



# DISTRICT OF HOUSTON HOUSING STUDY: FINAL REPORT

## Acknowledgements

Throughout this project, the research team at the Community Development Institute (CDI) engaged with, and received assistance from, many community members. We wish to thank all of the residents, service providers, voluntary groups, business and industry leaders, and municipal leaders and staff who took the time to help out and answer our many questions. In particular, we wish to thank Gerald Pinchbeck, Chief Administrative Officer with the District of Houston, who provided invaluable support by proactively connecting us with so many stakeholders interested in participating in this work and for providing us with their contact information. We also wish to thank Jennifer Bruns for her assistance with arranging meetings with council and obtaining more recent updates of new bylaws.

We also wish to express our appreciation to our student research assistants, Molly Mabbett and Megan Gordon, who transcribed the notes of many stakeholder interviews and provided assistance with the review of past documents.

The funding for this study was provided by the District of Houston.

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Prince George, BC  
2020

## Availability

Copies of this report have been provided to District of Houston and to all participants who provided input into this process. The final reports are further posted on the website of the Community Development Institute at UNBC: <https://www.unbc.ca/community-development-institute/research-projects>.

The information contained in this report is part of a series of reports completed for the District of Houston Housing Study. These include:

- District of Houston Housing Study: Final Report.
- District of Houston Housing Study: Review of Past Plans and Reports.
- District of Houston Housing Study: Community Profile.
- District of Houston Housing Study: Required Data.

## Contact Information

For further information about this topic and the project, please contact Marleen Morris or Greg Halseth, Co-Directors of the Community Development Institute.

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## 1.0 Executive Summary

The District of Houston is striving to ensure that the community has an adequate supply of high quality housing and that the housing stock includes options that meet the current and future needs of residents. The District is particularly interested in ensuring that the housing stock includes suitable options that consider: the full range of incomes in the community, people at different ages and stages of life, worker and workforce mobility, and the long-term costs of maintaining local government services and infrastructure.

This study is undertaken by the Community Development Institute at UNBC to collect and analyze data and provide information and knowledge that can inform decisions necessary to develop a robust and diverse housing supply that aligns with economic growth and diversification opportunities.

Below, is a brief summary of some emerging issues that people spoke about during our 40 interviews with 50 stakeholders. Before considering some of the issues, barriers, and priorities that are shaping local housing issues, two important overarching issues frame these results:

- 1) The Houston housing market is influenced not only by social, economic, and demographic changes within the community, but also by the housing circumstances of other nearby Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. Any future action plan will need to work with actions undertaken at a regional level.
- 2) Housing issues are highly integrated across different interests. For example, residents may wish to transition from rentals into home ownership, older residents may struggle to find options to downsize into. Any successful action plan will need to coordinate initiatives across different types of housing and community development investments to meet the needs of people from all ages and stages of life.

Houston is located within the Wet'suwet'en traditional territory in the Bulkley-Nechako region in northwestern British Columbia. In this Highway 16 corridor, Houston is 64 km from the closest regional centre in Smithers. The economy and housing market historically developed around forest-based manufacturing and mining. These sectors were reshaped by global commodity and restructuring pressures that prompted consolidation and industry closures, producing several impacts on the local housing market. The most significant changes occurred through the closure of Houston Forest Products mill and the Huckleberry Mine. As the broader housing stock and community infrastructure continues to age with minor or modest investments, quality and diversity of the local housing stock impacts the community's ability to attract economic investment and new professionals. These professionals seek larger lots, new subdivisions, smaller homes to purchase, high quality rental options such as condos and homes for rent. While the availability of affordable market rentals supported vulnerable residents, Houston has no subsidized housing facilities to support low-income individuals or families, and there are no emergency shelters, safe houses, or transition houses. Following industry closures, the population has also been aging. Despite significant investments in community-based and provincial-based seniors' housing, there is a need for subsidized housing to support people with complex care needs.

## Key Housing Issues

Overall, several key housing issues were identified through the housing needs assessment, including the need for:

### *Actions to improve housing for low-income and vulnerable groups*

- the maintenance and condition of the housing, mobile home parks, and market rental stock;
- the development of subsidized housing for single adults, families, and Indigenous residents;
- the development of an emergency shelter, safe house, or transition house; and
- more eco-friendly homes and market rentals to reduce energy bills.

### *Actions to improve the housing for aging population*

- more accessible housing options for seniors and residents with disabilities; and
- more investments in assisted living and complex care housing to support an aging population.

### *Actions to improve and diversify the housing stock to attract entrepreneurs, professionals, and the next generation workforce*

- more investments in affordable market rentals and homes;
- development of high quality rentals and homes to attract the next generation workforce and professionals;
- development of family-friendly housing environments; and
- diversity of housing options that reflect the rural and outdoor lifestyle.

### *Actions to monitor and assess changes with drainage due to climate change*

- monitoring and assessing changes with drainage due to climate change that can impact residential flooding.

## Building Capacity to Move Forward

As the community works to attract investment, and pursue community development initiatives, there are important capacity issues that need to be addressed in order to move housing initiatives forward. These include the need for:

### *Building relationships and networks*

- an interagency group to bring economic and social stakeholders together to monitor emerging community and economic development opportunities;
- stronger relationships with landlords;
- stronger relationships with BC Housing and the Residential Tenancy Branch; and
- establish a streamlined communication protocol between industry leaders and the District to monitor and provide updates on work camp and project construction activities.

### *Information*

- efforts to broadly promote and deliver information workshops on local, provincial, and federal government incentives and programs to support housing renovations and investments;
- a central housing resource centre to provide residents with current housing listings and programs, and to provide information to those at-risk of being homeless;
- information sessions and education programs on the rights and responsibilities of tenants, property managers, and landlords;
- workshops to provide training for property managers; and
- workshops on how to maintain homes and rental units.



### *Building stakeholder capacity and increasing housing quality*

- review of property maintenance / unsightly premise bylaws;
- incentives through tax exemptions and grants to develop more accessible housing and rental units;
- recruitment and training incentives for a building inspector;
- expanding the housing coordinator role to support non-profits pursuing non-market housing projects, and help residents access programs or funds to improve their housing conditions.

### *Infrastructure*

- partnerships to explore the use of underutilized spaces in the community to support an emergency or cold-weather shelter; and
- service and land use planning work to ensure the community is positioned to pursue future housing investments.

## Readiness for Housing Development

Houston's readiness for housing development will be further shaped by the availability of land within the urban service area, provisions around secondary suites, and the capacity of the local building sector.

### *Zoning and servicing*

The District owns two lots that can support future investments: one is located on Sullivan Way and the second is located on 10<sup>th</sup> Street in the downtown core. A number of larger private lots also have the potential to support future housing developments within the urban service area. There are also a number of smaller lots available within the urban service area that are also ready to support development.

Infill development is strongly encouraged in many of Houston's plans and strategies in order to support the viability of local government operations. A key issue affecting infill and re-development moving forward is that a number of small households are still living in larger houses and they have not found options for downsizing.

### *Secondary suites*

Secondary suites can provide an opportunity to increase the stock of affordable housing quickly. Secondary suites are permitted within R1 One Family Residential Zones and R2 Two Family Residential Zones, A1 Rural Agricultural Zones, and A2 Rural Residential Zones (low density residential); however, there are no existing incentives to promote or encourage secondary suite investments. Section 5.15 of **Development Bylaw No. 1040, 2013 (as amended by Development Bylaw No. 1106, 2018)** guides the siting and development of secondary suites.

### *Local builders*

Houston is seeking to expand the capacity to support the construction and renovation of the housing stock. Businesses such as Cornerstone Carpentry, Hansma Construction, Jerico Contracting, and Hodge Contracting provide services to support residential construction and renovations as one component of their business. Groot Contracting, M. Brown Contracting, Blast Contracting, and Bodnar Contracting also provide land clearing and site preparation services; although a significant part of their work supports resource development. Certified trades contractors include Emberson Plumbing and Heating, and Tower Communications (electrical). Building supplies are available through Bulkley Valley Home Centre Ltd, Reitsma's Home Hardware, and Window supplier (All-West Glass).

## 2.0 Introduction

The District of Houston is striving to ensure that the community has an adequate supply of high quality housing and that the housing stock includes options that meet the current and future needs of residents. The District is particularly interested in ensuring that the housing stock includes suitable options that consider: the full range of incomes in the community, people at different ages and stages of life, worker and workforce mobility, and the long-term costs of maintaining the local government services and infrastructure.

This study is undertaken by the Community Development Institute at UNBC to collect and analyze data and provide information and knowledge that can inform decisions necessary to develop a robust and diverse housing supply that:

- meets the current and future needs and provides options for the full range of Houston residents; and
- aligns with economic growth and diversification opportunities.

This housing needs assessment will not only support local government and community initiatives, but will also be important to meet provincial legislative requirements. In April 2019, the Province of British Columbia adopted new legislation that requires all local governments to complete housing needs assessments by April 2022 and re-assess every five years.<sup>1</sup> Local governments are then required to reflect on housing needs to inform changes to their official community plans.

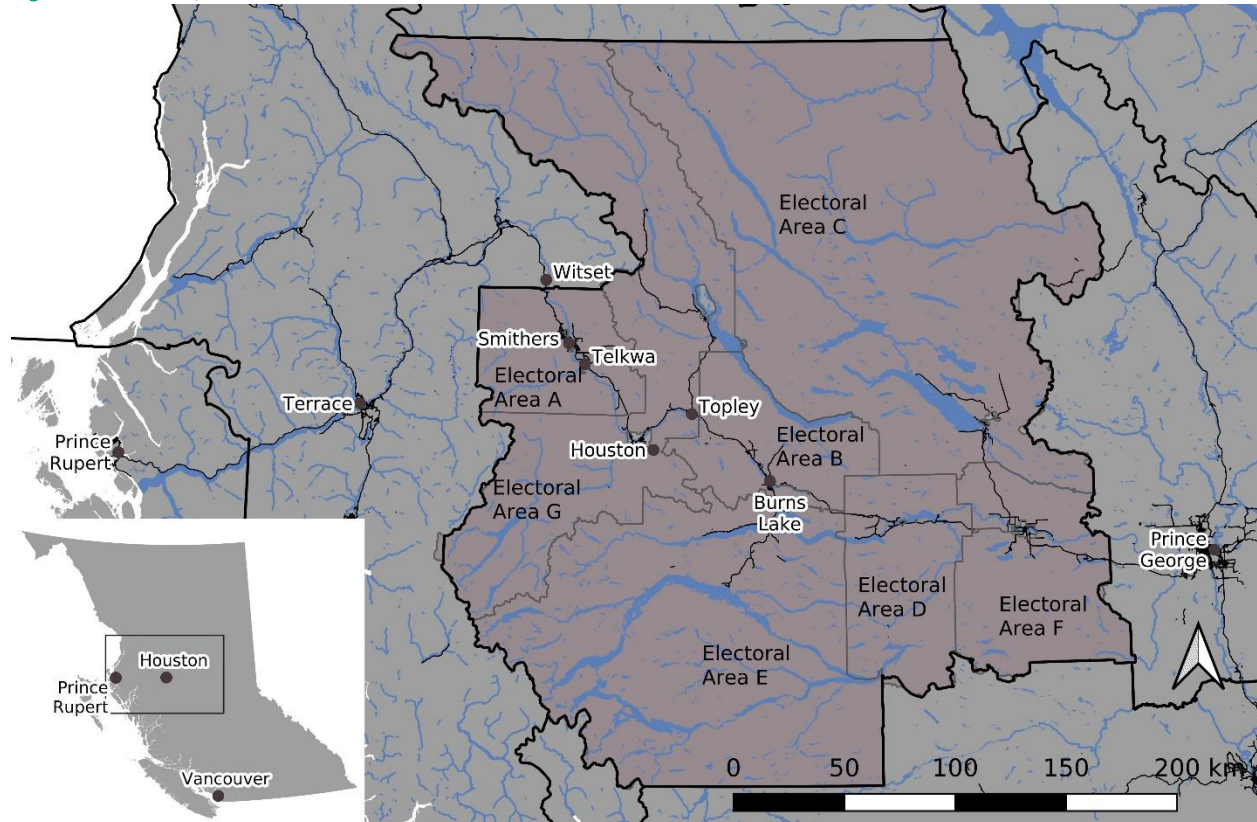
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<sup>1</sup> For more information on new provincial requirements concerning housing needs assessments, please visit: <https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/local-governments-and-housing/policy-and-planning-tools-for-housing/housing-needs-reports>.

### 3.0 Context

Situated within Wet'suwet'en traditional territory, Houston is located in the Bulkley-Nechako region in northwestern British Columbia. In this Highway 16 corridor, Houston is 80 km from Burns Lake and 64 km from the closest regional centre in Smithers (Figure 1). It is also just under 270 km from Terrace and 307 km from Prince George. Furthermore, Houston is located within the Nadina Forest District where forestry and mining sectors have been both major employers for residents and key stakeholders that have shaped the development of housing over time.

Figure 1: Houston, BC



Map credit: Aita Bezzola.

Early European settlement was gradual, with activities focused on ranching and the development of the Overland Telegraph Trail in the 1860s (Brienen & Newell 2008). The construction of the railroad in the early 1900s, however, prompted the development of a townsite that would eventually be incorporated as a Village in 1957 and as a District in 1969 (Werner & Layton 2018). Early settlement was supported by an emerging forest industry; first driven by the production of railroad ties and bridge timbers, and then replaced with several forest manufacturing industries during the post-World War Two period (Steynen 2010). In 1963, Bulkley Valley Pulp and Timber was formed. Several small sawmills and logging firms were consolidated over time, starting with Bathurst and Bowaters' acquisition of Bulkley Valley Pulp and Timber and 13 sawmilling businesses to form Bulkley Valley Forest Industries. In 1969, construction began on the new Bulkley Valley Forest Industries sawmill. This sawmill was purchased by Northwood in 1972, and was accompanied with a reduction of 90 workers. Growth in the forest sector continued, however, with the opening of Houston Forest Products in 1978. In 1985, Northwood's investments in technological upgrades and automation led to the loss of 120 jobs. A decade later, however,

Northwood would install a log chipping plant at the sawmill. Canfor would purchase the Northwood sawmill in 1999. Two major mills remained, including Canadian Forest Products (360 employees) and West Fraser Timber's Houston Forest Products (260 employees) (District of Houston 2014c). In 2014, the Houston Forest Products sawmill closed, resulting in a loss of 225 direct employees and an additional estimated indirect loss of 600 workers (District of Houston, 2014b).

