

City of Prince George: Housing Strategy Framework



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Prepared by:

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Availability

Copies of this project report have been provided to the City of Prince George. They may also be accessed through the UNBC Community Development Institute's website at:

<http://unbc.ca/community-development-institute/research-projects>

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1. Executive Summary

The Community Development Institute (CDI), working with the City of Prince George has developed two complementary reports, the City of Prince George Housing Strategy Framework and the City of Prince George Housing Need and Demand Study.

This report, the City of Prince George Housing Strategy Framework, was developed to provide a tool that the City can use to collect, organize, and understand information and data that can help inform the development of housing strategies. It is also intended to be a tool that the City can use to monitor the implementation and impact of housing strategies over time and make decisions about housing development.

Furthermore, based on the results of the research conducted for the City of Prince George Housing Need and Demand Study, the City of Prince George Housing Strategy Framework also includes a framework for strategies regarding housing development, including the identification of specific market needs, neighbourhood development, and the establishment of a platform for ongoing dialogue, innovation, and partnership development in implementing the housing strategy.

With regard to collecting and organizing information and data that can help inform the development, implementation, and impact of housing strategies, the research identified a number of indicators that should be monitored on an annual basis. They are:

- Population
 1. Age
 2. Household size
 3. Household income
 4. Population by neighbourhood study area (as defined in the City of Prince George Housing Need and Demand Study)

- Housing Stock:
 1. Number of homeownership dwellings, by type and location
 2. Number of rental dwelling units, by type and location
 3. Number of visitable housing units
 4. Number of adaptable housing units
 5. Number of houses in need of major repair

- New Construction and Densification:
 1. Number of new residential dwellings and their location
 2. Number of multi-family dwellings and their location
 3. Number of new narrow lot housing units and their location

4. Number of new secondary suites and their location
 5. Number and rate of residential demolitions and their location
- Renovation:
 1. Number of renovation permits issued for single-family residential dwellings
 2. Number of renovation permits issues for multi-family dwellings
 - Housing diversity:
 1. Monitor the implementation of neighbourhood plans with regard to achieving the ratios established for single-family dwellings, duplexes, and multi-family housing (City of Prince George 2013b)
 - Affordable housing:
 1. Rental rates for apartments and townhouses
 2. Rental vacancy rates
 3. Allowable annual rent increases
 4. Number of manufactured home parks
 5. Number of manufactured homes
 6. Number of strata title apartments, townhouses, single-family houses, and duplexes not receiving the Home Owner Grant
 7. Number of renter households in core need
 8. Ratio of owners to renters
 9. Number of homeless people
 10. Waiting lists for subsidized housing
 - Urban infrastructure and asset management:
 1. Link the geographic distribution of change with existing asset inventory data by recording and reporting annually on increases/decreases in assets requiring ongoing repair and maintenance (City of Prince George 2012a):
 - Roads and sidewalks (km)
 - Bridges and underpasses (numbers)
 - Water system (km of main and number of services)
 - Sanitary system (km of main and number of services)
 - Storm drainage system (km of main and number of services)
 - Utility facilities (number of water, sewer, and storm facilities)
 - Street lights and signals (lights and signalized intersections)
 - Parks, trails, and cemetery (hectares of highly developed park, natural park, green space, and undeveloped park)
 2. Build on existing service data by recording and reporting annually on increases in services provided on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis for:

- Public transit (kms of service extensions, changes in ridership levels, and potential demands)
- Custom transit (km of service extensions and changes in ridership)

With regard to the housing development, the research for this project suggests that housing strategies should support the following directions:

- Limit development in areas that are not serviced with existing infrastructure
- Continue to approve development in locations serviced with existing infrastructure, with a view to increasing population and dwelling densities
- Encourage renovation of existing housing to extend the life of the housing stock
- Encourage gentle densification options, for example through secondary suites, narrow lot housing, row housing, and other development options
- Encourage and consider establishing benchmarks for housing diversity, including a range of housing forms, tenures, target markets, and features such as adaptable housing. These would complement the benchmark for visitable housing already in place

Project meetings and interviews also identified a number of target markets for new housing. They include:

- Mobile workers travelling to and from northern industry jobs looking for accommodation with low maintenance and upkeep
- Permanent residents from larger cities, many of whom will be professionals or managers and their families looking for new homes and modern design
- Executives looking for large homes on large rural lots
- Mobile seniors looking for private, secure, low maintenance, single-storey housing, many of whom wish to travel extensively
- Older seniors who wish to live close to medical, health, or retail services or who may require onsite meals, social activities, personal services, and transportation
- Students who wish to live close to campus, services, and public transit

With regard to neighbourhood development, the research for this project suggests that housing strategies should support the following directions:

- Identify neighbourhoods suitable for a transition to higher density and mixed housing, as part of its growth management plan.
- Locate new development close to shopping, services, transit, parks, and schools to take full advantage of existing services and facilities rather than depending on future development of new services and facilities.
- Establish zoning, incentives, and expectations for neighbourhood development, similar to those in place for downtown redevelopment.

