



Prince Rupert

Housing Acceleration Action Plan

Fall 2023

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Introduction

This Housing Acceleration Action Plan was developed to support the City of Prince Rupert's application to the Federal Housing Accelerator Fund. The Housing Accelerator Fund provides incentive funding to local governments encouraging initiatives aimed at increasing housing supply at a systems level. It also supports the development of complete, low-carbon and climate-resilient communities that are affordable, inclusive, equitable and diverse. The policies and programs proposed in this Housing Acceleration Action Plan therefore reflect these goals based on Prince Rupert's unique context and housing needs. The Plan is intended to address the barriers to market and non-market housing development in Prince Rupert.

The Plan gives an overview of existing housing context from the housing needs assessment completed in December 2022, which included community and stakeholder engagement and data analysis and projections. The proposed policy actions in the plan are divided into overarching initiatives or programs. Each of these programs includes specific policy directions, with the plan indicating which are funding-dependent. These targeted actions are proposed to be implemented over the next three years to target growth for the next ten years provided external funding is obtained. The programs and their corresponding policy directions build on recommendations and findings from the Housing Needs Assessment, policy recommendations in the Interim Housing Plan adopted in 2021, input and observations of the development industry at a local and regional level, best practices, and anticipated population growth. Staff will update housing targets and review these actions against targets identified in our Housing Needs Assessments, which are mandated to occur every 5 years.

In adopting this plan, Council is not approving any specific bylaw amendments or policy actions, but rather signaling their commitment to support an increase in supply of housing that strategically meets the community's needs. Actions described in this plan will involve community input and public process before implementation, especially those requiring bylaw amendments. Many of these actions are funding dependent; however several policy directions can and will be implemented without Federal grant support. All actions that require funding will be implemented only once grant funding is obtained.

Housing Context

In 2022, the City completed a Housing Needs Report in accordance with Provincial legislation. The Report built on previous studies and engagement initiatives related to housing completed in Prince Rupert over the past fifteen years. Within the assessment process, the City's contracted planners engaged with area First Nations, housing and service providers, as well as local employers to capture a broad understanding of existing and projected housing demand in the community.

The report provided an understanding of current and anticipated housing needs within Prince Rupert, which are summarized below in order to set the stage for the series of actions

proposed by the City in our Housing Acceleration Action Plan—which responds to trends identified within the Assessment and brings forth actions directly based on the findings of the report.

This document was prepared as a supplement to the City's Housing Accelerator Fund application with the Federal Government, with the intent for it to be a living document and for future public consultation on a broader plan.

Additionally, policy directives requiring associated Bylaw amendments will still be required to go through the respective legislated public notification and consultation processes.

Key Housing Takeaways

Affordability + Housing for Bigger Families

To accommodate the projected change in population, additional housing units will be needed to maintain Prince Rupert's income and housing diversity. Of the **4,840 new homes projected to be needed by 2030, 35% will need to accommodate families with 3 or more bedrooms, and 47% will need to serve households earning less than \$60,000 per year.**

Affordability challenges persist in Prince Rupert despite higher household incomes. Historically, Prince Rupert has been a more affordable community in the northwest when compared to other major centres (e.g., Terrace, Smithers). This dynamic has shifted and feedback from engagement highlighted challenges moderate-income households are experiencing trying to find affordable rental and ownership housing in good condition.

The proportion of households in core housing need declined between 2016 and 2021, from 12.2% to 7.3%, primarily as a result of improvements in affordability. This trend is evident across Canada and demonstrates the impact of pandemic benefit programs in reducing household expenses. That being said, given these programs have largely now ended, we anticipate that current inflationary impacts will scale back past reductions. Feedback from community housing providers indicates the need for non-market housing remains, evident in long waitlists at newly opened housing facilities and the **number of people on BC Housing's waitlist for non-market housing (88 applicants as of July 2022).**

Climate and Age Related Condition of Stock, Land

It is very challenging to build new housing in Prince Rupert as the geotechnical conditions limit the areas available for new development and result in cost increases. As the "last stop" on Highway 16, it is also time-consuming and costly to send the necessary materials to Prince Rupert and find available contractors to complete the work. As a result, the **City's housing stock is old – 75% constructed before 1980 and 14% in need of major repair.**

Need for Seniors Housing

There is a growing need for seniors housing with varying levels of supports. Many older residents live in inaccessible single detached homes which come with significant maintenance requirements. Accessible multi-unit development (e.g., apartment with an elevator, single-storey townhouses) are needed for aging residents and singles looking for smaller units, as well as assisted living facilities with dedicated supports.

