



NEEDS AND GAPS ASSESSMENT

City of Fernie/West Fernie

Prepared by CitySpaces Consulting | July 2017



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Introduction

This project, the 2017 Affordable Housing Strategy Update, involves three phases and deliverables: a Housing Indicators Report (March 2017); this Needs and Gaps Assessment, which includes the results of community and stakeholder engagement; and, lastly, the Affordable Housing Strategy. The research findings from the first two phases are key to shaping the Strategy's priorities and directions.

- The first report – **Housing Indicators** – involved assembling and analyzing relevant and reliable data, including current housing mix, housing tenure, rental prices, housing sales prices, and household income. This information provides an indication on the level of affordability in the community, and particularly “who” in the community face the greatest challenges participating in the housing market, such as seniors, lone-parents families, and low-income families.
- This report – **Housing Needs and Gaps Assessment** – identifies the current and emerging housing needs in Fernie and examines gaps and issues. This assessment involved two research approaches: a survey that had 260 respondents; interviews, two focus groups, an open house, and interviews with 19 key informants¹

Demonstrated Needs and Gaps

Five main challenges were identified through the consultation process.

1. **Single-parent families** were identified as have the most difficulty in finding, suitable, adequate, and affordable housing.
2. There are limited housing choices for **renters**. In particular, there is little available affordable rental housing for single parent families, low income single people, and people with disabilities. Rental housing conditions are variable and, in some cases unhealthy (e.g., mould, poor insulation).
3. Home ownership is not attainable for many **moderate income working people**. As house prices rise, fewer family households are able to purchase a detached home, especially where one parent stays home with young children. The size and layout of most townhouse and apartment condominiums are not well suited to families.
4. The lack of affordable housing impacts **employee recruitment and retention**. Several survey respondents indicated they would be leaving Fernie as rents and house prices are considerably lower in Cranbrook, Sparwood and Elkford.
5. **Single people** of all ages with low or fixed incomes have difficulty finding suitable, affordable housing.

¹ Refer to Appendix A for the survey results, Appendix B for a summary of the consultations undertaken in mid-June, and Appendix C lists the key informants who were interviewed.

Population Groups



"I live with my parents. If we were on my own, I couldn't find affordable housing. Please, more affordable housing close to downtown."

"Yes, I am a single parent that lives in a one bedroom apartment with my son. We share a bedroom because that is all I can afford in Fernie."

SINGLE PARENT FAMILIES

The findings from the survey and key informant interviews identified single parent families as having the greatest challenge with affordability. Single-parent households have fewer choices in finding suitable, adequate, and affordable housing. Women leaving a difficult physical and emotional relationships, often with their children, are a particularly vulnerable population, and although Chrysalis House has a small shelter and 11 units of short-term transitional housing, finding safe and affordable rental housing is formidable.

Single parent households have much lower median incomes than couple families, with younger age groups earning close to three times less than comparable couple households. In 2014 the median income for a single parent in the 25-34 age group was \$29,550. Using the affordability "rule of thumb" that a household should not pay more than 30% of their gross income on housing, a single parent could pay no more than \$739 per month on rent. As the average rent for a one-bedroom suite in a purpose-built apartment is \$761, single parents at the median income and below would have a very difficult time to find adequate and suitable housing. Single parents at and below the median income are completely priced-out of the homeownership market.

Table 1: Single Parent Families Ability to Rent

Age	Median Annual Income	Income Availability Monthly	Available for Rent @ 30%
0 to 24	\$-	\$-	\$-
25 to 34	\$29,550	\$2,463	\$739
35 to 44	\$39,640	\$3,303	\$991
45 to 54	\$79,450	\$6,621	\$1,986
55 to 64	\$69,260	\$5,605	\$1,682

Source: Canada Taxfiler Data 2014 and calculations by CitySpaces



"We will probably never afford a house here, because any house that is reasonably priced is either impossibly small, awful, or falling apart."