With regard to continuing work on the development, implementation and monitoring of a housing strategy for the City of Prince George, the research for this project suggests the following strategies:

- Appoint a housing coordinator to act as convenor to bring together diverse groups including builders, financial organizations, and social services to provide input to the development, implementation, and monitoring of new housing strategies and approaches. The coordinator would also develop and maintain ongoing relationships with key staff at the federal, provincial, and local government level, and build relationships among departments within the City organization, all in support of the City's goals for housing.
- Establish a housing 'table' or advisory body that includes a broad cross-section of housing interests. The 'table' should report directly to City Council in an advisory role, similar to existing committees such as the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and the Advisory Committee on Development Design.
- Convene housing workshops of private, public, and non-profit groups to create joint solutions and development.
- Convene an annual round table on housing to evaluate progress on the housing strategy.

This report provides a framework for the creation of a housing strategy for the City of Prince George. The housing strategy framework is a tool the City of Prince George can use to collect, organize, and understand information that can inform the development of housing strategies. It is intended to be a tool that the City can use over time to monitor and make decisions about housing development.

This report also provides information regarding future housing needs and opportunities. These were developed considering the anticipated demographic shift in the City, age of the housing stock, and input from our workshops and meetings.

Importantly, this report provides information on mechanisms that can be established to ensure that the City remains connected to key housing sector stakeholders and is able to work with them to find innovative and effective approaches to address future housing needs.

Housing is a key part of all local economic development strategies and its importance demands ongoing attention from staff and elected officials.

2. Project Background

The Community Development Institute (CDI), working with the City of Prince George has developed two complementary reports: the City of Prince George Housing Strategy Framework and the City of Prince George Need and Demand Study.

The objectives of the housing strategy framework were to:

1. Inform the development of a robust and diverse housing supply that meets the needs and provides options for the full range of Prince George residents;
2. Widen inclusivity in housing issues and establish a platform for ongoing dialogue that positions all segments of the housing sector in Prince George to take advantage of opportunities as they arise;
3. Move toward action on delivering on the options identified; and
4. Position the City of Prince George to establish a housing supply that aligns with economic growth and diversification opportunities.

The objectives of the housing need and demand study were to:

1. Understand current housing need and demand;
2. Forecast future housing need and demand; and
3. Develop options for future housing development in Prince George, including discussion of neighbourhood and housing sustainability.

Project timelines are shown in Figure 2-1.

Figure 2-1: Project Timelines

Date	Tasks
February to April 2013	Project outline developed Project contribution agreement confirmed UNBC Research Ethics Board process completed Research team established Interview guide drafted Interviews and meetings Data collection
May and June 2013	Workshops Interviews and meetings Data collection
July and August 2013	Data analysis Data collection
September to December 2013	Feedback meetings, workshops, and interviews Review, analysis and development of recommendations
March 2014	Draft report completed
June 2014	Final Report completed

Source: Prince George Housing Strategy Framework field notes 2013.

2.1 Interview Sample

Meetings and interviews were held between March and June 2013 with stakeholders in seven sectors (Figure 2-2). The goal was to involve a wide range of stakeholders in various sectors with an interest in housing.

Figure 2-2: Interview Respondents

Sector	Number
1. Community organizations	2
2. Education	2
3. Health	1
4. Housing-related enterprises	15
5. Providers of housing or housing supports	14
6. Local/provincial government	5
7. Business and industry	2
Total	41

Source: Prince George Housing Strategy Framework field notes 2013

The seven sectors are defined as follows:

1. Community organizations: those that provide services to clients or the community, but do not directly provide housing or housing supports
2. Education: post-secondary institutions and the school district
3. Health: Northern Health Authority
4. Housing-related enterprises: private sector enterprises, for example, developers, realtors, homebuilders, building owners, home renovators, planning consultants, financial institutions
5. Providers of housing or housing supports to individuals: non-profit sector organizations, for example, social service agencies, rental property managers, adult group home providers, private independent seniors housing
6. Local/provincial government
7. Business and industry: private sector enterprises preparing for growth

2.2 Workshops

Workshops were held throughout the project. The purpose of the workshops was first to test housing information and assumptions, then present 'test' housing strategy options and recommendations, and finally to provide opportunities for developing other options and recommendations.

Additional opportunities were provided in the fall of 2013 for feedback on the recommendations and development of ways to move forward on meeting the housing needs and opportunities identified.

3. Introduction

The Prince George Housing Strategy Framework and Housing Need and Demand Study were commissioned by the City of Prince George as part of its ongoing commitment to understanding housing needs. With this study, the City of Prince George wanted to look at both market and non-market housing. Furthermore, there was a desire to explore opportunities for encouraging innovation in meeting emerging housing needs.

