



A DISCUSSION OF HOUSING
ISSUES IN THE REGIONAL
DISTRICT OF BULKLEY-
NECHAKO

Housing in the RDBN: A Discussion Paper

Prepared by:
Regional District of Bulkley Nechako Planning Department
Updated to January 2021

Table of Contents

PART 1: INTRODUCTION	4
Introduction	4
PART 2: MARKET VALUE, CONSTRUCTION COSTS, AND DEVELOPMENT	5
Market Value	5
RDBN Housing Starts	5
Construction Costs and Development Implications	6
Managing Construction Costs in the RDBN	7
Owner / Builder Regulations	7
BC Step Code	7
Looking to the Future	8
PART 3: HOUSING NEEDS IN THE RDBN.....	9
Housing Needs Assessments in the RDBN	9
Housing Type	9
Dwelling Age	9
Rental Housing.....	10
Owner Occupied Housing	10
Senior’s Housing	11
Low Income Housing	11
Housing Supply, Community Health, and Economic Development.....	11
Part 4: HOUSING STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS.....	14
Typical Housing Study Strategies for Market Housing	14
Market Housing Strategy Efficacy.....	14
Typical Housing Study Strategies for Non - Market housing	15
Non-Market Housing Success in the Region.....	16
The Role of the Rural Area in Addressing the Region’s Housing Needs	17
Part 5: PROVINCIAL INITIATIVES	19
Homes for BC: A 30 Point Plan for Housing Affordability in BC	19
BC Housing Funding Opportunities.....	19
Expert Panel of the Future of Housing Supply and Affordability.....	19
PART 6: HOUSING NEEDS REPORTS	21
Mandatory Local Government Housing Needs Reports	21
UBCM Housing Needs Reports Program	21

PART 7: NDIT HOUSING PROGRAM 23

 Housing Needs Assessments Program..... 23

 Community Planning for Housing Program 23

 Northern Housing Incentive Program..... 23

PART 8: SUMMARY 24

Appendix A: Housing DATA by Electoral Area (2016 Census Data) 25

 Electoral Area A 25

 Electoral Area B 26

 Electoral Area C 27

 Electoral Area D 28

 Electoral Area E..... 29

 Electoral Area F..... 30

 Electoral Area G 31



PART 1: INTRODUCTION

Introduction

Much effort has been made to address housing issues in British Columbia in recent years. The housing issues which have been the focus of the Province in southern areas of BC are associated with the high cost of housing and limited availability of housing. However, the housing issues that exist in the RDBN, and the contributing factors, are not associated with excessively high housing cost. The RDBN's housing issues are, at least in part, the result of market values not exceeding the cost of development. As a result, the RDBN and its member municipalities are challenged to address the region's housing issues in the relative absence of a market-based solution.

The RDBN's housing supply consists primarily of owner-occupied single-family dwellings that were built more than 30 years ago. The RDBN needs to diversify its housing stock to include a wide range of housing type, including assisted living and supportive housing, market and non-market rental housing, and new single-family housing. The availability of housing is a factor in our future economic sustainability and the region's ability to grow and attract skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and professionals.

Table 1: RDBN Housing Type

	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Municipal</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Single Family Dwellings	5510 (85.8%)	5370 (68.7%)	10880 (76.4%)
Manufactured Homes	850 (13.2%)	630 (8.1%)	1480 (10.4%)
Detached Dwellings	35 (0.5%)	360 (4.6%)	395 (2.8%)
Row Housing	10 (0.2%)	480 (6.1%)	490 (3.4%)
Apartment	20 (0.3%)	975 (12.5%)	995 (7%)
SUM	6425 (100%)	7815 (100%)	14240 (100%)

Table 2: RDBN Housing Ownership and Rental Housing

	<u>Rural</u>	<u>Municipal</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Owner Occupied	5,895 (91.8%)	5,555 (71.1%)	11,450 (80.4%)
Rental Housing	750 (11.7%)	2,195 (28.1%)	2,945 (20.7%)
SUM	6,645 (100%)	7,750 (100%)	14,395 (100%)

Note: "Other single attached house" have been combined with Semi-detached house. Basement suites are counted as an apartment.

This report provides an overview of the RDBN's housing needs in general terms, discusses the factors contributing to the housing situation, and evaluates the constraints and practical opportunities that exist to improve the RDBN's housing situation.

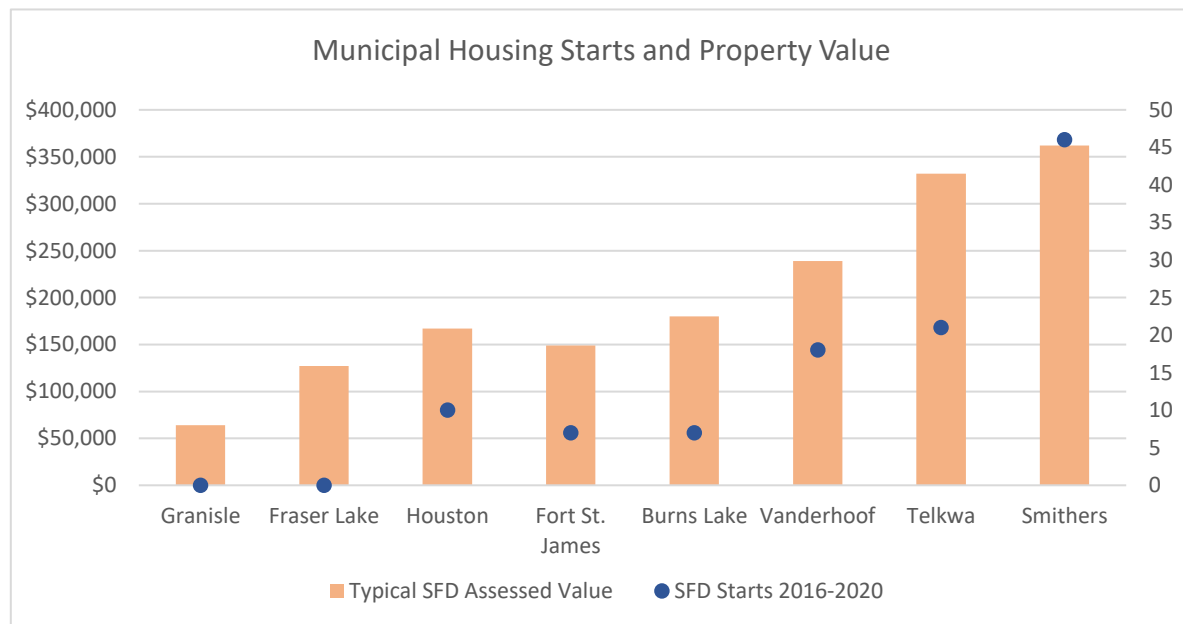
PART 2: MARKET VALUE, CONSTRUCTION COSTS, AND DEVELOPMENT

Market Value

The following table shows the BC Assessment Authorities assessed value for a typical single-family dwelling in 2020, and the assessed value change between 2019 and 2020.

