



# Housing Strategy

December 2020



## Table of Contents

<b>Section 1 – Introduction</b> .....	<b>2</b>
Background and Process	2
Housing Strategy Vision	3
Guiding Themes	3
Roles and Responsibilities	4
<b>Section 2 – Current State of Housing</b> .....	<b>6</b>
<b>Section 3 – Action Plan</b> .....	<b>13</b>
Goal 1 – Increase Affordable Rental and Ownership Housing Options	13
Goal 2 – Encourage Diversity of Housing Options Including Housing with Supports	17
Goal 3 – Support a Community Response to Homelessness	18
Goal 4 – Build Our Collective Capacity	19
<b>Section 4 – Implementation Plan</b> .....	<b>21</b>
Goal 1 – Increase Affordable Rental and Homeownership Options	21
Goal 2 – Encourage Diversity of Housing Options Including Housing with Supports	25
Goal 3 – Support a Community Response to Homelessness	27
Goal 4 – Build Our Collective Capacity	28
<b>Section 5 – Glossary of Terms</b> .....	<b>31</b>

## APPENDICES

Appendix A Background Document Review

## TABLES

Table 1.2: Anticipated Housing Needs Summary .....	11
----------------------------------------------------	----

## FIGURES

Figure 1.1: Housing Continuum .....	2
Figure 1.2: Population Growth, City of Fort St. John versus Peace River (2006-2016).....	6
Figure 1.3: Breakdown of Housing by Structural Type, City of Fort St. John versus Peace River (2016).....	8
Figure 1.4: Owner Versus Renter Core Housing Need, City of Fort St. John (2006-2016).....	10

## Section 1 – Introduction

### Background and Process

In 2020, a Housing Study was developed as part of a Provincial initiative that will enable the City of Fort St. John to better understand and respond to the current and future housing needs in our community. The Housing Study has two parts, a Housing Needs Assessment Report that looks to understand the current housing situation, which informed the second part, a Housing Strategy. As a community, access to a range of affordable housing and a diversity of housing types are important to ensure that we all thrive.

The development of the Housing Needs Assessment provides an increased awareness and understanding of current and future housing needs across the housing continuum from emergency housing to market rental and home ownership. This understanding will support the community to make informed decisions about existing and future development. The City will use the information as we work with our community partners to develop and update plans, guidelines and policies, and make informed decisions about existing and future development. Community partners, such as housing providers, support service agencies and developers can use the data to inform their own plans and strategies, as well as support their collective initiatives to provide housing and services in the city.

Figure 1.1: Housing Continuum



The [Housing Needs Assessment](#) explored:

- The current housing market conditions in the region, including:
  - Demographics (population, employment, income etc.);
  - Current supply and demand;
  - State of existing housing;
  - Assessed housing value and selling prices; and
  - Rental vacancy rates.
- What gaps exist in the housing market and potential opportunities to fill those needs; and
- Future housing needs.

As part of developing the Housing Needs Assessment, data was collected from a variety of sources including Statistics Canada, BC Housing, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation and BC Assessment, and through engagement with stakeholders including Council and Administration, non-profit housing providers, services and support providers, property managers, landlords, private developers, Indigenous organizations, representatives from First Nations communities and area residents. Current and future housing needs, gaps and future priorities across the full housing continuum were reviewed.

Findings from the Housing Needs Assessment, engagement with area residents and stakeholders, and a review of housing strategies in communities across British Columbia and Alberta provided the foundation for preparing a Housing Strategy. The Strategy describes policies and actions to help the City, and other partners, including community organizations, the Northern Health Authority, private and non-profit developers, and service and support providers, create and maintain an affordable, safe and suitable supply of housing over the next 10 years that will meet the needs of all City residents. The City and community partners will use the Housing Strategy to identify priorities, actions and partnerships to address the current and future housing needs of Fort St. John residents.

## Housing Strategy Vision

The Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan is intended to be a community-supported and led plan with actions expected to be implemented through the collective efforts of multiple partners, including all levels of government and both the private and non-profit sectors. The Strategy aligns with the community's aspirations for Fort St. John in 2030 as described in the Official Community Plan Vision:

*“Fort St. John will be a flourishing community where nature lives, businesses prosper, families are active, and diversity is celebrated.”*

## Guiding Themes

The Housing Strategy was developed around guiding themes that emerged through conversations and feedback from Council, Administration, stakeholders, Indigenous organizations, representatives from First Nations communities and area residents. The following four key guiding themes have been integrated into the Housing Strategy and Implementation Plan:

- **Collaboration:** engage the community and support partnerships between government and organizations to put the strategies into action over the next ten years;
- **Inclusion:** support an accessible, equitable system of housing options;
- **Excellence & Innovation:** create and deliver solutions that are based in data, evidence, and leading-edge practices; and
- **Sustainable:** develop and support housing solutions that incorporate economic, social, and environmental sustainability and balance.

## Roles and Responsibilities

The provision of safe and adequate housing is not solely the responsibility of the City of Fort St. John or any one single entity, but rather requires the collective efforts of a broad range of partners including all levels of government to come together to implement the recommended actions. All levels of government and non-profit and private organizations have various responsibilities as it relates to the provision of housing in the community.

### Federal Government

The federal government implements a variety of programs that provide capital and operational funding for non-market housing. The Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) is Canada's National Housing Provider. CMHC provides mortgage insurance and sets the rules and requirements for government-backed mortgage insurance, collects data and completes research on the housing industry across Canada, and is responsible for providing funding to support the provision of affordable housing across Canada. The National Housing Strategy, Reaching Home: Canada's Homelessness Strategy and the Rapid Housing Initiative are a few of the key initiatives the federal government has implemented related to housing and homelessness.

### Provincial Government

The provincial government has the legislative responsibility for housing in British Columbia. Much of the legislation that affects land use and housing is under provincial jurisdiction and as such, measures that municipalities can implement are constrained. The province, through BC Housing, has the mandate to develop, manage and administer a variety of subsidized and social housing units and programs across the province. BC Housing works with community partners, private and non-profit sectors and other levels of government to support the development of housing. They provide operational and capital funding for the development of a range of housing options, as well as rent supplement programs.

### City of Fort St. John

The City of Fort St. John has more than one role when it comes to the development and provision of appropriate and adequate housing within its boundary. The City's Zoning Bylaw is its primary regulatory tool to influence housing development through land use regulations, such as the location and types of housing. In addition, key roles that the City could take to support the implementation of actions contained within this Housing Strategy are described below:

#### Planner/Facilitator

The City will support housing providers and both private and non-profit housing developers in the community by working with them throughout the development process, being transparent about land use decisions and alignment to municipal priorities, working with different housing partners, and being open to new and innovative forms of housing.

## **Educator**

The City will help facilitate the sharing and distribution of information to the community about housing needs and affordable housing in the City. In this role, the City is a partner in the sharing of information and resources to/from housing providers, support services, private developers, residents and other community partners.

## **Investor**

The City will explore opportunities to support the development of affordable housing by lessening potential financial barriers that exist for private and non-profit developers to provide a range of affordable housing to meeting the varying needs of residents.

## **Advocate**

The City will advocate to all levels of government and will continue to build relationships and partnerships with other local governments, such as the Peace River Regional District, and Indigenous partners to secure funding and support for existing and future housing programs, services and development.

## **Non-Profit Sector**

The non-profit sector develops and manages non-market and subsidized housing units. This sector also provides additional support services, such as culturally appropriate supports, mental health supports, education and jobs and life skills training. They seek out funding from different levels of government and organizations through funding opportunities such as those provided by BC Housing and the National Housing Strategy Initiative. The non-profit sector also develops partnerships and collaborates with community organizations, the private sector and all levels of government.

## **Private Sector**

The private sector includes real estate agents, developers, builders, property managers and landlords. This sector develops, constructs and manages a variety of housing types from single family homes to duplexes, townhouses and condominiums, including both ownership and rental housing units. The private sector is primarily responsible for providing market housing (housing that does not require additional subsidies and supports from other organizations and government bodies); however, they also play a key role in developing non-market housing with the support of all levels of government and through community partnerships.

## Section 2 – Current State of Housing

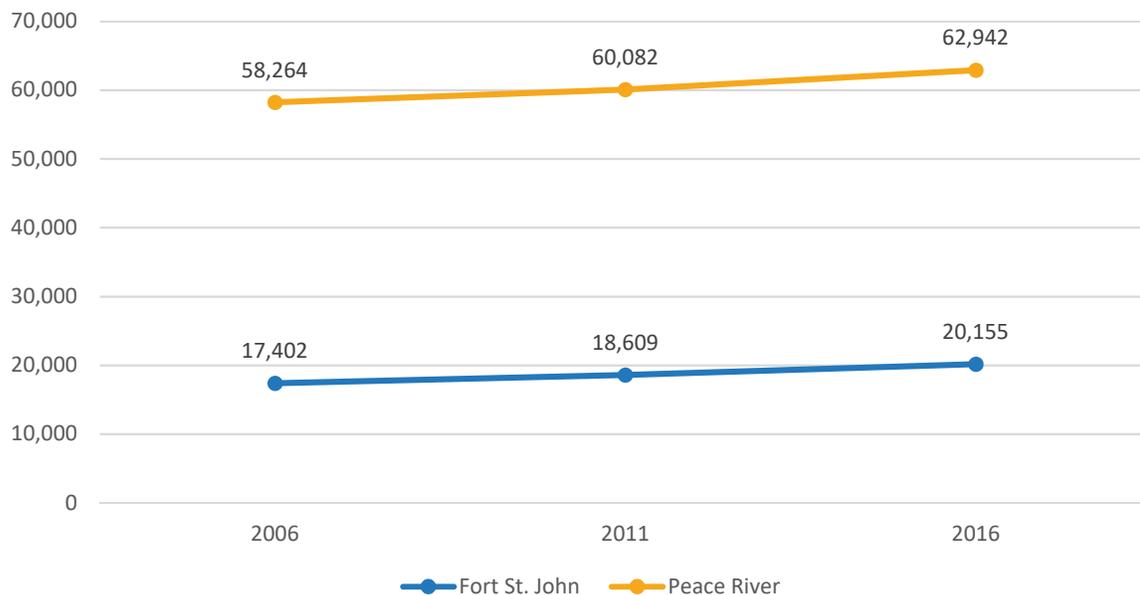
This section summarizes the key findings of the Housing Needs Assessment, including key demographic and economic trends, current housing supply and projected housing needs. This section also presents an overview of the existing plans and policies providing direction for the City to address current and projected housing needs.

