

For Information

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DATE: April 27, 2011

REPORT TITLE: **2011 AFFORDABLE HOUSING DESIGN GUIDELINES AND STANDARDS FOR FAMILY AND SENIOR APARTMENT BUILDINGS**

FROM: R. Kent Gillespie, Commissioner of Employee and Business Services  
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**OBJECTIVE**

To update Council on the 2011 Affordable Housing Design Guidelines and Standards (AHDGS), that will serve as the code of quality and performance for the design, construction and operations of all high rise Affordable Housing developments in Peel.

**REPORT HIGHLIGHTS**

- The 2011 AHDGS address all aspects of development from site selection, design and development, universal accessibility, construction and operation, ensuring that regulatory requirements and appropriate standards for quality, accessibility and sustainability are met.
- Financial implications are analyzed and balanced to maintain quality, functionality and affordability.
- The new document is more prescriptive than previous guidelines and it is intended to guide developers, consultants and builders in creating affordable, efficient, and functional housing that is also attractive.
- The intent of the AHDGS document is to approximate LEED (Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design) Silver criteria by Canadian Green Building Council (CaGBC) through knowledgeable content, material and site selections, with particular attention to the quality of the building envelope, without commitment to seek formal and costly LEED certification.
- The compilation of this document has been the result of consultation and collaboration among the Human Services department, the Employee and Business Services department and the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC).

**DISCUSSION****1. Background**

Region of Peel is known for its unique approach to building strong communities through mixing tenancies of various income levels, and its commitment to building sustainable and environmentally friendly developments. One of the main goals in building high rise apartment buildings is to provide quality housing that is affordable to low and moderate

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income families, seniors and persons with disabilities, as well as to provide management programs to ensure that new facilities are well maintained and complement their communities and the environment.

In order to achieve this goal, Region of Peel has developed design guidelines and standards which provide guidance and direction to developers, consultants and builders in creating efficient, functional, and long lasting housing that is also attractive. The 2011 AHDGS addresses all aspects of the project, from client program requirements, site selection, design and development, universal accessibility, construction and operation.

### **a) History**

In the early 1980's the design requirements for affordable housing were provided through a specification document known as the "Technical Guide for Family Housing" published by the Provincial Government. It provided program and technical data necessary to ensure quality and performance while maintaining affordability under the Ministry's maximum unit pricing model (MUP).

In 1995, the Government terminated funding for new construction affordable housing starts and the industry slid into dormancy for the next six years. The last publication of the Ministry's Technical Guide for Family Housing was rev 9 -1992.

In early 2001, the Region's housing department undertook a significantly unique turn-key opportunity to build a senior's/efficiency apartment without any funding support from senior levels of government. To achieve this, the Region in collaboration with the builder developed a new technical guideline to inform the design and quality with a significant focus on affordability and cost efficiency. On the merits of this guideline, Millbrook Place was built and became a catalyst for the development of new affordable housing construction starts.

In 2003/2004, with renewed funding support from the Province, the Affordable Housing Design Guidelines were revised to better reflect industry movement toward functional program and sustainable development practices. These guidelines were more elaborative and subjective attempting to attract a wider interest from developers and builders by encouraging maximum flexibility in the product expectation. During the early resurgence of the housing platform this document proved to be sufficient, however, as the housing program began to gain traction and mature in the general housing market it was apparent that a more prescriptive document would be required.

In 2007, the Region's staff revisited the Affordable Housing Design Guidelines focusing on quality of product, energy efficiency, environmental fit, life safety, accessibility and sustainability. Again the industry was moving quickly toward new construction concepts related to technological advances in materials and component assembly, which were mostly in response to societal awareness related to energy and the environment.

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Today, with the recent publication of the 2011 AHDGS the Region has produced a most comprehensive, coordinated and collaborative version of the document. It captures functional housing program, life safety requirements, water conservation, energy consumption reduction measures, air quality improvements, environmental integration, urban fit, sustainable design, universal accessibility, building envelop performance, maintenance and operational performance considerations all within the umbrella of financial accountability targeted at a cost/revenue neutral expectation. Several municipal housing providers have expressed interest to utilize this document pursuant to a greater collaboration and standardization within the industry. The Ontario government has recently expressed an interest to highlight the AHDGS in a handbook for planning tools related to affordable housing.

### **2. Objectives of the AHDGS**

The objectives of the Affordable Housing Design Guidelines and Standards are to ensure that all new housing developments in Peel are consistent with good social and industry practices. Financial implications are analyzed and balanced to render high quality livable space, required amenity, durable finishes, ease of maintenance, and universal accessibility that meet the current and future needs of tenants and owners with respect to affordability.

The intent of the AHDGS document is to approximate LEED Silver criteria by CaGBC through knowledgeable content and material selections, with particular attention to the quality of the building envelope, without commitment to seek formal costly LEED certification.