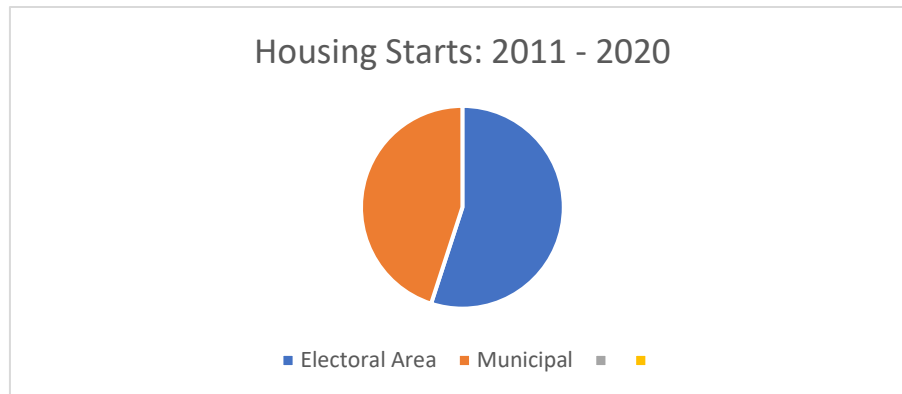
BC Assessment Typical Single-Family Dwelling Market Value Change: 2019 – 2020		
Municipality	Property Value Change	Typical Assessed Value
Town of Smithers	15%	\$362,000
Village of Telkwa	13%	\$332,000
Village of Burns Lake	21%	\$180,000
District of Fort St. James	(6)%	\$149,000
Village of Fraser Lake	1%	\$127,000
District of Vanderhoof	3%	\$239,000
District of Houston	10%	\$167,000
Village of Granisle	4%	\$64,000

The following chart shows the new single-family dwelling housing starts by municipality over the last 5 years in relation to typical assessed value for a single-family dwelling. This shows the relationship between market value and the amount of housing being developed in the RDBN.



RDBN Housing Starts

According to RDBN Building Permit data over the last 10 years the average number of new single-family dwellings (SFD) built annually in the region (including member municipalities) is 56. Approximately 55% of these dwellings were constructed in the rural area and 45% were constructed within municipalities. In 2020, the Regional District and member municipalities saw 66 new housing starts with 41 located within the RDBN and 25 located within a municipality.



Construction Costs and Development Implications

The cost of construction in the RDBN for a basic single-story house with an unfinished basement may be as low as \$200 per sq. ft. using a licensed builder, and \$170 per sq. ft. if built by an owner builder. This cost can easily increase with higher end materials and building design. The costs to use a licensed builder and hire trades can increase notably as you move away from communities where licensed builders and trades people are located. These costs do not include land costs, or any servicing or other costs outside of the typical building process. The Planning Department's rough estimate is that a 2,000 sq. ft. house can be expected to cost approximately \$400,000.00 to build, not including land value and servicing costs.

The study titled "Moving Housing Forward: From Strategy to Action" prepared for the District of Fort St James in early 2018 estimated that the total cost to build a 1,800 sq.ft. house in Fort St. James would be \$380,000.00. The cost to build a 1,500 sq. ft. house would be \$320,000.00. The study concludes that:

"The District has a sufficient supply of developable land at reasonable prices. However, it has witnessed limited new housing development as its population is either flat or declining and because the development returns are not high enough to compensate for the development risks. These economic fundamentals are likely to have an even greater impact on the supply of affordable housing for households with low to moderate incomes."

For example, a developer would be unlikely to develop housing when the anticipated revenues are not significantly higher than the total costs of development (land costs, development costs and marketing costs)."

The lack of financial incentive results in limited residential subdivision and limited speculative house construction in the region. The subdivision that is occurring in the region tends to be small scale infill subdivision where development costs are very low (roads already exist and services do not have to be provided). The most areas of the region market housing that is being built is limited primarily to persons building their own home where there is a degree of certainty that they will not be required to sell the home in near future.

Increased local demand for housing and higher market value reduces risk associated with having to sell at a loss. For increased land development and housing starts to occur in the region the market value of land must increase in relation to the cost of construction. This must occur to the extent that land can be subdivided, and housing can be built at a profit. It is hoped that recent increases in market value in parts of the region will translate into increased housing construction in future years.

Managing Construction Costs in the RDBN

Owner / Builder Regulations

As of July 2016, BC Housing regulations prohibit residents from building a house without first passing an exam which is intended to test their knowledge of construction basics. This is in addition to the many other regulations that the Province has put in place to govern residential builders in BC. In the RDBN this regulation is increasing the cost of construction and is discouraging the construction of new dwellings. In many areas of the region there is a very limited supply of licensed builders and there are long waits for their services. In some areas of our region it is challenging to retain a licensed builder at any reasonable cost.

The RDBN Board has expressed concern to BC Housing that the owner builder authorizations exam requirement is not appropriate in the north and owner builders should be allowed to retain the services of a construction manager to assist them in the building process without having to retain the services of a licensed builder. The owner / builder restrictions do not serve to improve the quality of construction in the RDBN and will continue to unnecessarily increase the cost of residential construction in the region.

