

PLANNING CASE STUDY STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK

The Challenge

Housing affordability challenges have affected virtually every city across Canada, and with increasing impact over recent years. In Atlantic Canada, the whiplash has been especially pronounced as most communities enjoyed decades of reasonably affordable housing conditions. Our client was not an exception, and as one of the major urban areas in their province, they were struggling to keep up with the growing pressure and calls for action. Recent influxes in population, among many other factors, left them with a growing list of problems to tackle and needs to address, but little established capacity or direction to shape their response. They enlisted Turner Drake's Planning Division to produce a complete Affordable Housing Strategy and give them a framework to organize around.

Turner Drake's Approach

Turner Drake had recently completed an in-depth Housing Needs Assessment for the region, giving our Planning Division a strong foundation of data, community feedback, and sector contacts from which to begin. We began by distilling the key insights from that work and the current landscape of policy, programs, and legislation across all levels of government to set the context. We explored ideas and best practices from other jurisdictions, and determined which were most pertinent and meaningful to the situation at hand.

Our goal was to arrive at a practical, manageable, and targeted set of recommendations that had potential to actually move the needle; not a wish list that said all the right things, but left the client with an unfocussed and unimplementable strategy. We tested and refined our recommendations through an engagement program including workshops with community and municipal stakeholders, service providers working at the frontlines of homelessness, direct interviews with housing developers for both non-profit and for-profit sectors, and a final survey for the general public. The result was a course of action centered around growing the non-market housing sector into a robust and meaningful segment of the housing ecosystem; while helping existing market-rate sector do more of the things it is well suited for to lighten the lift.

Our team synthesised it all into a plain-language document that outlined the issues at play, the goals for the municipality, the approach taken in responding, and a set of recommended actions that included low-hanging fruit, core strategic initiatives, and ambitious ideas that would require longer-term effort in exchange for durable, potentially transformative results. Our implementation guide helped identify timelines, responsibilities, and prioritization within the strategy's content to help get the ball rolling.

Winning Results

Our comprehensive affordable housing strategy provided our client with the detailed framework to help it scale up its capacity and begin taking meaningful action. The timing could not have been better; shortly thereafter the federal government expanded the funding and program support it was bringing to bear on the issue, and the resources our client put in place to start their strategy implementation efforts also positioned them to more effectively leverage those opportunities.

