

Local Approaches to Unlocking New Housing

2025 AMO Annual Conference Concurrent Session

Housing Innovation in the City of Barrie

AMO Conference August 2025

Presented by:

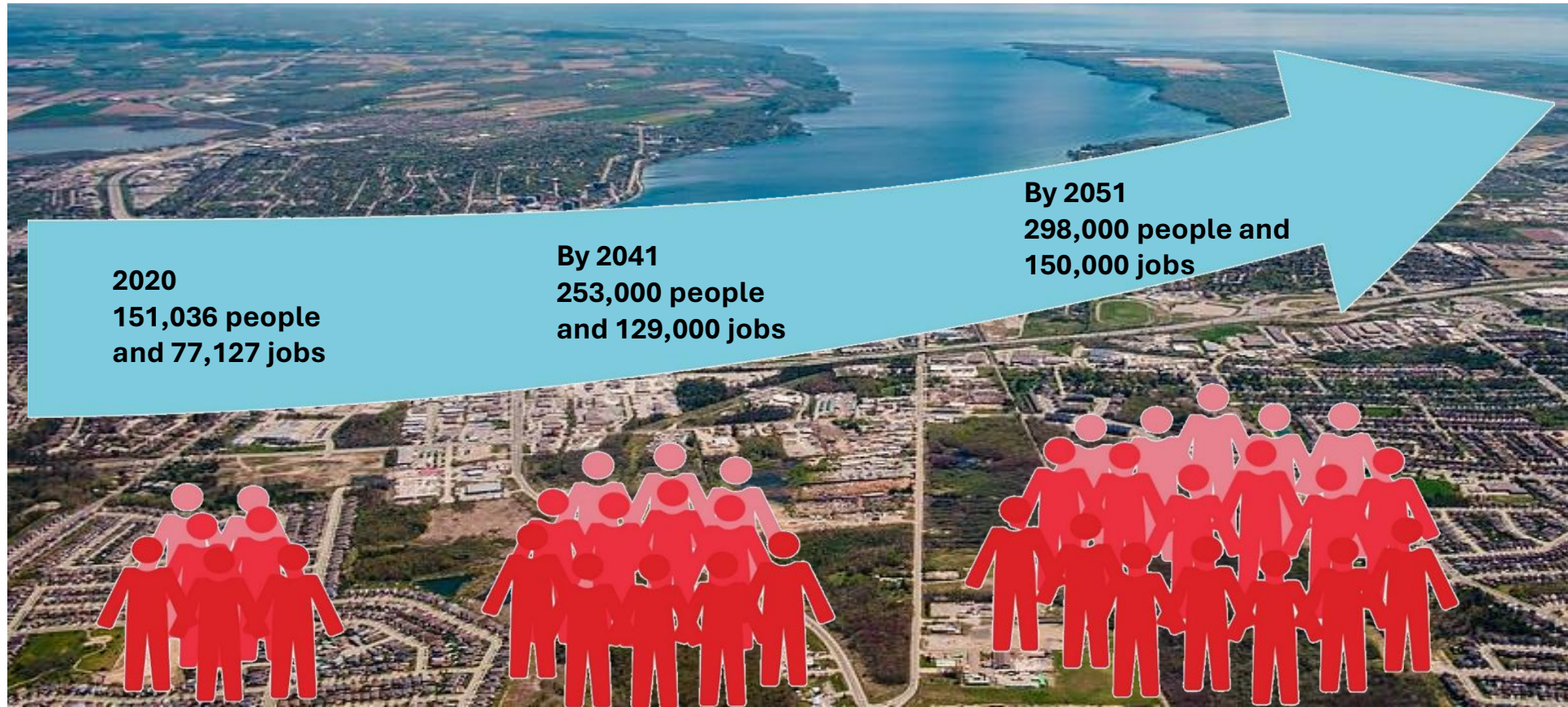
Michelle Banfield, RPP, Executive Director, Development Services



Bird's Eye View



The City Context – Population and Employment





New Foundations: An Affordable Housing Initiative



Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP)