Mining activities emerged as early as the 1900s following the completion of the Grand Trunk Pacific Railway. By the early 1990s, most of the mines in the area ceased operations, including the closure of the Bell Copper Mine near Granisle which operated from 1972-1992, as well as the loss of Equity Silver Mine which operated closer to Houston from 1981-1994 (Steynen 2010). The Huckleberry Mine, an open pit copper / molybdenum mine that operated from 1997 to 2016, was located approximately 88 kilometres south of Houston. Even though the mine is currently idled under care and maintenance, a preliminary plan has been developed to restart the mine under improved commodity price conditions (see <https://www.imperialmetals.com/our-operations/huckleberry-mine/overview>).

Much of the community infrastructure and housing stock was built to attract and retain a young workforce. In 1961, the surfacing of Highway 16 between Houston and Smithers was completed. At the end of the 1960s, housing construction increased and development of the Mountainview Park subdivision began that would eventually become Baggerman Trailer Court (Steynen 2010). As growth expanded in the 1970s, the first housing boom produced almost 550 homes and much of Houston's existing infrastructure was put in place. A temporary camp was also put in place to house construction and mill workers for Houston Forest Products. In 1979, the Houston Lions Association developed Cottonwood Manor with land donated by the local government. In the 1980s, new community facilities emerged, such as the courthouse, health centre, and seniors' residence (Steynen 2010). A suite of rental accommodations on top of the hill along Mountainview Drive were developed to accommodate new workers at Equity Silver Mines. Housing starts generally declined following this period. Industry showed signs that it was no longer interested in managing workforce housing. In 1981, Northwood sold its Houston apartment buildings to a business person in Prince George. The opening of the new Huckleberry mine and improved forest product commodity prices spurred a second housing boom in the 1990s with the development of 235 new homes (Steynen 2010). However, following industry closures at Equity Silver Mines and Houston Forest Products, many of the townhouses along Mountainview Drive were boarded up. Industrial closures were exacerbated by closures of government offices. In 2002, the forest district office closed in Houston (Steynen 2010).

Today, the District of Houston encompasses just under 73 square kilometres, much of which is contained within the 200-year flood plain of the Bulkley River and Buck Creek (District of Houston, 2018c). These key geographic features, along with Highway 16 and Mountainview Drive up towards Ruitter Heights, provide natural boundaries that have guided development in Houston.

Most of the retail sector is concentrated within two areas of the downtown core on the east side of Buck Creek. The first consists of businesses located within or surrounding the Houston Shopping Centre located adjacent to Highway 16. The second consists of restaurants, cafes, a grocery store, hardware store, trades, and other retail businesses between Copeland Avenue and Butler Avenue and from 11<sup>th</sup> Street towards Highway 16. This area to the east of Buck Creek is also the location of key community services and government offices, such as Houston Community Services, the District of Houston, Silverthorne Elementary School, the recreation centre, and Service BC. A significant portion of the housing supply is located on the east side of Buck Creek, including Cottonwood Manor (subsidized assisted and independent living), low density residential near Butler Avenue and in the Avalon subdivision, multi-family residential / apartments, and mobile home dwellings. This area also contains private land that could support future development within the existing urban service boundaries. Some land has already been donated by the Groot Brothers to support the development of the Pleasant Valley Village for seniors.

A third retail area is located to the west of Buck Creek with a variety of light industrial businesses, a gas station, convenience store, restaurants, automotive businesses, home building supplies, and Houston Christian School. The west side of Buck Creek also provides residents with access to the health centre, Houston Link to Learning, and the public library. To the south of this third retail and service sector area, there is a significant amount of housing located on the hill in Ruitter Heights. This includes a number of multi-family residential areas containing apartments and townhouses, with surrounding low-density residential subdivision containing single family dwellings, parks, Twain Sullivan Elementary School, and Houston Secondary School. Private land is available south of Walker Road to support future development within the urban service boundary area. Southwest of this area, there is a rural residential zone extending from Buck Flats Road off Highway 16, and connecting with Lund Road.

A light industrial sector is situated on the north side of Highway 16. The northside also contains a low-density residential area between 4<sup>th</sup> and 6<sup>th</sup> Street, as well as a third rural residential zone around Mount Davis Way.

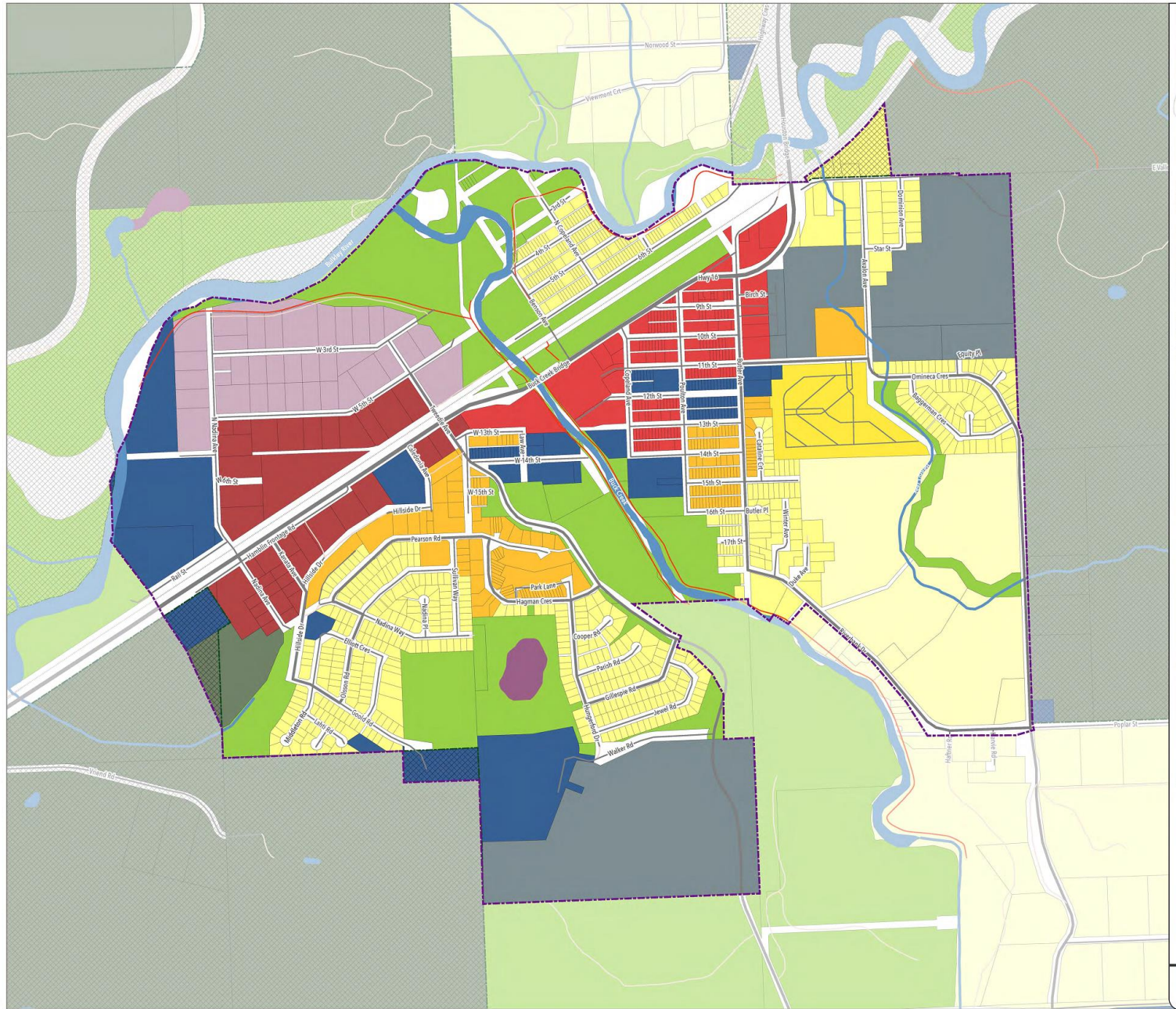
Major employers, such as Canfor and Monster Industries, are located further west along Morice River Forest Service Road. Just north of this industrial area, there is a final rural residential zone located off Highway 16 through Estates Drive and Gushwa Road.

# SCHEDULE B - URBAN SERVICE AREA

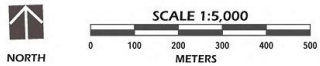
Land Use

## LEGEND

-  District of Houston Municipal Boundary
-  District of Houston Urban Service Area Boundary
-  A Agriculture / Resource
-  RR Rural Residential
-  LDR Low Density Residential
-  MHP Mobile Home Park
-  MFR Multi-Family Residential
-  DC Downtown Core
-  HC Highway Commercial
-  LI Light Industrial
-  HI Heavy Industrial
-  PI Public Institutional
-  POS Parks and Open Space
-  FD Future Development
-  Waterbodies & Rivers
-  Streams/Creeks
-  Wetlands
-  Dike
-  Highway
-  Arterial Road
-  Local Roads
-  Resource Road
-  Parcels
-  Agricultural Land Reserve
-  Railway



Projection: NAD83 / UTM Zone 19N



**CLIENT**  
 District of Houston  
 3307 12th Street  
 P.O. Box 370  
 Houston, BC V0J 1Z0

**ISSUE**  
 2017/12/05

**RE-ISSUE**  
 2018/12/13

**DRAWN BY**  
 PB

**SHEET SIZE**  
 24 X 36 inches

## DISTRICT OF HOUSTON LAND USE & ZONING PLAN

Selkirk Planning & Design  
 201 - 101A Second St. E  
 P.O. Box 1994  
 Revelstoke, BC  
 V0E 2Z0



## 4.0 Proposed Approach and Methodology

The overall study is based around five iterative phases of work:

1. review of current and past plans and reports,
2. data collection from existing sources to develop the demographic and housing market profiles,
3. key informant interviews,
4. community workshop to present and discuss draft findings, and
5. final report.

To complete phase one, a review was conducted of plans, reports, and information such as the Official Community Plan (OCP), Zoning Bylaws, housing studies, economic development plans, location of community services, location of retail services, transportation routes, and other relevant documents. The purpose was to review existing information pertaining to the housing situation, issues, and needs in Houston, as well as relevant information related to proposed and potential developments in the community and surrounding area.

In the third phase, a research team representing UNBC's Community Development Institute engaged in stakeholder interviews from September 18th to October 8th, 2019. During this period, 40 interviews were conducted with 50 stakeholders representing local government staff and leaders; community service providers and non-profit organizations; industry; small business; and realtors and related businesses engaged with the planning, permitting, construction, renovations, sale, and operation of housing (see Table 1). Participants were recruited through publicly available lists of stakeholders and through a list of interested stakeholders that was developed by the District of Houston.

### Table 1: Distribution of Stakeholders

Local government staff / leaders	8
Service providers / non-profits	27
Small business and industry	15
Total	50

*Source: District of Houston Housing Study 2019.*

**Note:** ten interviews were conducted with people directly involved with real estate, construction / renovations, or operations of housing assets.

**Note:** major employers included Canfor, TC Energy, School District 54, Northern Health, Wilson Brothers.

### Research Ethics

Research conducted by the Community Development Institute is bound by protocols at the University of Northern British Columbia that require all interview guides be submitted to UNBC's Research Ethics Board for review. A key component to this protocol is to provide research participants with a copy of the consent form that outlines the purpose of the study, how the research process will protect their anonymity and confidentiality, and that their participation is voluntary.

## Interview Questions

In general, stakeholders were asked questions about:

- the state, design, and quality of the current housing supply;
- the affordability and accessibility of the current housing supply;
- housing needs for individuals, families, seniors, and the next generation workforce;
- the impact of housing issues on workforce recruitment and retention;
- anticipated future workforce and related housing needs;
- key housing priorities that need to be addressed; and
- barriers that need to be considered in order to address housing issues.

## Analysis

During each interview, comments were recorded and notes were taken. A summary file was created for each interview and was sent to individual participants for their review and clarification. After a final summary file was created for each interview, qualitative analysis was done to identify, code, and categorize patterns and themes that emerged from the data.



## 5.0 Housing Needs and Issues in Houston

### 5.1 Factors Shaping the Housing Market

Stakeholders identified four factors that are shaping the housing market in Houston.

#### 1. Pipeline speculation

The first concerns the temporary activity associated with possible pipeline construction. The Coastal GasLink natural gas pipeline project is proposed to construct approximately 670 km of pipeline from the Dawson Creek area to a port facility in Kitimat, where it will be converted into liquefied natural gas for export by LNG Canada. The announcement of pipeline construction south of Houston led to increased interest in rentals, mortgage applications, and motel bookings to accommodate temporary pipeline workers. There are concerns, however, that there may be a limited housing supply to accommodate the influx of temporary workers if the camp is not in place when needed. Any delays in construction can create bottlenecks in the need for workforce accommodations as different project phases unfold. It is under these conditions that the need to accommodate temporary mobile workers can spill over into the community, resulting in an increased demand for housing, market rentals, and concerns about renovations. It is anticipated that there will be more than 800 temporary workers during the peak construction period (see section 5.10.4 on temporary workforce accommodations in and near Houston).