The AHDGS covers site selection, materials, physical components and systems that comprise buildings, landscapes and infrastructure. The level of quality deemed by these Guidelines is determined on the basis of achievement of the above noted objectives regarding: affordability, facility functionality, universal accessibility, quality performance, life safety, energy efficiency, sustainability and life-cycle cost.

This document is to be read in conjunction with other guidelines and standards such as, the most recent Region's Universal Accessibility Standards for Affordable Residential Housing, as well as, the most recent Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED), all municipal, provincial and federal codes, all requirements of Authorities Having Jurisdiction (AHJ) and any other document or report listed throughout the AHDGS.

### **3. Financial Feasibility**

The AHDGS document addresses the requirements of high density development related to high rise apartment buildings for family or seniors located in urban centers with very strict and/or particular requirements for land development. Many factors contribute to cost implications for typical housing models in this group. For example: building type, open space, site coverage (GFA), land cost and "build readiness", air quality considerations, noise impact adjustments, environmental impact, site access and site services all have significant impact in the overall total cost of the development, and as a result, vary dramatically from project to project.

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Each development has its own unique program requirements that also impact on cost, such as: design elements to meet site conditions, required number of units, unit sizes, unit mix, parking needs, accessibility requirements, universal accessibility, amenity spaces, program requirements and community space. In addition, objectives related to energy conservation, water and waste management, reduction of green house gases and minimizing carbon footprints are also significant contributors to cost impact. With all this in mind, staff must analyze and balanced all these elements in order to maintain a product that ensures quality, functionality and affordability.

The AHDGS have been created on the basis that for most developments, the project will be financially feasible. Capital and operating costs will be supported through rents and, where applicable Service Manager subsidies, so that the development will be sustainable financially. However, because of the variable factors noted above, each proposed development must be assessed to ensure financial feasibility.

Where new standards are created, whether through building codes or standards such as the AHDGS, they can alter the financial balance of projects by creating temporary cost increases. These cost increases are usually mitigated as the industry adopts the changes and often what at first is considered to be a significant cost impact soon dissipates over a short period of time as the market comes to terms with the changes. The AHDGS informs design to the extent that it improves operational cost models which can improve financial returns and mitigate cost fluctuations associated with unique site and development conditions.

Historically new high rise development proposals must be in the range of approximately 200 units and limited to two levels of underground parking with a unit mix of two and three bedrooms for family buildings, and one and two bedroom units for seniors' buildings to be cost effective and viable in today's market. The economy of scale for this size of project produces the optimum operational returns in terms of financial viability. Larger unit sizes, four and five bedroom units, can drive the per unit cost substantially upward and are only in limited amounts in high rise buildings or in lower density ground oriented developments. Provisions for community amenity spaces in our buildings help support the integration of service delivery among human service agencies, and community engagement, however these spaces are not addressed in the AHDGS and must be considered on the financial merits of each proposal.

#### **4. Accessibility**

Accessibility elements within the AHDGS have been aligned with the AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act) for all new high rise residential apartments. New buildings are designed with universal accessibility throughout the facility. Further accessibility features are incorporated in all common areas, corridors and public washrooms. In addition, automatic door operators are provided at all common/public access areas.

Many universal accessibility features in the AHDGS are programmed to be provided for all new construction projects avoiding significant retrofit cost should they be installed at a later date. Notwithstanding this, there are still up-front costs associated with space/area increases and "fit-out" requirements associated with the accessibility component of the AHDGS. As the market adopts Accessibility requirements as common industry practice, the cost of such initiatives will be typical to all market projects.

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### 5. Document Development and Review Process

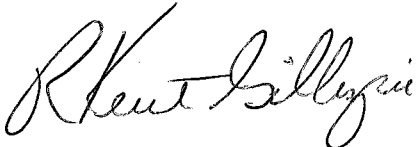
The compilation of the AHDGS document has been the result of consultation and collaboration with staff from the Human Services department, the Employee and Business Services department and the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC).

The AHDGS is a living document and must be continually managed to address legislative and regulatory changes, new design developments, technology advances, infrastructure changes, corporate initiatives and societal and program adjustments. Given the frequency and rate of industry change, annual publication is required to ensure the document remains valid and vital to the promotion of affordable housing in our community.

### CONCLUSION

The AHDGS is quickly becoming an important tool for the development of affordable housing in Peel and surrounding communities. It is a body of work that captures the collective knowledge and expertise throughout the various Regional departments and serves as an example of coordinated collaboration between Regional departments. The processes and controls that have been developed ensure transparent and accountable management while addressing the growing community needs for pragmatic solutions to affordable shelter and life requirements for the residents of Peel.

The document illustrates the leadership strengths in the housing industry and the desire of the Region of Peel to be partners with all housing stakeholders. Access to the document will be provided digitally on the Region's external website [www.peelregion.ca](http://www.peelregion.ca) and [peelbuilds.ca](http://peelbuilds.ca). Because of the size, hard copies will be printed for limited distribution only.



R. Kent Gillespie, Commissioner of Employee and Business Services



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### Approved for Submission:



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