

So what is Affordable Housing? Some people think it's low income housing. Others think it includes middle class housing or call it workforce housing. I like to think of it broadly, more what works for our community. Scarborough needs housing for everyone who contributes to our community and makes up our broad middle class.

Those of us of an older age still remember the struggle to make those rent or mortgage payments of early adulthood. I suspect many others feel the same and support Affordable Housing. That support has shown itself in the practices and policies the Town has followed. Let me explain two of the tools we have used to develop an effective program.

First, Scarbrough's 2006 Comprehensive Plan called for the strategic determination of neighborhoods that could accommodate affordable apartments, condos and compact clustered housing. For a decade after its 2006 adoption zoning reviews took place to accomplish these objectives. The result was to allow greater density in areas with sewer and water and exclude areas far removed from the center of town (primarily west of the highway). Reasonably priced apartment housing such as Carrier Woods off Mussey Road is an example of density zoning at work.

Second, the Town has nurtured relationships with the handful of developers in Greater Portland who specialize in Affordable Housing. It is a virtual certainty that developers need to access State and Federal grants and municipal support to justify building Affordable housing and it takes professional skill to maneuver through the grant and regulatory process. You commonly hear names such as Avesta (who built Southgate) and Bessey Commons (developed by Scarborough's own Cyndy Taylor). Both received funding support from the Town either through our Reserve Funds, TIF's, or both. The Town's relationship with Habitat for Humanity resulted in Habitat's largest and most successful building project in greater Portland located at Carpenter Court off Broadturn Road.

This is an important and complex topic that can be a lot to digest in one sitting. With that in mind, in the next edition of the newsletter I will talk about two more tools the Town uses to develop and promote affordable housing.