### Demographic and Economic Trends



Between **2006 and 2016**, the City of Fort St. John experienced a steady population growth, resulting in a population change of **15.8%**, almost double the population change of 8% observed in the Peace River Regional District for the same period. Based on the medium growth scenario population projections prepared for Fort St. John’s 2015 Growth Study, it was projected that the City would have a total population of 24,529 in 2020. The City is anticipated to see steady population growth over the next twenty years, growing to 39,106. **Fort St. John’s population is projected to grow by 2,819 people between 2020 and 2025 (a 2.2% annual growth rate).** With a median age of 31.3 years in 2016, the City has a younger population than both Peace River and the province as a whole.

Figure 1.2: Population Growth, City of Fort St. John versus Peace River (2006-2016)



Source: Community Profiles Statistics Canada Census, 2006-2016



Statistics Canada's Census reported **7,940 households in Fort St. John in 2016**, an increase of 1,070 households (15.6%) from 2006. Approximately 40% of these households were couples with children and just under 25% were couples without children. Since 2006, the household size has remained constant at 2.5 persons per household.



Most households in Fort St. John own their home. In 2016, **60.9% of households were homeowners and 39.1% were renters**. This represents a slight increase in Fort St. John's homeownership rate, after decreasing from 63.0% to 60.6% of total households between 2006 and 2011.



From 2006 to 2016 the labour force participation rate in the City has slightly decreased from 80.5% to 79%, and the **unemployment rate has increased considerably from 4.9% to 10.9%** over the same time period, which could be explained by the economic downturn of the oil and gas industry.

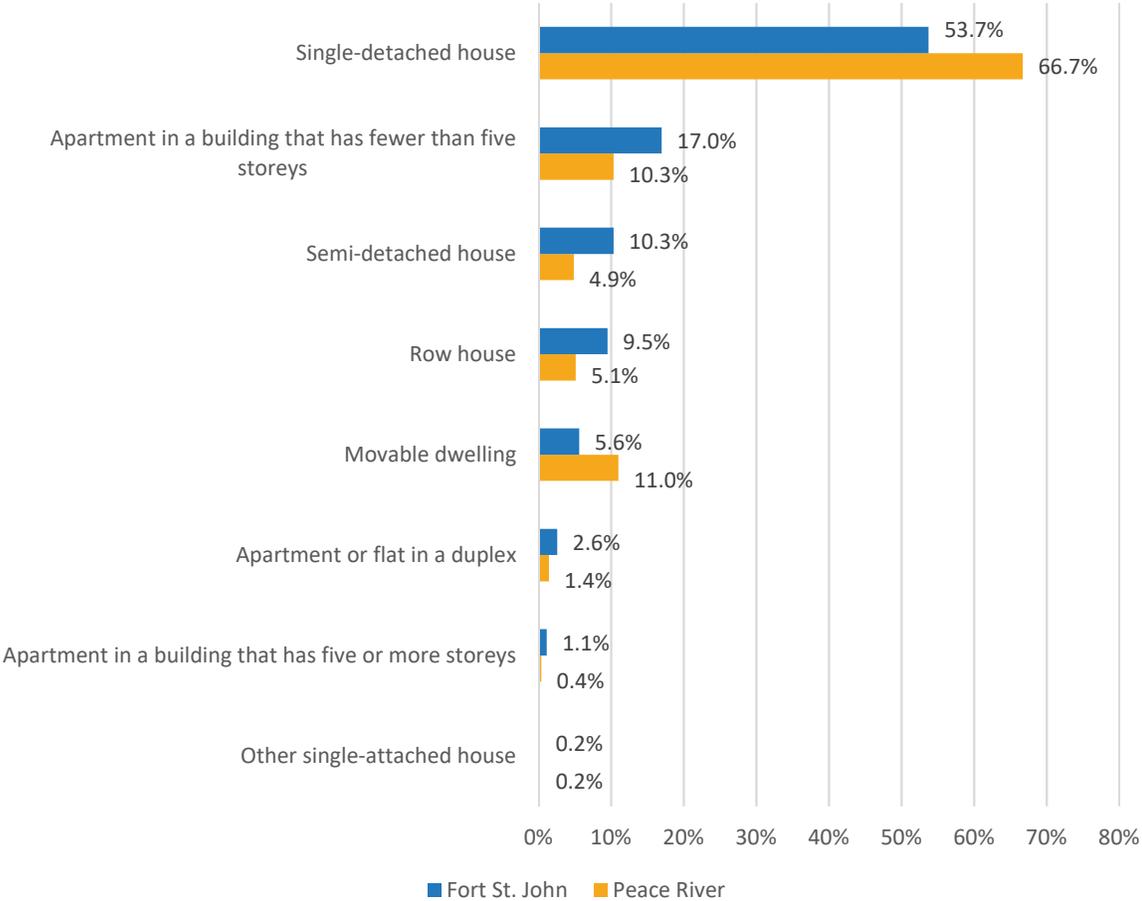


**In 2016, the median household income in Fort St. John was \$103,383** which is higher than households in the Regional District. Between 2006 and 2016 the City's median income increased by 29.4%, significantly above the inflation rate of 11.2% for the same period. There are significant differences when comparing owner and renter household income. In 2016, **median owner household income (\$127,044) was significantly higher than median renter household income (\$69,748)**.

## Housing Supply

In Fort St. John, just over half (~54%) of existing housing units are single detached dwellings with the remainder a mix of apartments, semi-detached and row houses. Overall, housing units are predominately 3 and 4+ bedrooms (~67%); only about 10% of the existing housing stock is comprised of one-bedroom units. The majority of the existing homes in the City were built between 1961 and 1980. Recent new home construction has considerably slowed down since 2016.

Figure 1.3: Breakdown of Housing by Structural Type, City of Fort St. John versus Peace River (2016)



Source: Custom Statistics Canada Census Reports, 2016

## Affordability



Based on median household income, the home ownership market is generally affordable, but challenges could arise if households cannot afford more than a 5% down payment. Homeownership affordability decreased significantly between 2005 and 2010 but has since remained relatively stable.



The average rental prices reported based on the primary rental market data (units that are constructed for the purpose of renting) indicate that rental units in the City are generally affordable. However, findings based on searches of current rentals, indicate that those in the secondary rental market (e.g. single-family homes) are being rented out at a higher price resulting in affordability challenges for some renter households.

## Core Housing Need

Core housing needs is a method to identify households who are not able to find and maintain housing that meets their needs. CMHC considers a household to be in core housing need *if housing falls below at least one of the adequacy, affordability or suitability standards and the household would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (meets all three housing standards):*

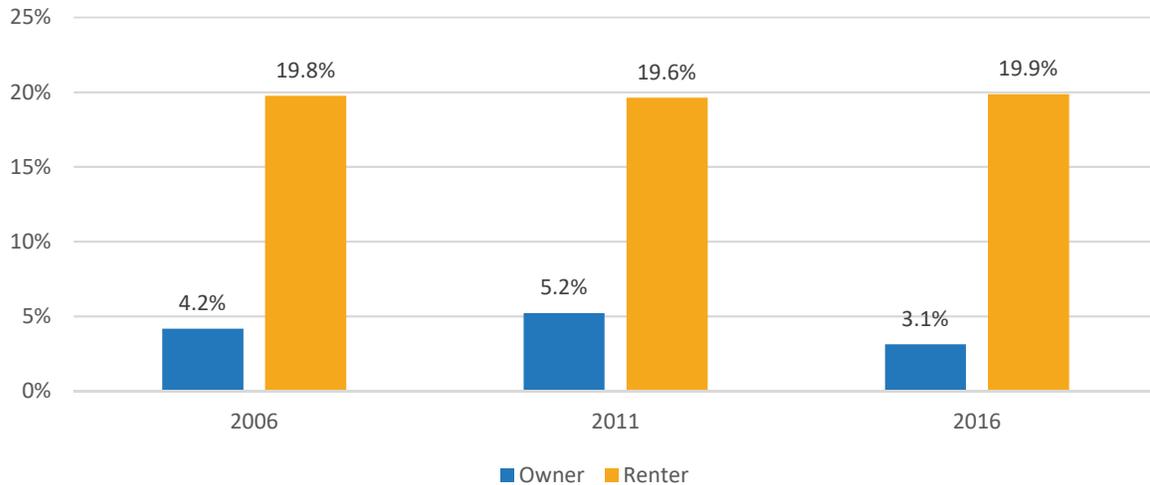
- *Adequate housing is reported by their residents as not requiring any major repairs.*
- *Affordable dwellings costs less than 30% of total before-tax household income.*
- *Suitable housing has enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of resident households, according to National Occupancy Standard (NOS) requirements.<sup>1</sup>*

Core housing need for households has remained fairly consistent in Fort St. John with 9.6% (745) of total households in core housing need in 2016 which is slightly lower than 9.9% (660 households) in 2006 (Custom Statistics Canada Census Reports, 2006-2016). This is lower than the 14.9% (260,225 households) in the province that identified as being in core housing need in 2016. Renter households make up the majority of households that experience core housing need.

---

<sup>1</sup> As defined by CMHC

Figure 1.4: Owner Versus Renter Core Housing Need, City of Fort St. John (2006-2016)



Source: Custom Statistics Canada Census Reports, 2006-2016

**1 in 5 renter households in Fort St. John were in core housing need in 2016 and this has remained constant since 2006.**

## Supportive and Social Housing

There are a number of supports available for residents who are experiencing housing challenges. However, the demand for these programs exceeds the current supply. **As of December 31, 2019, there were 54 applicants on the wait list for social/subsidized housing**, and feedback from stakeholders indicate long wait lists for seniors housing, housing for persons with developmental disabilities, and Indigenous housing. The March 2020 Point In Time Count of individuals experiencing homelessness identified **76 people experiencing homelessness**. 41 (54%) of those individuals identified as being unsheltered (e.g. stayed outside in parks or doorways), including 16 individuals who identified as staying with friends/family or couch surfing.

## Anticipated Housing Needs

Based on the medium growth scenario population projections prepared for Fort St. John’s Growth Study (2015), as well as assumptions about household formation and housing choices, the anticipated housing units required to meet current and future need can be estimated.

**1,085 housing units are anticipated to be required between 2020-2025 to meet residents’ needs, while 4,520 housing units are anticipated to be needed between 2025-2040. The housing stock gap is not meant to be accomplished through new residential development only, but also through renovations and infill development.**

Based on the population projections, the table below provides a summary of the anticipated number of housing units required between 2020 and 2025 (short-term) and between 2025 and 2040

(medium and long-term). It is important to note that the summary of approximate housing units provided below are not mutually exclusive, but instead, describe the anticipated need based on the identified category. For example, one housing unit can address the need for several of the categories below. It is also important to recognize that some of the housing units needed could also be addressed in the existing housing supply through renovations or retrofitting of units.

