

Housing Action Plan



Municipality of East Ferris
Housing Action Plan
August 2023

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Introduction

The Municipality of East Ferris has produced this Housing Action Plan to support our application to the Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) through the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC). Specifically, the Municipality of East Ferris qualifies to apply under the “Small/Rural/North/Indigenous Stream”, which applies to municipalities with a population of fewer than 10,000 residents.

The intention of the HAF program is to encourage significant shifts in municipal approaches and policies towards housing to incentivize and drive change in the type of housing that is provided within the community. The Municipality of East Ferris has developed the initiatives contained within this plan to demonstrate our commitment and ability to drive change within our own housing context. While East Ferris has recently had quite strong growth in housing in single detached dwellings, we have not had significant growth in other important housing types, including higher density multi-unit (missing middle) housing and affordable housing. The HAF represents an opportunity for the municipality to specifically address the lack of these types of housing, which are needed in the community.

The HAF program is intended to create transformational change within the communities that receive funding. East Ferris believes that our action plan will encourage the short term creation of housing but also set the framework for sustained longer term growth in the housing types that are needed.

Background

The Municipality of East Ferris is a growing rural community in the Nipissing Region in Northeastern Ontario. East Ferris is located immediately to the east of North Bay, the largest regional center. East Ferris offers the advantages and desirable qualities of a smaller rural municipality while still being in close proximity to more urban amenities. The municipality is situated in a unique geographical location between two major lakes, Trout Lake to the north and Lake Nosbonsing to the south. The municipality also has direct access to the major north-south and east-west highways, being highway 11 and highway 17 respectively.



All of the factors that make East Ferris a desirable place to call home have lead to a growing population:

| Census Year | Population |
|-------------|--------------|
| 2001 | 4,291 |
| 2006 | 4,431 |
| 2011 | 4,766 |
| 2016 | 4,862 |
| 2021 | 4,946 |

Although the municipality has been steadily growing, we are predominantly building single detached dwellings. With the price of housing rising across the province and detached dwellings becoming less and less affordable for the average Canadian family, it is highlighting the need for East Ferris to diversify our housing supply. As per the 2021 Census data, the breakdown of housing types currently in East Ferris is as follows:

| | |
|--|-------|
| Single Detached | 95.8% |
| Semi Detached | 1.06% |
| Row House | 1.59% |
| Apartment or Flat in a Duplex | 0.79% |
| Apartment in a Building Fewer than 5 Storeys | 0.53% |
| Movable Dwelling | 0.26% |

The overwhelming number of single detached dwellings means that it is difficult for residents seeking different types of housing to find what suits them. Specifically, seniors who are looking to downsize and age in place in the community and other vulnerable populations who are looking for affordable housing have significant difficulty finding appropriate housing.

East Ferris recognizes the need for a transformation in our housing profile. The Municipality of East Ferris adopted a new Official Plan in 2015 with partial approval from the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing given in 2015 and final ministry approval in 2022. Our Official Plan has identified the need for more affordable housing and a range of housing types, including a variety of multi-unit dwelling types, second units and rental housing options.

The recently updated Official Plan with a focus on expanding housing types and the areas that they are permitted positions the municipality well to quickly act on the initiatives outlined in this plan and supported by the HAF.

Further, Council passed a strategic plan for the municipality for the 2023 – 2026 Council term. This plan includes a section entitled “Cultivate a Vibrant & Livable Community” and specifically advocates for much needed additional seniors housing. The Council for the Municipality of East Ferris is committed to creating a community that all residents can enjoy and live in, within a range of housing types to accommodate all people.

This Housing Action Plan is another piece of the puzzle in yet another step that the East Ferris Council is taking to increase and diversify the housing profile in the community.

Initiatives

The Municipality of East Ferris has identified 6 major initiatives that make up the core of our Housing Action Plan.



Each of these initiatives are outlined in detail on the following pages with a breakdown of how they will increase housing supply in East Ferris and how the initiative will support the HAF program objectives.

Promoting infill development with increased housing density and a variety of unit types

- **Initiative #1**

Initiative Overview:

The East Ferris Official Plan encourages a mix of housing types and increased density within areas designated “Village”. The Village Designation represents the core areas of Corbeil and Astorville, the historic primary settlement locations within East Ferris. Specifically, Astorville has a large property that is a former school site that is right in the heart of the community. This site has been vacant for a number of years and has recently changed owners. This site is a prime location for an infill development with a variety of housing types and more dense development. The municipality will encourage a project that meets these goals through facilitating discussions with the owner and staff.

How will this initiative increase the supply of housing?

This initiative will increase housing by allowing the municipality to guide development on a very underutilized piece of property in one of our core areas. There is limited available land for development or redevelopment for these types of projects in our Village areas, so this opportunity allows us to provide for a greater mix of housing types, which will result in more overall units. Currently our community is dominated by single detached dwellings.

How will this initiative support HAF program objectives?

This initiative will support the program objectives by creating a more complete community in the Village core areas by allowing for a greater mix of housing types, which makes the community more inclusive and accessible and better supports commercial activity in our core areas. A greater density in the core will also lead to a more walkable community with the proximity to amenities such as park areas and grocery stores.

Promoting and allowing more housing types that serve vulnerable populations

• Initiative #2

Initiative Overview:

Seniors housing is in high demand within East Ferris. The changing demographics mean that many seniors are in need of affordable housing that fits their needs (single level, age in place friendly housing). By promoting and partnering with other organizations to provide this housing we can help serve this vulnerable population.

How will this initiative increase the supply of housing?

This initiative will increase the supply of housing because there is an existing waitlist that is significant in length for income geared rental housing for seniors. By promoting this type of housing and actively seeking partnerships and development opportunities this will increase the construction rate of this type of housing and add to the overall housing supply while limiting the waitlist of vulnerable people who are in need of this type of housing.