#### 2. Uncertainty within the forest sector

The uncertainty associated with the future of the forest sector is impeding investments in renovations and home purchases in Houston. The closure of Houston Forest Products and the forest district office prompted out-migration; although, some argued that the closures did not saturate the housing market as people chose to rent their homes or as renters used the opportunity to transition into home ownership. There are concerns that further potential forest sector downturns may discourage community and related housing investments. External factors that may shape the future of the local forest industry include reductions to the allowable annual cut from environmental factors such as the Mountain Pine Beetle infestation and forest fires.

#### 3. Uncertainty with the grocery store

Houston's main grocery store Super Valu closed in June 2016. This forced residents to commute to Smithers for groceries. The combined exposure to other housing options and greater access to services have enticed some people to relocate to Smithers. In November 2017, Buy-Low Foods opened and replaced the former grocery store.

#### 4. Housing pressures in other communities

The Houston housing and rental market is also influenced by housing shortages and conditions in other nearby Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities. This has supported an influx of residents looking for affordable housing and market rental options. People spoke about residents who moved from Smithers, or from the Lower Mainland where rising housing prices and rental costs have prompted migration. Housing needs in Indigenous communities have further prompted people to look at housing options in Houston.

### 5.2 Availability

There are currently a number of housing needs in Houston (Figure 2). The 2016 Census showed that single-detached dwellings make up around two-thirds of the housing stock in Houston, followed by mobile homes, apartments, and row housing (see community profile). With almost two-thirds of these consisting of larger homes with three or more bedrooms, there is a need for smaller dwellings to accommodate the increasing number of smaller households.

Currently, Houston has no emergency housing or shelters to address the needs of the homeless or at-risk of homelessness population. Following the closure of the Broadway Place shelter in Smithers last March, the closest homeless shelters are located in Terrace and Prince George. In Smithers, the 9-bed shelter at Broadway Place was replaced with Goodacre Place, an investment in 22 subsidized housing units for low-income residents, with an additional two rooms - each containing three beds to provide a response to an emergency crisis situation. At Goodacre Place, emergency shelter clients are provided with access to a housing coordinator to establish a plan to secure long-term housing. The maximum stay in these emergency rooms is generally three nights depending on the circumstances. The scale and scope of homelessness or residents who are at-risk in Houston is poorly understood.

Figure 2: Key Housing Needs Areas in Houston

Emergency Housing	Subsidized Housing	Supportive Housing	Market Rentals	Home Ownership
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•No homeless shelter</li> <li>•No safe house</li> <li>•No transition house</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•None for single residents</li> <li>•None for families</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Limited seniors' housing</li> <li>•Lack of assisted living</li> <li>•Lack of complex care</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Lack of quality rentals</li> <li>•Lack of furnished apartments</li> <li>•Lack of rentals for large families</li> <li>•Lack of duplexes</li> <li>•Lack of homes to rent</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>•Lack of new homes</li> <li>•Lack of small homes</li> <li>•Lack of acreage properties</li> </ul>

Houston has no safe houses or second stage / transition homes for women and mothers with children. When needed, the RCMP work with the Salvation Army, the Christian Reform Church, and other groups and non-profit organizations to place vulnerable residents in motels. However, this has numbers of limitations. The closest transition homes are located in Smithers and Burns Lake, but relocation impacts access to network supports. There are also concerns about access to addiction treatment centres, with the closest centres located in Terrace and Prince George.

Houston currently has no housing options to support residents with mental health, special developmental, or complex care needs. High Road Services Society operates an outreach office in Houston to provide residential skills programs to support the independence of residents with developmental disabilities. This has prompted calls for an assisted living facility specifically designed for mental health residents. The closest such housing facility is located in Terrace.

There is also a lack of subsidized housing to support low-income single residents under 55 years of age and families. Despite a substantial Indigenous population, there is no subsidized Indigenous housing in Houston.

With an aging population, there are concerns about the lack of seniors' housing and supportive forms of housing. Despite the development of three buildings containing a total of 18 units, the Pleasant Valley Village maintains a waitlist of approximately 50 residents. This is complemented with 6 subsidized assisted living units and 16 subsidized independent living units for residents aged 55 years and older that are maintained by the Smithers Community Services Association at Cottonwood Manor, as well as 4 complex care beds maintained by Northern Health at the Houston Health Centre. A lack of assisted living and complex care units means that residents must relocate away from Houston and from family and social networks.

In terms of market rentals, stakeholders felt there was a lack of rental options to meet the diverse needs in the community. This included a need for high quality apartment units, furnished apartments, rentals for larger families, and duplexes and single detached homes for rent.

Stakeholders generally felt that there was an adequate housing supply to support home ownership; although, the market has tightened in the last couple of years due to speculation around large-scale industrial construction projects. These comments were supplemented by a couple of caveats. With an aging housing stock, there is a lack of new housing to attract and retain professionals and support home ownership. Many homes were originally developed to attract young workers and their families. Few smaller homes have been developed to enable older residents to downsize or to support home ownership options for individuals or couples with no children.

## 5.3 State and Quality of Housing

### *Homeownership*

The state and quality of housing not only shapes health and safety of living conditions, but has significant implications in the recruitment and retention across various sectors in the community. Stakeholders generally felt that the aging housing stock needed attention. Data from the 2016 Census shows that over 60% of the housing stock in Houston was developed prior to the 1980s, with almost 12% of these housing assets now requiring major repairs (see community profile). The Avalon subdivision offers the newest selection of homes that were developed in the 1980s and 1990s.

Attention to the state and quality of housing can be supported by:

1. **Enhancing home maintenance knowledge for homeowners (see Appendix A).**
2. **Ensuring that people know when home renovation permits or inspections are required from the District, or from BC Safety Authority for electrical and gas repairs.**

## Rentals

Market rentals that are affordable for low-income residents are generally regarded as in the poorest condition (see Figure 3). Trailer parks are varied in quality. The townhouses on Pearson were boarded up following the closure of Equity mine. Stakeholders felt that property maintenance could improve the quality of the local rental stock. More recently, there are some townhouses and a 30-unit rental facility on Hagman and Pearson that are being renovated.

The state and quality of housing conditions can also produce unhealthy or unsafe living environments, including with health concerns related to the presence of mould and asbestos or where rental units are not equipped with working buzzers or locks.

Responses to the state and quality of rental housing can be improved by:

- 1. Enhancing tenant knowledge and expertise about maintaining rental units (Appendix A)**
- 2. Enhancing rental housing owners' and managers' knowledge about landlord rights and responsibilities.**
- 3. Enhancing property management training**
- 4. Investing in needed renovations and repairs by qualified trades**

Figure 3: Housing Issues Needing Attention

Structural Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Dilapidated roofs and decks</li><li>• Deteriorated treated wood</li><li>• Sound travel between apartments</li></ul>
Electrical	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Electrical issues</li><li>• Electrical box issues</li></ul>
Water and Sewage	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Flooding, water damage</li><li>• Aging plumbing / pipes / drain tiles</li><li>• Water supply / hot water tanks</li><li>• Sewage lines</li></ul>
Leaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• General leaks</li><li>• Leaking roofs</li><li>• Toilet leaks</li></ul>
Health and Safety	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Mould and asbestos</li></ul>
Heating and Energy Efficiency	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Poor insulation</li><li>• Inefficient heating / furnaces</li><li>• Old appliances</li></ul>
Pests	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Pests</li></ul>
Maintenance Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Windows</li><li>• Locks</li><li>• Other minor maintenance issues</li></ul>

## 5.4 Housing and Health

Housing conditions (Figure 3) impact the health of occupants. Poor housing conditions may affect:

- sleep patterns,
- nutrition, and
- overall health and recovery of patients.

Inadequate regional transportation means that Houston residents commuting to access regionalized health care services can become stranded in Smithers. There are no accommodation options for regional NHA patients discharged from hospitals or detox / treatment centres.

Precarious housing circumstances especially for high risk residents (i.e. mental health conditions or addictions) increase demands for health care supports. This can include high caseloads for mental health clinicians. In Houston, a new outreach mental health team consisting of 3 clinicians has been put in place and a psychiatric nurse has been recruited to the community.

## 5.5 Affordability

In general, stakeholders felt that Houston offered more affordable housing options compared to many other areas in the Northwest region and around BC. As demonstrated in the community profile, stakeholders felt that the cost of purchasing a home was affordable when compared to the average value of dwellings around the province. In 2016, the average value of a dwelling in Houston was \$186,152 (Cdn), compared to an average dwelling value of \$720,689 (Cdn) for BC. The closure of Houston Forest Products was credited with improving the affordability of home ownership for former renters. But, home ownership is not affordable for everyone, and young families were identified as a group challenged to find affordable housing. There are concerns that the cost of home ownership may be increasing due to high construction costs and speculation associated with pipeline construction.

Investments in seniors' housing through the Pleasant Valley Village has provided older residents with affordable and accessible housing options. A 2-bedroom unit in the complex costs \$630 per month. The provision of subsidized independent living units through Cottonwood Manor were deemed to be affordable at \$575 per month.

Older market rental units that have not been maintained often result in high utility costs (i.e. heat and hydro). On a positive note, strategic investments in geothermal energy infrastructure were made in the Pleasant Valley Village buildings, resulting in reasonable heating costs. There are a number of provincial and federal government programs that provide financial incentives and support for energy-efficient renovations (see Appendix A).

Market rentals were generally regarded to be inexpensive compared to home ownership. Average monthly costs for homeowners was \$874 (Cdn) in 2016, compared to monthly rental rates of \$734 (Cdn) (see community profile). This has prompted an influx of tenants seeking affordable housing. However, rental rates were not always deemed to be affordable for people on social assistance, retail workers, single residents, or those with large families. As demonstrated in the community profile, a greater proportion of tenant households were spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs (31%) compared to owner-based households (8%). Census data suggests that rental costs are increasing at a faster rate compared to those incurred by homeowners. There are provincial programs to provide assistance with market rental accommodations (see BC Housing's Rental Assistance Program and SAFER Program in Appendix A).

## 5.6 Accessibility

Houston has three facilities that provide accessible, single-level forms of housing for older residents and those with disabilities, including Cottonwood Manor, the Pleasant Valley Village, and complex care beds at the Houston Health Centre. Cottonwood Manor provides recreational programs for tenants, as well as other programs that are open to the broader seniors' community to support healthy living.

Most of Houston's housing stock, however, was built during the 1960s and 1970s. Single detached dwellings largely consist of split level cathedral entrances with many stairs. Homes are often larger, require maintenance that is beyond the capacity of older residents, and have numbers of accessibility issues<sup>2</sup>. Unfortunately, there are few options available to allow seniors to downsize.

## 5.7 Location and Proximity

Housing will only meet the needs of residents if it is placed within the broader context of community development. The location of housing and its proximity to services, businesses, and recreational assets will be important to meet the goals and objectives contained in many other strategic plans by shaping, for example, the outcomes for fostering a healthy and age-friendly community.

### *Proximity*

In general, stakeholders felt that the proximity of housing to services and amenities was good given the small size of the town. In particular, the location of Cottonwood Manor and apartment buildings within the downtown core were perceived to be relatively flat and within walking distance to many services. However, there are pockets of housing that can feel disconnected, and Houston was described as a town with sprawling development. In these developments, residents can feel isolated from schools and services. Proximity concerns were extended to a regional level. The location of affordable housing in Houston means that many low-income residents are not in close proximity to many regionalized services in Smithers.

### *Connectivity*

Proximity issues were compounded by limited infrastructure, networks, and transportation services to strengthen the connectivity between neighbourhoods. Issues were identified with sidewalks, crosswalks, and walking up and down the Mountainview Drive hill. Related issues included winter maintenance of sidewalks and crosswalks. For residents living at Cottonwood Manor, improving access to areas such as the mall would improve connectivity.

While most home owners own a vehicle, many low-income tenant households have no vehicle and rely on informal rides to access the grocery store, food bank, and other community services. There are no taxis or public transit to address local transportation needs in Houston. The Legion operates a shuttle service that provides free local transportation for veterans and seniors, but may not be affordable for other residents. The absence of convenient, affordable, and appropriately structured local transportation services is an issue, especially for residents with physical mobility needs. Some non-profits provide clients with rides to the food bank; although others do not,

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<sup>2</sup> There are provincial and federal programs to support home adaptations to improve accessibility for non-Indigenous and Indigenous residents (see Appendix A).

citing occupational health and safety and related liability issues. Affordable local transportation is needed to support residents attracted to the affordable housing assets in Houston.

The cost and scheduling of regional transportation services impedes access to regionalized services, education and training, and employment opportunities around the region (Table 2). These transportation costs were particularly difficult for low-income households.

*Table 2: Costs of Regional Transportation for Houston Residents*

	Legion Shuttle	BC Transit	Northern Health Bus	BC Bus
Smithers	\$80	\$5	\$10	\$35
Terrace	\$300	n/a	\$10	\$45
Prince George	\$300	n/a	\$10	\$35

## 5.8 Families

While stakeholders generally felt that there was an adequate supply of housing for families, there are some specific needs that require attention moving forward to reflect the range of family household needs. Examples of needs include family-oriented market rental units, more duplexes, and subsidized family-oriented rentals for single parents and low-income families.

More investments in high quality single detached housing are needed to attract new families to the community. This includes, in the case of renovation, investments in modern finishes and updated carpets, countertops, cupboards, light fixtures, and bathroom amenities, as well as high quality exterior finishes, such as new siding, roof shingles, doors, windows, and resurfaced driveways. As families acquire more financial assets, there is also an interest in larger acreage properties to support a rural and outdoor-based lifestyle.

## 5.9 Indigenous Housing

Stakeholders identified a strong need for Indigenous housing at both the local and regional level. Housing shortages and conditions in nearby Indigenous communities continue to put pressure on the housing market. As such, the research team attended the Aboriginal Housing Panel that was organized by the Dze L’Kant Friendship Centre in Smithers on October 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2019. The panelists included:

- Annette Morgan, Executive Director, Dze L’Kant Friendship Centre;
- Lucy Gagnon, Executive Director, Witset First Nation;
- Rod Hill, Director of Indigenous Asset Management, BC Housing; and
- Cliff Grant, Indigenous Strategic Relations, Aboriginal Housing Management Association.