Table 1.2: Anticipated Housing Needs Summary

Housing Need	Specific Need	2020-2025 (~Units Needed)	2025-2040 (~Units Needed)
<b>By Unit Size</b>	Bachelor	5	10
	1-Bedroom	125	575
	2-Bedroom	275	1,215
	3-Bedroom	325	1,445
	4-or more Bedroom	355	1,270
<b>Tenure</b>	Ownership	720	2,985
	Rental	365	1,535
<b>Affordable</b>	Ownership	170	700
	Rental	210	890
<b>People with Disabilities</b>	Accessible	355	1,550
	Housing with Supports (Mental Illness and Addictions)	10-23	45-120
	Housing with Supports (Cognitive Disabilities)	2	8
<b>Specific Populations</b>	Indigenous Peoples	110	410
	Seniors	542	1,699
	Families	350	1,065
	People who have Experienced Homelessness or At-Risk (Housing with Supports)	36 people	10 people

## Current City Policies

The City of Fort St. John has already taken important steps towards addressing the housing needs and gaps described above and in further detail in the Housing Needs Assessment. The Official Community Plan (OCP) has goals, objectives, and strategies to support residential development in the City, especially in the downtown core, where it plans to accommodate a larger portion of new residential development, well as infill. The main goals of the OCP are to support a mix of housing tenures, prices and types to foster diverse development and provide affordable and inclusive housing opportunities for all residents. The OCP contains separate strategies for low, medium and high density residential development. The key strategies are summarized below.

- **Low density:** increase housing supply by encouraging the development of secondary suites.
- **Medium and high density:** improve accessibility and walkability of these areas through the improvement of form-related requirements for new development.
- **Downtown residential:** maximize the available space at ground level by requiring underground parking facilities.

The City has also prepared a Downtown Action Plan, which contains policy directions and strategies to guide planning, development and infrastructure decisions in Downtown Fort St. John to catalyze investment and transform this area into a lively and vibrant place. Among the ten big moves proposed by this Plan, there are two that directly relate to housing. The first one is Downtown Living, which calls for creating and encouraging a range of living opportunities with innovative design elements in Downtown Fort St. John to help revitalize this area of the City past usual business hours. The second one is Vacant No More, which is about the redevelopment and reclamation of vacant and contaminated sites residential, commercial and civic use purposes.

The Downtown Action Plan also includes a Land Use and Development Concept that conceptually depicts appropriate locations for development of a range of housing types, including front-to-back and side-to-side duplexes, carriage homes, cottage home clusters, traditional (street fronting) row homes, townhouses ranging from 3-4 storeys, 4-6 storey apartment and mixed-use buildings, and tall buildings over 6 storeys. Finally, the Plan includes a list of specific actions to achieve its goals, including a series of amendments to the OCP and Zoning Bylaw.

Based on one of the big moves of the Downtown Action Plan, the City developed the Vacant No More Strategic Action Plan. This plan proposes concrete strategies to reduce underutilization of urban space in the City's downtown core. To incentivize development, the plan explores strategies such as a revitalization tax exemption program, a downtown improvement grant, a downtown reinvestment fund, a density bonusing program, partnerships with First Nations groups, a small community fund, a green municipal fund and creating a brownfield tax class.

There is a robust policy framework to support the actions required to address current and projected housing needs in the City of Fort St. John. The City has made efforts to support and facilitate the development and diversification of housing supply across the housing continuum, to provide a variety of opportunities and choices that are inclusive of all residents. This Housing Strategy will further support the City's current initiatives to provide a cohesive framework to integrate existing and new approaches into an actionable plan, providing all levels of government, private and non-profit sectors and community organizations with a tool to address anticipated housing needs and gaps in Fort St. John.

## Section 3 – Action Plan

The Action Plan contains recommended actions for each of the four key goals to enable the City and community partners to achieve the housing vision for the community over the next ten years. The following section describes the recommended actions.

### Goal 1 – Increase Affordable Rental and Ownership Housing Options

Access to housing is critical to the well-being of individuals and families. An important element of achieving a healthy and complete community is ensuring all residents and mobile workers, including low- and moderate-income households, have access to housing that meets their needs.

#### 1-1 Update the definition of affordable housing in the Official Community Plan

Recommended options for a definition<sup>2</sup> of affordable housing are:

##### **Renter Household Affordability**

- A unit for which the rent is affordable to households earning 70% of median renter household income, where affordable means not spending more than 30% of gross household income on housing costs

##### **Owner Household Affordability**

- A unit for which the purchase price is affordable to households earning 70% of median owner household income, where affordable means not spending more than 30% of gross household income on housing costs

#### 1-2 Adopt affordable housing targets in the Official Community Plan

The recommended targets for the next five years are:

- 145 affordable ownership units be created, or 20% of all ownership units
- 120 affordable rental units be created, or 33% of all rental units

These targets should be monitored and then reviewed and revised as needed after five years. These targets are based on need for affordable housing by each tenure based on the income distribution of households of that tenure (i.e. 20% of owner households have incomes below the affordable ownership threshold and approximately 33% of renter households have incomes below the affordable renter threshold).

---

<sup>2</sup> For the purposes of this definition, the most recent available (2016) Statistics Canada Census income data for median household income and median renter household income will be applied. This will be updated when the 2021 Statistics Canada Census data becomes available.

Data is not available on the percentage of new units that have been created at affordable levels in the recent past. As such, the proposed target has been established solely based on need.

The targets should be monitored annually (using data collected through the building/occupancy permit process) and then adjusted based on the level the market is providing (with or without public inducements). Adjusted future targets should be based on a combination of what is realistic and what the City should be striving towards to address need.

### 1-3 Encourage affordable housing in the downtown core

The Downtown Action Plan, Official Community Plan and Vacant No More Strategic Plan support the further densification of the downtown core. A core objective in the Official Community Plan is to increase the number of residential dwelling units needed in the City, in the downtown by 10% by 2030.

- Support implementation of the 2018-2023 Strategic Plan, Downtown Action Plan, Vacant No More Strategic Action Plan and Official Community Plan policies as they relate to encouraging residential development in the downtown core.
- Review and update the Development Cost Charges Bylaw to enable the City the ability to waive or reduce Development Cost Charges for for-profit affordable rental housing development.
- Promote opportunities for private and non-profit developers and BC Housing to acquire or lease City-owned surplus lands for the development of affordable and social housing:
  - Require developers to enter into a housing agreement with the City. The required agreement should contain conditions, such as tenure, rental and sales prices, processes to manage and tack housing units, associated with the purchase and lease of City-owned lands, to ensure the provision of affordable and social housing stock over the long-term.
- As per the Strategic Plan, investigate opportunities and options for financial incentives to support residential development and redevelopment in the downtown core.
- Reduce parking requirements for developments where affordable housing is being provided, the development is located downtown, the development has easy access to both transit and community amenities and services, or the anticipated future tenants (e.g. seniors, people experiencing homelessness) are considered.

#### *EXAMPLES FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES*

- City of Kamloops developers can have parking requirements reduced by 7% if minimum of 50% units provided are affordable
- City of Nanaimo parking requirements take into consideration the future tenants of the development

- Conduct an analysis of off-street parking supply and demand for residential uses in order to determine if minimum parking requirements may be creating barriers to developing affordable housing.

## **1-4 Continue to advocate for and leverage funding opportunities for affordable housing in Fort St. John**

- In collaboration with community partners, consider and pursue available funding opportunities such as the National Housing Strategy Co-Investment Fund for both new housing development and repairs, maintenance and renovations to existing housing units.
- Explore additional funding opportunities for the development of affordable housing from non-government partners such as the Northern Housing Incentive Program.

## **1-5 Consider additional zoning tools for new development to support meeting affordable housing targets**

- Conduct a review of different zoning tools such as inclusionary zoning and rental only zoning, to understand the potential benefits and obstacles of requiring new developments to provide a certain percentage of affordable rental or ownership housing.

### *EXAMPLES FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES*

- The City of New Westminster is one of the first municipalities in BC to have adopted a rental-only zone
- Ucluelet requires 15-20% of new multi-family units in new development to be affordable and that a percentage of units to be set aside for employees

## **1-6 Continue to work with community partners and developers to identify opportunities for affordable housing in Fort St. John**

- Work with non-profit organizations through the development process when new developments include units dedicated to subsidized, supportive or affordable housing.
- Facilitate proactive discussions with developers who are seeking approval for multi-residential developments on opportunities to incorporate affordable housing.

- Develop a guide for private and non-profit sector partners to help them navigate the City's development approval process, and include links to City plans and processes, regulatory tools and available resources, and additional resources, such as provincial and federal funding opportunities and programs.
- Create resources for staff to use to become informed and kept up to date on processes, funding opportunities and programs.

## **1-7 Continue to advocate for and promote funding programs and initiatives to support repairs to affordable and social housing to maintain and increase the retention and quality of housing stock**

- Promote funding opportunities and programs such as those available from the province through BC Housing and CMHC for completing repairs and renovations to affordable housing, including programs and funding for off-reserve Indigenous housing and funding opportunities for renovations to increase accessibility. Information could be shared through the Housing Hub (see Goal 4-2).

## **1-8 Monitor demolition and conversion of rental units to strata**

- Explore the need to develop a Strata Conversion Policy to protect purpose-built rental housing, set conditions to be applied prior to demolition and conversion of existing stock, and include provisions for monitoring demolition and conversion.
  - Municipalities that have developed and implemented a Strata Conversion Policy typically set conditions on how and when conversion could occur. Often, it is only when the vacancy rate has hit a certain threshold, usually ranging between 2-4%. Some municipalities also require that a certain percentage of current tenants to be in support of conversion.

### *EXAMPLES FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES*

- The City of Kamloops has developed an Affordable Housing Toolkit for private and non-profit developers
- The City of Nanaimo intends to create a guide to support the development of non-market housing by outlining the process and assigning city staff to act as liaison

### *EXAMPLES FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES*

- City of Nanaimo restricts conversion of rentals to strata when the vacancy rate falls below 3% and signed consent of 80% of existing tenants is required
- Town of Smithers will consider conversion if rental vacancy rate does not fall below 5% with the rental units of the subject site are removed

## Goal 2 – Encourage Diversity of Housing Options Including Housing with Supports

A range of housing choices are required to accommodate the diversity of housing and supports needed across Fort St. John. Maintaining and improving the existing housing stock can help extend the life and supply of existing stock to meet affordable housing needs without the high costs of new housing development. A diverse range of housing means ensuring that the housing stock can accommodate fluctuations in labour needs, aging of the population, a diverse culture, and varying abilities and circumstances. This action will help to provide safe, good quality housing for Fort St. John residents and the mobile work force.

### 2-1 Continue to encourage a mix of housing types and tenures

- Promote secondary suites and detached suites as an option to increase affordable rental housing units and support them as opportunities for aging in place and intergenerational living.
- Monitor new multi-family housing development to identify whether the Zoning Bylaw regulations are supporting of a large diversity of housing forms.
- Require neighbourhood level plans to include targets on percentage of housing units of various forms and affordability.