Housing Development Concierge Program



Exploring the realm of the possible to see what adding affordable housing might look like on eligible:

- Institutional & Residential properties owned by non-profit or charitable organizations
- Places of worship zoned for residential uses

New Foundations – Turning Ideas into Action

August 2021 – Council Motion

QUICK START FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING PROJECTS ON INSTITUTIONAL LANDS

1. That the Development Services Department write to all owners of institutionally designated properties in Barrie indicating the intention to allow housing as-of-right on their properties, and inviting them to contact the City to discuss the potential for the construction of affordable housing on their properties and that the Affordable Housing Task Force report back to Council on success of the program in encouraging applications from interested property owners by December, 2021 and further contact places of worship designated residential with the potential developable lands for the same purpose.
2. 10 studies at a cost of up to \$20,000 each

October 2021 Amendments to the City's Comprehensive Zoning By-law passed to make it easier to do Residential Uses on Institutional Properties, but adding this as a permitted accessory use, with specific zoning standard

New Foundations – Selecting Sites and Consultants

Winter/Spring 2022 We spread the word, held an open house, conducted application intake and interviews to finalize site selection

Spring/Summer 2022 Through a procurement process, the City hired Smart Density and Parcel Economics to create feasibility studies for 6 sites, with input from the owners/operators of these sites



New Foundations – Feasibility Studies

Site	Built Form	Type of Units	No. of Units
1	Low Rise Apartment Dwelling (4 storeys)	Rental	22
2	Low Rise Apartment Dwelling (4 storeys)	Rental	54
3	3 Mixed Use Building (Commercial Space, Community Space and Residential Dwelling Units)	Rental	54
4	High Rise Apartment Dwelling with Commercial Space (30 storeys)	Rental	1087
5	Long-Term Care Facility (4 Storey)	Long-Term Care Home	160
6	Low Rise Apartment Dwelling (3 storey)	Rental	28
			1405

In total, eight (8) sites have received funding for a total of \$154,065.56.

Six (6) were new feasibility studies, two (2) were places of worship that had already done some independent work.

New Foundations – Feasibility Studies



New Foundations – 4 Years later....

- Progress is slow to realize new units through this program, but recognize value in the process
- Trying to “match make” as funding projects remains a challenge for those who would like to implement the vision
- Changes in leadership and vision of their congregation in some churches
- Housing Accelerator Fund flagged as an opportunity to support and the **Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP)**
- Still optimistic... One project has applied for site plan (very recently)
- Smart Density has scaled it up with CMHC through their Solutions Lab Program...

Scalable Zoning Reform for Affordable Housing



How might municipalities **reform**
zoning and work in partnership to
unlock non-profit, faith-based, and
Indigenous lands for affordable
housing?





1

Definition

2

Discovery

3

Development

Fall 2025

Co-develop zoning models and prioritize actionable actions through virtual workshops, feedback, and solution refinement.

4

Prototype & Test

5

Roadmap

We're hosting our next workshop for municipal teams in fall 2025.

Scan the QR Code to join the list



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Housing Community Improvement Plan (CIP)



Council adopted a new CIP in June 2024...

“The goal of the Housing CIP is to **increase the supply of housing units and rental housing units**, and to **accelerate the construction of new housing** throughout the City of Barrie, by using financial incentives and other programs to reduce the cost of new housing development for **non-profit and market/for-profit developers** seeking to deliver **affordable options and market-rate rental housing**.”

Housing CIP - Per Door Grant Program

- Funded using Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF), Building Faster Fund (BFF) and City CIP Reserve dollars
- Flexible financial assistance to incentivize the creation of more affordable and rental housing units. One single capital grant replaced tying incentives to specific fees and charges
- Applicants are responsible for determining a reasonable amount of incentive per unit for their project, considering:
 - Depth and duration of affordability
 - Unit type or mix
 - Type, size and scale of development
 - Location
- Grants can be used towards any eligible project development costs, but cannot exceed total costs of development, or be used towards operational costs.

