



Westwinds
Communities



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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D'Arcy Affordable Housing project officially launches

OKOTOKS, AB: The Town and its partners, Westwinds Communities (WC) and the Brenda Stafford Society for the Prevention of Domestic Violence (BSS), are pleased to announce that today marked the official launch of the D'Arcy Affordable Housing project. The project, which will help boost local economies by increasing the purchasing power of residents and by attracting employers with the promise of a stable workforce, will be built in the newly developed D'Arcy neighbourhood.

"Okotoks Town Council and administration are very proud to be a part of this long-awaited project. Adding more purpose-built rental units in Okotoks will fill a gap that has existed for years. The project aligns with Council's strategic priorities, specifically to manage community growth and strengthen a healthy and safe community. Providing affordable and diverse housing options in our community will fit our residents' needs at every age and stage of their lives," said Deputy Mayor Florence Christophers.

This project also reflects the recommendations in the Affordable Housing Strategy to maintain and establish new partnerships that will get affordable housing built. The strategy, developed by the volunteer Affordable Housing Taskforce, was approved by Council in September 2020.

Westwinds Communities, is a not-for-profit organization that provides quality housing and supportive services for seniors, as well as subsidized housing and services for individuals and families. Westwinds has been the largest provider of affordable housing options in the Foothills Region since 1960. Today, they serve more than 550 households across 15 communities, helping people to put down roots, build social supports, and make meaningful contributions that strengthen their families and community.

"We feel privileged to work alongside the Town of Okotoks and Brenda Stafford Society to enhance the spectrum of affordable housing," says Lauren Ingalls, Chief Administrative Officer, Westwinds Communities. "This is a critical piece in fostering inclusive communities, and we're looking forward to engaging with the community on this exciting development."

Westwinds is planning to build 52 below-market rental units in two buildings, which will be completed in two phases. Their units will provide housing primarily for families, couples, roommates and seniors who are currently on housing waitlists in addition to a housing program for youth. The first phase of construction includes 20 units and the second phase provides an additional 32 units, in a stacked townhouse development.

The Brenda Stafford Society, registered charitable organization, provides safe housing and comprehensive support services for women and children impacted by family violence. Providing local services that will sustain natural connections and allow families to remain in their community helps ensure futures free from abuse. BSS is excited to be a part of this partnership and to help advance the Town of Okotoks' commitment to fostering a healthy and safe community.

The BSS proposes to build 42 supportive housing units with common amenity spaces and in-house services for women and families impacted by domestic violence. The development will closely mirror the Society's Calgary-based model of service and housing that has successfully supported women and families in their transition to independence for the past 25 years.

An additional acre is available to develop 44 market-rate rental units, which could potentially be owned and operated by a private builder. The Town will recoup a portion of the cost for the land through this development.

The vision of this project is to create a complete and welcoming community for all. By aligning with the Town's new Municipal Development Plan and Land Use Bylaw, and through this partnership and future relationships, long-term affordable housing will be supported, resulting in diverse neighbourhoods and an inclusive community. It will enable Okotoks residents to remain in the community throughout their lives as they transition through the continuum of their housing needs.

During the regular meeting on May 10, Town Council approved a motion to transfer approximately 2 acres in the D'Arcy neighbourhood to WC and BSS to advance affordable housing options in Okotoks.

The Town has contributed the land and WC and BSS will assume all costs for site development, permitting and construction costs for their portions of the site. Site development is expected to be completed in 2021, with construction beginning in fall, 2022.

For more information about the project and affordable housing in Okotoks, visit www.okotoks.ca/affordable-housing.

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D'Arcy Affordable Housing Q & A

1. Why is the Town providing land for this development?

Adding more purpose-built rental units in Okotoks will fill a gap that has existed for years. This aligns with Council's strategic priority to provide affordable housing and diverse housing choices to fit all of our residents needs at every age and stage of their lives. It also reflects the recommendations in the Affordable Housing Strategy to maintain and establish new partnerships that will get affordable housing built. The Strategy was developed by the Affordable Housing Taskforce, which was composed of volunteer community members.

