

Non-profits get three homes in Waterloo Region's affordable housing lottery



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Wed., Dec. 23, 2020 | 2 min. read

Article was updated 16 hrs ago



KITCHENER — The Region of Waterloo has given away three surplus properties it owns to create more affordable housing.

Two of the properties, at 32 and 34 Mill St., will go to the KW Urban Native Wigwam Project, and 24 Mill St. will go to MennoHomes. The homes will be occupied within six months.

The three sites in Kitchener are relatively modest, with street frontages of about 40 feet. Each lot contains a two-storey detached house of three or four bedrooms.

It's the first time the region held a lottery rather than selling property it doesn't need. Staff called it "a novel approach that provides a fair and open opportunity" for housing non-profits to acquire property. The region got three submissions, and would definitely consider holding other lotteries in future, said spokesperson TJ Flynn.

“This is a little bit of hope for the Indigenous community and will be an amazing home for someone very soon,” said Lee Ann Hundt, the housing administrator at KW Urban Native Wigwam Project. “This is wonderful news that will hopefully be the start of many great opportunities for KW Urban Native Wigwam Project, moving into 2021.”

MennoHomes will be renovating the house at 24 Mill.

“We are thrilled to have this opportunity to restore some family housing in downtown Kitchener,” said Dan Driedger, executive director at MennoHomes. “MennoHomes is always looking for creative partnerships. ... It was a unique opportunity that we are very excited about.”

Mennonite Disaster Service will co-ordinating volunteers and overseeing the renovation at 24 Mill, Driedger said.

“The house isn’t large but is a three-bedroom home with a yard so will be well suited to a family,” he said. “We will be working to have the renovations completed and a family able to call it their home in early summer 2021.”

“The Region of Waterloo is taking advantage of every opportunity we have to generate affordable housing,” said regional Chair Karen Redman. “Donating surplus lands is part of our 10-year housing and homelessness plan and going forward it will be an investment strategy that can generate hundreds of affordable homes each year.”

The lottery was open to non-profit housing groups that already provide affordable housing in Waterloo Region, and could show they have the experience, expertise and funds to manage the homes as affordable rental units.

The region covered the estimated \$6,000 legal costs to transfer the properties to new owners.

To ensure the sites remain as affordable housing, the region will register restrictive covenants on title, requiring that the houses be used as affordable rental housing for at least 25 years. The region will also have the option to buy back the properties for a nominal fee if they’re vacant for more than six months, if they aren’t used for affordable housing or if the non-profit tries to sell the property to a third party.



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