Per Door Grant – Projects Funded

- 2024 Intake had a budget of \$10M Budget and in total \$9,857,312.60 was awarded
- Grants were provided to support 4 housing projects – 3 by non-profits and one by a market housing developer – and will support the development of 500 purpose-built rental units, including 218 affordable units throughout the City
- Projects funded ranged from smaller-scale supportive housing to a 27-storey purpose-built rental that included affordable housing units



Camphill “Project Generosity”



County of Simcoe “20 Rose Street”



SkyDev “Sky Towers”

Housing CIP – Other Programs

Tax Increment Equivalent Grant (TIEG)

- Expanded on the previous TIEG based on feedback from the development community to allow all qualifying projects to be awarded the TIEG
- Incentivizes medium & high density purpose-built rental units by providing a yearly grant for a period of up to ten (10) years to phase in the post-development tax assessment increase
- Applications now accepted on a rolling basis, with staff delegated approval

Exemption from Planning Application Fees Program

- Development Services staff can waive upfront select Development Services Fees, including planning application fees, for qualifying affordable housing projects by non-profits and charitable organizations

Housing Development Concierge Program

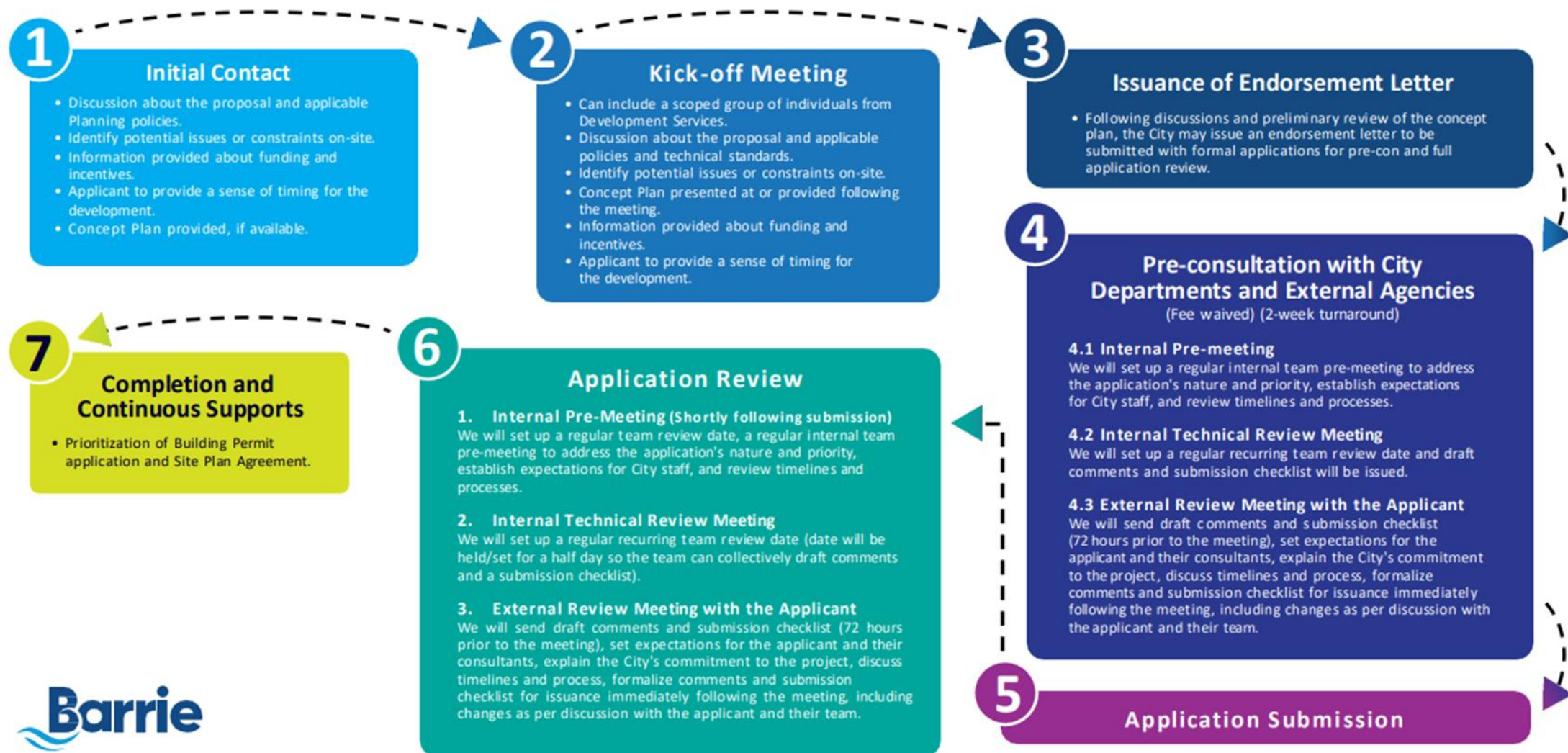


- Enhanced customer service and streamlined review for non-profit and private-sector developers of strategic housing projects, including:
 - Affordable rental and ownership housing
 - Emergency, transitional & supportive housing
 - Purpose-built rental housing
- Complimentary service that provides support during site selection, pre-submission due diligence, funding and incentives, partnerships and approvals processes

Housing Development Concierge Program

- Must apply through the online web form and are reviewed against a score card. If approved, applicants sign a letter of understanding to demonstrate equal commitment to moving the project forward quickly
- Projects are provided a Concierge planner in addition to a file manager
