing Needs Assessment Template