"We can't afford to buy a decent place and have a baby on the way. I have never been so stressed. Price of homes are almost making us move to another town. "

MODERATE-INCOME FAMILIES

The survey results and discussions with key informants indicated that families with moderate incomes, particularly those in the family formation stage, find it very difficult to rent or purchase a home in Fernie. The limited supply of suitably sized rental properties for this demographic means that some young families leave the area. In interviews with stakeholders, there is a perception that the lack of housing appropriate for young couples in the process of family formation may have long-term negative economic impacts on the community.

As the Government of Canada continues to tighten the "financial stress test" for prospective homeowners², and the Bank of Canada beginning to increase the cost of borrowing, which limits the prospects for moderate income families to qualify for a mortgage.

Table 2: Couple Families Ability to Purchase

Age	Available at GDS	Less Fees, Utilities + Insurance	Maximum Mortgage	Purchase Price w/ 20% Down
0 to 24	\$1,425	\$175	\$31,190	\$38,988
25 to 34	\$2,697	\$1,447	\$257,719	\$322,149
35 to 44	\$3,051	\$1,801	\$320,860	\$401,076
45 to 54	\$3,785	\$2,535	\$451,561	\$564,451
55 to 64	\$3,166	\$1,916	\$341,385	\$426,731
65+	\$1,884	\$634	\$113,003	\$141,254

Source: Canada Taxfiler Data 2014 and calculations by CitySpaces

² <https://www.theglobeandmail.com/real-estate/four-major-changes-to-canadas-housing-rules/article32223470/>



"Single men come to Fernie looking for work, then get stuck because there is no work, and are unable to afford to live here, or even to move on."

"Men are frequent clients (of the Salvation Army) as there are no resources for those struggling with housing; the need is great for single men with children."

LOW INCOME SINGLE PEOPLE

The survey results indicated that this group is also highly challenged by the lack of affordable housing. Low income singles cover the gamut of age groups, from youth leaving foster care to older seniors, some of whom live in older downtown hotels. While some of these singles are on income assistance / disability pension, others are working at one or more poorly paid jobs. Single people do not fit within the criteria for any subsidized or supported housing, nor are they eligible for BC Housing's Rental Assistance Program, which applies only to working families with modest incomes.

As is evident from Table 3, younger and older singles would find it particularly difficult to find stable, affordable housing.

Table 3: Single People

Age	Median Annual Income	Income Availability Monthly	Available for Rent @ 30%
0 to 24	\$17,710	\$1,476	\$443
25 to 34	\$37,610	\$3,134	\$940
35 to 44	\$49,310	\$4,109	\$1,233
45 to 54	\$49,840	\$4,153	\$1,246
55 to 64	\$32,490	\$2,708	\$812
65+	\$30,330	\$2,528	\$758

Source: Canada Taxfiler Data 2014 and calculations by CitySpaces



"Lack of designated "staff housing" by major tourism operators puts serious pressure on the rest of the housing market during the winter months."

"Focus on solutions for low income / seasonal workforce. They contribute significantly to the economic well being of the community and deserve a decent place to live."

SEASONAL EMPLOYEES AND COLLEGE STUDENTS

Results of the survey identified seasonal employees and colleges students as having unmet housing needs, but not as great as the three above-discussed groups. In conversation with some key informants, however, it was noted that the College of the Rockies cannot run all the courses it would like because there are few places students can rent affordably for the college year. With respect to seasonal residents (primarily Fernie Alpine Resort's employees), there were mixed views. Some felt that there was ample rental housing, with first year employees finding rooms in older downtown hotels (room and kitchenette), while returning employees share the costs of renting larger homes. (usually four to six people)



"Put more money into building affordable housing for the seniors who built this city, instead of catering to people who pass through for a winter or a year or two."