- Concierge team can help rapidly coordinate issue resolution and facilitate connections across departments and externally
- Concierge services are catered to meet needs of applicants – our non-profits require different supports than our market housing developers

Process Chart of Housing and Employment Development Concierge Program



Current Concierge projects...

- 7 projects and counting in the pilot program at various stages from re-zoning to site plan approval
- Positive feedback from applicants to date, and seems to be particularly well suited to speeding up site plan review
- One project has had a full-circle moment – moving from New Foundations funding to Concierge support as they navigate the site plan review process & also received CIP funding



Affordable Housing Project by Maplevue Community Church and non-profit housing provider Hollyhomes Corporation Ltd.

Want to learn more?

New Foundations Initiative: www.barrie.ca/newfoundations

Housing CIP: www.barrie.ca/CIP

Concierge Program: www.barrie.ca/developmentconciergeprograms

To join the next **Scalable Zoning Reform for Affordable Housing** CMHC Solutions Lab with Smart Density, Scan the QR Code or email info@smartdensity.com



Thank you

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Executive Director of Development Services

City of Barrie

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Local approaches to unlocking new housing

Oxford County's approach to
rural additional residential units

April Nix

RPP MCIP | Manager Planning Policy, Oxford County
AMO 2025 | Ottawa | August 18, 2025



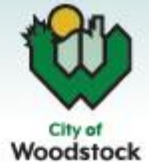
Oxford County

- Located centrally in southwestern Ontario
- Current population: ~135,000
 - ❖ Expected to increase by ~96,000 by 2061
- Among the fastest-growing areas in Ontario
 - ❖ 7% 2021-2024, Stats Can, 2024
- 8 area municipalities
 - ❖ 5 rural, 3 urban
- 100% groundwater dependant community for drinking water



Land use planning framework in Oxford

- One Official Plan
- 8 area municipal zoning by-laws
- The County provides coordinated land use planning services, and is also the service provider for water/wastewater service