Key Housing Takeaways

Port Growth = More Population = Demand on Housing

With limited new construction in recent decades, more market and non-market housing is needed in Prince Rupert to meet existing needs and provide housing options for new residents. Recruitment for local employers has become increasingly challenging because there is limited housing available. For the Port and related industries to thrive, additional housing must be constructed to accommodate the projected population growth.

The labour force dynamics in Prince Rupert are reflective of the larger region, as both Prince Rupert and North Coast Regional District have similar labour force participation and unemployment rates. With the port expansion and associated spin-off employment opportunities, median incomes in Prince Rupert are higher than incomes seen across the region and province. However, with the growth of Prince Rupert's economy, recruitment has become challenging for employers unable to offer high paying jobs.

Complex Housing Needs

Feedback from engagement highlighted the need for housing with supports for people living with complex mental health challenges and acquired brain injuries. Necessary support identified included mental health counselling and life skills support.

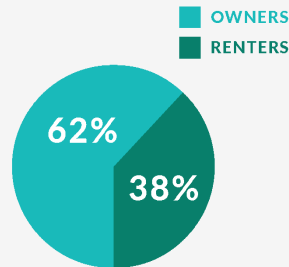
“Missing Middle” and Intergenerational Living

There is also a need for 2+ bedroom units for larger families. Participants indicated young adults cannot afford to live on their own and, as a result, it is becoming increasingly common for several generations to live together. Intergenerational living arrangements are also more common among Indigenous families and close to 40% of Prince Rupert's residents identify as Indigenous.

Recent non-market housing projects completed by First Nations and BC Housing showcase the strength of partnerships in delivering new housing that is culturally safe for Indigenous community members. Several participants expressed a desire for increased collaboration between governments, industry, and non-profits on housing issues.

HOUSING

As of 2021, Prince Rupert had a higher proportion of renters when compared to the North Coast region and the province overall.



HOUSING STOCK

As of 2021, 75% of Prince Rupert's housing stock was constructed before 1980, meaning many homes are reaching end-of-life and in need of major repair.



14% of homes in Prince Rupert are in need of major repair.

AVERAGE RENTAL PRICE, CITY OF PRINCE RUPERT, JULY - AUG 2022

The cost of rent is increasing, above what is reported by CMHC.

1-BEDROOM	2-BEDROOM	3-BEDROOM	ALL UNITS
\$1,420	\$1,880	\$2,440	\$1,950

Source: Facebook, Kijiji

Housing Targets

Housing targets identified above were developed as part of the City's 2022 Housing Needs Assessment. These needs/gaps were used to help priority and action setting in the following Housing Acceleration Plan. For the full Housing Needs Assessment, go to princerupert.ca/housing

HOUSING TARGETS

City of Prince Rupert, 2021 - 2031

INCOME GROUP	1-BEDROOM	2-BEDROOM	3-BEDROOM	4+ BEDROOM	2030 TARGETS
Very Low	295	50	0	0	345
Low	600	340	130	145	1,215
Moderate	275	230	110	115	730
Average	195	310	105	150	760
High	175	670	380	565	1,790
TOTAL	1,540	1,600	725	975	4,840
Share of Units	32%	33%	15%	20%	

Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census Profile

SUMMARY OF HOUSING NEEDS + GAPS

Accessible housing
for seniors

Multi-unit
development for
singles

Larger units for
families

Housing with
support services

New market housing
including detached
homes, townhouses,
and apartments

Rental housing for
low- and
moderate-income
households



Public Land Incentive Program

The viability of many of these programs may be funding dependent and is marked as so throughout the document.

Program Description:

The City is one of the largest landholders in the municipal land base and has historically withheld its properties for sale or development. In 2022, the City changed this stance as part of an interim housing strategy, put up multiple infill lots for sale, both single family and multifamily, and transferred undeveloped pre-subdivided land to its non-profit development arm, Legacy Inc for housing development. There has been little action on these sales yet due to costs of building in the community, including cost of earth works to prepare land for building, as well as inconsistent zoning of these lots. This initiative would comprise Phase 1 of a long-term program that subsidizes earthworks using funding through the Housing Accelerator Fund. Proceeds from the sale or leasing of City land would then act as seed funding for Phase 2 of the land preparation program that extends past 2026.