BC Step Code

The Province's Climate Leadership Plan set a goal that all new buildings in British Columbia will be net zero within 15 years. A net-zero energy building is one that has reduced energy

requirements, and renewable energy systems, so that the building produces as much energy as it consumes. The Energy Step Code is a Provincial Government initiative designed to have local governments implement the requirements for all new building to be net zero by 2032. The Province is expected to make Step 3 of the step Code mandatory in 2022. Step 3 requires that every class of home and building is energy modeled prior to construction and then “commissioned” (including testing for airtightness prior to occupancy) as part of the building process. Subsequent steps establish targets relating to the efficiency of the total building and the performance of the mechanical systems (i.e. heating, cooling, ventilation, etc.). The Province’s intent is that Steps 4 and 5 will be voluntarily adopted by local governments in advance of mandatory implementation by the Province by 2032.

The additional construction costs, which include the requirement to pay for professionals to undertake the necessary energy modeling, airtightness testing, and commissioning of building equipment, is expected to be notable and higher the further away a building site is from a larger urban centre. RDBN staff appreciate the intent behind the Energy Step Code; however, the anticipated impact may be counterproductive to the intent. The costs associated with implementing the Step Code may result in older less energy efficient homes not being replaced by new homes.

Looking to the Future

The BC Step Code and the Owner / Builder regulations may result in increased construction costs with unclear benefit to housing quality in the region. However, resolution of these issues, and other efforts to manage the cost of construction can not be expected to have a significant enough impact on controlling construction costs to effect change. The value of housing (and land) in the RDBN must increase for there to be a viable long-term market based solution to the RDBN’s housing issues. In recent years the market value of land has been increasing. This trend needs to continue.

PART 3: HOUSING NEEDS IN THE RDBN

Housing Needs Assessments in the RDBN

There have been several comprehensive housing needs assessments and housing studies developed for municipalities in the RDBN in recent years. These include the following:

- “District of Vanderhoof Housing Needs Assessment” prepared for the District of Vanderhoof, 2020.
- “Moving Housing Forward: From Strategy to Action” prepared for the District of Fort St James, 2018;
- “Burns Lake and Area 55+ Housing Needs Assessment” prepared for the Village of Burns Lake, 2017;
- “Smithers Housing and community Profile: Northern BC Housing Study” prepared for BC Housing, 2016;
- “District of Vanderhoof Housing Study and Needs Analysis” prepared for the District of Vanderhoof, 2015;
- “2014 Smithers Homeless Count Findings” prepared for the Smithers Action group Association, 2015;
- “Village of Telkwa Affordable Housing Needs assessment and Action Plan” prepared for the Village of Telkwa, 2011.

These assessments give a good overview of the housing needs that exist in RDBN communities. The region’s housing needs are discussed in general terms below, based on an evaluation of these documents, and the RDBN Planning Department’s understanding of the housing situation.

Housing Type

The RDBN’s housing supply consists primarily of owner-occupied single-family dwellings that were built more than 30 years ago. Approximately 77% of dwellings in municipalities, and 99% of dwellings in the rural area are single family dwellings or manufactured homes. Only 10% of housing in the RDBN is apartments or row housing.

Dwelling Age

The housing in the RDBN is older, and many homes need repair or notable upgrading. The average age of housing, and maintenance needs of that housing, is somewhat dependant on

the housing demand and market values in the community. Nearly 60% of housing in the RDBN is more than 25 years old.

Rental Housing

Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) does not collect data on rental market prices or rental vacancy for any RDBN municipality. However, it is clear there is limited rental housing stock across the RDBN. However, the level of demand for rental housing, and stability of occupancy, can vary notably given seasonal employment and economic fluctuations.

Vacancy rate are exceptionally low in some areas as rentals are taken up by workers associated with construction of the coastal Gaslink Natural Gas Pipeline.

Given the relatively homogenous nature of the housing stock across the region there is a notable need for bachelor suites and one- or two-bedroom housing. It is noted that the rental housing stock tends to be older housing stock that needs renovation.



This lack of quality low cost rental housing (especially apartment, row housing and other forms of affordable rental housing) is a limiting factor in a community's economic development, as employers may be challenged to attract workers to a community where acceptable housing is not available.

Owner Occupied Housing

Given the relatively homogenous nature of the housing stock across the region there is a need for one- or two-bedroom housing, as well as renovated and newer housing. This lack of new and quality renovated housing for sale is a limiting factor in a community's economic development as employers are challenged to attract professionals and trades persons to a community where quality housing may not be available. This housing issue may also be a factor in attracting retirees and entrepreneurs to a community.

Senior's Housing

There is a need for senior's housing across the region, and this demand is expected to increase. There is also a need for assisted living and supportive housing. This demand includes the need for market and non-market rental housing and owner-occupied housing. This demand relates to the lack of one or two bedroom housing across the region. Seniors are best served by housing that is in close proximity to shopping and services, and this type of housing is best



provided in RDBN municipalities. It appears that across the region, there are waiting lists for every type of housing facility catering to seniors.

The shortage for senior appropriate housing may result in seniors remaining in larger homes past the point where they are properly able to maintain the property. These homes are typically older with high maintenance needs and costs, and do not allow for easy access to services. This lack of seniors housing options may have notable social and health costs.

Low Income Housing

Given the lack of available rentals, and the predominance of larger single-family dwellings, market rental costs are relatively high. Low income persons are challenged to find suitable housing given that the predominant form of housing is single family dwellings. In many areas there is little or no emergency housing such as homeless shelters, and there is also little or no non-market housing for low income people. The non-market housing available is typically available only to seniors.

Housing Supply, Community Health, and Economic Development

The following is taken from the "District of Vanderhoof Housing Study and Needs Analysis" prepared for the District of Vanderhoof in 2015.

Seniors: *In Vanderhoof, suitable housing options for seniors to downsize into and receive the services they need are critically limited. Seniors housing complexes are full and have lengthy waiting lists. Assisted and complex care options are also fully subscribed. As a result, seniors are remaining in their family homes. While many of these seniors can no longer keep up their homes, there are no*

options for them to leave until their health deteriorates to the point where facility care is required.