Panelists reflected on the need for culturally appropriate Indigenous housing that includes the following features:

- homes with up to 5 bedrooms to support large families,
- racks to hang game meat,
- improved ventilation to mitigate the humidity and mould that can develop through extensive canning,
- a healing room, and
- double entrance doors to allow members to bring caskets into the home.

The University of Manitoba has been developing a framework for culturally appropriate housing:

<http://ecohealthcircle.com/boreal-home-building-program-starts-in-two-communities/>;

<https://www.cbc.ca/news/canada/manitoba/first-nations-housing-program-1.4855478>. Housing initiatives are also

exploring opportunities to incorporate wind and other sustainable forms of energy efficient infrastructure with traditional foods and medicines in the garden.

Indigenous housing needs are shaped by demographic pressures, including the needs of youth and Elders. There is also a need for safe housing to ensure Indigenous women are not left in precarious situations. Indigenous housing facilitates may also consider providing spaces for residents to get connected with various supports and services.

The lack of on-reserve housing has led to over-crowded conditions and pushed members to pursue off-reserve housing. With limited affordable rental options in Smithers, some residents are going to Houston. The M'Akola Housing Society formerly operated a 3-unit complex for Indigenous clients in Houston. The loss of federal subsidies prompted the sale of these assets, which are now rented privately. The Witset First Nation hopes to alleviate this stress with on-reserve housing investments. A housing manager has been hired to manage renovation and new construction initiatives. Approximately four housing renovations are completed each year pending funding from CMHC. The Witset First Nation is also building smaller homes for single residents (i.e. 480 – 700 sq. ft.). This initiative is supported by a loan guarantee program.

Indigenous housing investments are essential to foster cultural pride, self-esteem, and community well-being. Housing strategies and developments play an important role in reconciliation. For residential school survivors, there are significant ongoing impacts, including ongoing stigma in their housing situations – making it more important for Indigenous housing to be done by Indigenous people.

BC Housing has agreements with First Nations across BC to support Indigenous asset management<sup>3</sup>. In addition to home renovations and investments in tiny houses, for example, the Witset First Nation is entering into a partnership with BC Housing to build a 26-unit apartment building on-reserve. It will incorporate passive housing principles and is anticipated to eliminate 25% of their waiting list.

## 5.10 Workforce Housing

In this study, we spoke with small business stakeholders that employed less than 15 workers, as well as major employers that employed between 35 and 300 workers. Most of the local workforce lives within Houston or the surrounding rural areas. A number of employers, however, noted that some employees live in Topley, Smithers, Telkwa, Granisle, Burns Lake, and Quick. In some cases, mobile workers are recruited for short-term job contracts.

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<sup>3</sup> Building upon these agreements, BC Housing has an Indigenous Housing Fund that will invest \$550 million over the next 10 years for social housing both on-reserve and off-reserve (see Appendix A).

Anticipated future workforce needs will be shaped by five general factors.

1. Employers anticipate a **need to hire more staff**.
2. Employers anticipate a number of staff **retirements** in the near future that will need to be filled.
3. Staffing needs fluctuate according to **contract** and **seasonal employment** opportunities. These types of workers are more likely to pursue temporary motel or rental accommodations.
4. There is a **skills shortage** that will need to be addressed by developing or recruiting more technical trained workers and addressing gaps with trades workers. These professionals will seek higher quality rental and home ownership options.
5. There is a need to develop and recruit new **entrepreneurs** to address retail, service, and recreational gaps to strengthen the local quality of life. Entrepreneurs are seeking high quality options for rentals and home ownership, as well as affordable housing for their employees.

### *5.10.1 Housing and Recruitment and Retention*

The breadth and state of housing options is affecting recruitment and retention for many community and economic sectors. Inadequate housing, for example, is affecting the recruitment and retention of new professionals, contractors, and the next generation workforce. Business stakeholders expressed a need for attractive housing options to recruit service and hospitality industry workers from communities where they cannot afford to live.

Professionals are increasingly willing to commute from other places. Suitable housing options to attract these workers to live locally includes attention to the state, quality, and breadth of housing options, as well as to the general housing environment. Housing impacts many other facets of community development. Many professionals, such as doctors, health care and social workers, teachers, or government workers, look to rent in the community for a period of time before deciding to remain on a long-term basis and invest in home ownership. The provision of more suitable housing options will help to strengthen the pool of potential employees for local stakeholders.

A number of initiatives are being explored to improve access to housing, including:

- logistical support to locate appropriate housing for staff,
- mixed land use investments (apartments above commercial stores),
- the development of secondary suites to accommodate other teachers and professionals, and
- the provision of housing for temporary foreign workers.

Moving forward, the school district is exploring the viability of flat rate subsidies to relocate teachers to Houston.

### *5.10.2 Next Generation Workforce*

The next generation workforce will consist of young workers, professionals, and entrepreneurs who already live in, or are recruited to, Houston. Despite the availability of affordable housing options, some younger residents struggle to transition from the rental market to home ownership. To start, the lack of opportunities for older residents to downsize is impacting the breadth of options for home ownership for the next generation workforce. Younger residents do not always have the credit history or down payment required to purchase a home and may rely on family support to co-sign mortgages.

Stakeholders identified a number of home ownership features to attract and retain the next generation workforce. These features generally reflect two diverging approaches to homeownership. The first focuses on younger workers who are seeking homes that require minimal maintenance. These are professionals who prefer to use their weekends to enjoy Houston’s outdoor amenities. This group is seeking:

- affordable housing options,
- clean, safe housing,
- smaller homes for 1-2 people,
- newer or renovated homes,
- new subdivision,
- fenced yards, and
- a small amount of storage.

The second group focuses on young professionals who are attracted to Houston for its rural lifestyle. This group is seeking:

- acreage lots, and
- space for animals / pets.

There is also a group of the next generation workforce that are seeking market rental housing. These are people who have limited stays in town (i.e. pipeline workers, contract workers, etc.). Due to the length of each shift and rotation, these workers seek accommodations that require minimal maintenance. This group is seeking:

- modern, renovated rentals,
- family-based single detached homes for rent,
- condo-style apartments,
- furnished apartments for short-term stays,
- basement or secondary suites, and
- rentals that accommodate pets.

### *5.10.3 Aging Workforce Housing Needs*

There are two diverging approaches to address housing needs for the older workforce. The first reflects an interest amongst older workers or early retirees to acquire more acreage as they work less and spend more time enjoying their hobbies and activities. The second reflects an older workforce that is seeking to downsize their homes in order to support healthy aging in the community.

### *5.10.4 Temporary Workforce Accommodations*

An influx of mobile workers can generate many economic development opportunities for the community. The early stage of pipeline construction has already increased business for local motels. There is increased interest to renovate homes and develop secondary suites to attract mobile workers. Housing options of all types were noted as needing renovations to attract mobile workers. Peak construction periods and any changes or delays to construction schedules can, however, shape demand for local accommodations. Stakeholders expressed concerns, though, that there may be limited impetus to make such investments due to limited accommodation alternatives and the general high cost for construction and renovations.

During peak construction, TC Energy plans to accommodate most temporary mobile workers in a closed work camp approximately 70 kilometres outside of Houston and through the use of local motels to accommodate any overflow of contractors and sub-contractors. Office staff, however, may live in town. A contractor to operate the Huckleberry work camp is in the process of being finalized. The camp will be self-contained and equipped with recreational / exercise facilities, game rooms, satellite / television, laundry facilities, Internet, and primary care services.

The demand and management of temporary workforce accommodations needs to be monitored in order to detect emerging housing pressures. LNG proponents are working to invest in work camp accommodations to avoid intensifying local housing pressures. No living out allowance will be provided once the camp is in operation. There are concerns that the influx of mobile workers in advance of the completion of the work camp is already affecting some rentals and sparking speculation and competitive bidding on homes. During periods of rapid construction, community and business-related services can experience not only increased demand for supports as people come to the area looking for work, but they may experience internal capacity pressures. Stakeholders expressed concerns about losing staff to camps. An interagency committee should be established to monitor emerging socio-economic pressures that may emerge and function as an early warning system. The committee should encourage representation from industry, the Chamber of Commerce, the District of Houston, and various service providers and non-profit groups. Routine communication would enable stakeholders to identify emerging community changes, update stakeholders collectively, identify actions needed, and opportunities for synergies and collaboration.

In resource-based regions, work camps are increasingly being used to support a range of industry needs, including pipeline construction, oil and gas exploration, mining, reforestation, forest fire fighting, wind turbine construction, and more. The District of Houston currently permits the use of temporary camps in two industrial areas. Stakeholders reflected on the need to renew bylaws to determine how camps will address water, waste disposal, and sewage issues. We recommend ensuring local government policies and regulations are able to guide the continuum of work camp processes, including development, operations, decommissioning, and even re-opening (see Appendix B, template for work camps in the Peace River Regional District).

The presence of, and impacts associated with, temporary work camps will fluctuate – the key is how these periods can be used strategically to advance the long-term vision for the community. Strategic conversations about community benefits and legacy investments are needed during the early stages of industrial development. TC Energy, for example, is seeking to establish local partnerships to support organized activities and use of amenities for mobile workers in Houston. This can present a strategic opportunity to generate additional revenue that can be reinvested in planned equipment, infrastructure, and program needs.

## 5.11 Recreation Properties

With much of the surrounding areas consisting of mostly Crown land, Houston does not have many recreational properties or seasonal cottage country residents. Instead, Houston residents tend to own recreational properties nearby in the Lake Babine, Granisle, and Telkwa areas. Existing recreational properties are generally held by foreign visitors for the purposes of fishing and hunting. There is a general sense that recreational properties are expensive, despite interest in affordable small cottages and spots for RVs. Moving forward, new cabins are being planned to complement the extensive cross-country ski trail network.

## 6.0 Housing and Community Development

Housing has a mutually reinforcing relationship with community development. The economy, access to services and amenities, and overall quality of life will shape individual and family decisions to invest in long-term housing. At the same time, the quality of the housing stock will shape business and industry investments, and labour recruitment and retention. As such, housing policies, programs, and investments should be coordinated with broader community development and economic development strategies. Below, our discussion focuses on ten key topics that were impacting the overall quality of life, and potentially recruitment and retention decisions of residents.

### Economic Development

Houston has several business strengths that can be built upon. Stakeholders felt that the community has a good access to lumber stores, industrial businesses, a new clothing store, a new pub, and a greater variety of restaurants. Despite these strengths, there were concerns about the higher cost of necessities. Furthermore, despite affordable housing options, there are families who choose to live in other communities due to a lack of employment opportunities for spouses in service and retail sectors. To strengthen economic development assets in Houston, stakeholders are seeking:

- more grocery, retail, and clothing stores for workers and families,
- more restaurants,
- a local brewery to provide pride and a positive social space,
- another gas station, and
- businesses and services to service the night shift population.

Industry closures, out-of-town shopping, and on-line shopping have all contributed to a weakened business sector. The re-opening of a local grocery store through Buy-Low Foods was viewed as an important first step to renewing the small business sector and strengthening business retention.

The commercial infrastructure needs renovation to attract new entrepreneurs. The renovation completed for Happy Jacks has demonstrated what could be achieved through the renewal of commercial assets. Some businesses have started to develop in commercial spaces east of the mall, near and along 9<sup>th</sup> Street; however, there is a general lack of available space to support new retail development in the downtown core. Some downtown lots are owned as an investment without any commercial development. The District is working to improve the downtown core by implementing its downtown beautification strategy and through its renovation tax exemption policy. Moving forward, there is a need to explore ways to improve the uptake of local government and Northern Development Initiatives Trust (NDIT) incentives that support commercial renovations. Furthermore, there is a need to nurture and maintain the positive impact of having housing in the downtown core in close proximity to businesses. Communities, such as Terrace and Quesnel, have supported investments of seniors' independent housing in the downtown core for this purpose.

### Social Services

Houston lacks services in a number of areas. One such area involves food security issues for vulnerable households. The soup kitchen currently offers meals once per week. The Dze L'Kant Friendship Centre programs can also include meals. The Salvation Army is exploring opportunities to develop a mobile food truck. There is also a need for more social workers and counselling services to support vulnerable residents.

Overall, Houston has fewer provincial and federal government services compared to other communities in the Northwest. There is no local Ministry of Social Development office for those on social assistance; Work BC employment offices and Service Canada offices were regionalized to Smithers and Terrace; although, Service Canada provides scheduled outreach sites to smaller communities such as Burns Lake, Fort St. James, and Mackenzie (<http://www.servicecanada.gc.ca/tbsc-fsco/sc-lst.jsp?prov=BC&lang=eng>). Given the transportation challenges that exist to connect residents with regionalized supports, the District may wish to advocate for outreach sites or pop-up government services for residents. Houston also lacks some key community services (i.e. daycare and optometrist services) needed to attract the next generation workforce.

## Health Care

Business and resident decisions to move to a community are often strongly shaped by the availability and breadth of health care services. Houston is equipped with a health care centre. Following a successful doctor recruitment initiative, the community is re-equipped with two doctors, two counsellors, and a chiropractor. Home support is available for older residents and those with disabilities; although the extent of home support work is limited due to the demand for services. Seniors must commute to Smithers for more specialized forms of health care. The closest hospital offering 24/7 coverage is located in Smithers. Stakeholders identified the need for:

- extended hours for the health clinic,
- more resources to deal with the scale and scope of mental health issues,
- more part-time health care services,
- more dental services,
- more physiotherapy,
- more home support workers, and
- more alcohol and addiction supports.