### 2-2 Adopt accessible housing targets in the Official Community Plan

- The recommended target for 2020 to 2025 is 55 new accessible housing units. This should be monitored and then reviewed and updated after five years.

It is estimated that approximately 355 additional accessible housing units are needed between 2020 and 2025. This is part of the overall number of housing units required, as identified in the Housing Needs Assessment and some of these units may also be affordable. The majority of accessible units needed is anticipated to be addressed by retrofits of existing housing, rather than new housing stock. If all of the housing needs were met through new stock, approximately one third of the new stock would need to be accessible. In addition, if approximately 55 new accessible housing units were created between 2020 and 2025, or 5% of all new units created were accessible, it is both a realistic and ambitious target and would position the community well for meeting its accessible housing needs.

### 2-3 Continue to encourage the development of supportive housing and housing options for seniors

- Support the implementation of Official Community Plan policies by continuing to encourage innovative housing options to meet the needs for supportive housing and housing for seniors.

### **2-4 Support Indigenous housing providers/communities to create and retain Indigenous led affordable housing and support services**

- Share available information with First Nations communities and Indigenous organizations about how to access resources, funding and programs to support Indigenous led housing, services and supports such as culturally appropriate mental health services, education and life skills training programs.
- Work with First Nations communities who wish to identify and acquire appropriate vacant land and brownfield sites located within the City to support the development of Indigenous led housing and provision of culturally appropriate services and supports.

### **2-5 Continue to advocate to the province to increase in-home supports and subsidies for seniors and people with disabilities**

- Support service providers and the Health Authority by writing letters of support to improve and increase in-home supports through additional funding or resources.

## **Goal 3 – Support a Community Response to Homelessness**

Meeting the housing needs of individuals and families in Fort St. John includes having a community support system in place that can proactively build awareness of the supports available, respond in a timely way with available supports to individuals and families in crisis and in transition.

### **3-1 In partnership with the community, continue to advocate for increases to housing subsidies and leverage diverse funding sources**

- Support community partners in pursuing community funding programs such as United Way, Social Planning and Research Council of British Columbia (SPARC BC) and Vancouver Foundation through providing letters of support.
- Write letters of support for increases in housing subsidies to support people experiencing or at-risk of homelessness and for provincial income supports/shelter allowances to better align with rent levels.
- Promote and increase awareness by residents of provincial initiatives such as the Homeless Outreach and Homelessness Prevention Programs.

### **3-2 Continue to support community service providers in exploring and facilitating appropriate/additional short-term accommodation options for various population groups (i.e. people using substances, youth)**

- Promote unique housing options such as host homes programs or opportunities to leverage housing subsidies with community support programs.

## Goal 4 – Build Our Collective Capacity

In addition to facilitating the development and availability of a diverse range of housing options, increased awareness and education of local housing needs and gaps, available resources and funding opportunities, will help to facilitate a collaborative response to meeting local housing needs.

### 4-1 Facilitate the involvement of community partners and organizations in implementing the Housing Strategy

- Host a forum to build awareness of and share information about the Housing Needs Assessment and launch the Housing Strategy. The forum can also provide an opportunity for community partners to identify key Housing Strategy actions that they will lead and take action on.
- Advocate for BC Non-Profit Housing Association and BC Housing to host information sessions in Fort St. John for northern BC communities.
- Consider opportunities for other City departments, non-profit organizations, private developers, service providers and other community partners to assist with research, data analysis, reporting, and monitoring and managing of housing units and agreements.

### 4-2 Establish a “Housing Hub” web page to host information and resources for community organizations, housing providers, developers and residents

- The Housing Hub will evolve from the existing Housing Strategy web page and include:
  - Information for developers, including the Developers Toolkit, once prepared (see Goal 1-6);
  - Information on funding initiatives and programs:
  - Provincial and federal programs for first time homebuyers (e.g. First Time Home Buyers Program and First Time Home Buyers Incentive);
  - Completing repairs and renovations to rental housing to maintain safe and good-quality rental housing stock; and
  - For non-profit housing providers to develop affordable housing (e.g. BC Housing Community Partnership Initiative and Community Housing Fund).
  - Information on the housing continuum and a glossary for common housing terms;
  - Updates on the Housing Needs Assessment and Housing Strategy implementation; and
  - Contact information.

## 4-3 Monitor housing needs and establish data collection systems and processes

- Provide an annual update on the status of the Housing Strategy Implementation Plan related to the progress of the actions that have been undertaken in the previous year.
- Conduct a review of the Housing Needs Assessment and Strategy in 3-5 years, as new data becomes available.
- Develop a data collection process to compile rental rates information on units in the secondary rental market in Fort St. John.
- Conduct a shadow population study to gain a better understanding of housing needs and demands, as well as impacts to infrastructure, health care, community services and amenities, for the mobile workforce who reside or use services in Fort St. John.
- Establish a process to collect average rents and sale prices of all new housing stock on a regular basis to help identify where there may be gaps in new housing development and to inform target setting and determine how well the targets are being met.

### *EXAMPLES FROM OTHER COMMUNITIES*

- The Regional Municipality of Wood Buffalo conducts a count of its shadow population as part of the regular municipal census it undertakes
- The City of Grande Prairie monitors the progress of their Housing Strategy through an annual report

## Section 4 – Implementation Plan

A high level implementation plan is provided below that identifies current priorities and key partners that will lead the implementation of the various actions across each of the four key goal areas.

### Goal 1 – Increase Affordable Rental and Homeownership Options

Access to housing is critical to the well-being of individuals and families. An important element of achieving a healthy and complete community is ensuring all residents and mobile workers, including low- and moderate-income households, have access to housing that meets their needs.

Goal 1 – Increase Affordable Rental and Homeownership Options									
Strategy	Actions	Priority				Implementation By		Anticipated Resources	City Role
		Ongoing	Short-Term (1-3 yrs.)	Medium-Term (4-7 yrs.)	Long-Term (8-10 yrs.)	Lead (Who's Responsible)	Partner(s)		
<b>1-1 Update the definition of affordable housing in the Official Community Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Update the definition and monitor on an annual basis</li> </ul>		<b>S</b>			City		Staff Time	Planner/ Facilitator
<b>1-2 Adopt affordable housing targets in the Official Community Plan</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt targets and monitor on an annual basis</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing</b>				City	Developers	Staff Time	Planner/ Facilitator
<b>1-3 Encourage affordable housing in the downtown core</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Support the implementation of City policies such as those in the Official Community Plan</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing</b>				City	Developers Non-Profits	Staff Time	Planner/ Facilitator

Goal 1 – Increase Affordable Rental and Homeownership Options									
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and update the Development Cost Charges Bylaw to waive them for for-profit affordable rental housing in the downtown core</li> </ul>		S			City		Staff Time Lost Revenue	Investor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote opportunities for developers to acquire/lease City-owned land for affordable housing development</li> </ul>	Ongoing				City	Developers Non-Profits	Staff Time Lost Revenue	Investor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Investigate opportunities and options for financial incentives to support residential development and redevelopment in the downtown core</li> </ul>				L	City	Developers Non-Profits	Staff Time Lost Revenue	Investor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Reduce parking requirements for developments that provide affordable housing, are located downtown and where future tenants are considered</li> </ul>			M		City	Developers	Staff Time	Planner/ Facilitator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a review of off-street parking for residential uses</li> </ul>			M		City		Staff Time Funding	Planner/ Facilitator
1-4 Continue to advocate for and	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with community partners to act on government funding for</li> </ul>	Ongoing				Non-Profits	City	Staff Time	Planner/ Facilitator

Goal 1 – Increase Affordable Rental and Homeownership Options											
leverage funding opportunities for affordable housing	new affordable housing and repairs to existing										
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore non-governmental funding opportunities</li> </ul>	Ongoing					Non-Profits	City	Staff Time Funding	Planner/ Facilitator	
1-5 Consider additional Zoning tools for new development to support meeting affordable housing targets	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a review of different Zoning tools to explore benefits and obstacles of requiring new developers to provide a percentage of affordable rental/ownership housing</li> </ul>					L	City	Developers Non-Profits	Staff Time Funding	Planner/ Facilitator	
1-6 Continue to work with community partners and developers to identify opportunities for affordable housing in Fort St. John	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop a guide for private and non-profit sector partners to navigate the City’s development approval process</li> </ul>					M	City	Developers Non-Profits	Staff Time Funding	Planner/ Facilitator	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with non-profit organizations through the development process</li> </ul>	Ongoing					City	Non-Profits	Staff Time	Planner/ Facilitator	
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Facilitate proactive discussions with developers on opportunities to incorporate affordable housing</li> </ul>	Ongoing						Developers	City	Staff Time	Planner/ Facilitator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Create resources for staff to become informed and kept up to date on</li> </ul>	Ongoing						City		Staff Time	Planner/ Facilitator

Goal 1 – Increase Affordable Rental and Homeownership Options									
	programs and opportunities								
<b>1-7</b> <b>Continue to advocate for and promote funding programs and initiatives to support repairs to affordable and social housing</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote available funding opportunities for completing repairs and renovations to affordable housing</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing</b>				Non-Profits  Property Managers and Landlords	City	Staff Time	Educator

## Goal 2 – Encourage Diversity of Housing Options Including Housing with Supports

A range of housing choices are required to accommodate the diversity of housing and supports needed across Fort St. John. Maintaining and improving the existing housing stock can help extend the life and supply of existing stock to meet affordable housing needs without the high costs of new housing development. A diverse range of housing means ensuring that the housing stock can accommodate fluctuations in labour needs, aging of the population, a diverse culture, and varying abilities and circumstances. This action will help to provide safe, good quality housing for Fort St. John residents and the mobile work force.

