AFFORDABLE HOUSING GRANT PROGRAM FAQ

1. What is the purpose of the grant program?

The purpose of the City of Saint John Affordable Housing Grant Program is to help increase the number of affordable units in the community by incentivizing non-profit and private sector housing developers. As part of the City's Affordable Housing Action Plan, the program has been designed to make use of a one-time $800,000 funding allocation to the municipality.

2. What is the grant amount?

Non-profit housing organizations can receive $10,000 per affordable unit up to a maximum of $200,000. Private developers can receive $8,000 per affordable unit up to a maximum of $160,000. In addition, each project can receive up to an additional $50,000 in bonus funds for projects that are innovative or address a market gap. Funding will be committed through grant cycles until all budget is expended.

3. How do you define an affordable unit?

The Affordable Housing Grant Program is a "top up" grant, meaning that a project must apply and be eligible for a Provincial or Federal funding (CMHC) program. The definition of affordability rests within the Provincial/Federal Program. There are two separate definitions for affordable unit currently given by CMHC. The minimum requirement for the City of Saint John's Grant Program would be where a unit must be less than 80% of the Median Market Rent and be maintained for a minimum of 20 years. CMHC also defines an affordable housing unit as where tenants pay no more than 30% of their before-tax income on housing costs and the unit remains affordable for a minimum of 20 years. Consideration in evaluating projects will be given to the level of affordability.

4. What are the minimum eligibility requirements?

The Program prioritizes projects that are shovel ready; however, recognizes that projects often must seek to secure funding at an early stage. The more information an applicant can submit, the more points they may potentially be awarded (see Grant Scoring, pg. 2). Before entering a grant agreement with the City, the following requirements must be met:
- The project must be located with the serviced area of the City (Primary Development Area per the Municipal Plan)
- The project must be located within 1 km of a transit stop (or within an Intensification Area per the Municipal Plan)
- The project must be in compliance with the City's Municipal Plan and Zoning By-law
- Proof of funding sources must be provided, including confirmation of Federal/Provincial funds and/or confirmation of fund from a Canadian Financial Institution
- If a building permit is not submitted with the application, the proponent must participate in a pre-application meeting with the City and obtain a building permit within 12 months

5. How can I apply for a grant?

Application forms can be obtained by request by emailing affordable@saintjohn.ca. Paper copies may also be obtained from the One Stop Development Shop, located at 15 Market Square. The first grant cycle will open on January 10, 2023 and end on February 8th, 2023. After all applications are evaluated, a second grant cycle may open, subject to available funding.

Grant Scoring

Applications are evaluated by the Grant Committee based on the objectives outlined in the Grant Program Policy. The Grant Committee will utilize an evaluation criterion, which includes a point structure summarized below. Please refer to the Affordable Housing Grant Program Policy for complete criterion. Once the Grant Committee has deemed a project eligible, a letter of conditional approval will be issued to the applicant.

- Affordable Unit Count (1 point)
- Project located within an Intensification Area as defined by the Municipal Plan (5 points)
- Application includes a building permit submission with full set of drawings or letter of commitment from Social Development (5 points)
- Bonus points are also awarded for projects proposing 3-bedroom units, retrofitting of vacant buildings, and increased accessibility and energy efficiency standards.