SENIORS ON FIXED INCOMES AND SENIORS WITH COMPLEX CARE NEEDS

BC Stats population projections show that the seniors cohort (60 years+) will grow considerably in the Fernie Local Health Area over the next ten years – from 3,100 to 4,400, a 42% increase. Of this cohort, the population of residents age 75+ is projected to almost double. If these projections prove to be correct, there will be a growing demand for seniors independent living accommodation and for seniors needing supportive living or complex care facilities.

Although the survey results identified seniors as the third ranked group having the greatest housing need, discussions with key informants, with the exception the General Manager of Tom Uphill Manor, seniors were **not** identified as having unmet needs.

In the Elk Valley, there are 6 facilities (173 units and 62 residential care rooms) that are oriented to seniors:

- Tom Uphill Manor, Fernie – 31 one-bedroom units (rent geared to income);
- Trinity Lodge, Fernie – 31 one-bedroom units (rent geared to income);
- Rocky Mountain Village, Fernie – 12 independent living apartments (2 two-bedroom, 10 one-bedroom); 12 assisted living apartments (4 one-bedroom, 8 studio); and 62 private residential care rooms. The residential care rooms are publicly subsidized through Interior Health, with rates calculated on 80% of after tax income;
- Lilac Terrace, Sparwood – 6 two-bedroom, 24 one-bedroom apartments (rent geared to income)
- Sasko Manor, Sparwood – 9 one-bedroom, 9 two-bedroom units (rent geared to income); and
- Sparwood Seniors Villa – 39 one bedroom units.

Housing Gaps

Based on an analysis of housing indicators, as well as the survey results and observations from community stakeholders, the following housing gaps are identified:

- **Emergency Housing:** There are no warming centres or emergency shelters for men, despite the expressed need. The closest shelter is in Cranbrook. The Salvation Army regularly provides services (e.g., food bank, spiritual counselling) to men who are either episodically or chronically homeless. Further research could be taken to identify whether this is a year-round or seasonal (winter) need and what number of beds are needed.
- **Market Rental Housing:** Housing indicators and interviews with stakeholders indicate that Fernie has a limited supply of purpose-built rental housing, and the condition of some existing rental housing was reported to be in poor condition and in need of improvements. A large number of groups would benefit from an increased supply of market rental housing, including single people, young adults, couples, young families, and seniors. Although further research may be needed to accurately quantify demand, this may be a development opportunity.
 - **Gap:** Single parents with 1-2 children with low to moderate income – not many options as sharing accommodation is not viable.
 - **Gap:** Pet-friendly market rental housing.



- **Affordable (rent-geared-to-income and near market)**

Rental Housing: Based on the analysis of median incomes, there are a number of households that cannot afford to rent housing within 30% of their gross incomes. This is true among many single-person (estimated: 350 households) and single-parent households (estimated: 100 households).



- There is a need for more subsidized or mixed market-non market housing options in the area to provide housing for these low and moderate income households. Affordable rental housing is needed in a variety of forms, including units appropriate for single people, families, and people with disabilities.

- **Affordable Homeownership for Moderate Income Families.** The purchase of a detached home is increasingly unaffordable for moderate income households and there are relatively few townhouses available. Developers should be encouraged to consider building modestly appointed townhouses and stacked townhouses. These forms of housing would allow young families the opportunity to become homeowners and build equity towards purchasing a larger home.



Other Related Issues

1. The number of dwellings in need of major repairs is an area of concern, and it is likely that dwellings in need of repair may be concentrated among the available rental stock. This could put low- and moderate-income households at risk of health effects due to mould and water damage, as well as other risks to their health and physical well-being.
2. There is a surprisingly low take up of rent supplement programs (SAFER, RAP). Many more families and seniors could take advantage of these programs.
3. There is a small pool of contractors and tradespeople in Fernie, construction materials and specialty items must be brought by truck or train. The majority of valley lands has been built on, and most new development is taking place on the lower reaches of the mountains. As a consequence, these factors combine to make the costs of infrastructure and home-building perhaps 10-15% higher than other larger centres (e.g., Lethbridge, Calgary). Factory-built housing is likely to be a less costly alternative to on-site construction.
4. Airbnb. There are more of these types of rentals than there used to be; long-term rentals are switching to short-term rentals – this affects the options available, particularly for students. A number of people expressed that regulations around short-term rentals (STR) need to be strengthened and publicized widely.
5. A number of people felt that illegal secondary suites should be closed or required to be brought up to the building code.
6. Longer-term rentals are cheaper, shorter term are more expensive. Landlords are selective during the winter / high season and they select those that apply for shorter-term rental.