2. Why was this location selected for affordable housing?

This property is zoned Neighbourhood Core District (NC) under the Town's Land Use Bylaw and dwelling units are listed as a permitted use in this district. The proposed development for the site is aligned with the intent of the NC district to provide for a variety of housing options where dwellings are primarily attached and multi-unit dwellings.

The Location is excellent with access to the D'Arcy pathway system, local schools, shopping and downtown amenities ensuring the residents can be an active part of the local community.

The Town and development partners look forward to engaging with the community to discuss this development.

3. What will the buildings look like?

Detailed design of the buildings has not yet commenced; however, development of the site will be subject to the architectural controls for the D'Arcy neighbourhood and design standards in the Land Use Bylaw. Through the development permitting process, the layout and design of the buildings will be evaluated to ensure they are integrated with the surrounding community and align with the architectural controls.

Westwinds Communities anticipates building stacked townhouses with balconies on the upper units. We will be sharing conceptual designs for feedback from the community, along with other development details as we proceed.

4. Who will be responsible for the development and building permits?

Both Westwinds Communities and Brenda Stafford Society will assume all costs for site development, permitting and construction costs for their portions of the site.

5. What is application and approval process?

The Land Use Bylaw stipulates the rules of development that must be followed. Development proposals will be reviewed by the Development Authority and the development partners will share information on the site's design and building architecture with the public.

6. When will construction begin?

Westwinds Communities has been exploring land opportunities in Okotoks for affordable housing over the past six years. With this designation of 1 acre, we can now begin site design and seek funding from provincial and federal governments for the eventual

construction. Westwinds is dependent on government grants to advance both projects. Our goal is to complete phase one of the first 20 units in 2023.

As the newest partner in this development partnership, The Brenda Stafford Society is in early stages of securing seed funding to support servicing and design costs. This will position The BSS to be eligible for capital grants to advance construction. Our goal is to raise funds to begin construction in late 2022 – early 2023.

7. Who will be eligible to live in the units? How can you apply for a unit?

Westwinds Communities provides housing to low and moderate income households. We are pleased to say families, singles, couples, roommates and seniors will all be eligible for consideration. We anticipate two of the units in phase one to be completely barrier-free, for those seeking affordable housing.

Qualifying applicant households will have assets less than \$60,000 and an annual combined household income below \$46,000. Westwinds will start taking applications when construction commences.

The BSS serves women and children impacted by family violence. This includes single women (ages 18+) and women (ages 18+) with child dependents. Residents will receive affordable housing complimented by in house wrap around supports designed to support each family to transition to successful independence in the community. Supports include counselling, case management, child and youth development, respite care, employment prep, and life skills training. Potential residents may be referred from a women's emergency shelter, a community agency, a church, a family member/friend. We also accept self-referrals. Intake is based on availability and alignment with applicant needs. Intake is ongoing with no deadlines or application periods. Length of stay is up to 24 months. Applications may be submitted by contacting The BSS directly by phone or email.

8. What will it cost to live here?

Westwinds Communities rental rates aim to be 20% below typical market rental costs in Okotoks. Projected rental rates are anticipated to be in the range of \$900 to \$1,100 per month - plus utilities. Lower income households may also apply for the rental assistance benefit to further reduce the monthly rent, though availability will be based on provincial funding and the program waitlist.

The BSS - Rent is based on income and capped at 30% max of gross income. This will vary for each resident dependent on income source.

9. Who is building the market rental units?

The Town will list the market-housing site for sale and negotiate its purchase with interested builder partners. All costs for this portion of the site will be covered by the developer and this will provide an opportunity for the Town to recoup a portion of the land and development costs for this property.

10. When will the market rental units be built?

This will be determined once a sale to a private sector builder has been completed.

11. Who will manage the properties once they are built?

Shared on-site management will be arranged for snow clearing, landscape maintenance, parking lot maintenance, and other site matters between the two non-profit organization partners - and would not require Town involvement.