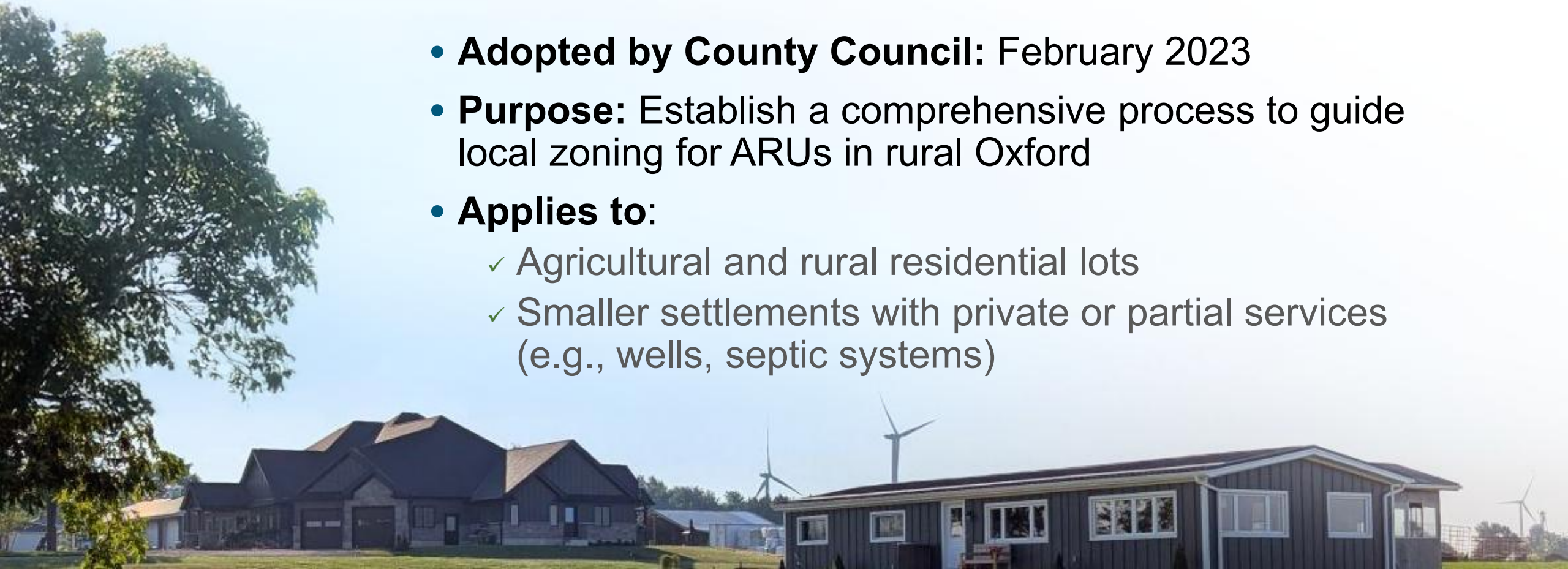


What are Additional Residential Units?

- ARUs are self-contained dwelling units.
- Can be within a house or in a detached structure on the same property.
- Various forms and names:
 - ✓ accessory dwelling units,
 - ✓ second units,
 - ✓ secondary suites,
 - ✓ apartments, lofts,
 - ✓ coach houses, tiny homes, etc.

Official Plan Amendment – Rural ARUs

- **Adopted by County Council:** February 2023
- **Purpose:** Establish a comprehensive process to guide local zoning for ARUs in rural Oxford
- **Applies to:**
 - ✓ Agricultural and rural residential lots
 - ✓ Smaller settlements with private or partial services (e.g., wells, septic systems)



Rural approach to ARUs

On agricultural lots and rural residential lots

- Maximum of 2 units
 - ❖ Limit of one in a separate detached structure
- ARUs are accessory and secondary to the principal dwelling in scale and function
 - ❖ 50% of the gross floor area of the primary dwelling to a max of 140 m² (1506 ft²)
 - ❖ Shared infrastructure driveway/parking



Rural approach to ARUs

On agricultural lots and rural residential lots

- Must meet Minimum Distance Separation (MDS I), or not further reduce an existing insufficient setback
- Avoid compatibility issues for surrounding operations and expectations for future severance in the agricultural area
- Avoid removing agricultural lands from production
- Require a minor variance to permit
 - ❖ Variance process confirms location, servicing, compatibility with agricultural uses, etc.