Goal 2 – Encourage Diversity of Housing Options Including Housing With Support									
Strategy	Actions	Priority				Implementation By		Anticipated Resources	City Role
		Ongoing	Short-Term (1-3 yrs.)	Medium-Term (4-7 yrs.)	Long-Term (8-10 yrs.)	Lead (Who's Responsible)	Partner(s)		
<b>2-1</b> Continue to encourage a mix of housing types and tenures	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote secondary suites as opportunities to increase affordable housing</li> </ul>			<b>M</b>		City		Staff Time	Planner/Facilitator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Monitor new multi-family housing development to identify whether the Zoning Bylaw regulations are supporting of a large diversity of housing forms</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing</b>				City	Developers Non-Profits	Staff Time	Planner/Facilitator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Require neighbourhood level plans to include housing targets</li> </ul>		<b>S</b>			City	Developers	Staff Time	Planner/Facilitator
<b>2-2</b> Adopt accessible housing targets in the Official Community Plan	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Adopt targets for accessible housing and monitor on an annual basis</li> </ul>	<b>Ongoing</b>				City	Developers	Staff Time	Planner/Facilitator

Goal 2 – Encourage Diversity of Housing Options Including Housing With Support										
<p><b>2-3</b> Continue to encourage the development of supportive housing and housing options for seniors</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Encourage innovative housing options for supportive and seniors housing</li> </ul>	Ongoing					<p>Developers</p> <p>Non-Profits</p>	<p>City</p>	<p>Staff Time</p>	<p>Educator</p>
<p><b>2-4</b> Support Indigenous housing providers and communities to create and retain Indigenous led affordable housing and support services</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Share available information and resources related to programs and funding</li> </ul>	Ongoing					<p>City</p>	<p>Indigenous Housing and Service Providers</p> <p>First Nations Communities</p>	<p>Staff Time</p>	<p>Educator</p>
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Work with First Nations communities who are interested in providing Indigenous housing or support services within the City</li> </ul>	Ongoing					<p>Indigenous Housing and Service Providers</p> <p>First Nations Communities</p>	<p>City</p>	<p>Staff Time</p> <p>Lost Revenue</p>	<p>Planner/ Facilitator</p>
<p><b>2-5</b> Continue to advocate to the province for an increase in-home supports and subsidies for seniors and people with disabilities</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write letters of support with community partners to improve and increase in-home supports</li> </ul>	Ongoing					<p>Health Authority</p> <p>Non-Profits</p>	<p>City</p>	<p>Staff Time</p>	<p>Advocate</p>

## Goal 3 – Support a Community Response to Homelessness

Meeting the housing needs of individuals and families in Fort St. John includes having a community support system in place that can proactively build awareness of the supports available, respond in a timely way with available supports to individuals and families in crisis and in transition.

Goal 3 – Support a Community Response to Homelessness									
Strategy	Action	Priority				Implementation By		Anticipated Resources	City Role
		Ongoing	Short-Term (1-3 yrs.)	Medium-Term (4-7 yrs.)	Long-Term (8-10 yrs.)	Lead (Who's Responsible)	Partner(s)		
3-1 In partnership with the community, continue to advocate for increases to housing subsidies and leverage diverse funding sources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write letters of support for community partners pursuing funding</li> </ul>	Ongoing				Non-Profits	City	Staff Time	Advocate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Write letters of support for increases in housing subsidies and provincial income supports/shelter allowances</li> </ul>	Ongoing				Non-Profits	City	Staff Time	Advocate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote and increase awareness of provincial homelessness initiatives</li> </ul>	Ongoing				Non-Profits	City	Staff Time	Educator
3-2 Continue to support community service providers in exploring and facilitating appropriate and additional options for various population groups	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Promote and educate service providers on unique housing options</li> </ul>	Ongoing				Non-Profits	City Developers	Staff Time	Educator

## Goal 4 – Build Our Collective Capacity

In addition to facilitating the development and availability of a diverse range of housing options, increased awareness and education of local housing needs and gaps, available resources and funding opportunities, will help to facilitate a collaborative response to meeting local housing needs.

Goal 4 – Build Our Collective Capacity									
Strategy	Action	Priority				Implementation By		Anticipated Resources	City Role
		Ongoing	Short-Term (1-3 yrs.)	Medium-Term (4-7 yrs.)	Long-Term (8-10 yrs.)	Lead (Who's Responsible)	Partner(s)		
4-1 Facilitate the involvement of community partners and organizations in implementing the Housing Strategy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Host a forum to share information about the Housing Needs Assessment and launch the Strategy</li> </ul>		S			City	Developers Non-Profits BC Housing	Staff Time Funding	Investor
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Advocate for BC Non-Profit Housing Association and BC Housing to host information sessions in Fort St. John for northern communities</li> </ul>			M		City	Developers Non-Profits BCNPHA BC Housing	Staff Time Funding	Advocate
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Consider opportunities for other City departments, non-profit organizations, private developers, service providers and other community partners to assist with research, data analysis, reporting, monitoring and managing of housing units and agreements.</li> </ul>	Ongoing				City	Developers Non-Profits Community Development Institute Northern Lights College	Staff Time	Planner/ Facilitator

Goal 4 – Build Our Collective Capacity									
<p><b>4-2</b> Establish a “Housing Hub” web page to host information and resources for community organizations, housing providers, developers and residents</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Transfer information over from current project website and continue to update with information about programs, funding opportunities, key terms and status of implementation</li> </ul>	Ongoing				City		Staff Time	Educator
<p><b>4-3</b> Monitor housing needs and trends and establish data collection systems and processes</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Provide annual update on the status of the Housing Strategy implementation</li> </ul>	Ongoing				City		Staff Time	Educator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a review of the Needs Assessment and Strategy every 3-5 years, as data is available</li> </ul>			M		City	Community Development Institute	Staff Time	Planner/Facilitator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Develop data collection process to compile rental rate information on units in the secondary rental market</li> </ul>		S			City	Real Estate Industry Property Managers and Landlords	Staff Time Funding	Planner/Facilitator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Conduct a shadow population study</li> </ul>			M		City	Community Development Institute	Staff Time Funding	Planner/Facilitator
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Establish a process to collect data on average rents and sales prices of new homes</li> </ul>		S			City	Real Estate Industry Developers	Staff Time Funding	Planner/Facilitator

## Goal 4 – Build Our Collective Capacity

							Property Managers and Landlords		
--	--	--	--	--	--	--	---------------------------------	--	--

## Section 5 – Glossary of Terms

**Accessible Housing:** Refers to units that are designed to promote accessibility for individuals with disabilities. This sometimes includes physical elements such as low height cupboards or light switches, wide doorways, and adapted bathrooms.

**Adequate Housing:** Dwellings not requiring any major repairs, as reported by residents. (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC))

**Affordable Housing:** The term ‘affordable housing’ encompasses a broad range of housing, including social housing, private market rental units, and ownership housing. The City’s Official Community Plan defines affordable housing as housing that does not cost greater than 30% of 80% of the median household income. Shelter costs include the following:

**For renters:** rent and any payments for electricity, fuel, water and other municipal services.

**For owners:** mortgage payments (principal and interest), property taxes, and any condominium fees, along with payments for electricity, fuel, water and other municipal services. (CMHC)

**Assisted Living:** A type of housing for seniors and people with disabilities that includes on-site hospitality and personal care support services. (BC Housing)

**At Risk of Homelessness:** Refers to people who are not homeless, but whose current economic and/or housing situation is precarious or does not meet public health and safety standards. (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness)

**By-Names List:** Refers to a real-time list of people experiencing homelessness that includes a robust set of data points that support coordinated access and prioritization at a household level and an understanding of homeless inflow and outflow at a system level. The real-time actionable data supports triage to appropriate supports and services, system performance evaluation, and advocacy. (Built For Zero Canada)

**Cooperative Housing:** A co-op is a type of housing that residents own and operate as part of a membership. (BC Housing)

**Coordinated Access:** A coordinated access system is the process by which individuals and families who are experiencing homelessness or at-risk of homelessness are directed to community-level access points where trained workers use a common assessment tool to evaluate the individual or family’s depth of need, prioritize them for housing support services and then help to match them to available housing focused interventions.

**Chronic Homelessness:** Refers to individuals who are currently experiencing homelessness and who have been homeless for six months over the past year.

**Core Housing Need:** A household is in core housing need if its housing does not meet one or more of the adequacy, suitability or affordability standards and it would have to spend 30% or more of its before-tax income to access local housing that meets all three standards. (CMHC)

**Emergency Housing:** Immediate, short-stay housing for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.

**Episodic Homelessness:** Refers to individuals who are currently homeless and have experienced three or more episodes of homelessness in the past year (episodes are defined as periods when a person would be in a shelter or place not fit for human habitations, and after at least 30 days, would be back in the shelter or inhabitable location. (Built For Zero Canada)

**Homelessness:** Describes the situation of an individual, family or community without stable, permanent, appropriate housing, or the immediate prospect, means and ability of acquiring it. (Canadian Observatory on Homelessness)

**Housing First:** Is a recovery-oriented approach to ending homelessness that centres on quickly moving people experiencing homelessness into independent and permanent housing and then providing additional supports and services as needed. There are five core principles of Housing First:

1. Immediate access to permanent housing with no housing readiness requirements
2. Consumer choice and self-determination
3. Recovery orientation
4. Individuals and client-driven supports, and
5. Social and community integration

**LGBTQ2S+:** Lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, two-spirited, queer, and additional identities.

**Primary Rental Market:** Consists of units in privately imitated, purpose-built rental structures of three units or more. (CMHC)

**Rent-Geared-to-Income:** A type of subsidized housing where the housing provider matches your rent to how much you earn. (BC Housing)

**Secondary Rental Market:** Refers to rental units that were not built for the purpose of renting but are being offered for rent (e.g. condominium apartments, secondary suites, single detached homes).

**Social Housing:** Social housing is subsidized housing that generally was developed under federal and provincial programs during the 1950s – 1990s, where ongoing subsidies enable rents to be paid by

residents on a 'rent-geared-to-income' (RGI) basis (i.e. 30% of gross household income). Social housing is also called subsidized, RGI, community, or public housing.

**Subsidized housing:** A type of housing for which government provides financial support or rent assistance.

**Suitable Housing:** Housing with enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of residential households. (CMHC)

**Supportive Housing:** A type of housing that provides on-site supports and services to residents who cannot live independently. (BC Housing)

**Tenure:** Refers to whether the household owns or rents their private dwelling.



**December 2020**

**Housing Strategy**

**APPENDIX A**

## Table of Contents

- Introduction ..... 2
- Background Studies and Policies ..... 2
  - Housing Matters BC (2014) ..... 2
  - Downtown Action Plan Package (2015) ..... 4
  - National Housing Strategy Letter (2016) ..... 6
  - Affordable Housing Committee Summary to Council (2017) ..... 7
  - Official Community Plan (2017) ..... 7
  - Vacant No More Strategic Action Plan (2017) ..... 12
  - Age Friendly Assessment and Action Plan (2018) ..... 14
  - Zoning Bylaw (2019, as amended) ..... 15
  - Social and Economic Development Framework for Fort St. John (2020) ..... 17
- Historical Background Studies ..... 17
  - Affordable Housing Background Study (2009) ..... 17
  - Affordable Housing Needs Assessment (2011) ..... 18

## Introduction

This document presents a summary of the studies and policies that were reviewed as part of the background research to inform the City's Housing Need Assessment (HNA) and Housing Strategy. These documents were selected based on their contribution to understanding and guiding housing matters in Fort St. John. Some of the studies and policies included in this review address housing issues indirectly, in which case only the sections that are most relevant to the goals of the HNA and Housing Strategy were considered. The historical efforts of the City to collect and analyze data and develop and implement housing policies were also reviewed. The following background documents were included in this review:

