

At a recent Committee meeting, Councillor Chapman said that we have nothing to lose by implementing inclusionary zoning now because *“if developers are not going to build, then fine, but if they are, we’ll get some affordable units.”* Aside from the fact that this assertion seems to ignore whether proformas and feasibility are impacted, it seems to me that a lot of staff time has been dedicated to a program that, at best, will create less than 10 attainable units next year, according to staff.

I think in many ways, Kitchener is doing important work on finding ways to incentivize more of the housing (especially affordable, supportive, and co-operative) that we want to see, even though, affordable housing is not traditionally a municipal responsibility. I am far more excited about the potential of programs like the housing grants for not-for-profit affordable rental and co-op housing, the rental replacement bylaw, and the property tax exemption to support affordable housing, as well as providing city land to create affordable housing. These programs have the power to make a real long-term impact on creating affordable housing in our community. I’d also encourage Kitchener to follow the lead of Toronto and Waterloo in looking at a multi-unit rental acquisition program.

While I think there is value to staff introducing both the Growing Together plan and Inclusionary Zoning together, I also understand staff’s concerns that given current market volatility, delaying inclusionary zoning for a short period may be sensible. Again, to respond to Councillor Chapman’s suggestion that there’s no harm in pursuing this now, I think that two real risks are that some projects may no longer ‘pencil out’ and won’t get built, impacting overall housing supply, and/or housing projects will relocate to outside of the IZ area or build just under the IZ requirements (where we end up with many 49 unit buildings, instead of 50+ units).

Perhaps, a compromise could be that the IZ program is delayed for a short time but when it’s implemented, it’s still implemented at the proposed rate (i.e., still increasing the set aside rate in 2027 as currently planned).

In general, though, I support staff’s direction on this issue and encourage Council to support it as well.

Melissa Bauman