The timing of this project was important for two reasons. Firstly, the City of Prince George is on the cusp of a significant change. The planned investment in the natural resources sector in northern British Columbia has the potential to bring growth and development to the City, including young working families. It has long been recognized that a robust and diverse housing stock and pleasant and functional neighbourhoods are key to attracting and retaining residents, which is key to the City's economic development strategy. At the same time, the City is experiencing a significant demographic shift in its existing population, as evidenced by a 51 percent growth in the population 65 years of age or older between 2001 and 2011. Given the 'typical' house design in Prince George, which features stairs and large lots that require significant maintenance, many older residents will soon find that their existing housing no longer meets their needs. With this project, the City will have a better understanding of the current and future housing needs and opportunities so that it can develop plans and strategies to address these.

Secondly, it is important to consider the impact potential new housing development will have on the demand for City infrastructure and services. Pursuing options for increasing housing supply in a way that increases revenue, while keeping cost increases low, will be an important long-term cost control strategy. As City costs are linked to property taxes, these considerations will have a direct impact on residents.

3.1 Historical Background

As early as 1993, the City of Prince George created a Housing Needs Project Steering Committee and commissioned a housing needs report:

to confirm the magnitude and dimensions of unmet housing needs in Prince George and to develop a strategy which could be implemented by the volunteer, public, and private sectors to meet these needs (City Spaces Consulting Ltd. 1993, Summary-1).

The report was spurred on in part by the Federal government's withdrawal in 1993 from direct involvement in housing. The report noted that, "For the foreseeable future, the 'cupboard is bare'

for capital financing for the construction or acquisition of new, socially-assisted housing” (p. 2 – Chapter 1).

Since that date, over two dozen research reports, studies, and other publications have been produced on housing needs and related matters in Prince George). Research has covered homelessness, seniors’ needs, accessibility and affordability, secondary suites, and the feasibility of establishing accommodation for low- and moderate-income households in upper-storey downtown commercial space.

In Prince George, market housing options have met the vast majority of housing needs. The development community has developed a keen understanding of market demand and has consistently built product that meets that demand. Until recently, most of this development took place in new subdivisions; however, infill development is now starting to occur.

With regard to non-market housing, housing for people who cannot afford market rents, government and non-government organizations including BC Housing, the Community Planning Council of Prince George, Prince George Community Partners Addressing Homelessness, Prince George Housing Coalition, the University of Northern British Columbia, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, the Prince George Council of Seniors, and others have worked at various times to identify unmet housing needs through reports and research.

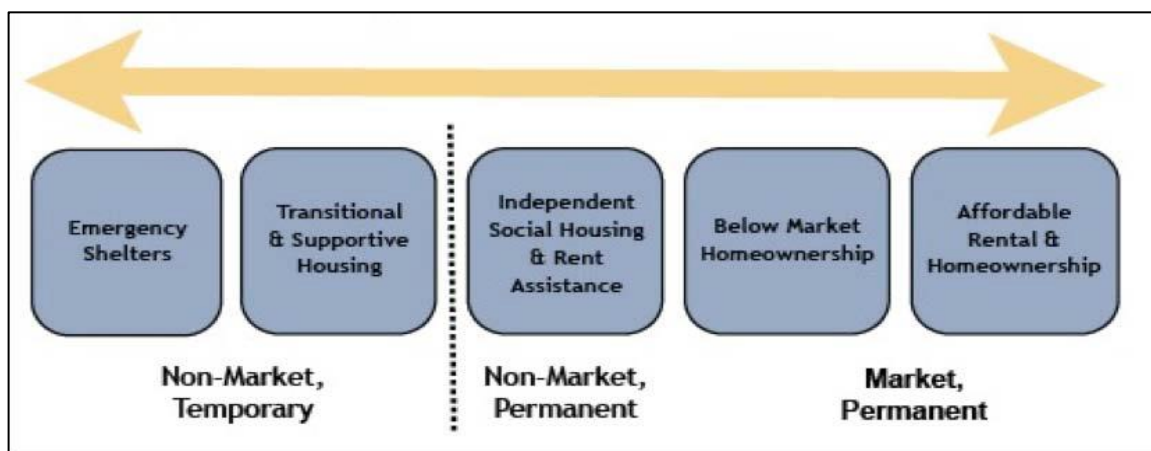
Government and non-government organizations (NGOs) have also worked to meet housing needs in the City by building or managing non-market housing. BC Housing has played an integral role in developing, managing, and supporting the growth of non-market housing and shelter in the City. Among NGOs, the Prince George Senior Citizens Home Society, which was operated by local service clubs from 1957 to 1998, built and managed over 300 subsidized seniors housing units that are still in use in various forms today. Other non-profits have worked to meet the need for housing and shelter. They include Active Support Against Poverty (ASAP), Prince George and District Elizabeth Fry Society, Prince George Métis Housing Society, Prince George Native Friendship Centre, Phoenix Transition Society, Association Advocating for Women and Children (AWAC), More Than a Roof Foundation, and the Sacred Heart Senior Citizens Society.

