

# HAF Action Plan Summary – St. Catharines, ON

## **Explanatory Notes:**

- *The following summary is a high-level overview of the approved Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) Action Plan.*
- *Local governments are expected to follow statutory processes and procedures when considering and adopting bylaws and policies, including public notification and input processes. HAF recipients have committed to follow regulatory requirements and to actively pursue the relevant council or other approvals needed to advance these initiatives.*
- *HAF recipients are also required to complete and regularly update a Housing Needs Assessment Report.*

## **Initiative 1: Municipal Development Corporation**

Partnering with developers and non-profit partners to develop housing and mixed-use transit-oriented projects on surplus and underused City-owned land.

- A new Municipal Development Corporation will assess available City-owned sites, create opportunities for redevelopment of sites owned by other orders of government, pursue environmental remediation where required and establish partnerships to redevelop selected sites (*corporation established in 2024, implementation through 2025*).

## **Initiative 2: Development Feasibility Support**

Improving the development approvals process and enhancing online services (*implementation through 2025*).

- St. Catharines will increase staff capacity and streamline internal processes.
- The e-permitting platform will be expanded to planning applications, and a new interactive mapping tool will feature 3-D modelling of the zoning bylaw, official plan, natural features, and development constraints.
- The City will also work with partners to update airport zoning requirements that impact development in the downtown core.

## **Initiative 3: Inclusive Housing Initiative**

Promoting housing diversity and affordability and incentivizing accessibility initiatives throughout the city (*implementation in 2024*).

- The City will identify best practices in inclusive housing design such as wheelchair accessibility and adaptive technologies, in collaboration with non-profits, academics, and people with lived experience.
- A new grant will offer up to \$75,000 to promote the creation of accessible housing units.
- The City will also introduce parking exemptions for affordable housing developments.

#### **Initiative 4: Missing Middle Initiatives**

Updating planning rules and promoting detached accessory dwelling units (ADUs) and laneway housing.

- St. Catharines will allow four units as-of-right on all residential and mixed-use lots City-wide (*bylaw change in 2024*).
- A new incentive program will offer up to \$80,000 per ADU, supported by design and implementation guidelines and a one-day building permit approval pilot project for ADUs (*incentive launched in 2024, full implementation through 2025*).
- Offering incentives for the development of affordable housing (*planning and building application refund policy adopted in 2024*).

#### **Initiative 5: Sanitary Sewer Asset Management Initiatives for Housing Intensification**

Reducing infrastructure barriers to housing intensification by freeing up sewer capacity and reducing stormwater impacts (*implementation through 2026*).

- Mapping and analysis of sewer flows during storm events will identify locations where capacity exists to support redevelopment, and where infrastructure upgrades are needed.
- A grant program will assist property owners with downspout disconnections and other projects to prevent stormwater from entering the sanitary sewer system.

#### **Initiative 6: Climate-Resilient Housing Development Plan**

Ensuring that new housing is resilient to climate change through community engagement and sustainable urban planning (*implementation through 2025*).

- St. Catharines will develop comprehensive guidelines for resilient housing construction, renovation, and design (e.g., flood-proofing, heat-resistant materials, and renewable energy integration), followed by demonstration projects in vulnerable areas.

#### **Initiative 7: Niagara Region Housing Innovation Hub**

Increasing community collaboration and promoting best practices at the intersection of housing, regional economic development, and sustainability (*implementation through 2024 and 2025*).

- A new Niagara Region Housing Innovation Hub will develop community-driven and collaborative solutions to a variety of challenges including housing for international students and increasing affordability near current and future transit stations.
- Solutions to be explored include parking policy reforms, formation of partnerships, incentivization, and community awareness and education programs.
- The Hub will increase local capacity to explore innovative climate solutions.