

# Heart of Our City Housing Incentive Program

## Background

- The primary objective of this program is to create a more vibrant Downtown. To be vibrant, the city core needs lots of people, day and night. Housing brings that 24-hour activity to downtown streets and patrons to downtown businesses. The population growth associated with more housing leads to the development of more “value added” businesses, services and activities. The resultant effect is increased business, employment and entertainment opportunities which are hallmarks of a vibrant Downtown. With a more vibrant downtown, private investment should increase, leading to greater tax contributions. More people and activity Downtown also contributes to the feeling of being safe. This program is intended to create a minimum of 40 new dwelling units during the budget period.
- The Heart of Our City Housing Incentive Program (HOCHIP) is therefore intended to incentivize the creation of new market based housing units in Downtown Lethbridge which will, in turn, increase the downtown population and thereby increasing business, employment and entertainment opportunities.
- The Heart of Our City Master Plan recognized the importance of having a critical population mass to help sustain the vitality of the Downtown. To attract and retain Downtown residents, it is essential to re-establish elements which contribute to a neighbourhood feeling. This will involve enhancing downtown by providing the necessary housing, services and amenities to support Downtown living.
- This housing incentive program is intended to help offset the cost disadvantage between Downtown and sub-urban development sites. The approved operating budget allocation of \$1,600,000 will provide funding for up to 53 new dwelling units.

## Eligibility Criteria

It is the policy of the City of Lethbridge to financially assist qualified downtown property owners and investors to construct self-contained dwelling units in the Downtown Core according to the provisions of the Heart of Our City Housing Incentive Program policy.

In order to qualify for funding, a project shall meet the following criteria:

- Qualified projects shall be located within the Downtown Core Area;
- Projects shall consist of the construction of new self-contained residential dwelling units;
- Self-contained dwelling units may be created in new buildings or existing buildings provided that the incentive is only for additional new dwelling units;
- Renovations to dwelling units that were in existence prior to adoption of this policy are ineligible;
- Projects where rent or sale value is subsidized by any government entity, a non-profit organization or a cooperative are ineligible for this program;
- Funding will not be granted for projects which have commenced prior to being approved by the Grant Administrator; and
- Self-contained dwelling units must be townhouse or apartment units with a minimum area of 600 ft<sup>2</sup> (55.7m<sup>2</sup>) and an average area of 800 ft<sup>2</sup> (74.3m<sup>2</sup>) within the project.

**Awarding of Funding:**

- Project funding is limited to \$30,000 per new qualified dwelling unit;
- Applications will be placed in the queue upon receiving pre-approval of their initial and complete application by the Grant Administrator;
- Applications will be rejected if they do not adhere to established funding criteria;
- Should there be inadequate funding to meet demand, applications will be held in a queue and processed in chronological order of their submission date if additional funding becomes available;
- Self-contained residential dwelling units must be completed and in receipt of a City of Lethbridge Occupancy Permit;
- Residential dwelling units must not be in arrears in taxes, municipal utilities or any other municipal charge; and
- If any Development or Building Safety Code Permit lapses, project eligibility for funding will cease and will lose its place in the projects queue. A proponent may re-apply for the program but would have to re-qualify and re-queue.

**Applicant Requirements:**

- All applicants must have an ownership interest in the property on which the project is to be constructed;
- owners of eligible properties and/or their agents are required to meet with the Planning and Development Department for an assessment of project eligibility for funding; and
- All applicants must submit the appropriate application form for processing and approval including: a site plan; floor plans; and facade details; and
- allow the Planning and Development Department, along with the Grant Administrator, access to the completed site to conduct a final inspection of the construction project.

**Contact:****Further information on this program can be obtained as follows:**

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