With this initiative, staff foresee a cascade of actions that will precipitate development and set a financing precedent for local housing moving forward, while maintaining the City's ability to collect revenue and direct returns on investment back into the housing system. This initiative will incent multifamily housing, affordable housing, and single or duplex development with accessory dwelling units on City-owned land already placed for disposal.

TARGET GROWTH OVER 10 YEARS: 800 housing units

POLICY DIRECTIONS

- Utilize the City-own Development corporation, Legacy Inc., to create a fund intended for reducing costs of City or Legacy-owned lot development to incentivize housing. **FUNDING DEPENDENT**
- Pre-zone all lots that were placed for sale for housing units by Legacy or the City in February of 2022 to reduce uncertainty in building.
- Establish a standardized procedure and incentive package for sale of lots for housing development on City or Legacy-owned property.



Gentle Density

Program Description:

The Gentle Density program includes allowing detached accessory dwelling units (ADU), which are not currently permitted, and reducing off-street parking requirements for all rental housing near routes where alternative transit exists. While the City recently permitted secondary suites (attached units) in all types of housing, much of our existing housing stock cannot accommodate a secondary suite to meet building code standards or without a variance. There are, however, a number of single-family or duplexes that could better accommodate a detached unit, and the City has received a number of homeowners interested in developing detached suites (also known as carriage or garden suites).

The addition of ADUs and gentle density in residential neighbourhoods adds both rental and homeownership options to help attract and retain workers to the community with more affordable housing options, while supporting the existing population by adding more supply within existing neighbourhood footprints. It should be noted that Prince Rupert is currently attracting a number of new immigrant families and students, who are filling much of the current service sector employment demand. If this trend continues, it will be essential to have housing stock such as ADUs that may accommodate this population as well as an industrial workforce.

TARGET GROWTH OVER 10 YEARS: 100 housing units

POLICY DIRECTIONS

- ◆ Adopt a Zoning Bylaw Amendment to allow detached accessory dwelling units and reduce parking requirements for rental units within 50 m of transit lines and City Core.

- ◆ Engage a consultant to develop pre-approved stock designs for ADUs.

FUNDING DEPENDENT

- ◆ Establish procedures for improving operations and development coordination of work associated with new ADU development to accelerate the process



Removing Development Barriers

Program Description:

This initiative aims to help kick-start development and remove barriers to developing housing in the City by introducing and advertising incentives both regionally and farther afield to attract developers and reducing auxiliary costs of building. This initiative will complement a resolution adopted in November of 2022 to waive all development permit, building permit, and rezoning fees that would result in addition of new units.

Prince Rupert's market currently experiences development hesitancy due to higher than average development costs, however the development community understands that worker housing is a viable future market. Removing these additional costs will help to remove hesitancy and also contribute to a more sustainable building industry overall by addressing housing as a barrier for attraction/retention of building industry workers.

TARGET GROWTH OVER 10 YEARS: 200 housing units

POLICY DIRECTIONS

- Reduce parking requirements where alternative transit exists.
- Introduce a resolution to waive frontage improvement requirements and service hook-up fees for new multi-family housing. **FUNDING DEPENDENT**
- Establish a Peat Dump to receive peat removed from developable lands. **FUNDING DEPENDENT**
- Developer Packages & Advertising. **FUNDING DEPENDENT**

Building Capacity Initiative



Program Description:

This initiative is intended to support an increase in skills development and human capital for builders and the public to both build new houses and bring existing structures that are uninhabitable back into our housing inventory. It is also intended to increase capacity internally at the City to facilitate permit approvals at a faster rate.

Accelerated housing stock as a result of increased capacity and efficiencies will contribute to supply of detached low-density housing to attract workers and newcomers seeking more affordable detached housing options, outside of larger urban centres. Increased housing supply will also support housing a growing building industry by providing housing to individuals working within the industry – helping it to self-sustain over the long term. Although not anticipated to have an immediate supply impact, this initiative will significantly improve the local housing system and capacity to support future development.

TARGET GROWTH OVER 10 YEARS: 50 housing units

POLICY DIRECTIONS

- ◆ Adopt e-permitting software and one short-term or casual staff-member to support transition. **FUNDING DEPENDENT**
- ◆ Develop informational packages for builders and support efforts to increase builder and tradespeople training, attraction, and retention.



Complete Communities

Program Description:

This initiative aims to ensure all housing decisions and developments align with walkable and complete communities principles, and includes projects that will incentivize further developments. It will include developing decision-making tools and aligning capital infrastructure projects to support new developments. This will in turn remove costly and geospatial barriers to development.