The City of Prince George (the City) recognizes the importance of housing in its Official Community Plans (OCP). The 2001 OCP focused on the need for affordable, rental, and special needs housing. In particular, the OCP noted the importance of developing a coordinated approach to housing issues by remaining an active participant in a Housing Coalition in Prince George, providing such a coalition with housing data and technical information, and supporting the development of a central housing registry.

The 2011 Official Community Plan (OCP) outlines a number of objectives and policies that provide direction with regard to the development of housing and neighbourhoods. It encourages the development of “downtown and neighbourhood centres with a compatible mix of uses and housing forms” (City of Prince George 2012b). It also supports increased housing density and diversification through objectives that allow for narrow lot housing, infill housing on vacant and underused sites, and the redevelopment of surplus school sites. These approaches add to the housing supply without the need to expand the existing infrastructure envelope. The 2011 OCP objectives related specifically to housing are:

1. Develop and enhance partnerships with all forms of government and forge new relationships across sectors to further affordable housing objectives;
2. Support development of a full range of housing types and tenures so that people of all ages, income levels and abilities have housing choices throughout the community;
3. Support development of new affordable housing across the housing continuum (Figure 3-1);
4. Support preservation of existing affordable housing in good condition;
5. Support a Housing First¹ approach to the elimination of homelessness; and
6. Incorporate visitable or adaptable features to ensure accessibility in new and existing housing to accommodate people with mobility challenges and enable seniors to age in place.

Figure 3-1: Housing Continuum



Source: City of Prince George 2012b.

¹ In 2011, the City adopted a Housing First policy. Housing First “is an approach to ending homelessness that centres on providing homeless people with housing quickly and then providing services as needed” (City of Prince George 2011b). The primary focus is to help individuals and families quickly access and sustain permanent housing.

In 2012, the City took formal steps to develop a housing strategy framework. The City worked with UNBC on the design and implementation of an experiential, project-based course to contribute to the development of a housing strategy framework. The course ran successfully in the fall of 2012 and the student research has contributed greatly toward our understanding of many housing issues.

Throughout the meetings and interviews conducted in 2013, we received consistent messages of hope and excitement that the work will lead from talk to action on a long-term housing strategy for Prince George. We have witnessed how market and non-market housing providers have enthusiastically come together to learn more about each other's challenges and opportunities for creating a range of housing options in Prince George.

4. Housing Strategy Framework

The housing strategy framework will assist the City of Prince George to place housing development within the context of discussion and decision-making for all City business. Housing development must be considered as an integral part of:

- Economic strategy and policy
- Fiscal management strategy and policy
- Land use planning strategy and policy
- Taxation and fee strategy and policy
- Social strategy and policy including crime reduction
- Environmental strategy and policy

The proposed housing strategy framework is a tool that the City can use to collect, organize, and understand information that can inform the development of housing strategies. It is intended to be a tool that the City can use over time to monitor then respond to opportunities about housing development.

4.1 Housing: A Key Community Asset

Why is development of a housing strategy so important? A robust and diverse housing supply is central to the City's economic development strategy. Attractive and affordable housing and neighbourhoods will attract and retain new workers and businesses to Prince George. The City must plan to have a range of housing options available at a range of housing costs so that all workers, from those making minimum wage to those earning managerial and executive salaries, can find accommodation in Prince George. This approach to housing supply will support business development and growth.

Furthermore, housing construction generates revenues in the form of taxes and fees. Through the property tax, housing provides one of the most significant sources of operating dollars for local government. However, decisions on housing location determine present and future municipal costs such as:

- Infrastructure which must be developed and maintained for the foreseeable future after new subdivisions are constructed
- Municipal services, such as garbage collection, snow clearing, public transit, and custom transit that must be provided for the foreseeable future for new subdivisions

Decisions on housing location influence the location of municipal amenities such as recreation facilities, parks, and trail networks. Housing location also influences attendance at local schools and

may require land to be dedicated in new subdivisions for future schools. Housing development decisions, such as new neighbourhood plans in greenfield areas may take decades before full build-out. However, the costs of maintaining infrastructure and providing services commence with construction of the first homes must continue as long as the subdivision is occupied.