## Background Studies and Policies

- Housing Matters BC (2014)
- Downtown Action Plan Package (2015)
- National Housing Strategy Letter (2016)
- Affordable Housing Committee Summary to Council (2017)
- Official Community Plan (2017)
- Vacant No More Strategic Action Plan (2017)
- Age Friendly Assessment and Action Plan (2018)
- Zoning Bylaw (2019, as amended)
- Social and Economic Development Framework for Fort St. John (2020)

## Historical Background Studies

- Affordable Housing Background Study (2009)
- Affordable Housing Needs Assessment (2011)

## Background Studies and Policies

### Housing Matters BC (2014)

In 2014, British Columbia updated its 2006 Housing Strategy. The 2014 Housing Matters BC presents the progress and successes achieved by the province from 2006 to 2014 in areas such as providing affordable and social housing and reducing homelessness. It also emphasizes the current strengths and opportunities of the province to continue to work toward the goals of housing affordability and reduced homelessness, and explains the three strategic shifts in policy that will be adopted going forward:

- Healthy Buildings (flexible, responsive and balanced regulatory systems and codes)
- Stable Housing (modern, affordable and accessible services)

- Committed Partnerships (facilitating strategic partnerships that increase housing options, decrease costs and promote effective, coordinated programs for all)

These policy shifts are supported by six strategies:

1. **STABLE HOUSING:** Stable housing with integrated support services for those facing homelessness.
2. **PRIORITY ASSISTANCE:** BC's most vulnerable citizens receive priority for assistance.
3. **ABORIGINAL HOUSING:** Aboriginal housing need is addressed through a strong Aboriginal housing sector.
4. **RENTAL HOUSING:** Low to moderate income households have improved access to affordable and stable rental housing.
5. **HOMEOWNERSHIP:** Homeownership continues to be a sound option for British Columbians.
6. **BUILT ENVIRONMENT:** BC's governance framework for housing, building and technical equipment safety is clear, effective and balanced.

Each of these strategies contains action items that support the three policy shifts guiding the Housing Strategy. In summary, these actions are:

**To promote healthy buildings:** establish a Uniform Building Code; review the Safety Standards Act to ensure that it effectively addresses new products; implement targeted updates to the Strata Property Act; and establish knowledge, skills and competency requirements for key participants in the system and a certification program for elevating device mechanics under the Safety Standards Act.

**To support stable housing:** transform the Residential Tenancy Branch services to enhance services and meet demand; develop an accessible and cost effective dispute resolution system for strata property owners; develop a model for third party dispute resolution of home warranty claims; enhance rental assistance programs; and improve supports for the homeless, particularly during transitions.

**To create committed partnerships:** maintain, upgrade and redevelop the existing social housing stock, and transfer stock to the non-profit housing sector where appropriate; increase affordable housing options, expand successful financing programs for new affordable rental housing, and promote partnerships to develop innovative housing services for the homeless and ensure adequate supply of rental housing; strengthen the non-profit and Aboriginal housing sector to support culturally appropriate and sustainable social and market housing options; facilitate partnerships with, and provide education to, local governments and community agencies to encourage infill, redevelopment and higher density development; and advocate for long term federal funding.

## Downtown Action Plan Package (2015)

This Plan contains policy directions and strategies to guide planning, development and infrastructure decisions in Downtown Fort St. John to catalyze investment and transform this area of the City in a lively and vibrant place. The five fundamentals guiding this plan are:

- A multi-modal transportation system
- A compact mix of land use and activities
- A high-quality public realm
- Community, culture and arts
- Creating economic conditions for successful development

### Part III: Ten Big Moves

**Downtown Living:** calls for creating and encouraging a range of living opportunities in Downtown Fort St. John to help revitalize this area of the City past usual business hours. The plan highlights opportunities for developing housing on top of street grade commercial uses in mixed-use developments, and compact street-fronting townhouses and apartments on infill and vacant redevelopment sites.

The market demand study completed in 2012 as part of the Downtown Action Plan forecasts a population increase from 20,340 in 2011 to 31,100 by 2031, and roughly 35,000 by 2036. This translates into a demand of 3,516 single detached dwelling units (average of 146 units/year); 1,200 townhouses, duplexes, and row-houses (average of 50 units/year); and 1,151 apartments (average of 48 units/year). Data from 2014 confirms that these forecasts are being exceeded.

The objectives of this Big Move include meeting the growing housing demand through residential infill and redevelopment in downtown, encouraging standalone residential uses on vacant sites and mixed-use development along key retail streets, supporting affordable housing choices, encouraging innovative and affordable ground-oriented family housing, and using tax exemptions, DCC holidays and parking relaxations, among other tools, to incentivize residential development in downtown.

**Vacant No More:** proposes the redevelopment of vacant sites and rehabilitation of contaminated sites to reinforce the vitality, character and confidence of Downtown. Using infill development as a main strategy, this Big Move is about transforming underutilized and contaminated sites into integrated urban spaces destined for residential, commercial and civic uses. It also enables the public acquisition of land to achieve the goals and vision for downtown, including the development of a wide range of housing options and other temporary and permanent uses key to supporting residential development.

## Part IV: Land Use and Development Plan – Land Use Designations

FIGURE A: LAND USE MAP



This section presents a land use and built form concept for Downtown. The land use plan identifies residential uses in the periphery of downtown, around the Central Business District, the Arts, Culture and Entertainment District, the Education and Innovation District, and the Civic District. There is also a “Transition Commercial District” where there are opportunities for mixed use developments.

In terms of built form, the plan encourages a range of housing types, including front-to-back and side-to-side duplexes, carriage homes, cottage home clusters, traditional (street fronting) row homes, townhouses ranging from 3-4 stories, 4 - 6 storey apartment and mixed-use buildings, and tall buildings over 6 storeys in appropriate locations.

To optimize the use of space, the plan suggests parking approaches that assume provision of enclosed, secured parking through either tuck-under/under-building, and garage parking. The target density is between 10 and 20 units per net acre, depending on the housing type. The plan presents a few sketches with clustering options that would support these densities. Examples below.



## Part IV: Land Use and Development Plan – Objectives, Policies and Actions

The second part of this section provides policies and actions to achieve the objectives and aspirations presented in the land use designation and built form concept. Housing related items include:

### 1) Objectives:

- To encourage the development of a mix of appropriate, high-density land uses in the downtown.
- To provide guidance and flexibility to enable a creative response by developers to both market and site conditions.
- To promote, encourage, and incentivize downtown living.
- To support infill and redevelopment while ensuring a consistent standard of design quality for new development.

### 2) Policies:

- Amend the OCP to include a new Downtown Housing land use designation.
- Develop and adopt supportive zoning and consider pre-zoning selected sites to support implementation of the Downtown Housing Land Use Designation.
- Accommodate a significant share of the City of Fort St John’s overall residential growth through multi-family and mixed-use developments located in the downtown.
- Amend the zoning by-law to include the following on-site parking requirements for downtown residential development: 1.25 stalls/unit for apartment developments and 1.5 stalls/unit for townhouse developments.
- Establish a Tax Exemption By-Law for the Downtown Plan Area as enabled by the BC Community Charter for new multi-family residential infill projects of 4 units or more, and new mixed buildings of 2 storeys or more.
- Update the City’s Development Cost Charges Bylaw to waive or reduce Development Costs Charges in the downtown plan area for non-profit rental housing (including supportive living housing), affordable market housing, multi-family residential infill projects of 4 units or more, mixed-use buildings of 3 storeys or more, and other development that demonstrates a significant reduction in GHG emissions or reduced environmental impact.

## National Housing Strategy Letter (2016)

A letter was sent by the City to the National Housing Strategy Team at the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation to provide input and feedback to the **“Let’s Talk Housing”** national discussion.

The letter presents the characteristics of the local context that shape housing needs and policies in the City of Fort St. John:

- Northern climate requiring climate-sensitive and energy-efficient housing design strategies
- Fast-growing population requiring affordable housing, i.e., diversity of type, ownership/tenure options

- Wide age-range population requiring flexible housing design criteria for accessibility, visitability, and ageing-in-place
- Wide income-range population requiring financial security to attain climate-sensitive, affordable, accessible, and flexible housing options over time

The letter emphasizes how the City's Official Community Plan addresses housing needs in the community, namely through environmental stewardship and winter city policies, and policies that promote the development of affordable and accessible housing, and multigenerational and age-friendly communities. Based on these observations about the local context, the City proposes the following discussion themes around housing:

- **Sustainability:** For climate-sensitive communities, support innovations to reduce residential water and energy consumption, promote energy-efficient construction and siting standards, and increase residential densities and mixed-uses to meet environmental stewardship and climate-design targets.
- **Affordability:** For fast-growing communities, promote initiatives that encourage construction of a range of housing types, from non-market to standard market ownership, in order to improve housing affordability and balance with development guidelines for density, design, and affordability.
- **Inclusivity:** For communities with wide age-ranges, support innovations and initiatives that are responsive to flexible housing design criteria for visitability, accessibility, and age-in-place.
- **Financial Flexibility & Security:** For communities with wide income-ranges coupled with fluctuating housing market pressures, support initiatives that mitigate geographic or periodic pressures on local housing markets such as, housing design innovations, housing trades retention, improved subsidization of key housing markets/types to increase individuals' flexibility and the community's financial security.

## Affordable Housing Committee Summary to Council (2017)

In its 2017 recommendation to Council, the Affordable Housing Committee prioritized the following housing types (in this order):

1. Low-Cost Market Housing
2. Transition and Supportive Housing
3. Social Housing and Rent Supplements
4. Emergency Shelters
5. Near Market Housing

## Official Community Plan (2017)

One section of the Land Use Plan in the updated Official Community Plan (OCP) refers to future residential development in the City. The residential policy section is organized by general strategies, low density residential strategies, medium density residential strategies, high density residential strategies. The City has also prioritized residential development and infill in the downtown core and

has a separate section of strategies related to downtown residential development. The OCP sets out overarching goals, objectives and strategies for residential development.

## Residential Development

### Goals

1. To maintain a mix of tenures, price points and housing types to foster development in Fort St. John while providing affordable, attainable and inclusive housing options for citizens.
2. To diversify the housing stock in Fort St. John.
3. To foster densification within the existing boundary, specifically in the City's downtown while diversifying the housing stock.

### Objectives

1. Strive to achieve residential land uses of approximately 35% of the City's land base.
2. Support residential growth and development while addressing concerns related to the environment, access to parks and natural areas, parking, traffic, noise, lights, and odour effects on other properties and neighbourhood character.
3. Encourage and support more diverse housing options that respond to needs as they change over time, including affordable, attainable and inclusive housing.
4. Encourage the development of new housing that integrates with the character of existing neighbourhoods.
5. Encourage and support the upgrading and retrofitting of older houses.
6. Support the development of supportive housing and community care facilities, preferably close to community services and public transit.
7. Support the development of adaptive housing to meet the changing needs of a household over its lifespan and enable aging in place.
8. Encourage the development of a range of seniors living facilities, from independent living to extended care, within the community.
9. Continue the partnership with School District No. 60's Residential Construction Program.