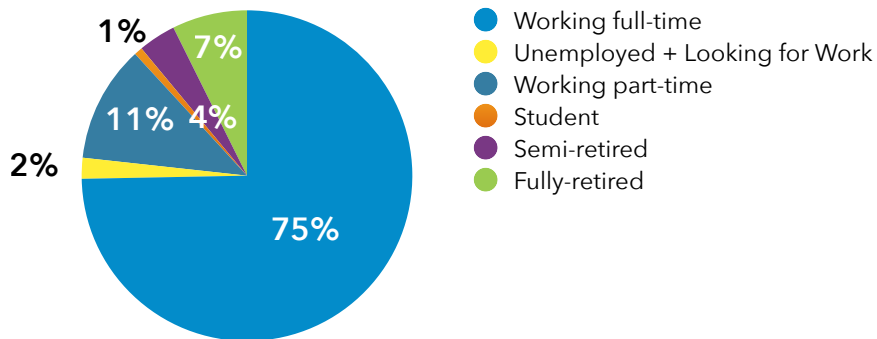
APPENDIX A

Community Survey

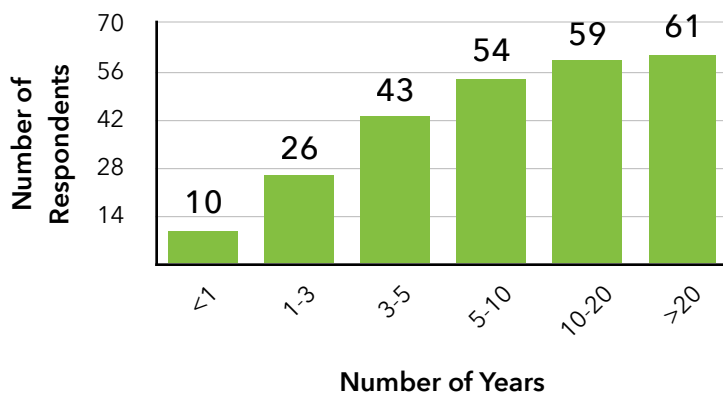
Community Survey

The Affordable Housing survey was launched in mid-March and closed in mid-April, 2017. Fifty-one surveys were conducted person-to-person; 208 were entered on the City of Fernie's website, 51 were filled out at pop-up consultations and three were completed in hardcopy – this represents 5.5% of all Fernie households. The following presents the outcomes of those who responded to the survey.

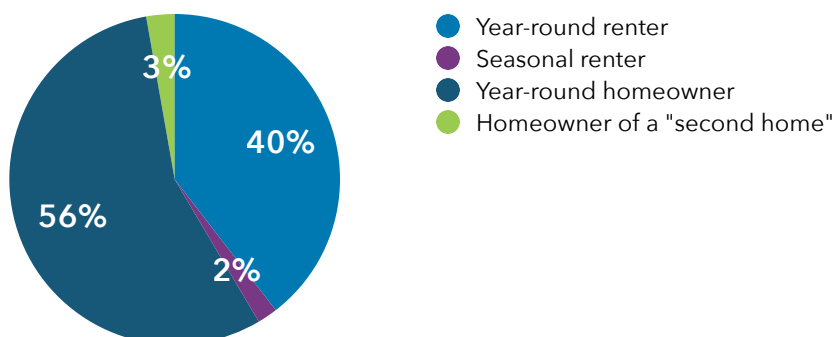
Q1. How do you describe your residency in Fernie/West Fernie?