One/Two Person Households: *One and two-person non-seniors households are generally comprised of young individuals and couples: working professionals and those starting out on their careers. In Vanderhoof, many of these individuals are recent graduates who have been recruited to town by the major employers. While some may wish to buy, most are looking to rent. For some in this group, affordability is an issue, however, the 2011 median after-tax income of a two-person household was \$68,775 and \$23,116 for a single person household. Generally speaking, the type of housing they are looking for is a modern small-scale single or multi-family unit, equipped with a full range of amenities.*

Low Income Individuals: *The number of low income individuals in the community is higher than the provincial average, and many are receiving income assistance. Many of the people on income assistance have a disability, either physical or mental, or are single-parents. The government assistance allowance for housing is \$375 per month, which often falls critically short of what is required to cover both rent and utilities, especially during winter. These individuals all require financial assistance to find suitable housing, and some also require housing connected to support services.*

Families: *In Vanderhoof, long-time residents are generally housed in the stock that was new when they purchased their homes during the growth decades up until the 1980s. New families to town, however, are experiencing difficulty in finding suitable housing. While the majority of the housing stock is comprised of single-family dwellings, decent quality homes rarely come onto the market at a low- to mid-range price point. This is having an impact on the ability of key employers to attract and retain new workers.*

The following is taken from “Moving Housing Forward: From Strategy to Action” prepared for the District of Fort St James in 2018.

The District of Fort St. James is experiencing an extremely tight rental market. Conversations with the stakeholders and the municipal staff has found that many potential renters are struggling to find rental units in the District and are frustrated by the lack of units available on the market.

Based on the demographic assessment, the District is likely to experience a significant increase in senior households over the next 10 years. This would result in increased demand for both owner-occupied and rental housing in the District. The District lacks age-appropriate housing for this demographic segment. The built form for such units would also likely be ground-oriented apartments, townhouses, and duplex/triplex/fourplex.

In addition, the District is likely to experience a strong shift towards smaller sized households. However, it lacks appropriate housing for this demographic segment and is

likely under-built in bachelor/studio and one-bedroom homes. There might be an untapped demand for smaller, market-priced ownership and rental units targeted toward early-career professionals and young families. The built form for such units would likely be ground-oriented apartments, townhouses, and duplex/triplex/fourplex. Much of the housing stock of the District is old and requires major repairs. The regular maintenance and upkeep of the current housing stock would provide the much-needed affordable rental and owner-occupied housing in the community.

There is unmet need for social housing in the District, including homeless shelters, transition homes as well as affordable rentals. The District has roughly 30 homeless individuals and a significant proportion of households that are priced out of the owner-occupied as well as the rental housing market.

The District experiences a high degree of variation in its housing needs due to temporary or seasonal jobs in the economy. This instability of occupancy and vacancy make for a difficult investment climate for development of additional rental housing stock. Moreover, due to limited rental stock, the rental rates are likely to trend upwards during period of high economic activity in and around the District.

The First Nations communities are facing housing shortages, over-crowding and mold issues. This has been aggravated by limited construction over the last decade. As a result, all of the four First Nations communities would benefit from additional construction and maintenance of their housing stock.

The limited availability of quality housing in a variety of forms, for both ownership and rental, is a concern across the region. New housing in differing forms is necessary to help our communities keep young adults in the community after graduation, attract skilled employees and professionals, and accommodate seniors.



It is recognized that economic diversification beyond reliance on mining, the primary forest products industries, and traditional agriculture is dependant on the region's ability to attract skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and professionals that have a high degree of mobility and choice regarding their home community. The availability of acceptable and attractive housing is a key factor in attracting new residents and our future economic sustainability. Investment in housing and the creation of increased diversity of housing type is an economic development and diversification issue, as well as a resident quality of life issue.

Part 4: HOUSING STRATEGIES AND ACTION PLANS

Housing needs assessments and housing studies commonly contain recommended actions or strategies to address the housing needs identified in the study. The housing needs assessments and housing studies developed for municipalities in the RDBN in recent years are identified in part 3 of this discussion paper. This section summarizes the typical recommendations contained in these types of studies, and their effectiveness in addressing housing issues in the RDBN.

Typical Housing Study Strategies for Market Housing

The strategic actions commonly proposed in housing studies to address market housing issues can be categorized as follows:

- Removing land use regulation barriers. These recommended actions typically include the following:
 - amending zoning to allow secondary suites, garden suites, and other forms of rental housing in single family residential areas;
 - ensuring land for a variety of housing forms and densities is identified in the official community plan and allowed by zoning.
- Fast tracking development approval processes for housing projects.
- Reducing development standards and development fees with the aim to reduce development costs. These recommended actions typically include the following:
 - reducing or waiving application fees, development cost charge fees, etc.
 - implement taxation breaks for housing;
 - reducing development standards such as parking requirements.
- Offering density bonuses. In the context of market housing this involves allowing a residential development with increased density in exchange for the commitment to include rental housing within the development.
- Working with large employers to provide financial assistance to developers.

This appears to be the focus of the Province's Expert Panel on the Future of Housing Supply and Affordability discussed later in this report.

Market Housing Strategy Efficacy

Most of the strategic actions commonly proposed in housing studies to address market housing issues cannot reasonably be expected to result in increased construction of housing in any form given the current housing market in the RDBN. The above noted recommendations may be

viable strategies in jurisdictions with notably higher land values, where developers are highly motivated to build and redevelop to the development density that is allowed, where development costs are impacted by development fees, and where reducing development approval processing time equates to some value. However, this is not the situation in the RDBN.

Most municipalities and rural areas in the RDBN have developed flexible rules regarding secondary suites. Smaller second dwellings are permitted on lots in certain rural areas and in a number of communities. Across the RDBN zoning and development standards are not impeding or limiting housing development in any meaningful way, and amending zoning to increase development flexibility or offering density bonuses is not a meaningful incentive. Nevertheless, the RDBN's regulatory approach to housing should continue to be evaluated on a regular basis as part of the Official Community Plan review process for Electoral Areas.

Reducing development standards and development fees with the aim to reduce development costs can not be expected to result in any notable increase in development in the RDBN. The gap between development costs and market value can not be overcome by reducing the minimal fees that exist. This approach only makes sense where development fees and charges, and development standards have been substantially inflated to take advantage of high development pressures; therefore, preferred development can be encouraged by reducing these inflated costs. This is not the situation in the RDBN.

Typical Housing Study Strategies for Non - Market housing

The above noted actions relating to market housing are also commonly recommended in relation to non-market housing issues. Density bonuses in the context of non-market housing involves providing a residential development with increased density in exchange for the commitment to include non-market housing within the development. This typically involves the development of a housing agreement with the developer.