Rural approach to ARUs

In private or partially serviced settlements

- Up to one ARU per lot is permitted
 - ❖ Subject to servicing constraints
- Unit is limited in scale, and lot area has to be large enough to accommodate servicing (septic) and other infrastructure
- Servicing needs to ensure protection of water quality/quantity
- Require a minor variance to permit
 - ❖ Variance process confirms location, servicing, compatibility with agricultural uses, etc.



Impact of changes and next steps



- Roughly 100 ARUs in the rural area have been approved so far.
- Ongoing monitoring of applications and decisions helps inform policy effectiveness and delivery of outcomes.
- Updates to zoning by-law provisions (ongoing) are being informed by monitoring.

Conclusion



Having clear principles and objectives drive smart approaches – and smart approaches shape better policies.



Integrated processes cut duplication, boost efficiency and deliver better results.





Region of Waterloo

Modular (Container) Housing Development - Bechtel St.

2025 Association of Municipalities Ontario

August 18, 2025

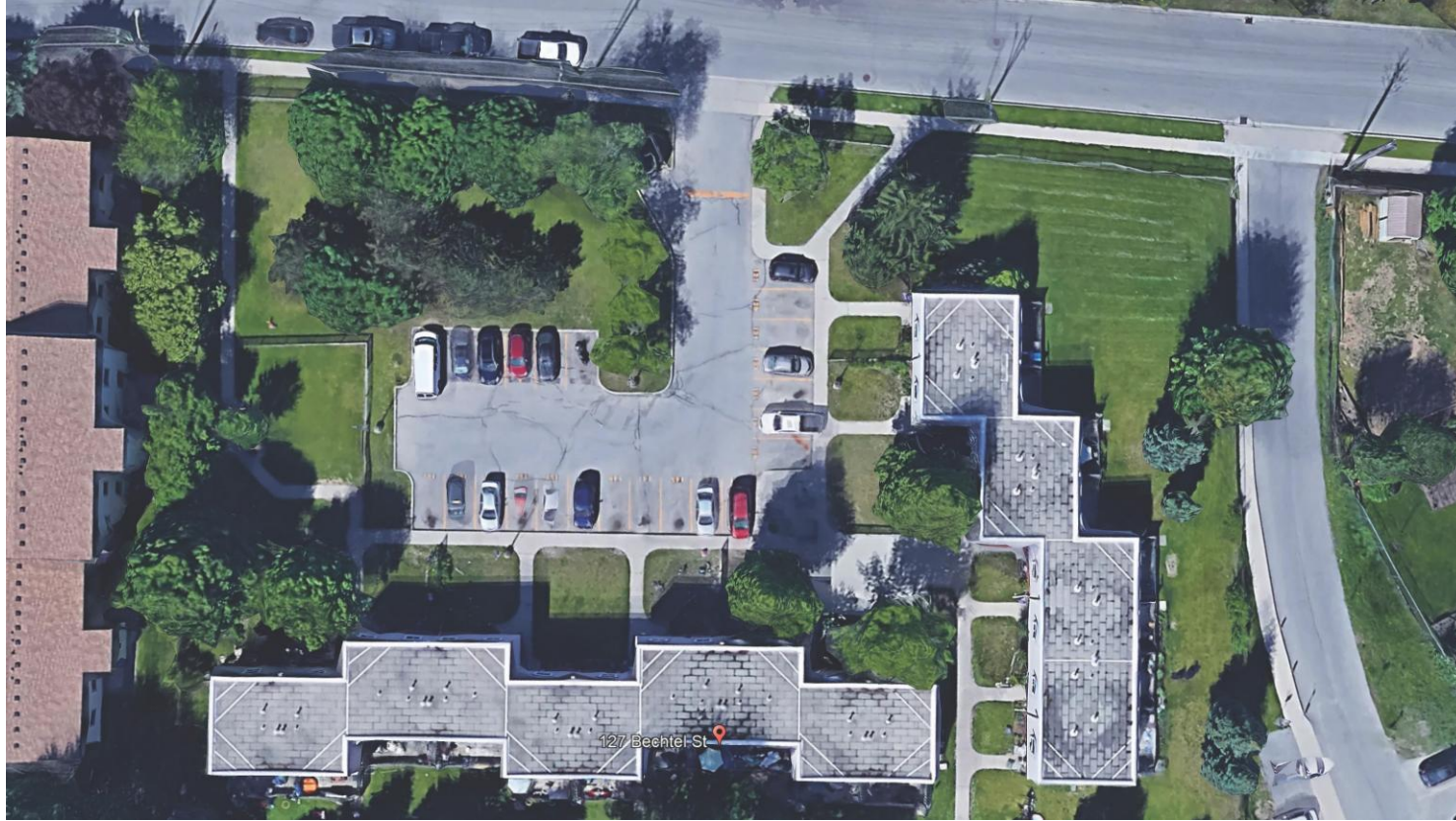
Our Project

- Wanted to use land currently owned by the Region to create the affordable housing more quickly (early 2019)
- Looked at all 65 Waterloo Region Housing (WRH) properties
- Looked for those which had room to expand – 14 sites selected
- These sites were ranked according to 7 criteria
 - Parking
 - Neighborhood factor
 - Tenant impact
 - Planning process
 - Community amenities
 - Greenspace

127-161 Bechtel Street, Cambridge



127-161 Bechtel Street, Cambridge



Timeframes

- *November–December 2019*: Region began considering an alternative housing pilot project (Action 3.1 of 10 year plan)
- *January–April 2020*: Region staff prepared background information on alternative housing and reviewed potential sites
- *May 2020*: Bechtel is chosen as the pilot site in Cambridge
- *June 17, 2021*: Community engagement staff distributes flyers to Bechtel community
- *June 24, 2021*: Press release to let the general public know of the Region's intention
- *June 25–26, 2021*: The Region hosted town hall meetings for information and questions
- Feb. 2022 – Open House and unit tours
- March 2022 - Occupancy

Lessons Learned - Process

- Surveys
- Retrospectives sessions
- Steering Committee

Learning By Themes