## Education and Training

Another factor impacting business and resident decisions to move to a community is access to quality education and training. Access to education and training is critical to support lifelong learning, continuous renewal of workforce skills, and opportunities to develop the next generation workforce. Houston has received a number of vulnerable residents in response to regional housing pressures. These residents need access to employment training, upgrading, and financial literacy outreach supports in order to improve their living conditions. Houston Link to Learning currently provides supports for all forms of literacy, food skills programs, and career preparation. The Bulkley Valley Credit Union also delivers financial literacy sessions on banking and mortgages. The Houston Public Library provides many resources and guides to support life-long learning.

Houston, however, has limited access to post-secondary programs. The Coast Mountain College, formerly Northwest Community College, closed the Houston campus in 2017. Regional transit schedules limit the ability for students to commute to classes in Smithers. The college is currently assessing the feasibility of organizing transportation for regional students. TC Energy has expressed an interest to support literacy, continuous learning, and skills development training.

After a number of years of decline, student enrolment in Houston's K-12 schools has stabilized with a total of 691 students in local public and private schools (Table 3). The class sizes are not over crowded, with average class sizes consisting of 13 students at Houston Christian School, 19 students at Silverthorne Elementary, 23 students at

Twain Sullivan Elementary, and 20 students at Houston Secondary School. The elementary schools are evenly distributed throughout the community.

*Table 3: Aging K-12 Education Infrastructure*

School	Date Opened	Age of Asset	2019 Enrolment*
Silverthorne Elementary	1954	65 years	174
Houston Christian School	1964	55 years	162
Houston Secondary School	1971	48 years	177
Twain Sullivan Elementary School	1977	42 years	178

Source: District of Houston, 2019. Available on-line at: [https://www.houston.ca/schools\\_in\\_houston](https://www.houston.ca/schools_in_houston).

\*Source: BC Ministry of Education and Training, 2019. Available on-line at:

<http://www.bced.gov.bc.ca/apps/imcl/imclWeb/SchoolContacts.do?distNo=054&...>

## Planning

Planning and community dialogue to understand community needs and interests in amenities will help to attract and retain residents. Stakeholders feel that Houston needs a clear vision to guide downtown beautification and develop a vibrant downtown core. Comments reinforce recommendations and actions contained in other plans and strategies, including:

- more public spaces throughout the town’s core,
- a more centrally located community garden, and
- updated town infrastructure.

Park features are an important element to strengthening local quality of life, with stakeholders requesting more benches and park space throughout the town. Concerns were expressed about park space that was eliminated to support the construction of the new swimming pool, as well as emerging plans to develop a road through the Duck Pond that would impact this family-friendly park area.

Stakeholders further stressed the need to make the community family-friendly. Some communities, such as Fort St. John have developed a family-friendly certification program that encourages public, private, and non-profit groups to support flexible scheduling, access to childcare, organizing family-friendly activities, and other things.

## Physical Infrastructure

The state of physical infrastructure will shape the overall aesthetics and feel of a community to potential investors and residents. The District is looking to improve street lighting and address road infrastructure throughout the community.

## Recreation

Houston’s recreational amenities and assets are amongst its greatest strengths to attract people who are seeking an active or outdoor lifestyle. They also support several guiding outfitters and related tourism activities.

Stakeholders highlighted several positive assets in Houston, including:

- the Houston Leisure Facility;

- the Claude Perish Memorial Arena;
- the Four Seasons Horse Park;
- the Mount Harry Davis mountain biking trails;
- the Pleasant Valley Plaza bowling alley, mini golf, and movie theatre;
- the cross-country ski trails maintained by the Morice Mountain Nordic Ski Club;
- several good hiking and snowmobile trails;
- good ball diamonds;
- good community parks;
- several fishing and fly-fishing spots; and
- other back country recreational assets.

Stakeholders noted a need to improve the promotion of these recreational assets. Stakeholders also discussed upgrades that are needed for the arena, bowling alley, trails, cabins, and cottages to support back country recreation, and a potential boat launch for the Morice River.

## Youth

The District has a broad range of recreational assets and programs for families and youth, such as hockey, skating, ringette, swimming. However, there are fewer non-sport recreational programs for youth in the community. The lack of teachers living in Houston has meant that there are few after-school or extra-curricular activities for youth. A number of organizations and committees have been working to expand the range of programming opportunities for youth. For example, the Dze L’Kant Friendship Centre delivers programs for youth and young families, while Basement Dwellers provides space for youth to play games and connect socially with others. The Harm Reduction Committee delivers Kids in Control and Teens in Control to assist youth who live in households where addictions are present. They deliver youth programs such as movie nights and dodgeball. Similarly, the Youth Wellness Committee organizes youth events (i.e. sports tournaments, game / pizza nights).

## Informal Networks

Houston is a community with strong social ties. There are many informal networks in Houston that are mobilized to provide support to those in need. Church groups and youth, for example, provide assistance with snow removal for older residents. The loss of residents following the closure of industries and government offices means that this capacity must be renewed. Many community organizations are looking for more people to join and expand the volunteer capacity.

## Social Cohesion

Houston has a good comradery amongst many of its residents. This sense of community is strongly linked to its identity as a logging town as many households had someone engaged in the forest sector and had developed strong work-based networks. Following forest sector closures, however, some stakeholders felt that this cohesion has been challenged. Stakeholders felt that more attention to develop small spaces to support music, arts, and culture is needed to create a socially vibrant environment.



## 7.0 Short-term Priorities

Looking into the future, stakeholders identified eight key housing issues deemed to be the highest priorities to address in Houston in the next five years. These include: maintenance, accessibility, housing for the next generation workforce, subsidized housing, affordability, complex care, subdivision development, and acreage development.

### 1. Maintenance

The top priority is to address the maintenance and condition of the housing, trailer parks, and market rental stock. To move this objective forward, stakeholders are supportive of local government assuming a greater role to discuss and enforce property maintenance.

#### i. Developing stronger maintenance / unsightly premise bylaws

This will require a better understanding of the District's legal position to enforce these standards. It will also require adequate staffing resources to enforce new regulations. BC Housing provides a model bylaw for municipalities looking to strengthen their property maintenance bylaws ([http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/pub/htmldocs/pub\\_guide.htm](http://www.housing.gov.bc.ca/pub/htmldocs/pub_guide.htm)). This information is designed to strengthen affordable housing assets by establishing basic levels of maintenance and standards for rental accommodations.

#### ii. Annual government inspections for large-scale rentals

This will require assigning a building inspector to routinely assess the suitability of rentals.

There are emerging concerns that renovations conducted during a period of rapid pipeline construction nearby could prompt more renovictions for vulnerable residents. Municipalities are developing policies to address some of the concerns associated with renovictions. The City of Courtney, for example, will not support the rezoning of mobile home parks unless the owner has arranged and paid for the relocation or purchase of the existing homes (City of Courtenay 2007).

Stakeholders expressed an interest to deliver more education and supports to ensure residents know how to maintain their homes and rental units (for possible programs, see Appendix A).

### 2. Accessibility

A second priority identified by stakeholders is to improve accessibility in housing throughout the community. This includes attention to expanding seniors' housing, as well as attention to improving accessibility in single detached homes, single level strata developments, duplexes, and rentals. Incentives (i.e. tax exemptions and grants) to renovate or develop more accessible housing and rental units will need to be broadly promoted to homeowners and developers. Such investments should be complemented with home care and handyman supports to enable people to remain in their homes longer.

### 3. Housing for the Next Generation Workforce

A next key priority is the need for low maintenance, modern, and high quality rentals to attract professionals and the next generation workforce. These units should be equipped with a small amount of storage to accommodate

recreational equipment for professionals seeking to spend their spare time engaged in recreational activities in the area. The provision of such rentals will play a big role to entice professionals' decisions to remain living in Houston.

#### 4. Subsidized Housing

Subsidized housing is needed for low-income single adults, families, and Indigenous residents. Appendix A provides information about existing provincial and federal programs to support investments in subsidized housing. These programs support the development of new subsidized housing investments, as well as subsidies to assist low-income tenants in market rentals. Before any subsidized housing initiatives move forward, non-profit stakeholders, BC Housing, and the District will need to explore the scale and scope of subsidized housing needs and options for obtaining land to support such investments.

#### 5. Affordability

Building on the provision of subsidized housing, investments in affordable market rentals and homes are needed to support the workforce. Opportunities to increase densification (i.e. duplexes) were recommended to provide purchase and rental options at affordable rates. Incentives to develop quality market rentals need to be more broadly promoted to potential developers and real estate investors.

#### 6. Complex Care

Stakeholders identified supportive housing through assisted living and complex care as a priority to complement investments in accessible forms of housing in order to help residents age-in-place. Such investments will require investments in supportive staff to help families maneuver the processes associated with placement within assisted living and long-term care facilities.

#### 7. Subdivision Development

Stakeholders identified a series of issues to shape and renew subdivision developments. These focused on the need for:

- 1) subdivisions with new single detached homes in family-friendly environments;
- 2) mixed housing neighbourhoods and mixed market and subsidized housing developments;
- 3) infill development where servicing is already in place; and
- 4) eco-friendly homes and market rentals to reduce energy bills.

#### 8. Acreage Development

Recognizing the diversity of interests and lifestyles in the community, another priority focused on the development of more acreage lots in order to retain low-density areas that reflect the rural and outdoor lifestyle sought by some residents.

## 8.0 Future Priorities

Stakeholders were asked to reflect on long-term housing issues and priorities in Houston. These focus on continued investments in accessibility, housing for the next generation workforce, and affordability, as well as attention to safety, renovations to the housing stock, energy efficiency, and long-term planning.

### 1. Accessibility

Stakeholders identified accessibility as both a short-term and long-term priority. As the population continues to age-in-place, ongoing attention to accessible forms of housing will be needed. In addition to continued investments in seniors' housing in the short- and long-term, efforts are needed to connect seniors with home support services and grant programs to assist with home adaptations (i.e. ramps, walk-in tubs, etc.). Programs to reduce the isolation of older residents living independently in their homes may be needed.

### 2. Housing for Next Generation Workforce

Housing investment for the next generation workforce was identified as a priority. New single-detached homes and new smaller homes were highlighted as key elements to attract and retain this group in the community. New housing assets that have already been developed in the community need to be promoted to potential new residents. Building on short-term priorities for new high quality rentals, there is a need for small condo developments that can offer owners modern finishes, a small amount of storage, and low maintenance.

### 3. Affordability

Transitions in affordable housing assets will likely require sustained long-term commitments of capacity and resources. As such stakeholders felt that attention to new affordable homes and rental options should remain a long-term priority. Investments in energy-efficient subsidized housing and low-income modular housing were also recommended.

### 4. Safety

Another long-term priority concerns investments in safe housing. For stakeholders, this meant creating safe living and playground spaces, as well as supporting investments in emergency shelters and transition housing.

### 5. Renovations to Housing Stock

As a part of the continued renovations to the housing stock, stakeholders felt that there is a need to address asbestos in older homes and multi-family dwellings to bring these assets up to current building code standards. Major repairs to housing and rental assets will require a long-term commitment of resources. Many households, however, may not have the financial capacity to address unexpected costs that can emerge. The closest certified contractors for removing hazardous materials are located in Smithers, Terrace, and Prince George; exacerbating the costs of such repairs. Building upon existing government tax credits, grants, and rebate programs to encourage investments in energy-efficiency, housing industry proponents are advocating for similar senior government programs to support the remediation of hazardous materials during the renovation of aging housing assets (Edge 2018). Long-term efforts should continue to monitor and enforce the maintenance of market rental properties.

## 6. Energy-Efficiency

An important source of pride for many stakeholders stems from existing investments in energy efficient housing and related infrastructure assets. Moving forward, stakeholders prioritized a long-term commitment to further investments in solar panels, wind energy, and geothermal energy infrastructure to support housing and broader community development initiatives. However, there is also a need to explore ways to improve the uptake of existing grants and rebate programs (see Appendix A) to support investments in better insulation, windows, and doors.

## 7. Long-Term Planning

With mounting climate change pressures unfolding, there is a need to ensure the 200-year flood risk assessment for the Bulkley River has been completed to support appropriate planning and emergency planning for residential areas.

Another important long-term planning task will be for the District to examine legacy investments that can be leveraged from industrial investments. It is important to note, however, that legacy investments should be negotiated between the local government and industry proponents during the early stages of project development. To support local governments in these contexts, UNBC's Community Development Institute prepared a report ***Best Practices Guiding Industry-Community Relationships, Planning, and Mobile Workforces*** for BC's Natural Gas Workforce Strategy Committee<sup>4</sup>.

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<sup>4</sup> In Australia, the Gladstone Regional Council received funding from LNG companies to invest in affordable housing. The affordable housing units have left an important \$19.6 million legacy within the community (Ryser et al. 2015). Furthermore, the City of Fort St. John signed the Community Measures Agreement with BC Hydro in advance of the construction of the Site C Clean Energy Project. Through this agreement, BC Hydro agreed to provide 50 housing units, including 10 units to support affordable housing (Ryser et al. 2019).

## 9.0 Community Capacity

The success of moving the priorities contained within the housing needs assessment forward will largely depend upon the community capacity and collaborative structures that are in place. Below, we explore the strengths and gaps identified with human capital in the private sector, local government, non-profit and voluntary sectors; collaboration; senior government supports; financial capital; access to land; climate and geography; access to information; and social barriers.

### 9.1 Human Capital

#### *Non-profit capacity*

The construction, renovation, and management of existing social housing developments have been led by the **Smithers Community Services Association** (assisted and independent living), **Northern Health** (complex care), and the **Houston Retirement Housing Society** (independent living). Many stakeholders talked about the important contributions of long-time resident Arnold Amonson who managed the financing, contracting, volunteer coordination for the Pleasant Valley Village project, with three buildings completed in 2008, 2010, and 2013 respectively. A broader community group that included the Senior Citizens' Association engaged in many fundraising initiatives to support these projects. Gas tax funding was also obtained to support investments in the heating and furnace systems. The Groot Brothers donated 5 acres of land to support the development of the Pleasant Valley Village. There are currently plans to develop a fourth building in the summer of 2020 to add an additional six units, bringing the total number of independent living units to 24.