In addition to the above, the following strategic actions are commonly proposed in housing studies to address non-market housing issues:

- Promotion, support, facilitation, and advocacy in association with housing projects. These actions are commonly recommended in relation to non-market housing as projects are commonly dependent on the work of non-profit societies, and funding from the Provincial and federal governments.
- Direct staff resources or financial towards non-market housing projects. This can include the following:
 - providing staff time facilitating the creation of, and working with, non-profit societies dedicated to a non-profit housing development,
 - researching non-profit housing funding opportunities,

- making available municipal owner land for a non-profit housing project.

Non-Market Housing Success in the Region

Non-market housing project success in the RDBN has been dependent on a motivated local body, such as non-profit society, with a committed project manager that has worked closely with BC Housing. There has also been the need for a society to play a role in managing the operation of the facility after construction.

Housing related societies are typically reliant on volunteer work, and these volunteers can be challenged by the scope of work necessary to successfully facilitate the development of a project in partnership with BC Housing or Northern Health. Once a society has completed projects, and entered into agreements with BC Housing, Northern Health, Community Living BC, etc. (which includes funding for the operation of housing projects) the societies can potentially begin relying on paid staff to manage existing facilities and develop new projects. This can greatly increase capacity.

Local governments can play a role in moving housing projects forward in partnership with BC Housing. For example, the Capital Regional District has created the Capital Region Housing Corporation which develops, promotes, and operates non-market housing in the region.

The following is a list of the notable non-market housing projects that have been completed in the RDBN in the last 15 years.

Table 26: Non-Market Housing Projects in RDBN Municipalities			
Housing Name, Location, Year	Project Lead / Operator	Type of Housing	Funding
Alpine Court, Smithers	Smithers Community Services Association	24 Units Townhouse Low & Mid Income families	BC Housing
The Meadows, Smithers	Smithers Community Services Association	14 single bedroom units assisted Living for seniors	BC Housing Northern Health
Sparrows Christian Housing, Smithers	Sparrows Christian Housing Society	Independent Living facility for disabled adults	None
Harding Heights, Smithers	Dik Tiy Housing Society	19 unit apartments seniors / disabled adults	BC Housing Comm. Living BC
Broadway House, Smithers	Smithers Community Services Association	6 unit market rental and emergency shelter	BC Housing
Goodacre Place, Smithers	Smithers Community Services Association	22 units supportive housing emergency shelter	BC Housing
Pioneer Place, Smithers	Senior Citizens Housing Society	31 bachelor and one bedroom affordable housing for seniors	BC Housing
Telkwa House, Telkwa	Telkwa Seniors Housing Society	8 one bedroom units seniors and disabled adults	BC Housing

Cottonwood Manor, Houston	Smithers Community Services Association	28 unit (5 assisted living and 11 independent living) for seniors	BC Housing Northern Health
Pioneer Place, Fort St. James	Fort St James Senior Housing Society	12 one-bedroom units for seniors and disabled adults	Northern Health
Pioneer Lodge, Fort St. James	Fort St James Senior Housing Society	two-unit assisted living development for seniors.	Independent Living BC
Fireweed Safe Haven Transition House, Fort St. James	Fireweed Collective Society	(4 units) for women and their children	BC Housing Northern Health
Westside Court, Fort St. James	BC Housing	15 2 and 3 bedroom units affordable housing	BC Housing
At Risk Housing, Fort St. James	Nechako Valley Community Services	2 one-bedroom rental units at risk of homelessness	BC Housing Northern Health
Carroll Cottage, Burns Lake	Lakes District Seniors Housing Society	14 units of independent seniors' housing	BC Housing
Tweedsmuir House, Burns Lake	Lakes District Senior Housing Society	17 units of assisted living	Northern Health
Heritage Manor, Burns Lake	Lakes District Seniors	25 units of supportive seniors housing	BC Housing
McKenna Place, Burns Lake	BC Housing	39 three bedroom units of affordable housing for families	BC Housing
Riverglen, Vanderhoof	BC Housing	31 three bedroom units of affordable housing for families	BC Housing
Riverside Place, Vanderhoof	Nechako Valley Community Services	18 bachelor and one bedroom units of affordable housing	BC Housing Northern Health
Nechako Valley Senior Citizens Home, Vanderhoof	Nechako Valley Community Services	9 one bedroom units of affordable housing for seniors	BC Housing
Silver Birch Lodge, Fraser Lake	Fraser Lake & District Senior Citizens Home Society	23 one bedroom units of affordable housing	BC Housing

The Role of the Rural Area in Addressing the Region's Housing Needs

The rural area within the RDBN plays many roles in the efficient and effective function of the region. The rural areas provide resources in support of urban areas. The rural areas support agriculture and local food production. The rural areas accommodate land uses which must occur close to resource extraction or can not easily occur in urban areas because of land use conflict (gravel pits and industrial development). Housing is provided in the rural area in support of agricultural activities, and there is a demand for housing that offers a lifestyle only available in a rural setting or associated with an amenity available only in the rural area.

The RDBN's housing regulations are relatively flexible. On nearly every parcel in the rural area at least one dwelling and a secondary suite are permitted. Two dwellings, plus two secondary suites are typically permitted on parcels larger than 4 ha. (not including land in the Agricultural Land Reserve). And, additional cabins are permitted for larger parcels zoned RR1. The RDBN manages land use in the rural area, through Official Community Plan policy to meet the region's rural housing needs without inappropriately impacting the urban housing market, facilitating rural sprawl, degrading the character and function of the rural area, and creating land use conflict between necessary uses in the rural area and excessive rural residential development. It is noted that the RDBN's flexible approach to housing policy and regulations results in the bulk of new housing starts in the region occurring in the rural area. This has caused municipalities concern and is not sustainable in the long term.

The RDBN Planning Department's work plan includes an evaluation of a zoning bylaw amendment to allow a second dwelling on any parcels zoned H1 (Small Holdings). This would allow 2nd dwellings on the parcels within the typical 2 ha. (5 ac.) rural residential subdivisions surrounding municipalities and may increase the rental housing supply in some areas to a small degree. Consultation on this proposed zoning change is expected to occur in mid 2021.