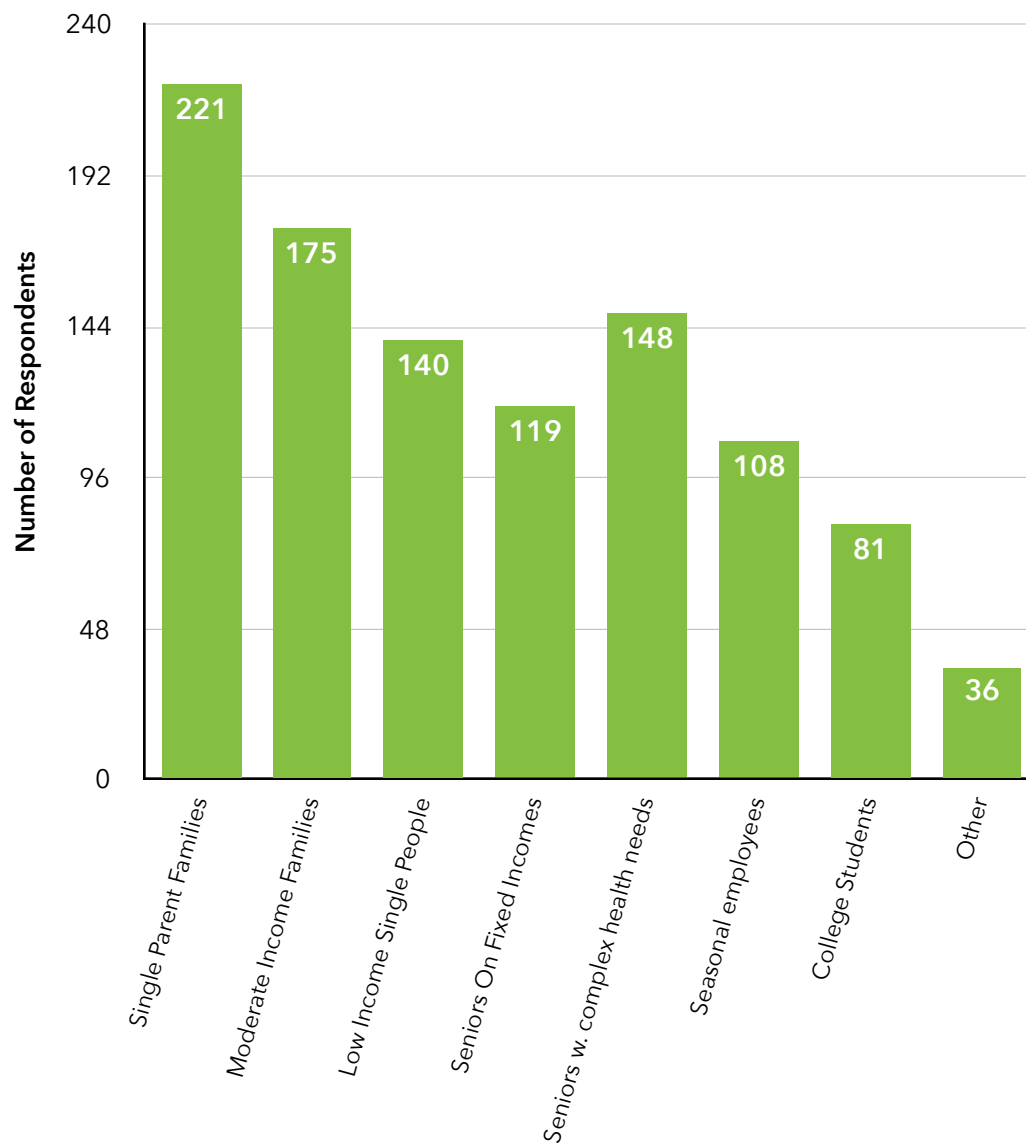
Q2. If you answered being a year-round renter or year-round homeowner, how many years have you lived in Fernie/West Fernie?



