



Shown here is 17 Guelph St., a potential site for an affordable housing complex that could begin construction as early as 2022.

# TOWN TAKES ON AFFORDABLE HOUSING ISSUE

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Recognizing the shortage of affordable housing in Halton Hills, the Town is taking steps to increase the supply.

A recent affordable housing open house led by the Town discussed some of the current initiatives while looking to gather input from residents.

"Affordable housing is a strategic plan priority," Nicole Pal, economic development and special projects co-ordinator for the Town of Halton Hills, said.

Last year, Halton Hills had a rental vacancy rate of 1.5 per cent, though it's climbed in 2021 to 1.9 per cent. A healthy vacancy rate is 3 per cent.

"We're looking for any and all opportunities to increase the supply of affordable housing," Pal said.

For home-owning residents, that comes in the form of increased permissions for accessory suites.

"We're working to promote and create awareness of the benefits of creating a second unit," Pal said.

Rental income from suites can help owners pay down their mortgages while increasing the supply of affordable housing.

**"We're looking for any and all opportunities to increase the supply of affordable housing."**

**- Nicole Pal, economic development and special projects co-ordinator for the Town of Halton Hills**

The current lack of supply in rental units, however, has driven up the price of available units.

The average rental unit price in Halton Hills was reported at \$1,245 per month, though the only two rental units currently vacant on Kijiji as of writing this had an average rental price of \$1,525 per month for one bedroom, one bathroom basement units.

"In terms of shelter costs, it is exceedingly high for something that is typically a deeply affordable part of the housing stock," Pal said.

The Town also looks to entice developers to create affordable housing opportunities.

"We do our best to support them through the approvals process," Pal said.

From fee waivers and development charge deferrals, the Town has a number of tools to encourage affordable housing from developers.

"Many affordable housing projects need help from all levels of government," Pal said.

In November, the Town announced an affordable housing opportunity at 17 Guelph St. in Georgetown.

The Town earmarked \$284,000 in the 2021 capital budget for pre-development activities on the property.

Now, the Town hopes to attract a developer to complete the project, which, in its preliminary stages, has been pitched as a four-storey building with 14 affordable units.

To ensure the project remains an affordable housing property, the Town is implementing a 'land-lease' agreement.

There has been no affordable rental construction in Halton Hills since 2011.

"Developers are interested in building affordable housing," Pal said, "but it has to make financial sense."

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