Many of the region's housing needs can not be addressed in the rural area. The majority of the region's housing issues are best addressed or only addressed, within a municipality. The function of the region will not benefit from excessive rural growth in comparison to municipal growth. Multi-family housing and non-market housing must be accommodated primarily in municipalities. The RDBN needs to ensure that land remains available for land uses which do not fit within a higher density municipal environment and that the potential for conflict between these uses and rural residential development is minimized. The RDBN has a clear interest in supporting municipalities in addressing the region's housing needs in a coordinated and proactive manner as every RDBN resident will see the benefits.

Part 5: PROVINCIAL INITIATIVES

Homes for BC: A 30 Point Plan for Housing Affordability in BC

In September 2018, the Province introduced a housing plan called Homes for BC. This plan focuses on affordable housing issues associated with excessive land values in southern BC. It also allocates funding to address the need for low income housing and homelessness. The funding opportunities in the 30-point plan are outlined below.

The majority of actions proposed focus on controlling land values in southern BC and can not be expected to address the RDBN's market housing related issues. However, the increase in funds and opportunities available for non-market housing initiatives are notable.

BC Housing Funding Opportunities

BC Housing works in partnership with non-profit sectors and private sectors, community and Indigenous groups, provincial health authorities, ministries and local governments to facilitate a non-profit housing development. BC Housing is relatively flexible in developing innovative solutions; however, they do require a local entity to plan and facilitate the project and own and managed the housing once it is developed.

- Building BC: Community Housing Fund - Creates new units of social housing for low and moderate income families and seniors in British Columbia.
- Building BC: Indigenous Housing Fund - Facilitates the building and operation of social housing for Indigenous people in B.C.
- Building BC: Supportive Housing Fund - Provides supportive housing for people who are experiencing homelessness, or who are at risk of homelessness.
- Building BC: Women's Transition Housing Fund - Provides women and their children who are at risk of violence and/or who have experienced violence with access to safe, secure and confidential services.
- Community Partnership Initiatives - Provides financing, partnership referrals and advice for non-profits looking to develop affordable rental housing or licensed care facilities.

Expert Panel of the Future of Housing Supply and Affordability

The Federal Government and the Province created the Expert Panel on the Future of Housing Supply and Affordability “to identify measures that could build on government investments and initiatives already underway to help more people find affordable housing in British Columbia”.

The Panel's terms of reference state that the Panel's goal is to focus on making housing more affordable in high-priced markets in British Columbia.

This panel underwent a consultation process which focused on three key areas:

- governance, or the way in which governments control or influence the supply of housing;
- the diversity of housing for all income levels and tenures.
- accelerating and adding certainty to the process for adding new supply.

In December 2020, the Province released an interim report from the expert Panel titled "What We Heard." A final report with recommendations is expected some time in early 2021. It is clear from the document that the panel discussions and interview sessions were focused on increasing housing supply in areas of high property values. The underlying theme of the interim report is that removing local government density restrictions in urban areas will result in the provision of additional market housing. It is not anticipated that any of the recommendations in the final report will have a notable impact on market housing in the RDBN.



PART 6: HOUSING NEEDS REPORTS

Mandatory Local Government Housing Needs Reports

The Local Government Statutes (Housing Needs Reports) Amendment Act, 2018, S.B.C. 2018, c. 20 makes amendments to the Local Government Act which requires local governments to complete housing needs reports by April 2022, and every five years thereafter. The Province says that these changes will “strengthen the ability of local governments to understand what kinds of housing are most needed in their communities.” And “will help ensure that local policies, plans and development decisions that relate to housing are based on recent evidence and responsive to current and future needs.”

Local governments are required to collect approximately 50 distinct kinds of data relating to current and projected population, household income, economic sectors, and available and anticipated housing needs. Regional districts are required to collect this information for each electoral area.

Housing needs reports must contain statements about key areas of local need, including affordable housing, rental housing, special needs housing, seniors housing, family housing, and shelters and housing for people at risk of homelessness. The number of housing units required to meet current and anticipated housing needs for at least the next five years, by housing type. In addition, the number and percentage of households in core housing need and extreme core housing need. Regional districts must include this required content for each electoral area. A local government is required to consider its housing needs report during the developing of its official community plans and when amending any portion of an official community plan relating to housing statements, map designations or policies.

UBCM Housing Needs Reports Program

The UBCM Housing Needs Reports program provides financial assistance to local governments to complete housing needs reports. Funding is based on the net population of the planning area. Each planning area can only be funded once over the full span of the program. The funding available is \$15,000 for municipalities and Electoral Areas under 5,000 population, and \$20,000 for municipalities and Electoral Areas between 5,000 to 14,999 population. Applications can be made for a collaborative housing needs reports projects involving the municipality and electoral area, as a single application. The maximum funding available would be based on the funding maximums for each jurisdiction.

The RDBN’s made application to the UBCM Housing Needs Reports program to complete Housing Needs Reports for all Electoral Areas as a regional project. This will allow the RDBN to

meet its legislated obligation to develop 7 separate housing needs assessments, in an efficient manner. It will also allow rural housing issues to be evaluated in a comprehensive manner. The Planning Department will ensure that the housing reports evaluate the housing required in support of the agricultural community, the RDBN generated demand for non-market housing, issues relating to the need for increased replacement of the regions aging housing stock, and the potential role of housing in regional economic development.

In future years there may be benefit for the RDBN to partner with municipalities in the development of housing needs reports. The RDBN's rural populations tend to concentrate around municipalities in each Electoral area. It is appropriate that housing needs in the region be evaluated and addressed based on population centres, rather than political boundaries. However, the legislation requires that specific information and reporting is provided for each individual electoral area and participating municipality.



PART 7: NDI HOUSING PROGRAM

Housing Needs Assessments Program

The Housing Needs Assessment program provides one-time grant funding to local governments for the development of a comprehensive housing needs assessment that covers the entire community and meets the requirements of the 'Local Government Statutes (Housing Needs Reports) Amendment Act.'

One-time grant funding per eligible local government up to \$10,000 to a maximum of 50% of the eligible project budget.