A housing strategy framework enables the City of Prince George to establish a clear set of principles to guide decision-making, particularly in the following areas:

- Mixed housing development which would create robust and diverse communities and accommodate the changing demographic makeup
- Housing density which would improve affordability and increase property tax revenues per metre of existing urban infrastructure
- Adaptable housing which would ensure that new housing is suitable for use throughout the residents' life course
- Development within the existing infrastructure envelope, which would reduce long-term infrastructure maintenance and replacement costs and the urban environmental footprint
- Property or neighbourhood redevelopment which would result in higher densities or mixed uses, where appropriate
- Partnership development, which would encourage innovation among builders, developers, non-profits, and government agencies
- Social sustainability which would reduce poverty, crime, and social insecurity through housing security and affordability

4.2 Official Community Plan

A housing strategy must be developed in the context of the City's Official Community Plan. City policy regarding a housing strategy is stated in the Official Community Plan (2012b, 208):

The City should undertake a housing needs assessment and develop an affordable housing strategy outlining clear goals, priorities, and directions for affordable, rental and special needs housing, including specific municipal roles.

The OCP supports the development of a full range of housing types and tenures, suitable for all ages, income levels, and abilities. It supports the development of new affordable housing along the continuum, as well as the preservation of existing affordable housing. It seeks to incorporate visitable and adaptable features in new and existing housing, and it seeks to develop partnerships with all forms of government and build new relationships across all sectors of the housing market

The OCP also addresses the following goals to:

- Strengthen neighbourhoods and neighbourhood centres;

- Support walking, cycling, and transit;
- Minimize ongoing costs of infrastructure;
- Facilitate infill and redevelopment; and
- Maintain school age populations in existing catchments.

4.3 Housing Strategy Framework

The proposed housing strategy framework is a tool the City of Prince George can use to collect, organize, and understand information that can inform the development of housing strategies. It is intended to be a tool that the City refreshes on an annual basis so that the information guiding housing strategy development remains current. The housing strategy framework can also be used to monitor the impact of housing strategies and the achievement of targets and benchmarks that the City may wish to establish.

This framework outlines four action areas drawn from workshops and meetings relating to the creation of a housing strategy. These are:

1. Collecting information needed to make decisions and measure progress in achieving the City’s housing and neighbourhood development goals.
2. Managing existing and future housing stock.
3. Managing existing and future neighbourhoods.
4. Establishing a platform and partnerships for implementing the housing strategy.

4.3.1 Information and Indicators

Information regarding housing stock, housing development, and demographics is key to making decisions about housing priorities. It is important that the City maintain current information in order to constantly monitor and assess the state housing in Prince George.

The City currently prepares monthly reports on the value of building permits issued for single-family dwellings, duplexes, multi-family housing, mobile homes, and related alterations. As part of the housing strategy framework, the City should set benchmarks and standards to measure progress in achieving the City’s goals for housing and neighbourhood development.

The research for the housing strategy framework suggests the following information should be collected and maintained on an annual basis:

- Population
 1. Age
 2. Household size
 3. Household income

4. Population by neighbourhood study area (study areas are defined in the City of Prince George Housing Need and Demand Study, and based on Census data)
 - Housing Stock:
 1. Number of homeownership dwellings, by type and location
 2. Number of rental dwelling units, by type and location
 3. Number of visitable housing units
 4. Number of adaptable housing units
 5. Number of houses in need of major repair
 - New Construction and Densification:
 1. Number of new residential dwellings and their location
 2. Number of multi-family dwellings and their location
 3. Number of new narrow lot housing units and their location
 4. Number of new secondary suites and their location
 5. Number and rate of residential demolitions and their location
 - Renovation:
 1. Number of renovation permits issued for single-family residential dwellings
 2. Number of renovation permits issues for multi-family dwellings
 - Housing Diversity:
 1. Monitor the implementation of neighbourhood plans with regard to achieving the ratios established for single-family dwellings, duplexes, and multi-family housing (City of Prince George 2013b).
 - Affordable Housing:
 1. Rental rates for apartments and townhouses
 2. Rental vacancy rates
 3. Allowable annual rent increases
 4. Number of manufactured home parks
 5. Number of manufactured homes
 6. Number of strata title apartments, townhouses, single-family houses, and duplexes not receiving the Home Owner Grant
 7. Number of renter households below the Housing Income Limits (HILs) established by BC Housing²

² Housing Income Limits establish eligibility for subsidized housing in BC. The limits are set by community. For details, visit BC Housing's website: http://www.bchousing.org/Options/Subsidized_Housing/Apply/Eligibility/Income_requirements

