



## Town of Huntsville Staff Report

**Meeting Date:** June 25, 2025

**To:** General Committee

**Report Number:** DEV-2025-73

**Confidential:** No

**Author(s):** Amanda Ferrante, Kirstin Maxwell,

**Subject:** Pre-approved Secondary Residential Dwelling Unit Plans

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### Report Highlights

This report provides an overview of a program to provide pre-approved secondary residential dwelling unit (SRDU) permit drawings to the public from different qualified designers and premanufactured homes.

### Recommendation

**IT IS RECOMMENDED THAT:** Committee approve the Secondary Residential Unit Pre-Approved Permit Pilot program to procure building permit drawings as detailed within Report DEV-2025-73

**AND FURTHER THAT:** Funding for the initial cost of the drawings be budgeted at no more than \$100,000 and be funded through the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) Reserve.

### Background

At the General Committee meeting on March 26, Council approved the implementation of a [Housing Action Plan](#). Item #4 specifically spoke to establishing a program for the provision of pre-approved building permit drawings for SRDUs. Item #3 involves designing a marketing campaign to raise awareness of opportunities to construct SRDUs.

### Discussion

#### How other areas operate

Several municipalities have recently adopted a platform aimed at simplifying the process of home construction by offering pre-approved home designs and building permit drawings. These municipalities proactively reached out to designers and pre-manufactured home companies to curate a range of designs in various sizes. Once launched, the municipalities chose not to act as intermediaries. Instead, homeowners are expected to drive their projects forward independently. The selected home designs are highlighted on municipal websites, allowing residents to view and choose

from the available options. However, engagement with these platforms has been limited. One municipality we contacted reported only a handful of inquiries over the past 18 months. They acknowledged that while the platform functions as a marketing tool—a design catalog of sorts—its effectiveness has been minimal, potentially due to limited promotion or unclear user pathways. Their focus has been primarily on aggregating designs and prefabricated models, without providing additional services or support. Based on these observations, we believe there is significant opportunity to build on this foundation and offer a more comprehensive solution.

### **Huntsville Pilot Project**

To truly make the process more accessible and effective for homeowners, we propose offering a complete start-to-finish package that includes not only pre-approved designs but also all necessary building permit documentation. This approach removes many of the technical and bureaucratic barriers that often discourage homeowners from pursuing construction projects. This package would include full permit drawings, namely: elevations, structural, heating, plumbing, and electrical details.

By providing a full permit package, we can:

- **Reduce Friction:** Simplify the process for homeowners by removing the need to coordinate with multiple stakeholders.
- **Boost Adoption:** Make participation in the program more appealing by offering a turnkey solution.
- **Ensure Quality and Consistency:** Standardize design and documentation across all projects.
- **Support Designers and Manufacturers:** Offer royalties or licensing fees for each package sold, creating a sustainable business model for contributors.

This model transforms the platform from a passive catalog into an active tool for housing development—one that is genuinely accessible, efficient, and user-friendly. If our goal is to increase housing options and empower homeowners, offering a complete permit-ready package is the most effective path forward.

As a homeowner looking to utilize one of these packages, we would offer assistance with Community Planning Permit By-law (CPPBL) compliance, site plan requirements, and cloudpermit submission to ensure that the homeowner had as much assistance as could be feasibly provided in order to assist with the development of the SRDU.

There are many benefits to pursuing this type of program.

**For Homeowners:** No guesswork, less red tape—just choose a design and build. This approach simplifies the decision process and expedites building permit approval timelines.

**For Municipality:** Higher engagement, faster permit approvals, and meaningful progress toward housing goals.

**For Designers/Manufacturers:** A new revenue stream and visibility in growing markets.

### **Procurement**

Staff intend to procure the drawings from qualified designers through an appropriate procurement process. Staff would review the submissions based on OBC compliance, accessibility, and affordability to build. The Town would purchase the building plans, and then each use of the plan by a homeowner would require the payment of a royalty fee to the designer, as use of their plans requires the designer to assume responsibility under the OBC. The designer will be required to sign a Memorandum of Understanding with the municipality regarding the use of the designs and acknowledging that a royalty fee would be paid per use by the homeowner.

It is anticipated that the cost per use of the designs to the designer should be based on a percentage of overall cost to the municipality. (ie design costs are \$10,000 we would charge the homeowner \$1,000 for their use, which would be paid back to the designer). Through discussions on approach with some local designers, it was felt that this is an appropriate amount and method to ensure that the designer's liability is appropriately covered.

If Council felt that there should be a proportionate cost for the use of the building designs staff would suggest that each package include an additional amount to offset the costs of the original drawing procurement. At this time staff are proposing that the initial cost of the drawings be funded fully at the Town's expense, with only the royalty/usage fee being paid by the homeowner. This approach would save a homeowner anywhere from \$6,000 - \$10,000 per design.

## **Marketing**

This program will be advertised and promoted through our website, a media release and social media channels. The intent will be to boost public awareness of the opportunity for SRDUs. It is anticipated that the marketing component of this project would launch in 2026 and \$5000 should be earmarked for the initial launch. This could also include graphic renderings of the designs and print, digital and radio promotion.

