

Town of Cochrane

Mayoral Directive to Staff MD-2025-07

TO RESEARCH AND CREATE HOUSING DEVELOPMENT REFORM

Under the Authority: *Part VI.1 (Special Powers and Duties of Head of Council)* of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, *Sections 284.3 & 284.4 (Direction to Employees)* the Mayor may direct Staff to:

- a) undertake research and provide advice to the head of council and the municipality on policies and programs of the municipality or of the head of council as they relate to the powers and duties under this Part; and
- b) carry out duties related to the exercise of the power or performance of the duty, including implementing any decisions made by the head of council under this Part.

DIRECTIVE: Advancing Cochrane as Northern Ontario's Most Housing-Friendly Community

As Mayor of Cochrane, Ontario, I am issuing a clear and resolute directive: Cochrane must become the most housing-friendly municipality in Northern Ontario. This transformation is essential to meet our evolving socio-economic development goals and to ensure a prosperous future for our residents.

To achieve this, we will take decisive action to streamline housing development processes, eliminate unnecessary regulatory barriers, incentivize responsible growth, and foster a culture of innovation, responsiveness, and unwavering customer service within Town Hall. We must fundamentally reframe how we approach housing—treating it not merely as infrastructure, but as a cornerstone of community well-being and future economic vitality.

Cochrane will pursue a bold, tailored strategy that addresses the unique housing challenges facing our town and region. This approach will be comprehensive, inclusive, and forward-looking—reflecting the full continuum of housing needs and integrating all facets of municipal planning and development.

Our objective is clear: to **position Cochrane, Ontario as the most housing and development friendly town in Northern Ontario.**

To realize this vision, we will consolidate a wide array of strategic initiatives, innovative policies, and legislative reforms aimed at accelerating development timelines and reshaping our housing framework. This is not incremental change—it is a transformative agenda that will define Cochrane's future.

Let's move forward together with purpose, unity, and ambition.

THE MAYOR DIRECTS AS FOLLOWS:

1. That the following five objectives be adopted by the Town and implemented in all housing development and municipal building direction and policy:
 - a. **Simplify The Regulatory Environment and Expedite Approvals Processes.**
 - b. **Evolve The Municipal Culture to Be Housing Development Friendly.**
 - c. **Introduce More Flexibility in Fees and Charges, And Incentivization.**
 - d. **Consolidate And Strengthen Capacity for Affordable Housing Development.**
 - e. **Effectively Market and Attract Interest in Housing Development.**

2. The municipality shall develop and present to the Mayor's Office a roadmap and implementation plan addressing the following matters. This research and plan will be proposed to the Mayor, who in turn will collaborate with municipal staff to provide guidance on its execution and oversee the preparation of any necessary by-law(s) for presentation to Council.

OBJECTIVE 1: Simplify the Regulatory Environment and Expedite Approvals Processes. Revise and reform local planning, policies and procedures, and develop and implement a plan that aims to reduce delays, increase design flexibility and lower costs for faster, more consistent outcomes. Among other directives, this includes action on:

- ✓ Secure delegation of planning authority from the province.
- ✓ Create an intuitive and user-friendly Dashboard on the Town website to portray and articulate key performance indicators in local housing development, including:
 - Housing Development Summary
 - Housing Development Application Summary.
 - Building Permit Application Summary
 - Application Timelines Reporting
- ✓ Reform policy and process in accordance with By-law 1525-2022 (Mandate and Directive).
- ✓ Simplify and speed up site plan control and place this in a by-law.
- ✓ Review, simplify, and reform design guidelines.
 - Establish a set of preset and preapproved designs that offer the most expeditious and simplest route to housing development.
- ✓ Create tree conservation and management guidelines.
- ✓ Create a development application monitoring and review policy.

OBJECTIVE 2: Evolve City Culture to Be Housing Development Friendly.

Addressing the current housing crisis calls for a fresh approach—one that embraces innovation, flexibility and partnership to meet the urgent needs of our growing community. The Municipality will develop and propose actions that will focus on:

- ✓ Simplifying application processes and waiving of application fees.
- ✓ Complete customer care and guidance to successful permit acquisition.
- ✓ Applying a risk-based, pragmatic approach to policies, minor deviations from engineering standards, and other technicalities based on past practices and encouraging housing development.
- ✓ Implementation of surveys and customer care tools to assess administrative performance, success, and failure rates.
- ✓ Reviewing and reforming the development approval process for various types of development.
- ✓ Streamlining planning review and approval.

- ✓ Performance bonus incentives.

OBJECTIVE 3: Introduce More Flexibility in Fees and Charges.

Rising costs of land, labor, materials and borrowing have created a significant challenge to delivering housing in the current market. These factors are adding strain on the housing market which is more sensitive to cyclical fluctuations than overall consumer spending. The municipality will explore, development, and propose a plan that will be premised on the following objectives:

- ✓ Deferral of Building Code fee increases for five years.
- ✓ Pausing Development Charges for a period of five years.
- ✓ Pausing rental unit development application fees for five years.
- ✓ Reforming rental unit development policies and procedure to facilitate aggressive rental unit development.
 - This includes a more development friendly plan for the downtown core.
- ✓ Full implementation of the property rebate CIP program.
 - Identify, create, and map out lots that qualify as \$10 lots for individuals.
 - Prepare shovel ready projects for developers to build subdivisions.
 - Include all phases and costs.
 - Include full cost benefit analysis.
- ✓ Securing provincial and federal funding for infrastructure development to promote these projects.
 - Develop a strategy to maximize this resource.

OBJECTIVE 4: Consolidate and Strengthen Capacity for Affordable Housing Development

The affordable housing sector is facing a multifaceted crisis. Specific actions are required to target and support the growth of affordable housing. Housing Development will focus on the following actions:

- ✓ Creating a 10-year housing roadmap for municipally owned lands, and to map out private lands that hold high housing development potential.
- ✓ Waiving planning and building permit fees for non-profit affordable housing projects.
- ✓ Enabling intensification and expansion on existing non-profit housing sites.
- ✓ Exploring ways to ensure long-term sustainability of the affordable housing sector.
- ✓ Build partnerships with other government services and private services to promote accelerated affordable housing development.

OBJECTIVE 5: Effectively Market and Attract Interest in Housing Development

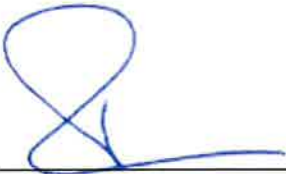
The Town will effectively invest in marketing and promoting the community housing development incentives, programs, and opportunities. This will include:

- ✓ Budgeting appropriately to help realize measurable annual growth.
 - ✓ Hire and deploy marketing expertise.
 - ✓ Leverage partnerships and piggy backing on other campaigns to create maximized exposure.
 - ✓ Developing a marketing and promotion strategy.
 - ✓ Aligning all municipal services with the marketing campaign and strategy.
3. That the municipality establish a think-tank or series of think-tanks to be held bringing together municipal services, governance, mayoral guidance, and housing developers to contemplate local strategies and options, based on this direction. That this direction be concluded within sixty days of the issuance of this directive.

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4. That a final strategy and gameplan implementing this direction be created and presented to the Mayor by December 31, 2025.
5. That the final strategy and gameplan above be presented to council on the first council meeting after December 31, 2025.

Executed this 21st day of November 2025 by:



Peter Politis
Mayor | Maire | Ogima