8. Ratio of owners to renters
 9. Number of homeless people
 10. Waiting lists for subsidized housing
- Urban Infrastructure and Asset Management:
 1. Link the geographic distribution of change with existing asset inventory data by recording and reporting annually on increases/decreases in assets requiring ongoing repair and maintenance (City of Prince George 2012a):
 - Roads and sidewalks (km)
 - Bridges and underpasses (numbers)
 - Water system (km of main and number of services)
 - Sanitary system (km of main and number of services)
 - Storm drainage system (km of main and number of services)
 - Utility facilities (number of water, sewer, and storm facilities)
 - Street lights and signals (lights and signalized intersections)
 - Parks, trails, and cemetery (hectares of highly developed park, natural park, green space, and undeveloped park)
 2. Build on existing service data by recording and reporting annually on increases in services provided on a neighbourhood-by-neighbourhood basis for:
 - Public transit (kms of service extensions, changes in ridership levels, and potential demands)
 - Custom transit (km of service extensions and changes in ridership)

4.3.2 Housing Stock

Existing Neighbourhoods

The housing strategy should recognize the implications of the City's aging housing stock. Over half of the housing stock was built between 1961 and 1980. Many of these structures now require renovation or replacement by private owners and developers. This presents an opportunity for the City to allow and encourage increased density in established neighbourhoods close to the centre of the City. This will have the effect of increasing property tax revenues from already developed communities, utilizing already existing infrastructure. It will also revitalize aging neighbourhoods.

Secondary suites and upzoning to RS4 narrow lot housing in selected areas of the City are two mechanisms the municipality is using to expand the housing stock through gradual densification.

Many older houses can accommodate secondary suites, which have been allowed in single-family dwellings since 2007. There are currently between 1,400 and 1,800 secondary suites, according to census data and BC Assessment records. Increased numbers of secondary suites add to the supply

of affordable housing. New secondary suites also lead to gradual densification and more efficient use of existing municipal infrastructure.

The OCP outlines in detail the City's goals for infill where it is an appropriate fit with neighbouring areas. The RS4 zoning for narrow lot housing in older neighbourhoods with back lanes is a step in the direction of gradual densification. It provides options to replace very old, possibly sub-standard homes with new, smaller homes built to current standards. The proposed mass RS4 rezoning, initiated by City Council, would rezone a number of appropriate properties to RS4 on behalf of the property owners.

Project meetings and workshops proposed a third mechanism for gradual densification through redevelopment of shopping centres where some buildings have reached the end of their lifespan. The redevelopment of shopping centres was seen as an option permitted under the OCP's focus on neighbourhood centres. Commercial and retail areas located at growth management hubs (OCP Schedule B-4) should be identified for redevelopment with a combination of housing, retail, and other services. Mini-malls located close to residential areas and bus routes should be encouraged to convert unused commercial space to rental housing for students and working singles with low incomes. In the context of population aging, redevelopment of property on or adjacent to shopping centres that will include parking, retail, and accessible/affordable seniors housing has several benefits. It more efficiently uses civic infrastructure, can assist the financial viability of the shopping centre, and provide seniors with walkable access to grocery stores, pharmacies, medical clinics, and clothing shops, as well as ready access to transit.

The City should also be prepared for increased renovation activity, as older homes are given a new lease on life. It is anticipated that these renovations will be homeowner, rather than developer driven. These renovations will most likely occur to modernize the home for today's family or adapt the home for ongoing occupation by *in situ* older residents. The modest population growth projections for Prince George suggest that renovation for continued use of the existing housing stock will be essential to avoid deteriorating neighbourhoods. Keeping the permitting process simple and straightforward and approval times short will help encourage renovation activity.

New Neighbourhoods

With regard to new neighbourhoods, the input from the project workshops and meetings suggested that high priority be placed on building these within the City's existing infrastructure envelope. This would make higher and better use of the infrastructure already in place. At the same time, it would reduce the need for costly new infrastructure and services.

When new neighbourhoods are approved, targets for housing diversity and density should be established. These targets should be monitored and reported annually so that the City can compare

tax revenues from new construction with the increased costs of infrastructure maintenance or service extension in these new neighbourhoods. This information will help the City manage costs.

The City should also track and report on the achievement of its goal for visitable housing. For projects on land owned or sold by the City, the OCP benchmark for visitable housing is no less than 15% of market-rate single and two-unit residential development shall be visitable housing; and, all affordable (non-market) single and two-unit residential development shall be visitable (City of Prince George 2012b, 183). The City should also consider establishing a benchmark for adaptable housing and reporting the number of new units of adaptable housing constructed in the City each year.

Future Housing Strategies

With regard to housing development, the research for this project suggests that housing strategies should support the following directions:

- Limit development in areas that are not serviced with existing infrastructure or that are beyond the Growth Management Urban Boundary, until the life-cycle costs of such a development are measured and demonstrated.
- Continue to approve development in locations serviced with existing infrastructure, with a view to increasing population and dwelling densities.
- Encourage renovation of existing housing to extend the life of the housing stock. This may include property tax exemptions and reduced building permit and construction waste disposal fees for major renovations.
- Encourage gentle densification options, for example through secondary suites, narrow lot housing, row housing, and other development options. Incentives could include property tax exemptions, as well as reduced building permit, demolition, and waste disposal fees. The City could also consider allowing further densification when adjacent single-family properties are assembled.
- Encourage and consider establishing benchmarks for housing diversity, including a range of housing forms, tenures, target markets, and features such as adaptable housing. These would complement the benchmark for visitable housing already in place.