### General Strategies

1. Encourage all residential development and redevelopment projects to minimize the disturbance of existing trees, topographic features and landscaped areas that contribute character and quality to the streetscape. Where these areas are disturbed, encourage the installation of new features and landscaped areas that contribute to the streetscape and are consistent with other well-developed landscapes in the neighbourhood.
2. Ensure that new residential subdivisions include a mandatory dedication of park space included in the development or require a cash-in-lieu payment as an alternative approach, only if the park space does not meet the minimum park size of 0.4 ha.
3. Ensure that a planned subdivision or development incorporates a rhythm in its design, rather than a repetition or pattern of building types.

## Low Density Residential Strategies

The low density residential land use designation is designed to enable the development of residential areas containing primarily single family residential development. This style of residential development will have a maximum gross density of 20 units per hectare.

### Strategies

1. Encourage Low Density Residential development to a maximum of 20 units per hectare in areas designated Low Density Residential on the Land Use map (Schedule B).
2. Encourage the development of detached suites, such as carriage houses or garage suites, in Low Density Residential areas that have rear lane access.
3. Encourage the development of attached suites in single-detached homes by permitting suites in selected zones.
4. Support closer front setbacks of residential dwellings to sidewalks in the Zoning Bylaw to increase pedestrian friendliness.
5. Support home-based businesses, provided that they are clearly secondary and incidental to the principal residential use.
6. Encourage more open green space and better snow storage capacity in subdivisions.

## Medium Density Residential Strategies

Medium density residential development is intended to contain a mix of single family and multiple family residential developments with a maximum gross density of 55 units per hectare.

### Strategies

1. Encourage Medium Density Residential development to a maximum of 55 units per hectare in areas designated Medium Density Residential on the Land Use map (Schedule B).
2. Manage the density of developments and neighbourhoods by ensuring that attached suites are not developed within duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes.
3. Encourage new medium density residential areas to be rear lane accessible, with required parking for individual dwelling units to be accessible by rear lanes where appropriate.
4. Support a pedestrian environment by requiring underground or below grade parking on larger projects with higher densities and accessed from rear lanes. For smaller projects where parking is at grade, locate parking lots or parking garages behind buildings away from the primary street to the greatest degree possible.
5. Required parking facilities and open space for residential developments must include Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles in their design and construction.
6. All medium density residential development must incorporate winter city elements.
7. Council may consider applications for the reduction of the outside open space requirement in proposed developments with four or greater units up to 50% where:
  - a. South-facing indoor amenity space is provided at a minimum of 3 m<sup>2</sup> per unit
  - b. A green roof is proposed as an open space offset
  - c. Landscape enhancements are proposed that will increase the aesthetic and usability of the proposed open space

- d. The landscape design integrates the winter city elements
  - e. Garden plots are planned
  - f. There is inclusion of no-step entries and accessible design for at least 25% of the dwelling units
8. Use Medium Density Residential designated lands to act as a buffer between Low Density Residential and High Density Residential designated lands.

## High Density Residential Strategies

High density residential land uses are designed to enable the development of primarily multiple family residential developments with a minimum gross density of 55 units per hectare.

### Strategies

1. Encourage High Density Residential development with a minimum density of 55 units per hectare in areas designated High Density Residential on the Land Use map (Schedule B).
2. High density residential areas will be generally located on arterial roads and within and along the periphery of the downtown core.
3. Support a pedestrian environment by placing parking underground, below grade, or at grade under cover on larger projects with higher densities. For smaller projects where parking is at grade, locate parking lots or parking garages behind buildings away from the primary street.
4. Required parking facilities and open space for residential developments must include Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles in their design and construction.
5. All high-density residential development must incorporate winter city elements.
6. Council may consider applications for the reduction of the outside open space requirement in proposed developments with four or greater units up to 50% where:
  - a. South-facing indoor amenity space is provided at a minimum of 3 m<sup>2</sup> per unit
  - b. A green roof is proposed as an open space offset
  - c. Landscape enhancements are proposed that will increase the aesthetic and usability of the proposed open space
  - d. The landscape design integrates winter city elements
  - e. Garden plots are planned
  - f. There is inclusion of no-step entries and accessible design for at least 25% of the dwelling units

## Downtown Residential

The downtown core of Fort St. John should be developed to enable a mix of multiple family residential types and configurations as envisioned in the Downtown Action Plan.

### Goals

1. To develop a vibrant and active downtown core.
2. To support residential infill development in single family detached residential neighbourhoods surrounding the downtown core.

3. To support the redevelopment of single-detached homes into higher density forms in the downtown core.
4. To encourage the amalgamation of lots in the downtown to encourage redevelopment.
5. To develop the downtown core as a viable and thriving urban community.

## Objectives

1. Facilitate the infill and redevelopment of designated areas in the downtown core for medium gross density residential of 20 to 55 units per hectare consisting of a variety of housing types as envisioned in the Downtown Action Plan.
2. By 2030, increase the number of residential dwellings units in the downtown by 310 units, or 10% of the projected housing needs for 2030.

## Strategies

1. Apply Downtown Development Permit Area guidelines to all developments within the Downtown Commercial Mixed-Use designation.
2. Council may consider applications for buildings over six storeys as opportunities occur.
3. Require parking for new residential development to be lane accessible and in enclosed structures.
4. Require larger residential redevelopment sites to develop a rear lane.
5. Place parking underground or below grade on larger projects with higher densities. For smaller projects where parking is at grade, locate parking lots or parking garages behind buildings away from the primary street to the greatest degree possible.
6. Required parking facilities and open space for residential developments must include Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design principles in their design and construction.
7. Council may consider applications for the reduction of the outside open space requirement in proposed developments with four or greater units up to 50% where:
  - a. South-facing indoor amenity space is provided at a minimum of 3 m<sup>2</sup> per unit
  - b. A green roof is proposed as an open space offset
  - c. Landscape enhancements are proposed that will increase the aesthetic and usability of the proposed open space
  - d. On-site gardening plots are provided at a minimum of 3 m<sup>2</sup> per unit
  - e. There is inclusion of no-step entries and accessible design for at least 25% of the building.
8. All downtown residential development must incorporate winter city elements.

## Vacant No More Strategic Action Plan (2017)

The City created this strategy to support the implementation of one of the ten Big Moves presented in the 2015 Downtown Action Plan. The following is a summary of housing-related content.

### Policy Context

The City prepared multiple studies and plans to address the issue of vacant and underutilized lots.

The **Vacant and Underutilized Land Inventory (2012)** provided a baseline for the City to understand and monitor the effects of land use policy over time. This report registered the amount of vacant and underutilized land, and presented a qualitative analysis including a classification by land use. The report found that there were 604 vacant lots with a total area of 398 ha, and 405 underutilized lots with a total area of 183 ha.

The **Residential, Office and Retail Market Analysis (2013)** explored the market demand for various uses, concluding that there are plenty of opportunities to support the forecasted market growth within downtown. Some strategies to provide an adequate supply of residential development include coordinating public and private investment, enhancing existing amenities, engaging the community in refining the vision for downtown, and prioritizing downtown over other areas of the City for future development.

The **Downtown Action Plan (2015)** affirmed Downtown as a priority and created a vision based on 10 Big Moves, one of which is “Vacant No More”. This has been summarized above.

The updated **Official Community Plan (2017)** contains policies around vacant and underutilized land, and brownfield development. Strategies under this theme include creating a brownfield inventory, create an information package for developers to provide information on incentives and programs, develop an incentives program including fee waivers, revitalization tax exemption and financial assistance to conduct Environmental Impact Assessments, and promote temporary uses on vacant land that could revitalize the space while permanent development occurs.

### Incentives for Redevelopment:

**Revitalization Tax Exemption:** enables local governments to encourage certain types of development by reducing property taxes for a certain period. The tax exemption can be used to encourage new multi-family residential development and mixed-use development in downtown, or to encourage brownfield development in target areas while improving the City’s tax base over the long term through an efficient and compact built form.

**Downtown Improvement Grant:** provides funding for the physical improvement of buildings, granted to certain properties subject to meeting specific criteria. This is funded annually by the City.

**Downtown Reinvestment Fund:** allows the City to allocate the total or a portion of the increased value of the downtown property assessment to a downtown reinvestment fund that would be then used to fund improvement projects within the same area.

**Parking Revenue for Downtown Improvement:** reinvests funds from parking meters in the area in which they were collected (streetscape, open space, etc.).

**Density Bonusing:** allows developments to exceed the maximum Floor Area Ratio established in the zoning bylaw.

**First Nations:** many Treaty 8 nations have expressed interest in acquiring land in Fort St. John. Both the City and First Nations communities may mutually benefit from focused outreach with local First Nations to identify what their land acquisition and development priorities are in Fort St. John and how they could meet those priorities through brownfield and vacant land acquisition.

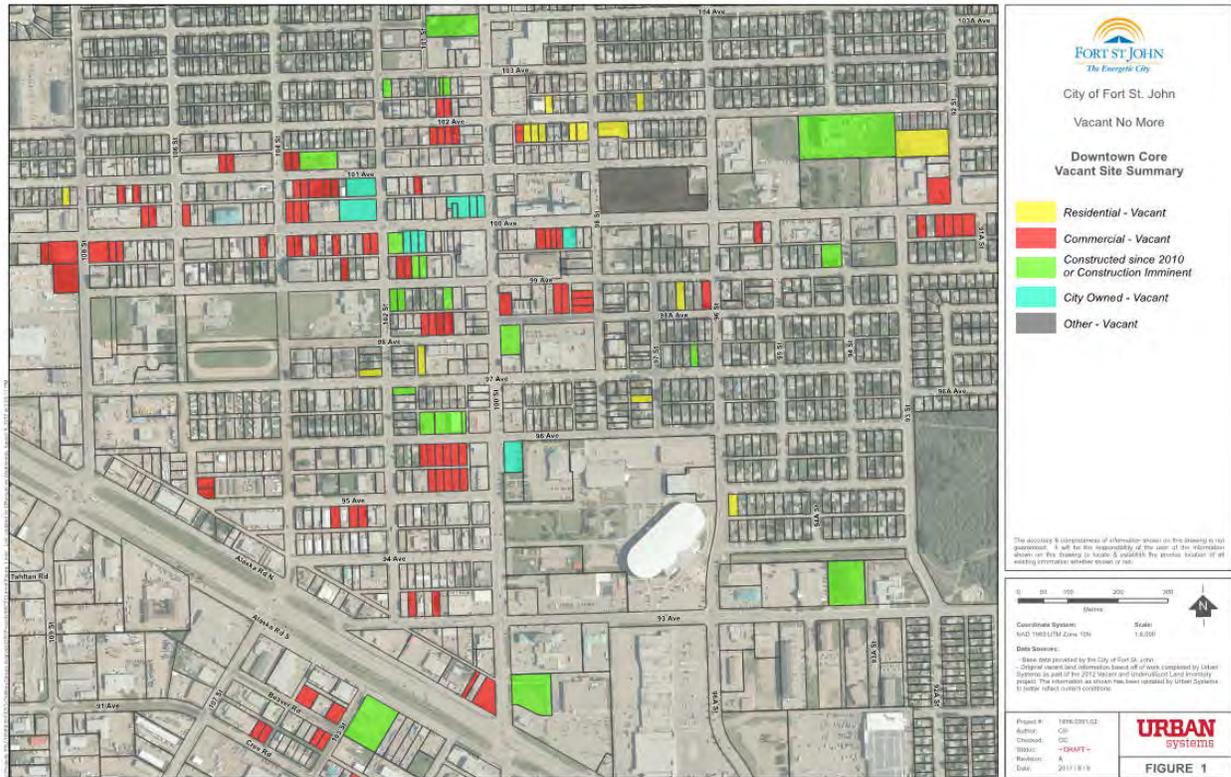
**Small Communities Fund:** this is a program within the New Build Canada Fund (NBCF) that provides funding to support infrastructure projects, construction of municipal use public parks and affordable housing in brownfield sites in communities with populations under 100,000 residents.