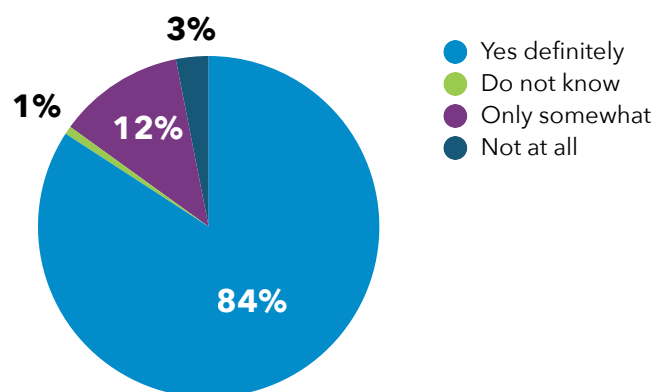
Q3. Participation in the Labour Force?



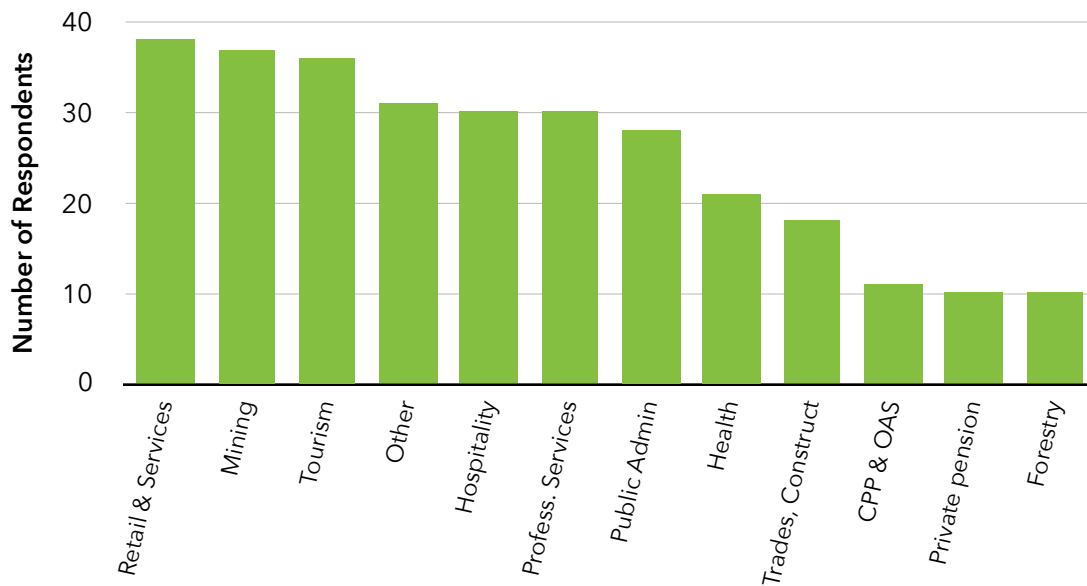
Q4. Which groups do you think have the most challenging needs?



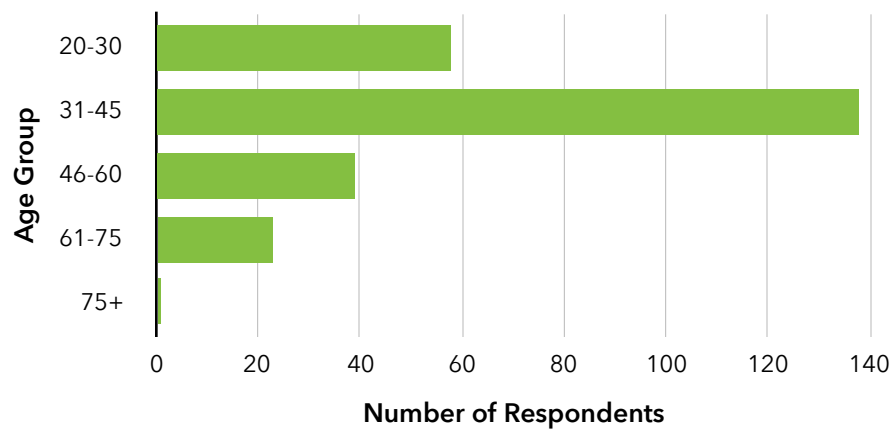
Q6. Do you think there is an overall housing affordability issue in Fernie/West Fernie?