Project meetings and interviews identified a number of target markets for new housing. They include:

- Mobile workers travelling to and from northern industry jobs looking for accommodation with low maintenance and upkeep
- Permanent residents from larger cities, many of whom will be professionals or managers and their families looking for new homes and modern design
- Executives looking for large homes on large rural lots
- Mobile seniors looking for private, secure, low maintenance, single-storey housing, many of whom wish to travel extensively
- Older seniors who wish to live close to medical, health, or retail services or who may require onsite meals, social activities, personal services, and transportation
- Students who wish to live close to campus, services, and public transit

General opportunities also exist for secure parking and storage of work vehicles, trailers, and expensive work-related equipment. Developers wishing to pursue these markets should be encouraged to do so within the City's current infrastructure envelope, rather than requiring further development of low-density greenfield sites.

4.3.3 Neighbourhoods

Neighbourhoods were an important part of the discussion during project workshops and interviews. Attractive neighbourhoods with services and amenities attract and retain people. Participants understood the value of locating housing close to schools, shopping, services, transit, schools, parks, recreation areas, trails, and bike/walking paths. They emphasized the value of mixed neighbourhoods containing a variety of housing forms, tenures, and costs that would meet the needs of households through life stages from young families to old age. They felt it was important to identify specific neighbourhoods to make the transition to clustering and mixed housing.

With regard to neighbourhood development, the research for this project suggests that housing strategies should support the following directions:

- Identify target neighbourhoods for a transition to higher density and mixed housing, as part of the growth management plan.
- Amend existing zoning to allow for a variety of housing options as contemplated in the OCP, provide incentives similar to those in place for downtown redevelopment, and establish development guidelines for these neighbourhood centres.

- Locate new development close to shopping, services, transit, parks, and schools to take full advantage of existing services and facilities rather than depending on future development of new services and facilities.

4.3.4 Establishing a Platform for Ongoing Dialogue and Partnership Development

The City of Prince George currently has no formal mechanism to examine fully the cause-and-effect relationships between housing and the many decisions that may positively or negatively affect housing and related municipal costs. In addition, there is no mechanism to bring diverse groups together to discuss housing issues and opportunities. Through the discussions, workshops, and meetings for this project, people expressed a strong desire to participate in more ongoing dialogue around housing.

The City should establish an ongoing strategic dialogue that brings people and organizations together on housing, neighbourhood, and land use issues. Convening this dialogue would require: an individual to bring together people with diverse backgrounds, a community housing table, and mechanisms to support creativity on housing issues. The process would enhance communication and learning, and provide access to extensive housing-related information and expertise.

With regard to continuing the work on the development, implementation and monitoring of a housing strategy for the City of Prince George, the research for this project suggests the following strategies:

1. Appoint a housing coordinator to act as convenor to bring together diverse groups including builders, financial organizations, and social services to provide input to the development, implementation, and monitoring of new housing strategies and approaches. The coordinator would also develop and maintain ongoing relationships with key staff at the federal, provincial, and local government level, and build relationships among departments within the City organization, all in support of the City's goals for housing. Ideally, the individual would have a real estate and finance background as well as experience working with social service agencies. The position would be situated within Development Services or Corporate Services.
2. Establish a housing 'table' or advisory body that includes a broad cross-section of housing interests. The 'table' should report directly to City Council in an advisory role, similar to existing committees such as the Advisory Committee on Accessibility and the Advisory Committee on Development Design.

Committee members should include appointees from:

- Development industry

- Real estate industry
- Non-profit housing providers
- Provincial and federal government housing-related agencies
- Residential property management firm
- A financial institution that handles residential and development financing
- Members of the public at large appointed by City Council

Committee terms of reference should include monitoring and anticipating current and future trends to ensure that the City develops a robust and diverse housing supply that meets the needs and provides options for the full range of Prince George residents.

3. Convene housing workshops of private, public, and non-profit groups to create joint solutions and development.
4. Convene an annual round table on housing to evaluate progress on the housing strategy.

4.4 Conclusion

This report provides a framework for the creation of a housing strategy for the City of Prince George. The housing strategy framework is a tool the City of Prince George can use to collect, organize, and understand information that can inform the development of housing strategies. It is intended to be a tool that the City can use over time to monitor and make decisions about housing development.

This report also provides information regarding future housing needs and opportunities. These were developed considering the anticipated demographic shift in the City, age of the housing stock, and input from our workshops and meetings.

Importantly, this report provides information on mechanisms that can be established to ensure that the City remains connected to key housing sector stakeholders and is able to work with them to find innovative and effective approaches to address future housing needs.