**Green Municipal Fund:** The Federation of Canadian Municipalities (FCM) provides municipalities resources and funding to redevelop brownfields. Funding could be allocated for Sustainable Neighbourhood Action Plans or Community Brownfield Action Plans, feasibility studies, brownfield capital projects, and capital projects in the energy, transportation, waste and water sectors.

### **Penalties for Not Redeveloping:**

**Brownfield Tax Class:** The North Central Local Government Association (NCLGA) endorsed a resolution to lobby the provincial government to create a new tax class for brownfield sites so that local governments can tax these sites accordingly. In 2016, the province responded that it is not currently considering a separate property class for brownfield sites due to remediation costs. With municipalities still facing challenges, in 2017 the NCLGA endorsed a second resolution to add a separate property class to the Assessment Act for brownfield sites.

## Vacant Site Inventory:



## Age Friendly Assessment and Action Plan (2018)

In 2018, the City of Fort St. John adopted an Age-Friendly Assessment and Action Plan, based on the World Health Organization’s age-friendly framework, to analyze the current age-friendly situation and develop a set of strategies to address the identified issues. One of the key dimensions under the age-friendly framework is housing.

The seniors’ population in Fort St. John is small compared to provincial and national averages, but one of the fastest growing population sectors. Only 14% of the seniors in the City were identified to be in core housing need; however, the report points out that most of the seniors in core housing needs are renters as opposed to homeowners. The results of a number of interviews with seniors housing providers and advocates conducted for the purposes of this report showed unanimous consensus regarding the shortage of affordable rental housing for seniors, which was also identified by the general population as the most needed housing type.

Facts about the housing situation for seniors in Fort St. John:

- 75% live in single detached homes and just over 20% in some form of semi-detached or multi-family dwelling.
- 80% are homeowners and 20% renters.
- 70% have no-stairs access to their bedrooms, but 60% have stairs in the main entrance of the home.

- 70% indicated their home only needs general maintenance, just under 23% live in homes that need minor repairs, and just under 8% occupy a house that needs major repairs.
- From the seniors that are currently living in a single detached home, 50% will be looking for independent living units within the next 5 years, 27% would be looking for supporting living units, and 23% indicated they will not be looking for a different form of housing in the near future.
- 90% of the general population believes that the current housing stock does not meet the needs of seniors, and almost 100% thinks that the City needs more housing for older residents.

The existing assets and opportunities in the City to provide adequate housing for seniors include the affordable and accessible inventory of seniors housing facilities and the fact that most seniors are homeowners. On the other hand, challenges include the shortage of affordable rental housing and the fact that seniors occupy the older housing stock which, in many situations, need repairs or retrofitting to be supportive and accessible.

This report recommends the City to identify preferred locations for seniors housing, building upon existing initiatives such as Vacant No More. It is also recommended to work with BC Housing, the Chamber of Commerce and Northern Health to provide information about programs and services, raise awareness within the community and stakeholders, leverage private investment and work toward the availability of senior housing options across the full housing spectrum.

## Zoning Bylaw (2019, as amended)

A summary of residential zones in Fort St. John and the housing types currently permitted are provided below. While some of the zones permit the same residential uses, the purpose and site regulations of the individual zones varies. For example, the Single-Detached Housing (Small Parcel) district only allows for single detached dwellings, similar to the Single-Detached Housing district, but it provides different site regulations to accommodate development in smaller lots. Similarly, Multiple Dwelling Housing (Medium Density) and Multiple Dwelling Housing (High Density) have the same permitted residential uses, but the specific building regulations vary to reflect the desired residential density.

Residential Zone	Permitted Principle Residential Use
R-1 – Single-Detached Housing  R-1A – Single-Detached Housing (Small Parcel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Single detached dwelling</li> </ul>
R-2 – Two-Unit Housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Single detached dwelling</li> <li>● Semi attached dwelling</li> <li>● Duplex dwelling</li> <li>● Secondary suite</li> <li>● Detached suite</li> </ul>
R-3 – Factory-Built Housing Park	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Factory-built house park</li> </ul>
R-4 – Factory-Built House	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Single detached dwelling</li> <li>● Semi attached dwelling</li> <li>● Duplex dwelling</li> </ul>
R-4A – Factory Built House (Small Parcel)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Single detached dwelling</li> </ul>
RM-1 – Multiple Dwelling Housing (Medium Density) – Existing Development  RM-2 – Multiple Dwelling Housing (High Density) – Existing Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Single detached dwelling</li> <li>● Semi attached dwelling</li> <li>● Duplex dwelling</li> <li>● Triplex</li> <li>● Fourplex</li> <li>● Townhouse</li> <li>● Apartment</li> <li>● Secondary suite</li> <li>● Detached suite</li> </ul>
RM-3 – Multiple Dwelling Housing (Medium Density) – Future Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Triplex</li> <li>● Fourplex</li> <li>● Townhouse</li> <li>● Apartment</li> </ul>
RM-4 – Multiple Dwelling Housing (High Density) – Future Development	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Townhouse</li> <li>● Apartment</li> </ul>
CD-03 – Comprehensive Development Zone	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>● Seniors Lifestyles Building</li> <li>● Assisted Living</li> <li>● Seniors Care Facility</li> <li>● Supportive Living</li> <li>● Adult Living</li> <li>● Seniors Housing</li> </ul>

## Social and Economic Development Framework for Fort St. John (2020)

The Community Development Institute prepared a Social and Economic Development Framework for the City, outlining strategies in 15 action areas, including housing. The housing vision proposed by the CDI reads “A range of housing options to attract and retain people across socio-economic categories; to provide affordable, appropriate, and secure housing”. This report highlights that the housing stock has grown in diversity between 1991 and 2016, and that the existing stock is relatively modern, with only 8% of housing units needing major repairs. The areas for ongoing attention include the range of housing options available, affordability across the income spectrum, neighbourhood design (safety, accessibility, etc.), and housing in the downtown core.

The actions recommended by the CDI include encouraging the development of seniors housing, including market and subsidized options and supporting aging-in-place; considering overall housing affordability in the planning, development, and management of communities to lower other expenses such as transportation and utilities; developing housing that supports a mobile workforce to provide stability to resource workers and enhance their connection to the community; encouraging the development of housing in the downtown core to support businesses and foster positive street life in this area of the city; planning neighbourhoods to encourage interaction between neighbours and support inclusion; and encouraging and supporting a wide range of housing options and choices.

## Historical Background Studies

### Affordable Housing Background Study (2009)

This report presents an overview of the current (as of 2009) affordable housing situation in Fort St. John. This summary of the document provides historical context of the affordable housing in Fort St. John ten years ago. At that time, the City owned a small amount of land that could be allocated for the development of affordable housing, which includes parcels in R1, R1, R4, RM1 and RM2 zones. The City had a total of 250 affordable units, most of which were operated by BC Housing, and a number of non-profit organizations. Most of these units were frail seniors’ units, family housing, independent living and homeless shelters, and a small number of units are special needs housing, homeless housed and Aboriginal housing. There were no rental assistance units for either seniors or families and at that time, the waiting list included 59 individuals, most of them applying for family units and seniors housing.

The report also examined the practices that other municipalities and organizations in BC have adopted to address the issue of affordable housing. The sample includes the Town of Comox, the City of Langford, the Town of Golden and Smart Growth BC. The most commonly used policies are inclusionary zoning, density bonusing, rent and resale price restrictions, secondary suites, housing funds, and rental housing replacement policies. These policies are paired with tools such as Housing Needs Assessments, Affordable Housing Strategies, Growth Management Strategies, public-private partnerships, land acquisition, real estate transfer tax allocation and the real estate escrow interest

grant. There are also several ways to leverage the private sector in providing affordable housing by cooperative, cohousing and community land trusts models.

The report provides an overview of a previous study conducted by the Ministry of Community Services, and the programs and services offered by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation. The report concludes that some of the challenges facing the City of Fort St. John in regards to housing affordability are the increasing in-migration of resource workers, less housing turnover due to shifting demographics (young people not moving out, seniors staying longer, not many people moving away), a need for more diverse housing types and price points and shortages of home builders and construction trades, and chronic shortage of rental housing, among others.

## Affordable Housing Needs Assessment (2011)

In 2009, the City produced an Affordable Housing Baseline Study to review past and current affordable housing initiatives in the City and other municipalities in BC. This study recommended that the City conduct an Affordable Housing Needs Assessment to precisely identify the range of current and emerging housing need facing Fort St. John.

The Affordable Housing Needs Assessment has two volumes. Volume 1 presents the high-level results of the public and stakeholder consultation, a short community profile, a summary of current housing stock and development trends, the evolution of housing affordability indicator in the City over the last 10 years, and an analysis of non-market housing and homelessness. Volume 2 is an extended version, breaking down each section into key themes and providing more quantitative and qualitative data. The housing stock is analyzed by type, and age and conditions, and includes a subsection on construction trends, helping to anticipate emerging housing challenges and needs. The analysis of key affordability indicators includes homeownership costs, rental rates, vacancy rates and household spending on shelter costs. There is an emphasis on the non-market housing sector, specifically regarding providers and clients, types of housing available and in demand, rental assistant programs, and waitlists by housing type. The appendices of the report include the engagement materials and results (survey and round table event), and the provincial and local legislative/regulatory framework enabling municipal action.