

D'Arcy Affordable Housing Development Project Frequently Asked Questions

Q: Why did the Town embark on an affordable housing project?

A: 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.

This project 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 Okotoks Town Council in September 2020.

Q: When did the Town purchase land for an affordable housing project?

A: December, 2019

Q: Where is the affordable housing project located?

A: The D'Arcy neighbourhood. This image below shows general building placement and access (there will be three accesses that will connect this development to the street network; two accesses on Sage Way and one to Willow Crescent in a loop).



Q: Why was this location selected for affordable housing?

A: 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.

Q: How much did the land cost?

A: \$2.6 million dollars.

Q: When did the project launch?

A: September, 2021

Q: Who is the Town partnering with on this project and what are their plans for the development?

A: Westwinds Communities, Brenda Strafford Society and a private sector market housing developer.

Westwinds Communities

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.

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.

Brenda Strafford Society

The Brenda Strafford Society, registered charitable organization, provides safe housing and comprehensive support services for women and children impacted by family violence.

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.

Private Sector Developer

The approximately 0.9 acre site along Willow Crescent has been conditionally sold to a private sector developer who builds predominantly stacked townhouses. The purchaser is currently working with the Development Authority on site design and approvals.

Q: How many buildings will make up the D'Arcy affordable housing development?

A: There will be four separate buildings on site managed by three separate ownership groups. Like all Town developments, this one in D'Arcy will have to meet developer architectural guidelines and Town bylaw requirements.

Q: What will the buildings look like?

A: 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.

Q: Who will be responsible for the development and building permits?

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

Q: 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.

Q: When will construction begin?

A: Westwinds Communities has been exploring land opportunities in Okotoks for affordable housing over the past six years. With this designation of 1 acre, site design and seeking funding from provincial and federal governments for the eventual construction can begin. Westwinds is dependent on government grants to advance both projects. The goal is to complete phase one of the first 20 units in 2023.

The Brenda Stafford Society is in the early stages of securing seed funding to support servicing design costs. This will position them to be eligible for capital grants to advance construction. The goal is to raise funds to begin construction in early 2023.

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

A: Westwinds Communities provides housing to low and moderate income households; 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. Learn more by contacting them directly at: 403-652-8600 or visiting <https://www.westwindscommunities.ca/>.

The Brenda Stafford Society 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 Brenda Stafford Society. Contact them directly by emailing centre@brendastraffordsociety.org or calling [403-270-7240](tel:403-270-7240). Learn more by visiting <https://brendastraffordsociety.com/>.

Q: What will it cost to live here?

A: 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 Brenda Strafford Society rent is based on income and capped at 30% max of gross income. This will vary for each resident dependent on income source.

Q: What is happening with the 1 remaining acre of the 3.3 acre project site that is currently for sale?

A: This space has been conditionally sold to a developer for market-rate rental units, which would be owned and operated by a private builder. The sale of this property will allow for market housing to seamlessly integrate with the surrounding neighbourhood and also give the Town a return on its initial investments into affordable housing.

Q: Who is building the market rental units?

A: The Town has a conditionally approved purchase and sale agreement with a Calgary-based builder. 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.

Q: When will the market rental units be built?

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

Q: 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 nonprofit organization partners - and would not require Town involvement.

Q: What work is currently happening on the project site?

A: Work will include infilling, installing underground services and road/laneway paving; please expect traffic delays and detours along Sandstone Gate and temporary road closure of Sage Way.