Community service agencies are increasingly pursuing an active role in housing support programs. As regional service providers, the **Dze L'Kant Friendship Centre** and the Smithers Community Services Association have housing coordinators in place to support referrals, respond to emergency housing situations, and connect clients with resources. The demand for these programs has been shifting to Houston as clients seek affordable housing options. The **Houston Community Services**, **Houston Link to Learning**, and **Legal Services Society** work together to advocate for clients and connect them with housing and related programs. Furthermore, the Legion has assisted veterans with major home repairs.

In Houston, there are concerns that the non-profit sector is already operating at peak capacity and have limited time and staff resources to pursue new housing initiatives or manage existing housing assets. These challenges are compounded by struggles to attract qualified skilled workers.

Many non-profit organizations in small communities rely heavily on volunteer support. In Houston, the engagement of local volunteers was a cornerstone component guiding the successful development of Pleasant Valley Village. However, Houston is not only now challenged by a lack of volunteers, but the existing volunteer pool is aging. There is a need to recruit more and younger volunteers to support future housing projects.

Another challenge to volunteer capacity has been the closures of industry and provincial government offices – many of which had experience working through government and private granting processes.

### *Private sector capacity*

Two key capacity constraints in the private sector stem from limited property management capacity and limited capacity in the trades sector. Market rentals are largely owned by absentee landlords. There is no local landlords' association or network in place to facilitate streamlined communication between the private sector, local government, and other community stakeholders. There are also no licensed property managers or professional property management business in the area.

In terms of trades, there is only one certified plumber and one certified electrical business in Houston. There is no local capacity to repair flat roofs. As a result, housing stakeholders pursue trades workers from Vanderhoof to Smithers. The closest pest control exterminator is located in Terrace.

### *Local government capacity*

Stakeholders would like local government to pursue a greater leadership role to address housing issues. As a small local government, the District is challenged with limited capacity to support bylaw enforcement and housing initiatives. There is no local building inspector, often resulting in long wait times and creating bottlenecks for contract work. A part-time housing coordinator was recently hired with the responsibility to mobilize recommendations from the housing needs assessment. Moving forward, the development of a resource list of retired professionals through organizations such as the North Central Local Government Association or the Union of BC Municipalities could assist communities, such as Houston, on an ad-hoc basis.

## 9.2 Collaboration

New housing projects are complex endeavors that require a long-term commitment of time and resources. Collaboration unfolds on a case by case basis. With a number of issues that need to be addressed moving forward, it will be important to streamline, rather than expand, collaborative structures in order to avoid overwhelming the small network of stakeholder resources in Houston. The closure of Houston Forest Products provided an impetus to bring local government, industry, business, and community service stakeholders together. An investment of time is important to build the capacity of organizations individually and collectively in order to understand each other's strengths, networks, and generate more timely and comprehensive responses to emerging housing issues.

### *Example: Collaboration in Kitimat*

In Kitimat, the closure of Eurocan, and the rapid growth associated with the KMP and pipeline announcements led to the development of new collaborative responses to socio-economic pressure and change. The community started two 'dialogue' groups. The first dialogue group focused on economic opportunities and challenges, while a second dialogue group focused on social and community matters. The first dialogue group provided industry leaders with streamlined communication with the local government's CAO. Membership in the second dialogue group included public and voluntary/non-profit service providers from Kitimat and Terrace. To support this approach, those at the planning meeting endorsed using the existing 'Interagency Committee' as a working group to deal with the impending changes. The Interagency Committee was a routine informal gathering of social service and community groups where people shared information about their activities. These meetings were routinely attended by industry representatives and contractors such as Rio Tinto, Bechtel, and LNG Canada. Industry presentations helped to better understand the scope, scale, and timing of potential effects from the smelter modernization project as well as some smaller and related proposed projects. The group acted as an early warning system with respect to some of the subtler socio-economic changes in the community (i.e. renovations).

Through the Interagency Committee, other collaborative structures emerged to address specific topics such as youth programs, housing, economic development, poverty, physical and mental health, and seniors' needs. Through dialogue, members of the Interagency Committee were able to form various shared decision-making partnerships that have included the Housing Committee, the Violence Against Women in Relationships Coordination Committee, the Community Response Network, the Early Years Initiative, Integrated Case Management teams, and others. Through these collaborative structures, service agencies improved communication and access to information; improved their understanding of protocols and procedures; improved access to a broader range of resources and expertise; shared human resources to deliver joint events; achieved greater efficiency through joint service agreements and new protocols; and determined who could best address local gaps.

Through the Harm Reduction Committee and the Youth Wellness Committee, stakeholders continue to demonstrate that a foundation for governance and collaboration is in place as groups develop experience working together. There is a need, however, for a permanent broader stakeholder network to monitor housing issues and to guide the implementation of many strategies and plans, including housing, in response to emerging issues.

### 9.3 Senior Government Supports

Stakeholders advocated for more resources and outreach support from BC Housing and the Residential Tenancy Branch. As a part of this outreach, there should be proactive efforts to provide information and supports to tenants about which provincial government agency has jurisdiction over different housing issues. Some stakeholders expressed concerns, for example, that Northern Health was not following up on complaints about poor housing conditions. As stakeholders work to address housing concerns in Houston’s neighbourhoods, there is a need for greater synergies between BC Housing, Northern Health, the District of Houston, and other key stakeholders in the community.

In May 2019, the Province of British Columbia created a new staff position to help municipalities address rental issues (Yuzda and Boothby 2019). The enforcement unit has a mandate to identify repeat housing offenders and conduct investigations. The operations will focus on major / serious issues that could impact the safety or integrity of the rental unit (i.e. electrical).

### 9.4 Financial Capital

Stakeholders have a lack of funding or financial capital to invest in new housing projects and renovations. For private sector investors, economic uncertainty, tax increases, and rent capping discourage housing investments. Secondary suites are permitted within R1 One Family Residential Zones, R2 Two Family Residential Zones, A1 Rural Agricultural Zones, and A2 Rural Residential Zones (low density residential); however, there are no existing incentives to encourage secondary suite investments.

#### *An Example*

In Kitimat, a lack of suitable housing for an aging population and influx of mobile workers prompted the local government to promote a forgivable loan program to encourage the development of affordable and accessible secondary suites. This program provides a five-year forgivable loan via a grant agreement with the District.

#### **District of Kitimat Secondary Suite Incentive Program**

Type of Secondary Suite	Allowable Forgivable Loan
Any suite	\$2,500
Level 1 affordable <sup>5</sup>	\$5,000
Level 2 affordable <sup>6</sup>	\$7,500
Any suite that is accessible for disabled <sup>7</sup>	\$2,500 (bonus)

*Source: District of Kitimat, n.d.*

For potential home buyers, high construction costs make it cheaper to simply purchase existing homes. There are high costs to install water wells and sewage systems. Some noted, however, that high renovation costs are prompting the use of informal networks to complete renovations and repairs.

<sup>5</sup> According to Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, Level 1 affordable units cost no more than \$645 for a bachelor, \$750 for 1 bedroom, \$900 for 2 bedrooms, and \$950 for 3 or more bedrooms (District of Kitimat, n.d.).

<sup>6</sup> According to CMHC, Level 2 affordable units cost no more than \$575 for a bachelor, \$685 for 1 bedroom, \$815 for 2 bedrooms, and \$873 for 3 or more bedrooms (District of Kitimat, n.d.).

<sup>7</sup> Accessible units must meet BC Housing Design Guidelines and Construction Standards (District of Kitimat, n.d.).



There are a number of provincial and federal programs to support non-profit investments in housing (see Appendix A). Furthermore, non-profit organizations in some communities are exploring the logistics of establishing rent banks to assist low-income households that require ‘emergency loans’ to address sudden crises or emergencies (i.e. fires, renovations, loss of utilities, sudden loss of employment, or sudden changes to health) (City of Fernie 2017). The operations and policies associated with rent banks vary (see <https://www.sourcesbc.ca/our-services/sources-rent-bank>).

Municipalities have been using a number of regulatory tools to support affordable housing projects, including waiving or reducing application and permit fees, tax exemption programs, and the establishment of affordable housing funds, trusts, or reserves (City of Courtenay 2007; City of Fernie 2017; City of Parksville 2009; Cityspaces Consulting 2014; Cityspaces Consulting & City of Nelson 2010). Potential sources of revenue for affordable housing funds stem from density bonus schemes that require construction camps to make amenity contributions (District of Kitimat 2014); specialty property tax levies (City of Campbell River & Affordable Housing Steering Committee 2010; Social Planning Cowichan 2010); conversion fees for strata units, annual contributions from municipal budgets, and cash contributions from developers seeking rezoning changes (City of Fernie 2017).

## 9.5 Access to Land

There are limited options of available land to support new market and subsidized housing investments. Land is available to support more seniors’ housing investments next to the Pleasant Valley Village. The District owns two lots: one is located on Sullivan Way and the second is located on 10<sup>th</sup> Street in the downtown core that may be able to support new accessible seniors’ housing in a location closer to the grocery store and health centre or to support more infill development. Privately owned land is available adjacent to Highway 16, near the Avalon trailer court, and further south up the hill past Ruitter Heights. The Witset First Nation is investing money to obtain fee simple land and pursue processes to add land to their reserve. Moving forward, the District of Houston will need to work closely with community stakeholders and property owners to identify potential parcels of land that could be purchased or donated to support future housing projects.

## 9.6 Access to Information

Residents struggle to obtain timely access to information about available housing options. Currently, there is no clear access point for people to obtain information. Residents access housing information through five general mechanisms, including social media, informal networks, businesses, print materials, and non-profit groups. Stakeholders generally find it difficult to maintain a current listing of rentals as property managers change frequently. A central housing resource centre is needed to provide updated information about housing options and resources in the community.

Residents, property managers, and rental property owners also need access to information about tenancy rights and responsibilities. Topics raised include information about changing tenancy agreements, renovation processes, evictions, and how landlords can protect themselves from negative tenant behaviours and property damage.

Several community service agencies have been working on education programs to strengthen literacy and awareness of tenancy rights. Houston Community Services and the Dze L’Kant Friendship Centre have pursued opportunities for tenancy education. The Friendship Centre has also been working on a workshop to build non-profit skills around tenant advocacy. The Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre delivered a workshop to train housing advocates in Houston and Smithers. This complements efforts by the Smithers Community Services Association that mentors and supports non-profits that are interested in developing and managing housing assets.

Nonprofit organizations, Rental Owners and Managers Society of BC, and Landlord BC provide assistance to help property owners and managers understand tenancy legislation (see Appendix A).

## 9.7 Social Barriers

In any housing context, there are some areas of special concern in supporting better housing for vulnerable residents. These include:

- discrimination against low income tenants,
- racism and discrimination against First Nations that have historic trauma, and
- stigma against people with mental illness.

A lack of understanding or social divisions within a community may be impeding support for certain forms of housing investments. For example, some long-term residents can feel threatened by an influx of newcomers and low-income residents to a community. Any such barriers to addressing housing issues need to be part of a community dialogue on housing.

## 9.8 Key Lessons for Housing Projects

Stakeholders that have experience with developing and managing housing assets offered several key lessons to guide future housing initiatives. These include the need to:

- carefully assess the capacity and collaborative skills of potential partners;
- ensure the project is supported by the District to nurture broader community buy-in;
- identify critical housing and design needs of the targeted group;
- carefully consider the location of housing projects;
- start with small housing projects;
- ensure there is a good understanding of building code requirements;
- secure funding prior to the project construction;
- ensure that a building manager is in place during the design stage of the project;
- carefully select the housing operator or manager to ensure that they have the skills to maintain the assets;
- ensure sufficient budget resources are allocated to have adequate staff in place;
- ensure good tenant agreements are in place; and
- ensure good tenant screening processes are in place.

## 10.0 Conclusion

Houston's economy is continuing to transform through ongoing changes in the forest and mining sectors and through opportunities emerging through pipeline construction and its recreational assets. Housing market conditions have been impacted by past industrial closures, out-migration, population aging, and an influx of people seeking affordable housing. The affordable housing prices in Houston provides the community with a good advantage as it moves forward with community renewal processes. The aging condition of owned housing and market rental assets, however, produces expensive utility, heating, and maintenance costs. The quality of housing assets is an important part of attracting entrepreneurs, professionals, and the next generation workforce. However, much of the existing housing stock was designed and built in the 1960s and 1970s to attract a different

generation of young workers and their families and is not suited to an aging population or the current new generation workforce.

## Housing Needs Issues

Stakeholder interviews and housing data identified several housing issues that need to be addressed in order to better position community and economic development initiatives moving forward.

### *Actions needed to improve the living conditions of low-income and vulnerable groups:*

- attention to the maintenance and renovation of the housing and market rental stock;
- the development of subsidized housing for single adults, families, and Indigenous residents;
- the development of an emergency shelter, safe house, and a transition house; and
- energy-efficient homes and market rentals to reduce energy bills.

### *Actions needed to improve the living conditions of an aging population:*

- construction and renovations to develop more accessible housing; and
- the expansion of assisted living and complex care units.

### *Actions needed to improve the quality of the housing stock to attract entrepreneurs, professionals, and the next generation workforce:*

- more investments in affordable market rentals and homes for purchase;
- development of high quality rentals and homes to attract the next generation workforce and professionals;
- the development of a new subdivision within the existing infrastructure envelope to expand high-quality, family-friendly environments; and
- more acreage lots to retain low-density areas that reflect the rural and outdoor lifestyle.

### *Actions to monitor and assess changes due to climate change:*

- Floodplain mapping,
- Water and flooding issues,
- Infrastructure issues.