5. Appendix A: Information and Indicators: Source and Frequency of Collection

Data Required	Source	Frequency
Population		
Age	Statistics Canada: Census	Every five years
Household size	Statistics Canada: Census	Every five years
Household income	Statistics Canada :Census	Every five years
Population by neighbourhood	Statistics Canada: Census	Every five years
Housing Stock		
Number of homeownership dwellings, by type and location	Statistics Canada: Census	Every five years
Number of rental dwelling units, by type and location	Statistics Canada: Census	Every five years
Number of visitable housing units	City of Prince George	Annually
Number of adaptable housing units	City of Prince George	Annually
Number of houses in need of major repair	Statistics Canada: Census	Every five years
New Construction and Densification		
Number of new residential dwellings and their location	City of Prince George	Annually
Number of new multi-family dwellings and their location	City of Prince George	Annually
Number of new narrow lot housing units and their location	City of Prince George	Annually
Number of new secondary suites and their location	City of Prince George	Annually
Number and rate of residential demolitions and their location	City of Prince George	Annually
Renovation		
Number of renovation permits issued for single-family residential dwellings	City of Prince George	Annually

Data Required	Source	Frequency
Number of renovation permits issues for multi-family dwellings	City of Prince George	Annually
Housing Diversity		
Monitor the implementation of neighbourhood plans with regard to achieving the ratios established for single-family dwellings, duplexes, and multi-family housing	City of Prince George	Annually
Affordable Housing		
Rental rates for apartments and townhouses	CMHC Rental Market Reports	Annually
Rental vacancy rates	CMHC Rental Market Reports	Annually
Allowable annual rent increases	BC Residential Tenancy Office	Annually
Number of manufactured home parks	City of Prince George	Annually
Number of manufactured homes	City of Prince George	Annually
Number of strata title apartments, townhouses, single-family houses, and duplexes not receiving the Home Owner Grant	BC Assessment Authority	Annually
Number of renter households in core need	Statistics Canada: Census	Every five years
Ratio of owners to renters	Statistics Canada: Census	Every five years
Number of homeless people	Community Social Service Agencies	
Waiting lists for subsidized housing	Non-profit housing providers	Annually
Urban Infrastructure and Asset Management		
Roads and sidewalks (km)	City of Prince George	Annually
Bridges and underpasses (numbers)	City of Prince George	Annually

Data Required	Source	Frequency
Water system (km of main and number of services)	City of Prince George	Annually
Sanitary system (km of main and number of services)	City of Prince George	Annually
Storm drainage system (km of main and number of services)	City of Prince George	Annually
Utility facilities (number of water, sewer, and storm facilities)	City of Prince George	Annually
Street lights and signals (lights and signalized intersections)	City of Prince George	Annually
Parks, trails, and cemetery (hectares of highly developed park, natural park, green space, and undeveloped park)	City of Prince George	Annually
Public transit (kms of service extensions, changes in ridership levels, and potential demands)	City of Prince George	Annually
Custom transit (km of service extensions and changes in ridership)	City of Prince George	Annually

6. Appendix B: Ideas from the Housing Workshops

Densification Opportunities

- Motel property redevelopment:
 - There are many older hotel properties close to services.
- Around large neighbourhood shopping nodes: (Hart, College Heights):
 - Surrounding them are properties that can be redeveloped (Spruceland) or greenfield sites in the Hart or College Heights.
- Large number of very small neighbourhood shopping plazas (two-four stores):
 - Build residential units adjacent to these plazas which are located at various crossroads in the community.
- Create density layers:
 - Move out from dense commercial centres into lower density neighbourhoods.
 - Include commercial activity to encourage partnering and cross-subsidization.
 - Go beyond commercial to public sector office space.
 - Bundle offices with housing, e.g. Northern Health offices, Outreach offices, Government of Canada offices, etc.

Role Changes

Non-profit housing societies:

- Opportunity to create mixed market and non-market housing.
- Non-profit groups need to start thinking as entrepreneurs and many will need training and education in this regard.
- Have the opportunity to build different models of mixed market/non-market housing.

City of Prince George:

- Opportunity for the City to play the central role as a facilitator of new development.
- Need to engage builders, property managers, non-profits, service agencies.

Perceptions

- The perception of Prince George as it has been over last 10-20 years has to change.
- Think of Prince George with a significant number of retired people and young families with fewer kids.

Development Financing

- Need to develop creative financing packages for multi-unit housing.

Partnerships

- Building new forms of mixed used development that include market housing, non-market housing, retail, offices, and services will require that partnerships be developed between the key players.
- Facilitating partnerships could be a role for the City of Prince George.

Research

- Conduct research on the impact of a new owner on rental rates, building renovations, and rental/leasing agreements in small and medium-sized cities.

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