Community Planning for Housing Program

The Community Planning for Housing program provides grant funding for municipalities and regional districts to assist with the cost of hiring incremental planning capacity for a 12-month period to identify housing issues and facilitate the development of housing in community.

Northern Development commits to one placement per regional development area. Local governments are eligible to receive up to \$40,000 from Northern Development to assist with the salary cost of hiring incremental planning capacity for a 12-month period. Host communities are required to provide a minimum of \$10,000 toward the salary to support a minimum base salary of \$50,000. The District of Fort St. James was successful in their application for funding under this project, as were the District of Houston and Village of Telkwa in their joint application.



Northern Housing Incentive Program

The Northern Housing Incentive program provides grant funding to local governments to incentivize private sector housing developments. Local governments may receive a grant of up to \$10,000 per dwelling created in a multi-unit market housing project to a maximum contribution of \$200,000.

PART 8: SUMMARY

The RDBN's housing stock needs to be replaced at an increased rate, and the housing stock needs to grow and be diversified to meet the needs of current and future residents. The challenge is that the market value of land has not adequately facilitated private sector investment in subdivision and housing equally across the region.

Investment in housing and the creation of increased diversity of housing type is an economic development and diversification issue, as well as a resident quality of life issue. The region's economic future is not solely determined by the forest products industry, mining, and large energy projects. It is recognized that economic diversification beyond reliance on this industry is dependant on the region's ability to attract skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and professionals that have a high degree of mobility and choice regarding their home community. Our ability to provide the services and amenities necessary to maintain a healthy and fulfilling regional lifestyle and attract new residents is a critical component of our future. This increased demand is necessary for any market-based solution to the RDBN's housing issues.

The financial and other support available from the Province, the UBCM, and NDIT are important. However, the long-term sustainable solution to housing issues in the region is dependant on a diversified economy and growth. The RDBN and member municipalities are making notable effort to increase the region's quality of life and attract and retain new residents. Internet connectivity, parks and trails, and other regional quality of life related efforts remain critical to making our region even more competitive in its ability to attract skilled workers, entrepreneurs, and professionals. Because of these efforts it is expected that continued increases in the market value of housing in the region will continue along with increased housing opportunity in the future.

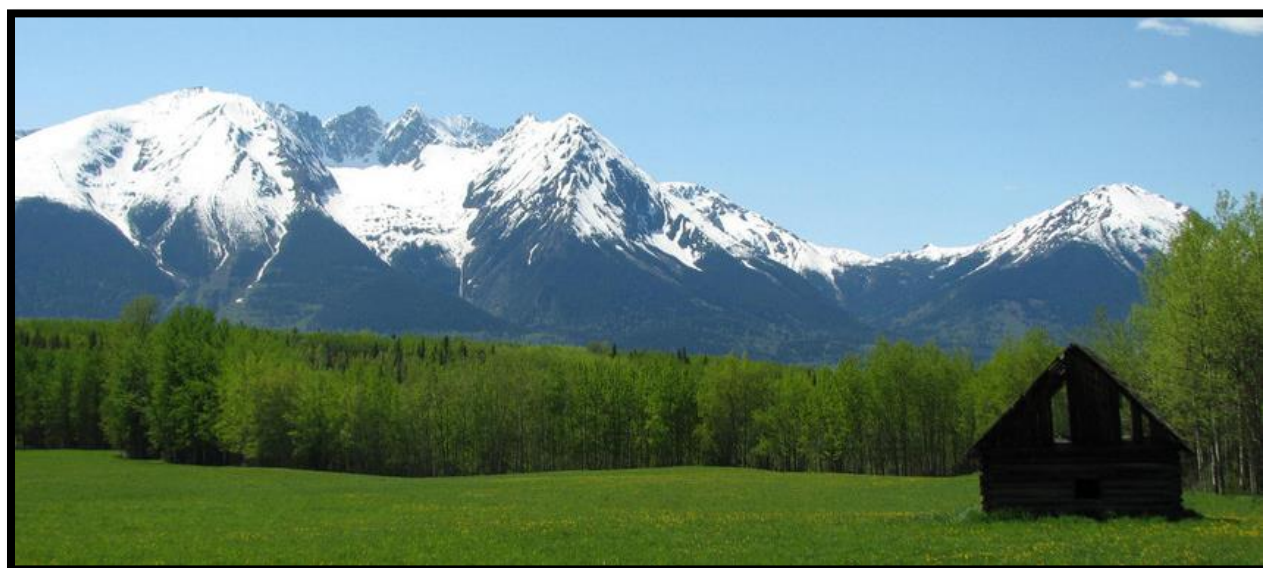
Appendix A: Housing DATA by Electoral Area (2016 Census Data)

Electoral Area A

Table 3: Housing Type				
	Electoral Area A	Town of Smithers	Village of Telkwa	TOTAL
Single Family Dwellings	87%	66.4%	91.8%	77.7%
Manufactured Homes	12.4%	5.2%	5.1%	8.2%
Semi - Detached Dwellings	0.5%	6.1%	0%	3.1%
Row Housing	0%	3.9%	2%	2.1%
Apartment	0%	18.3%	1%	8.9%
Total Housing Stock	2213	2389	539	5141

Table 4: Housing Ownership and Rental Housing				
	Electoral Area A	Town of Smithers	Village of Telkwa	TOTAL
Owner Occupied	88.6%	68.8%	90.8%	79.4%
Rental Housing	11.0%	31.2%	10.2%	20.8%

Table 5: Housing Age				
	Electoral Area A	Town of Smithers	Village of Telkwa	TOTAL
1960 and earlier	7.4%	18.1%	17.3%	13.5%
1961-1980	39.6%	37.6%	17.3%	36.4%
1981-1990	19.8%	17%	16.3%	18.1%
1991-2000	22.5%	15.5%	32.7%	20.2%
2001-2010	4.2%	8.1%	8.2%	6.5%
2011-2016	3.5%	3.9%	8.2%	4.2%



Electoral Area B

Table 6: Housing Type			
	Electoral Area B	Village of Burns Lake	TOTAL
Single Family Dwellings	82.3%	75.2%	79%
Manufactured Homes	14.6%	0.7%	8.1%
Semi - Detached Dwellings	1.9%	2.2%	2%
Row Housing	0.6%	1.5%	1%
Apartment	0.6%	20.4%	9.8%
Total Housing Stock	896	748	1644

