

Rose Street Social and Community Services and Affordable Housing Development Project

20 Rose Street, Barrie

Q: Where is the new affordable housing proposed to be constructed?

A: The property is located at 20 Rose Street in the City of Barrie. The County has recently purchased the former OPP building (with easy access to the 400 and Bayfield Street).

Q: Why is the OPP building going to be demolished?

A: Although investigated, the existing structure is not suitable for conversion and can not be included into the new design. The building also has a number of hazardous materials that need to be properly and safely removed.

Q: Why is the County developing Affordable Housing in Barrie?

A: Across the region, the demand for affordable housing has been identified in the County's 10-Year Affordable Housing and Homelessness Prevention Strategy. The Strategy's goal is to achieve 2,685 affordable housing units by 2024.

As of June 30, 2021, a total of approximately 2,443 affordable housing units have been created county-wide. The general target for the creation of affordable housing units identified in the Strategy for the City of Barrie is a total of 840 units. Despite the target being achieved for the city, the County recognizes affordable housing remains an identified need and that urban settings such as Barrie are considered a "draw" for households in nearby municipalities that need housing with close proximity to employment, community services and public transit. During the pandemic, the need for affordable housing has become even more apparent than ever.

Q: What will the development include?

A: The proposed development will include approximately 150 affordable housing units for seniors, families and individuals. The ground floor will also include Social and Community Services space for County services, including Ontario Works, Children Services, Community Services, and Social Housing. The building may also contain other social service partner agencies such as Licensed Child Care, and potentially an EarlyON Child and Family Centre.

Q: What is “Affordable Housing”?

A: A conventional measure of housing affordability is the shelter cost-to-income ratio, which most commonly sets the affordability threshold at 30% of before-tax household income. (CMHC, 2019. Defining the Affordability of Housing in Canada). Simcoe County Housing Corporation typically sets affordable rents for new Affordable Housing developments at approximately 80% of Average Market Rent (based on CMHC annual data reports).

Q: What is the difference between Affordable Housing and Social Housing?

A: Social Housing, a commonly used term, is a category of housing that includes public housing, cooperatives, and non-profit providers that are specifically identified in the Housing Services Act and that receive government funding to assist with rent subsidies and operating and capital costs.

Social Housing is often used interchangeably with Affordable Housing, but they are two different things. All social housing is affordable, but not all affordable housing is social housing.

The County’s proposed development in the City of Barrie is designed as Affordable Housing, potentially with the inclusion of some replacement Social Housing units. The Affordable Housing units will have rents set at approximately 80% of Average Market Rent, as determined for the area by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

Q: Who owns the Simcoe County Housing Corporation?

A: The County of Simcoe is the sole shareholder of Simcoe County Housing Corporation. This means that the County is the owner and manager of Simcoe County Housing Corporation properties that provide affordable housing to seniors, families and individuals. This also means that the Affordable Housing created will be well-maintained and will be kept affordable in perpetuity.

Q: Will my property value be negatively affected by a nearby affordable housing development?

A: No, in fact some research suggests that the opposite is true. Property values have been shown to increase after affordable housing developments have been built. (HomeComing Community Choice Coalition, 2020)

Q: Will this put additional strain on public services and infrastructure (i.e. water, sewer, schools, & roads)?

A: Generally, higher-density housing needs less extensive infrastructure than new development – features like piped water, sewer services, schools and roads already exist. Also, higher-density development and infill can provide the larger customer base needed to increase the range and quality of available services (such as public transit). (Ontario Human Rights Commission, 2012)

As part of the site plan control process, the County will be required to satisfy the City of Barrie development requirements including infrastructure and site access improvements.

Q: What about my safety? Will this development make my neighbourhood and my community more dangerous?

A: There is no evidence that affordable housing leads to increased crime rates. (HomeComing Community Choice Coalition, 2020)

Q: What is the timeline?

A: Pending County budget approvals, the pre-development process, in consultation with the City of Barrie, will commence in 2022. It is anticipated the property will be shovel-ready so that construction may begin in late spring or early summer of 2024 with anticipated completion late 2026 or early 2027.

Q: Will more information be made available?

A: The pre-development process will initiate preliminary design and costing. Pending County Council's direction, detailed design will follow.

Further information and details on public information sessions, which may be held virtually or in-person (pending pandemic health restrictions) will be made available. Updates will continue to be posted on the County's website as the project progresses.