While this initiative is unlikely to directly result in new units, it will help ensure that new developments are close to amenities and connected within the community. This will help increase the attractiveness and retention of newcomers and workers to the community and help serve those already living here.

TARGET GROWTH OVER 10 YEARS: 0—this program is not about incentivizing housing so much as it is about ensuring housing is appropriately located/served.

POLICY DIRECTIONS

- ◆ Adopt Complete Communities framework to support increased density
- ◆ Incorporate Climate Adaptation and Actions into the Official Community Plan.



Affordable Housing Incentive Program

Program Description:

This initiative aims to encourage affordable housing development through coordinated efforts and support for non-market or mixed-income development to support community members and new working population, including newcomers, who may face barriers to maintaining market rentals.

This initiative would build on the in-kind support that staff members already provide to non-profits, and formalize this work through an affordable housing policy. This policy will eventually comprise a component of our overall housing strategy.

In conjunction with an affordable housing policy, the City would support the development of a coordinated response to housing affordability through multiple agencies, governments, and organizations.

TARGET GROWTH OVER 10 YEARS: 120 housing units

POLICY DIRECTIONS

- ◆ Adopt an interim affordable housing policy following public engagement.
- ◆ Hire a position to initiate an affordable housing committee. **FUNDING DEPENDENT**



Supporting Indigenous Housing Program

Program Description:

This initiative continues work with Ts'msyen Nations to develop shared commitments on housing and provide equity, capacity, and certainty to Indigenous-led housing projects. These actions will likely result in opportunities to provide land and in-kind support for housing developments or programs led by First Nations or Indigenous agencies and/or pursuing partnerships with First Nations or Indigenous organizations to develop housing or housing programs with HAF funding.

By dedicating support to Indigenous led housing projects and programs, the City is ensuring that Indigenous community members are benefiting from increased development and are able to participate in shared prosperity of the community.

TARGET GROWTH OVER 10 YEARS: 100 housing units

POLICY DIRECTIONS

- Form and commence the Reconciliation Committee
- Initiate the Community-to-Community Forum on Housing to discuss partnering on development. **FUNDING DEPENDENT**
- Hire Indigenous relations and social development coordinator with a focus on housing support. **FUNDING DEPENDENT**
- Complete shared prosperity agreements with the local First Nations that are inclusive of working together on addressing the housing crisis.



City Core Revitalization Program

Program Description:

The goal of this initiative is to incentivize housing units in our City Core, which holds significant potential for infill development through mixed-use, multifamily, and duplex and row-house residential development.

City Core revitalization is necessary for increasing attractiveness of the City, investment in future commercial and residential development, and retention of workers and newcomers to the community to service a growing port. Currently there is very little housing in the downtown core, with a large number of empty lots or teardown buildings. Our zoning already permits high- and low-density developments downtown, however this initiative is intended to increase uptake of the opportunity and remove development barriers, such as space requirements for off-street parking and servicing and frontage requirements that can add substantial cost.

TARGET GROWTH OVER 10 YEARS: 300 housing units

POLICY DIRECTIONS

- Remove parking requirements for infill development in areas of City Core.
- Amend the zoning bylaw to reduce parking requirements for purpose built rental units in the City Core and within walking distance of the City Core boundaries.
- Introduce a resolution to waive all fees for development, building, and zoning amendments in City Core and waive frontage requirements (inclusive of service hook-up costs) for housing units in the City Core.

FUNDING DEPENDENT

- Create information packages and advertise development incentives at local and larger scales. **FUNDING DEPENDENT.**

Conclusion

This Housing Acceleration Action Plan was developed in response to the imminent need identified in our Housing Needs Assessment, and was a requirement to submit in concert with the City's application to the Federal Housing Accelerator Fund. It builds off of the good work initiated with our Interim Housing Strategy, with directives to continue to build out policy in the important area of Affordable Housing.

This is a supply-focused plan to help kick-start much-needed housing development in the community. However, while supply is an important part of addressing the current housing crisis, it is not the only approach needed. This document is only one component of a broader plan which will address housing needs across the spectrum of housing policy areas, from homelessness to market-housing, as well as access to housing and housing supports.

This is also a working document. Although some deliverables are explicitly tied to the availability of funding, there are many actions that the City can deliver on through policy changes possible within our existing staff capacity and budget. This document will inform future community engagement and input, and a broader comprehensive housing plan going forward while allowing staff to continue working to address the housing crisis with the limited resources available.