## Imperatives to Guide Planning and Investments in Housing

An action plan to address housing issues in Houston will need to be closely coordinated with broader comprehensive community and economic development strategies. Most notably, investments in affordable, accessible, and subsidized housing need to be complemented with strategic planning regarding the location and proximity of these assets, and investments in local and regional public transportation to connect residents with needed supports. New housing investments should be placed within the existing infrastructure envelope to sustain the viability of local government operations. The District may advocate for outreach or pop-up sites for government services that are needed to support vulnerable residents. As the local housing market is impacted by broader housing shortages and conditions in other regional Indigenous and non-Indigenous communities, future housing investments and strategies will need to be coordinated with actions undertaken at a regional level.

Housing strategies and investments will need to reflect the integrated nature of actions needed to address the breadth of housing interests and demands. With an aging population, investments in smaller homes, independent seniors' housing facilities, and more complex forms of care will provide the housing assets needed to enable older residents to downsize while increasing the availability of housing assets to attract and retain the next generation of workers and entrepreneurs in the community. Any successful action plan will need to coordinate initiatives across different types of housing and community development investments to meet the needs of people through all ages and stages of life.

## Recommendations

As Houston moves forward to develop an action plan to address housing issues, we propose a series of recommendations that can build local capacity and better position community stakeholders to be ready to invest in housing initiatives.

### *Strengthening relationships and networks*

- an interagency group to bring economic and social stakeholders together to monitor emerging community and economic development issues;
- stronger relationships with landlords;
- a landlords' association at a local or regional level;
- stronger relationships with BC Housing and the Residential Tenancy Branch; and
- a streamlined communication protocol between industry leaders and the District to monitor and provide updates on work camp and project construction activities.

### *Information*

- information workshops on local, provincial, and federal government incentives and programs to support renovations and investments in housing;
- a homeless count of homeless or at-risk populations;
- a central housing resource centre to provide residents with current housing listings and programs;
- information sessions and education programs on responsibilities of tenants, property managers, and owners;
- training workshops for property managers;
- education and supports to ensure residents know how to maintain their homes and rental units;
- education programs and information sessions to help tenants understand their rights and how to work through processes with the BC Residential Tenancy Branch; and
- community awareness programs about mental illness to reduce the stigma for these residents.

### *Building stakeholder capacity and increasing housing quality*

- stronger maintenance / unsightly premise bylaws to control the quality of renovations and maintenance of housing;
- incentives (tax exemptions and grants) to develop more accessible housing and rental units;
- recruitment and training incentives for a building inspector; and
- expanding the role of the housing coordinator to support non-profits pursuing non-market housing projects, and help residents maneuver various processes to access and improve their housing conditions.

### *Infrastructure*

- develop partnerships to use underutilized spaces in the community for an emergency or cold-weather shelter;
- expand land reserves to ensure the community is positioned and ready to pursue housing investments; and
- link housing and community infrastructure planning and investments.

## Appendix A: Housing Resources and Programs

This appendix provides useful resources and programs to guide the development and operations of housing. This section should be treated as a 'living' resource, subject to changes in organizations, government departments, policies, programs, and regulations. Regardless, it should provide a useful starting point for any individual or organization that is seeking additional information around tenancy, social housing investments, and training for housing staff and operators.

### Information and Resources about Tenancy

#### *Residential Tenancy Branch*

<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/residential-tenancies>

**Description:** provides information for both landlords and tenants, including their respective rights in tenancy, tenancy agreements, allowable rent increases, dispute resolution processes, changes to tenancy laws, and important information guiding the start, duration, and ending of a tenancy arrangement. A number of forms are provided to provide clarity guiding the landlord / tenant relationship, including unit inspection reports, notice of rent increases, etc.

#### *Renting in BC*

[https://renters.gov.bc.ca/?utm\\_campaign=20190627\\_GCPE\\_AM\\_REN\\_3\\_ADW\\_BCGOV\\_EN\\_BC\\_TEXT](https://renters.gov.bc.ca/?utm_campaign=20190627_GCPE_AM_REN_3_ADW_BCGOV_EN_BC_TEXT)

**Description:** provides targeted information to address many emerging issues in rental markets, such as renovictions, connecting seniors with affordable rental options through BC Housing, fair rent increases, repairs, damage deposits, etc. The site contains information about a new Compliance and Enforcement unit created within BC's Residential Tenancy Branch to address landlords and renters who are repeat or serious offenders of tenancy laws.

#### *Information for Tenants (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/tenants-programs-resources/information-for-tenants>

**Description:** provides important resources for tenants, including a 'Tenant Handbook' in several languages, administrative forms, emergency and maintenance contact information, and links to other informative resources, including the *Residential Tenancy Act*. The Tenant Handbook covers many topics associated with moving in, rights and responsibilities, maintaining rental units, safety for tenants, and moving out.

#### *Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre*

<http://tenants.bc.ca>

**Description:** provides information about starting a tenancy (i.e. tenancy agreements, tenant insurance, finding background information about landlords, and condition inspection reports); resolving issues during a tenancy (i.e. bed bugs, rent increases, repairs and maintenance); and ending a tenancy (i.e. breaking a lease, breaching terms of a rental agreement, evictions, fires and other disasters, and moving out). The website provides many template letters to help tenants clearly communicate issues pertaining to bedbugs and other pests, requested changes to tenancy agreement, responding to landlords entering units illegally, requesting copies of rental receipts and tenancy agreements, requests for repairs or reimbursement for emergency repairs, responses to illegal eviction notices, etc.

### *The Landlord Engagement Toolkit*

[https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/LANDLORD%20TOOLKIT\\_ENG\\_web.pdf](https://www.homelesshub.ca/sites/default/files/attachments/LANDLORD%20TOOLKIT_ENG_web.pdf)

**Description:** provides a how-to guide to engage with landlords. Although, it is designed around the context of the Housing First program, there are many actions that are applicable to broader market rentals and subsidized housing initiatives. Key issues addressed include: building relationships with landlords; establishing a community advisory committee; the completion of a landlord survey; securing appropriate financial resources; leases and contracts; operational policies, protocols, and procedures; staff training; recruiting landlords; developing an effective marketing strategy; meetings between landlords and housing coordinator; education for tenants and landlords; screening tenants; risk management; managing damages and evictions; and the provision of templates. The toolkit provides guidance to landlords renting to Indigenous tenants in order to be aware of barriers that may impede effective housing of these residents. Topics include: racism and prejudice, the provision of on-site culturally response supports, and appropriate landlord engagement.

### *Landlord Guide*

<http://tenants.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/2015/01/Landlord-Guide-English.pdf>

**Description:** provides information about landlord responsibilities, discrimination, maintaining the condition of rental units, tenancy agreements, repairs, rent increases, entering the rental unit, evictions, and damage deposits.

## Information about Home Ownership

### *BC Housing: Homeowners and Home Buyers*

<https://www.bchousing.org/licensing-consumer-services/new-homes/>

**Description:** provides information about buying and selling homes, including information addressing home insurance, home maintenance, renovation regulations, builder complaints, and dispute resolution.

## Subsidized Housing and Rental Assistance Programs for Residents

### *Subsidized Housing (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/rental-housing/subsidized-housing>

**Description:** connects tenants to housing providers that offer affordable housing options.

**Eligible recipients:** housing providers determine specific eligibility criteria. Common criteria include ability to live independently, residency requirements, access to an income source, references, or willingness to adhere to rules of co-op housing structures.

#### **Local Service Provider:**

##### Cottonwood Manor

Smithers Community Services Association  
2261 Copeland Avenue, Houston, BC V0J 1Z0  
(250) 845-3770

- Subsidized housing for seniors and persons in need of assisted living
- 22 single-bedroom units
- Apply through the housing provider (<http://www.scsa.ca> or 3815B Railway Avenue, Smithers
- British Columbia, Canada V0J 2N0)

### *Independent Living BC (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/housing-with-support/independent-living-bc-program>

**Description:** provides subsidized housing with built-in support services for persons in need of assisted living services. Housing includes private units, shared dining and social areas, housekeeping services, personal care services and emergency response services.

**Eligible recipients:** seniors and persons with disabilities who have received a referral from a health care worker.

#### **Local Service Provider:**

Cottonwood Manor

Smithers Community Services Association

2261 Copeland Avenue, Houston, BC V0J 1Z0

(250) 845-3770

- Apply through [Northern Health Authority](#)

### *Rental Assistance Program (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/rental-assistance/RAP>

**Description:** assists low-income families with rent through cash assistance.

**Eligible recipients:** low income persons or families (gross household income of \$40,000 or less) who have been employed in the last year, and have one or more dependent children.

### *Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/rental-assistance/SAFER>

**Description:** subsidizes seniors' rent through monthly cash assistance.

**Eligible recipients:** seniors (60 years or older) who have lived in BC for 12 months before application, meet citizenship requirements and pay more than 30% of gross household income for rent.

### *On-reserve Income Assistance program (Government of Canada)*

<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1100100035256/1533307528663>

**Description:** provides income assistance for individuals and families who demonstrate financial need to cover basic needs such as rent, as well as pre-employment and employment supports.

**Eligible recipients:** 'ordinarily resident on-reserve' individual members of a First Nation.

## Home Adaptation Grants

### *Home Adaptations for Independence (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/HAFI/program-overview>

**Description:** provides grants to low-income households for home adaptations to help persons with disabilities or limited abilities live more independently.

**Eligible recipients:** households with one or more persons with a disability/limited ability.



## Information and Resources for Non-Profit Housing Providers

### *Information for New or Potential Housing Providers (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/projects-partners/partner-with-us>

<https://www.bchousing.org/partner-services>

**Description:** provides information for new or potential housing providers on how to partner with BC Housing, become a part of the BC Housing Registry, and/or manage a group home, transition house, safe home and/or and second-stage housing program.

### *Information for Existing Housing Providers (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/partner-services>

**Description:** provides variety of resources and information designed to support non-profit housing providers, including information about the housing registry, non-profit training, funding opportunities, capital planning, asset management and development, operational resources, tax guides that apply to non-profit housing providers, and other toolkits.

### *Community Partnerships Initiative (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/projects-partners/funding-opportunities/CPI>

**Description:** provides non-profit housing providers with advice and helps connect them to partnership opportunities and long-term financing.

### *Building BC: Community Housing Fund\* (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/projects-partners/funding-opportunities/Building-BC-CHF>

**Description:** provides funds to develop mixed income, affordable rental housing for families and seniors.

**Eligible recipients:** non-profit organizations, housing co-operatives, and local governments.

*\*Note: new intake of applications will be issued in spring 2020.*

### *Building BC: Supportive Housing Fund\* (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/projects-partners/funding-opportunities/Building-BC-SHF>

**Description:** provides investments in new housing facilities that are owned by the Province, with services for new supportive housing for persons at risk of, or experiencing, homelessness provided by non-profits and other community stakeholders.

**Eligible partners:** non-profit housing providers; government authorities; community groups.

*\*Note: next submission deadline TBD.*

### *Building BC: Women's Transition Housing Fund\* (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/projects-partners/funding-opportunities/Building-BC-WTHF>

**Description:** provides funding to support the development of new transition houses, safe homes, second stage, and long-term housing, for women and children at risk of, or experiencing, violence.

**Eligible recipients:** non-profit service providers.

*\*Note: next submission deadline TBD.*

## Training

### *Housing Internship Initiative for First Nation and Inuit Youth (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)*

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/developing-for-first-nations/housing-internship-initiative-first-nation-inuit-youth>

**Description:** provides assistance to help organizations hire First Nations and Inuit youth to equip them with on-the-job training and experience in the housing industry.

**Eligible recipients:** Trainee: First Nations and Inuit youth between the ages of 15 and 30.

Sponsor: First Nation and Inuit organizations, including businesses, councils, and self-government entities located within First Nations or Inuit communities.

### *BC Housing: Skills Plus Program*

<https://www.bchousing.org/projects-partners/training/skills-plus>

**Description:** delivers a series of modules over 2-3 days about building maintenance and building management in order to lower maintenance costs and reduce the need for contractors.

### *Non Profit Housing Training (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/projects-partners/training>

**Description:** provides a series of on-line and workshop training opportunities for non-profit housing providers and partners, including asbestos training, fire safety training, Vulnerability Assessment Tool Training, and maintenance programs for minor repairs.

### *Social Housing Management Certificate Program (Langara College and BC Non-Profit Housing Association)*

<https://langara.ca/continuing-studies/programs-and-courses/programs/real-estate/programs.html>

**Description:** provides a series of courses for staff, managers, or volunteers of social and affordable housing operations, including negotiation and dispute resolution, financial skills, and business communications.

### *Property Management Certificate*

<https://langara.ca/continuing-studies/programs-and-courses/programs/real-estate/programs.html>

**Description:** provides training for residential and commercial property management, with a focus on building operations, negotiation and dispute resolution, financial and management skills, and business communication.

### *Regional Workshops for Rental Housing Providers (LandlordBC)\**

<https://landlordbc.ca/regional-education/>

**Description:** provides free educational workshops for landlords, property managers, rental building managers, and resident caretakers to inform them of rights and responsibilities, including the Residential Tenancy Act, The Human Rights Code, and privacy guidelines.

*\*Note: There are no workshops presently scheduled in the Houston area; however, the website contains a form to request information on educational opportunities.*

*First Nations Housing Manager Certificate Program (Vancouver Island University)*

<https://www.viu.ca/programs/trades-applied-technology/first-nations-housing-manager>

**Description:** provides a 3- month series of online courses for current and prospective managers of First Nations housing, or First Nations governance or administrative personnel seeking to gain skills and knowledge about First Nations on-reserve housing management.

*First Nations building inspector Program (Vancouver Island University)*

<https://pdt.viu.ca/british-columbia-first-nations-building-inspector>

**Description:** delivers a First Nations Building Inspector Program for building inspectors. The 12-week program is supported by ITA and the Access Centre.