## **Designs**

To simplify and provide a range of options for both homeowners and designers, we propose to obtain at least two (2) options of three (3) types of designs. The options would include ranges of square footage tiers of 250-400 sq ft, 600-800 sq ft, and 600-800 sq ft above a garage, based on two key considerations:

- **Tiny Home Alignment:** The 250 sq ft size aligns with the minimum standard for a tiny home—suitable for compact living while meeting essential code requirements. This size helps support affordability and sustainability goals while offering viable living space for one person.
- **CPPBL Compliance and Flexibility:** The CPP by-law regulations for SRDUs sets limits on the maximum allowable square footage. By offering a progression (250-400, 600-800 sq ft), we create a flexible range of unit sizes that remain within compliance and suit different household types or site constraints. 800 sq ft represents the upper limit allowed under the CPPBL, maximizing space utility while staying within legal parameters and maintaining affordability.

These sizes are designed to work for both standalone secondary residential dwelling units (SRDUs) and units built above garages, allowing property owners flexibility in design and construction based on lot size, use-case, and budget.

## **Design Options per Square Footage Tier**

To balance variety and manageability, we propose obtaining two distinct design options for each square footage tier (250-400 and 600-800 sq ft and 600-800 sq ft above a garage). This approach ensures:

- **Adequate Choice:** Prospective homeowners and developers can select from multiple configurations that suit different lifestyles, site conditions, and aesthetic preferences.
- **Design Quality:** Limiting the number of designs allows for more focused refinement and higher-quality solutions rather than spreading resources too thin across many options.
- **Practical Feasibility:** The total number of designs remains practical for project management, construction feasibility studies, and budget considerations.
- **Flexibility Based on Designer Interest:** The final number of designs may be adjusted slightly depending on the level of engagement and capacity from interested architects and designers.

This strategy ensures a well-curated portfolio of SRDU/tiny home designs that meets diverse needs while maintaining project clarity and efficiency.

### **Affordability**

As these units are SRDUs, no development charges apply. Building permit costs for the structures are based on \$11/\$1,000 of construction value, with a minimum fee of \$150.00. It is anticipated that the range of price for a building permit would therefore be anywhere from \$1,925.00 to upwards of \$4,400.00. Staff would work with the homeowners to try and ensure that the proposed SRDUs would be located in CPPBL compliant areas on a lot, to expedite approvals and reduce costs for variations/amendments. In addition, if they meet the requirements of the Affordable Housing Policy then there would be opportunity for rebates for building permit fees. Staff have not included any further reductions, as the largest cost associated with the procurement of the structural drawings will be borne by the municipality.

As part of the Housing Action Plan Council agreed that staff should also investigate a similar process for Duplex and Semi-Detached dwellings. At this time, staff would like to move forward with only the SRDU program, review its usage and determine its effectiveness prior to investing additional resources in other forms of development.

### **Options**

1. Committee approve the program as proposed (**recommended**)
2. Committee could direct staff to not implement any of the proposed action items (**not recommended**)
3. Committee could direct staff to implement a program that mirrors that of other municipalities (**not recommended**)
4. Committee could direct staff to investigate other options and report back (**not recommended**)

### **Operational**

Funding to implement this program and purchase drawings is anticipated to be no more than \$100,000 and be funded through the Municipal Accommodation Tax (MAT) Reserve. It is anticipated that existing staff resources will be sufficient to manage the implementation of this program, however, there may be some delays with other projects if Council deems this to be the priority.

Based on forecasted revenues and projects funded by the MAT, it is expected the ending balance of this reserve will be \$275,027 at the end of 2025, including the \$100,000 proposed in this report.

### **Relevant Policies / Legislation / Resolutions**

[Housing Needs Assessment](#)

[Housing Action Plan](#)

Town of Huntsville Official Plan

Community Planning Permit By-law 2022-97, as amended

Building Code Act, 1992, S.O. 1992, c. 23

2024 Ontario Building Code

GC35-25

**Council Strategic Direction**

- Balanced Growth-1.1: Review planning legislation and policies to support flexibility and optimize land use, including in rural areas, to address different community needs.
- Balanced Growth-2.1: Develop a Housing Action Plan to identify solutions to meet the Town's market rental and ownership needs as identified through a Needs Assessment to be conducted in conjunction with the District of Muskoka.
- Balanced Growth-2.2: Collaborate with the District, other levels of government and community partners to create attainable housing options and effectively communicate their programs to Huntsville residents.

**Consultations**

Marie Turner, Legal and Agreements Coordinator  
Alicia Horne, Procurement and Risk Management Coordinator  
Lisa Spolnik, Manager of Marketing

**Respectfully Submitted:** Amanda Ferrante, Kirstin Maxwell,

**Manager Approval (if required):** \_\_\_\_\_

**Director Approval:** \_\_\_\_\_

**CAO Approval:** Denise Corry, Chief Administrative Officer