How will this initiative support HAF program objectives?

This will support the program initiatives by helping to provide affordable housing to a vulnerable group which creates greater equitability across the population as far as access to housing goes. This also helps to diversity the housing types as this type of housing will vary in form and density.

Create a process for the disposal of municipal owned land assets for the development of affordable housing as-of-right (not requiring rezoning)

• Initiative #3

Initiative Overview:

The municipality has land available in different parts of the municipality that could be candidates for new affordable housing; however, many of these pieces of land are not development ready and require work to consolidate parcels, go through zoning exercises, and generally prepare them to be shovel ready. The municipality would undertake the survey work required, go through the legal process of consolidating these fragmented lands and complete rezoning exercises with broad zoning permissions that would fit a variety of styles of affordable housing. This could be done to accommodate a mix of affordable rental housing and housing that would be affordable to own.

How will this initiative increase the supply of housing?

This initiative will increase the supply of housing by opening new parcels of land up to potential housing development projects. Municipal land is currently sitting vacant without development plans so by creating a process for the disposition of this land and advertising it and proactively looking for partners it will accelerate the development of this type of housing.

How will this initiative support HAF program objectives?

This supports the program initiatives by supporting the development of a diverse range of housing types and ownership models. Since the land is municipally owned it gives the municipality full control in implementing zoning that best fits the housing types that are needed in the community. This will create a more inclusive spread of housing types within the housing spectrum that support all people in obtaining housing.

Working with local non-profit organizations that provide seniors housing to support the building of more income geared rental units for seniors looking to age in place

• Initiative #4

Initiative Overview:

The changing demographics in East Ferris mean that there is a significant demand for seniors housing. In many cases this needs to be income geared rental housing that is single storey to suit the needs of the people looking to live there. There are 28 units currently managed by the non-profit group The Seniors Villas of East Ferris. These units are in incredibly high demand with the waitlist to get a unit at over 50 applicants. East Ferris has the ability to support the creation of new units either by the Seniors Villas of East Ferris or other organizations by consolidating surplus land that we have available and providing it either free of charge or at a very low rate to these groups in exchange for guarantees that new housing units will be built.

How will this initiative increase the supply of housing?

This initiative will increase the supply of housing by removing the barrier to entry for non-profits in acquiring and preparing land for development. This will make it easier and more affordable for these groups to move forward with new housing projects which will increase the badly needed supply of rental housing in East Ferris. This will also help to support Initiative #1 as the majority of our candidate sites for this would also be infill development opportunities where townhouse blocks would be the best type of built form.

How will this initiative support HAF program objectives?

This would support the program initiatives by adding a mix of housing types in East Ferris. We have a shortage of rental options and a shortage of variety of housing, with single detached homes being the norm. This initiative would help provide not only a variety in the physical type of housing (townhouse vs. single detached) but also provide rental options, which are very limited at the option. Further, it would support seniors who are in high need of this type of housing, which would help provide equitable housing across the entire demographic spectrum.

Implement rental only zoning

- **Initiative #5**

Initiative Overview:

This is something that we would implement in conjunction with Initiative #4, which would ensure that municipal lands that are targeted for that type of housing are used for the needed rental housing.

The municipality would also explore the viability of requiring all infill developments within the Village areas that have greater than a certain number of units to require a percentage of units to be rental only units.

How will this initiative increase the supply of housing?

This initiative would help support the implementation of new rental units, which are currently lacking in East Ferris. In a normal situation, developers may approach a redevelopment project in a way that they can create the number and type of units that would be most profitable. This often doesn't align with the goals of creating more rental housing or more units of varying types when the developers are not normally in the rental housing business. By requiring rentals as part of the zoning, it allows the municipality to drive greater unit creation in all scenarios.

How will this initiative support HAF program objectives?

This would help create a wider range of housing types by accommodating rental opportunities in different types of housing. Rental only zoning would ensure that the entire spectrum of housing is built in East Ferris which would support options for everyone in the community across a wide range of demographics and socio-economic conditions to be able to find housing.

Review of housing policies on new construction

- Initiative #6

Initiative Overview:

Currently the East Ferris Official Plan has housing policies that limit the rate of housing development. An example is a very restrictive policy that does not allow more than one new subdivision/condominium designation to be considered at a time outside of the Village areas. This limits the ability to provide different housing options because subdivision applications can come in many forms (waterfront, rural estate, various condominium options, etc.). This policy is also problematic in that it does not allow multiple developers to be active at the same time and has the potential to shut out people who would otherwise build new housing in the community.

How will this initiative increase the supply of housing?

This initiative would help increase the housing supply by allowing for multiple projects to be considered simultaneously, which will give more options for housing and allow for a greater supply of land that is ready for development.

How will this initiative support HAF program objectives?

This would support the program initiatives by allowing for a diverse range of applications to be made that would result in the option for a greater range of housing types. By allowing multiple applications to be active at a time it increases the opportunity for developers who focus on different types of housing to be active with applications concurrently. If only one application can be active at a time by someone who only builds a certain type of detached housing, it limits the ability to have multiple housing types being pursued simultaneously.

Conclusion

The initiatives outlined in this housing action plan will help guide the municipality in our policy development, program outreach, partnerships and overall housing strategy in order to increase the supply of housing of all types within East Ferris. Further, the municipality commits to completing a housing needs assessment report to further identify specific types of housing across the housing spectrum and to provide guidance on the implementation of the initiatives outlined in this action plan.

East Ferris has a strong history of residential growth and the use of the HAF funding will allow the municipality to build on that strong foundation to provide more diverse housing projects and provide opportunities for housing for the entire population.