## Capital Repairs

*Assessments and Funding for Capital Repairs (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/partner-services/asset-management-redevelopment/capital-planning-repairs>

**Description:** assesses, ranks, and prioritizes capital repairs funding for social housing through:

- The Replacement Reserves Fund (minor repairs under \$5000); or,
- Capital Renewal Funding (major repairs over \$5000 that maintain or improve a building's safety or energy performance).

**Eligible recipients:** non-profit housing societies.

*Emergency Repair Program (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)*

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/funding-opportunities/on-reserve-renovation-programs/emergency-repair-program-on-reserve>

**Description:** provides financial support for emergency repairs for low-income houses on-reserve (i.e. heating systems, structural damage, plumbing, electrical systems, and flooring).

**Eligible recipients:** First Nation communities or individual members of a First Nation.

*Rental Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)*

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/funding-opportunities/on-reserve-renovation-programs/residential-rehabilitation-assistance-program/rental-residential-rehabilitation-assistance-program>

**Description:** provides funding for major or mandatory repairs with on-reserve affordable housing (i.e. structural, plumbing, electrical, fire safety, etc.).

**Eligible recipients:** property owners or landlords of on-reserve affordable housing units not owned by the First Nation community.

*Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program – Persons with Disabilities (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)*

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/funding-opportunities/on-reserve-renovation-programs/residential-rehabilitation-assistance-program/home-modifications-for-persons-with-disabilities>

**Description:** provides financial support for housing modifications to accommodate persons with disabilities on-reserve (ramps, handrails, height adjustments to countertops, and cues for doorbells, fire alarms, and smoke detectors).

**Eligible recipients:** First Nation communities or individual members of a First Nation with a disability.

*Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program – Secondary and Garden Suites (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)*

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/funding-opportunities/on-reserve-renovation-programs/residential-rehabilitation-assistance-program/secondary-and-garden-suite-development>

**Description:** provides financial support to modify existing homes on-reserve to add secondary or garden suites.

**Eligible recipients:** First Nation communities or individual members of a First Nation who own homes.

*Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program – Conversion (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)*

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/funding-opportunities/on-reserve-renovation-programs/residential-rehabilitation-assistance-program/affordable-housing-conversion-rehabilitation>

**Description:** provides financial support to convert on-reserve non-residential properties into self-contained affordable housing units.

**Eligible recipients:** owners of non-residential properties on-reserve (First Nation and non-First Nation owners).

## Energy Efficiency Retrofits

*Fortis BC: Rental Apartment Efficiency*

<https://www.fortisbc.com/rebates/business/rental-apartment-efficiency>

**Description:** provides assistance to building managers and property owners to support energy and water efficient investments.

*Clean BC Better Homes and Home Renovation Rebate Program*

<https://betterhomesbc.ca/rebates/cleanbc-better-homes-and-home-renovation-rebate-programs>

**Description:** provides rebates for home renovations through investments in space heating, water heating, insulation, windows, and doors.

*New Home Construction*

<https://www.fortisbc.com/rebates-and-energy-savings/rebates-and-offers/rebates-details/new-home-construction>

**Description:** provides incentives to support energy efficient construction of new homes, secondary suites, duplexes, and townhouses.

*Energy Efficiency for Homes*

<https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/energy-efficiency/energy-efficiency-homes/20546>

**Description:** provides information to improve the energy efficiency of old and new homes. Also includes information about financial incentives by province through rebates and programs.

*Energy Star Canada: Products*

<https://www.nrcan.gc.ca/energy-efficiency/energy-star-canada/18953>

**Description:** provides information about energy efficient products as recognized through Energy Star Canada.

### *Energy Efficiency Retrofit Program (BC Housing)*

<https://www.bchousing.org/partner-services/asset-management-redevelopment/energy-efficiency-retrofit-program>

**Description:** provides funds for electric and gas energy upgrades and small-scale, energy saving retrofits (e.g., light fixtures, boilers).

**Eligible recipients:** non-profit housing society, housing co-operatives or municipal housing authorities with an operating agreement with BC Housing.

### *BC Hydro Home Renovation Rebate*

<https://www.bchydro.com/powersmart/residential/savings-and-rebates/current-rebates-buy-backs/home-renovation-rebates.html>

**Description:** provides homeowners with financial incentives and rebates for renovations that improve household energy efficiency through insulation, draft-proofing, ventilation, and efficient hot water and heating systems.

### *BC Hydro Nonprofit and Aboriginal Housing Upgrades*

<https://www.bchydro.com/powersmart/residential/savings-and-rebates/savings-based-on-income/non-profit-aboriginal-housing-upgrades.html>

**Description:** provides non-profit housing providers and Aboriginal stakeholders with assistance to upgrade housing assets with energy efficient products to lower energy costs for low-income tenants.

### *Social Housing Retrofit Support Program*

<https://www.fortisbc.com/rebates/business/social-housing-retrofit-support-program>

**Description:** provides non-profits with funding to support energy efficient investments in multi-unit residential buildings.

### *BC Hydro Power Smart for Low-Income Households – Energy Conservation Assistance Program*

<https://www.bchydro.com/powersmart/residential/savings-and-rebates/savings-based-on-income.html>

**Description:** provides low-income residents with a home energy evaluation and installation of energy efficient products by certified contractors.

### *BC Hydro Power Smart for Low-Income Households – Energy Savings Kit Program*

<https://www.bchydro.com/powersmart/residential/savings-and-rebates/savings-based-on-income/free-energy-savings-kit.html>

**Description:** provides low-income households with free Energy Savings Kits that provide simple modifications to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption costs.

### *Refrigeration Equipment Rebates for Nonprofit Organizations*

<https://www.fortisbc.com/rebates/business/refrigeration-equipment-rebates-for-non-profit-organizations>

**Description:** provides rebates to non-profit or Aboriginal housing providers to upgrade to Energy Star fridges and freezers for tenants.

## Information and Resources for Indigenous Housing Providers

### *Information for Managing First Nation Properties (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)*

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/maintaining-and-managing/managing-first-nation-properties>

**Description:** provides resources and information designed to support the management of First Nation properties, including role of a First Nations housing manager, management of tenant records, building code compliance, financial agreements, and maintenance and energy efficiency of housing assets.

### *Guide to Housing Policy (Assembly of First Nations)*

<https://www.afn.ca/uploads/files/housing/housing-policy-guide.pdf>

**Description:** provides a guide to help First Nations communities understand, develop, and implement local housing policies for a full range of housing options to expand their housing portfolio. Examines issues such as land tenure, governance, financial planning and management, operations, reporting, building codes and related construction processes, insurance, and tenant and home owner relationships.

### *First Nation Housing Policies Development Guide (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)*

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/maintaining-and-managing/managing-first-nation-properties/first-nation-housing-policies-development-guide>

**Description:** provides a guide to help First Nation communities develop housing policies.

### *Credit Enhancement (First Nations Market Housing Fund)*

<https://www.fnmhf.ca/english/elements/credit.html>

**Description:** helps communities to obtain housing loans from financial institutions by providing a financial backstop to a housing loan guarantee.

**Eligible recipients:** individual members of a First Nation or First Nations communities.

### *Capacity Development Program (First Nations Market Housing Fund)*

<https://www.fnmhf.ca/english/elements/development.html>

**Description:** provides support for training, advice, and coaching to develop market-based housing capacity in First Nation communities. This includes support for planning, development of housing staff, workshops for home ownership and tenancy, etc.

**Eligible recipients:** individual members of a First Nation or First Nations communities.

### *New Approach to Housing Support in BC\* (Government of Canada)*

<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1460572397817/1533297381547>

**Description:** provides funding support for housing through: 1) building the governance capacity to develop housing policies and plans, cover training costs, or build capacity; 2) providing a flat-rate subsidy to build, purchase, or renovate homes; 3) providing flexible funding over a 2-3 year period to build single or multi-unit housing, purchase or renovate homes, or cover site preparation, inspection, or project management costs.

**Eligible recipients:** First Nation communities, First Nation councils, tribal councils, authorized band-housing authorities, block-funded First Nations, self-government and Treaty First Nations.

*\*Note: this program replaces the First Nations On-Reserve Housing Program for the province of BC.*

### *Ministerial Loan Guarantees (Government of Canada)*

<https://www.sac-isc.gc.ca/eng/1100100010759/1533297595541>

**Description:** provides loan guarantees to lenders financing on-reserve housing and renovation initiatives.

**Eligible recipients:** First Nation communities, First Nations acting on behalf of individual members of a First Nation.

*Shelter Enhancement Program (Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation)*

<https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/developing-and-renovating/funding-opportunities/on-reserve-renovation-programs/shelter-enhancement-program>

**Description:** provides financial support to repair existing shelters, build new shelters, or build second-stage housing projects for persons fleeing domestic violence on-reserve.

**Eligible recipients:** First Nation communities or First Nation housing providers.

*Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund*

<https://www.bchousing.org/projects-partners/funding-opportunities/Building-BC-IHF>

**Description:** provides funds to support new rental housing investments.

**Eligible recipients:** Indigenous non-profit organizations, First Nations, Metis, and other housing stakeholders who are partnering with First Nations.

*\*Note: new intake of applications will be issued in spring 2020.*

## Strengthening Bylaws

### *An example: strengthening bylaws*

Some larger metropolitan areas are now strengthening bylaws and enforcement operations to target bad landlords. These initiatives are relatively new. In 2017, for example, the City of Toronto decided to ensure city inspectors visit all rental apartment buildings in the city (Rieti 2017). Such programs are modelled or build upon health inspections of restaurants. In this case, the recommended RentSafeTO bylaw targets apartment building owners to register annually with the local government, to provide a process for receiving and tracking tenant complaints, to provide plans for addressing waste management and cleaning; to perform routine inspections and address pests efficiently, to use licensed contractors / trade workers for repairs; and to maintain records about the operations (see: <https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/municode/toronto-code-354.pdf>). Similar initiatives to license landlords are being explored (Porter 2019); although, there are concerns that such pursuits could be expensive and add more bureaucratic tasks to municipal staff (Kurys 2019). In smaller communities, however, these issues may be less pronounced given the generally small group of landlords. This initiative is then complemented with the property standards or maintenance bylaws that are in place across many municipalities to address issues such as pest control, property maintenance, roofs, windows, electrical, plumbing, heating, and sanitary conditions (see for example: [https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/municode/1184\\_629.pdf](https://www.toronto.ca/legdocs/municode/1184_629.pdf)).

## Strengthening Crime Free Housing

### *An example: crime free multi-housing program*

In 1994, the New Westminster Police Department developed the Crime Free Multi-Housing Program that has now been adopted by more than 20 municipalities in BC. A 'crime free building' designation is provided to rental buildings that meet minimum standards. Upon completion of a training workshop for resident managers and / or owners delivered by police and the BC Crime Prevention Association, a safety and security review is completed for the rental property in order to provide recommendations to the building owner. The program strongly encourages building owners, property managers, and tenants to routinely meet to share information, increase awareness of crime and safety issues, and connect with broader resources. The program is strategically intended to reduce liability concerns for owners, while improving the retention of good-standing tenants.

Website: <http://bccpa.org/resources/crime-free-multi-housing>.



## Appendix B: PRRD Work Camp Template

Services	Function	Requirement	Confirmation / Documentation (attach supporting documents)
<b>Water</b>	Use of local government water source	Pre-approval from local government	
	Use of river or other natural water resource	Permitting or agreement in place	
<b>Sewer</b>	Use of local government sewer receiving facility	Pre-approval from local government	
	Use of on-site treatment	Pre-approved from Ministry of Health / Ministry of Environment	
<b>Transportation Roads</b>	Ministry of Transportation Traffic Impact Study or Traffic Impact Study completed by a Ministry approved company	Completion of Traffic Impact Study	
	Noise and Dust Address the concern about Noise and Dust	Provide a copy of the Operational Impact Plan that addresses how noise and dust concerns will be addressed.	
<b>Transportation Travel</b>	Will the camp be fly in, fly out; Will employees be bussed to work area; will a shuttle from a municipal centre operate	Explanation on whether it is an open or closed camp and the company's plan for worker transportation	
<b>Housing</b>	Will all employees be housed at the work camp	Explanation on whether other accommodation will be used (i.e. hotels, RV camps)	
<b>Recreation</b>	What is being planned for employee recreation activities	Confirmation of discussion with municipalities around recreation if not using on-site recreation	
<b>Policing</b>	What is planned for on-site security (policing)	Confirmation details for site security	
	What is the camp's plan around crime prevention	Confirmation of open or dry camp and policies on alcohol, drugs, hunting, trespassing, off-site behavior, etc.	
<b>Social</b>	What is being planned for on-site health services	Information of level of on-site health service	
<b>Reclamation</b>	Demobilization	Documentation on site remediation plans	
<b>Emergency Management</b>	Safety	Information on emergency management procedures including notification process to local and provincial government agencies	
<b>Communications</b>	Internet / cell phone	Information on mitigation plans to local communication infrastructure as a result of additional demand	
<b>BC Assessment</b>	Notification	Communication of work camp to BC Assessment	

Source: Peace River Regional District 2019.

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BC Housing: Addiction Recovery Program

<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/housing-with-support/addiction-recovery-program>

Northern Health: Supports for Substance Abuse

<https://www.northernhealth.ca/services/mental-health-substance-use/services-by-community#smithers#terrace>

## The Community Development Institute at the University of Northern British Columbia

The Community Development Institute (CDI) at UNBC was established in 2004 with a broad mandate in the areas of community, regional, and economic development. Since its inception, the CDI has worked with communities across the northern and central regions of British Columbia to develop and implement strategies for economic diversification and community resilience.

Dedicated to understanding and realizing the potential of BC's non-metropolitan communities in a changing global economy, the CDI works to prepare students and practitioners for leadership roles in community and economic development, and to create a body of knowledge, information, and research that will enhance our understanding and our ability to deal with the impacts of ongoing transformation. The Community Development Institute is committed to working with all communities – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – to help them further their aspirations in community and regional development.



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