- Contract/Legal
- Procurement
- Communication and Community Engagement
- Construction
- Financial and affordability
- Planning

Lessons Learned - Development

Procurement

EOI vs. RFP

Design Build

- Community Agencies
- Timing

Contract/Legal

- PMSI and PPSA
- Bonding
- Payment advances

Communication and Community Engagement

- Weekly meetings and email updates
- Neighborhood
- Tenants
- Dedicate email and phone number

Lessons Learned - Development

Construction

- CSA approvals approval before site plan
- Tight space
- Surveys
- Two space at once
- Modified unit design

Financial and affordability

Drafting a budget – DCs, fees, permits
Surplus land or infill - helpful need more for deeper affordability
Time is money
Not 'cheaper' but faster

Planning

- Project team including City Councilor, building officials, contractor, Region
- Weekly meetings

Lessons Learned - Tenancy

Rent Up

- RGI Units
- Seniors
- Move In Dates
- Offers without viewings

Occupancy

- Tours & Open House
- Furniture
- Tenant Supports
- Deficiencies

Lessons Learned

What worked well?	What could be improved?
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• A commitment to collaboration contributed to the project's success• Being transparent and interactive with community• Good project planning made the process easier• Project and impacted tenants were prioritized	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• More preparatory work and a better regimented process• Novelty of the project created challenges• There is a need to increase community engagement in future projects• Zoning bylaws created challenges
Learning to carry forward	Questions and new ideas
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effective collaboration improves team effectiveness• Better documentation and planning is needed earlier to streamline process• Nature of build combined with bylaws made project complex• Provide more insight to community• Expression of Interests (EOI) provide alternative to Request for Proposals (RFP), but should be better differentiated from the contract	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Maximize affordability for tenants• Make information about modular builds available• Find ways to expedite the building process



billy

Scan to watch
a time-lapse
video





**Scan to watch
a virtual tour**







Questions and Answers