Table 7: Housing Ownership and Rental Housing			
	Electoral Area B	Village of Burns Lake	TOTAL
Owner Occupied	90.9%	61.3%	81%
Rental Housing	9%	39.4%	23.1%

Table 8: Housing Age			
	Electoral Area B	Village of Burns Lake	TOTAL
1960 and earlier	10.8%	17.5%	13.9%
1961-1980	39.9%	44.5%	42%
1981-1990	15.8%	13.9%	14.9%
1991-2000	22.8%	21.9%	22.4%
2001-2010	8.2%	3.6%	6.1%
2011-2016	1.3%	1.5%	1.4%



Electoral Area C

Table 9: Housing Type			
	<u>Electoral Area C</u>	<u>Fort St. James</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Single Family Dwellings	81.1%	69.8%	75.3%
Manufactured Homes	18%	11.6%	14.7%
Semi - Detached Dwellings	0%	2.3%	1.2%
Row Housing	0.8%	7%	4%
Apartment	0%	9.3%	4.8%
Total Housing Stock	737	761	1498

Table 10: Housing Ownership and Rental Housing			
	<u>Electoral Area C</u>	<u>Fort St. James</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Owner Occupied	86%	72.1%	85.7%
Rental Housing	13%	27.9%	20.7%

Table 11: Housing Age			
	<u>Electoral Area C</u>	<u>Fort St. James</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1960 and earlier	3.3%	7.8%	5.6%
1961-1980	45.9%	55%	50.6%
1981-1990	19.7%	14%	16.7%
1991-2000	20.5%	17.1%	18.7%
2001-2010	5.7%	3.1%	4.4%
2011-2016	4.9%	3.1%	4%



Electoral Area D

Table 12: Housing Type				
	<u>Electoral Area D</u>	<u>Fort Fraser</u>	<u>Fraser Lake</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Single Family Dwellings	87.8%	56.7%	57.8%	72.2%
Manufactured Homes	9.9%	23.3%	4.6%	9.3%
Semi - Detached Dwellings	0.8%	10%	19.3%	9.3%
Row Housing	0%	0%	9.2%	3.7%
Apartment	1.5%	10%	9.2%	5.6%
Total Housing Stock	854	138	551	1543

Table 13: Housing Ownership and Rental Housing				
	<u>Electoral Area D</u>	<u>Fort Fraser</u>	<u>Fraser Lake</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Owner Occupied	87.9%	76.9%	73%	80.7%
Rental Housing	12.0%	23.0%	27%	17.8%

Table 14: Housing Age				
	<u>Electoral Area D</u>	<u>Fort Fraser</u>	<u>Fraser Lake</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1960 and earlier	9.2%	13.3%	2.8%	7%
1961-1980	42%	30%	56.9%	46.7%
1981-1990	19.8%	20%	11.9%	16.7%
1991-2000	19.8%	16.7%	6.4%	14.1%
2001-2010	6.9%	0%	4.6%	5.2%
2011-2016	3.8%	0%	1.8%	2.6%



Electoral Area E

Table 15: Housing Type		
	Electoral Area E	TOTAL
Single Family Dwellings	89.4%	89.4%
Manufactured Homes	9.8%	9.8%
Semi - Detached Dwellings	0%	0%
Row Housing	0%	0%
Apartment	0.8%	0.8%
Total Housing Stock	840	840

Table 16: Housing Ownership and Rental Housing		
	Electoral Area E	TOTAL
Owner Occupied	87.9%	88.6%
Rental Housing	12.0%	12.2%

Table 17: Housing Age		
	Electoral Area E	TOTAL
1960 and earlier	13.8%	13.8%
1961-1980	48%	48%
1981-1990	13.8%	13.8%
1991-2000	13%	13%
2001-2010	10.6%	10.6%
2011-2016	1.6%	1.6%



Electoral Area F

Table 18: Housing Type			
	<u>Electoral Area F</u>	<u>Vanderhoof</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Single Family Dwellings	85%	69.3%	76.2%
Manufactured Homes	15%	9.7%	12%
Semi - Detached Dwellings	0%	3.7%	2.1%
Row Housing	0%	10%	5.6%
Apartment	0%	7.2%	4%
Total Housing Stock	1902	1831	3733

Table 19: Housing Ownership and Rental Housing			
	<u>Electoral Area F</u>	<u>Vanderhoof</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Owner Occupied	88.4%	71.9%	79.5%
Rental Housing	11.0%	28.4%	20.9%

Table 20: Housing Age			
	<u>Electoral Area F</u>	<u>Vanderhoof</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1960 and earlier	7.3%	14.6%	11.4%
1961-1980	38.3%	38.7%	38.5%
1981-1990	20.1%	16%	17.8%
1991-2000	15.3%	16%	15.7%
2001-2010	11.3%	11.2%	11.2%
2011-2016	8%	4%	5.8%



Electoral Area G

Table 21: Housing Type				
	<u>Electoral Area G</u>	<u>Granisle</u>	<u>Houston</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Single Family Dwellings	86.3%	74.3%	62.9%	68.8%
Manufactured Homes	12.3%	5.7%	16.1%	14.3%
Semi - Detached Dwellings	1.4%	0%	1.6%	1.4%
Row Housing	0%	14.3%	6%	5.6%
Apartment	0%	5.7%	13.3%	9.8%
Total Housing Stock	450	284	1245	1979

Table 22: Housing Ownership and Rental Housing				
	<u>Electoral Area G</u>	<u>Granisle</u>	<u>Houston</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Owner Occupied	79.5%	97.1%	72.6%	76.4%
Rental Housing	15.1%	11.4%	27.4%	23.3%

Table 23: Housing Age				
	<u>Electoral Area G</u>	<u>Granisle</u>	<u>Houston</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
1960 and earlier	4.1%	5.7%	6.5%	5.9%
1961-1980	54.8%	91.4%	54.4%	58.1%
1981-1990	13.7%	0%	14.1%	12.6%
1991-2000	13.7%	0%	16.5%	14.3%
2001-2010	4.1%	0%	7.7%	6.2%
2011-2016	2.7%	5.7%	0.8%	1.7%

