

Affordable and Energy Efficient Housing

The City needs to declare both affordable housing and energy efficient housing as priorities for attention, resources, reduction of fees, one stop service and quick turnaround times.

The City needs to acknowledge that it does not have the means to adequately address these two goals: it must cooperate with others.

Members of Council may need a refresher, in non-technical language, about the concepts of energy efficiency, energy conservation and heat transfer.

City Staff, especially those in the front line, need access to similar but more in depth, technical understanding of energy aspects.

As a starting point, the City should focus on what exists now: existing houses with their surrounding properties and usually owned by independent homeowners.

Since homeowners are generally the sole decision makers in undertaking construction projects, the City needs to engage them as first-time, non-professional builders/developers at their level of understanding and (in)experience.

The City should provide "in house, climate ambassadors" to assist and lead the first 1,000 applicants who want to build affordable or energy efficient housing or both, through the design and application processes.

The City adopts the role of EDUCATION for energy use in buildings given the absence of such leadership by the Federal Government, the Provincial Government, industry and municipal governments.

The City will provide readily available information about energy efficiency, energy conservation and heat transfer (no need to reinvent the wheel - all the information has been around for ages but it must be differentiated from popular misconceptions).

The City should identify known problems/deficiencies with new builds (and the Building Code) and provide proven options. It should also offer information to reduce the risks of flooding and severe wind damage.

Similarly, the City should point out the problems of typical, existing houses and provide effective recommendations (this information exists now).

A number of accompanying slides illustrate some common problems and some uncommon solutions.

The City develops ideas/options for typical house models (e.g. narrow, 2 storey pre WWII houses, bungalows, raised ranches, split levels, and 2 storey units with double garages out front) to help motivate homeowners to consider making an extra dwelling unit by conversions.

The City to acquire "working drawings", pre-approved by the Building Department, for converting double car garages into a separate dwelling unit.

The City will be guided in its decisions by a balance between existing zoning regulations and societal goals for affordable and energy efficient housing. Staff will be empowered to stray from a rigid interpretation of regulations and apply flexibility providing the principles of safety and longevity are maintained.

The City will determine a "made in Hamilton" definition/description of "energy efficient" (perhaps 50% more efficient than the Building Code) and "affordable" (possibly the maximum of 30% of income standard).

This would be a good start.

Further suggestions related to the above;

The City should highlight the advantage of expanding the building envelope using innovative, green standards in order to create additional housing units.

The City will initiate the planning of a workshop attended for citizens at large focusing on information, practicality, skills development and proven effectiveness.

The City will promote understanding and dependability of harnessing renewable energy including demonstrations at City Hall (south entrance) and other appropriate spots to demonstrate its benefits for electricity and hot water.