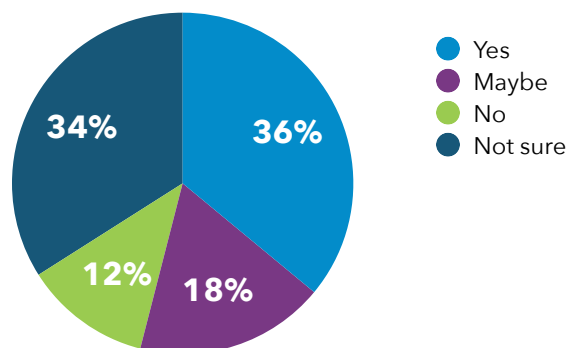
Q9. Thinking about your income what is the main sector from which you derive your income?



Q10. Age Group



Q11. Over 60? Do you think you will continue to live in Fernie/West Fernie after retirement?



Cross Tabulations

CROSS-TABULATION #1 – RENTERS AND OWNERS

When the data was examined by renters and owners, the following cross-tabulations revealed:

- 92% of renters and 82.6% of homeowners responded to the question, **“Do you think there is an overall housing affordability issue in Fernie?”** answered “Yes, definitely”.

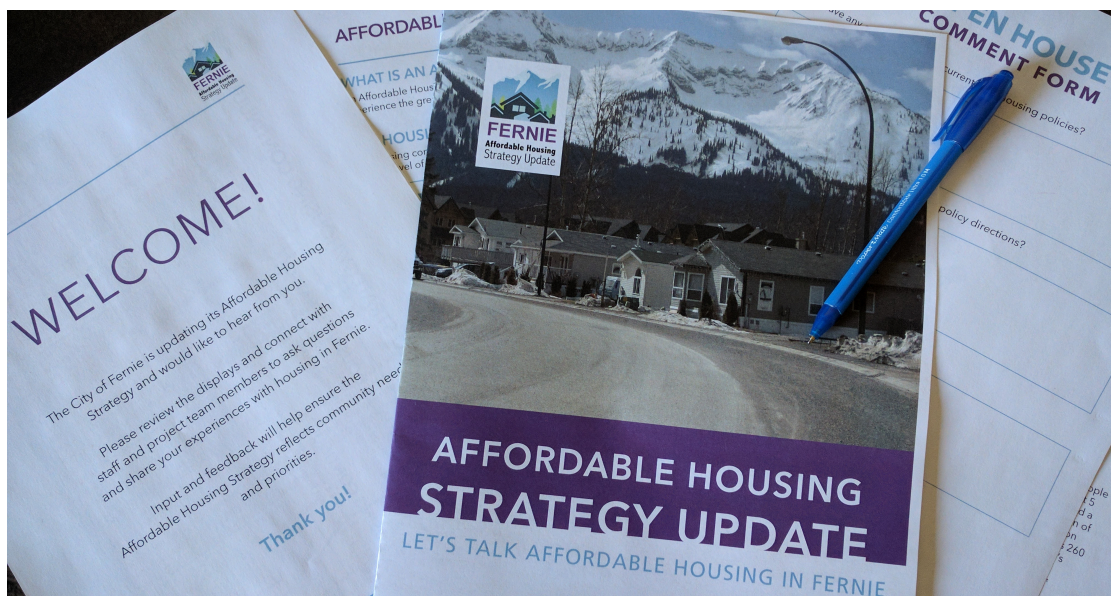
CROSS TABULATION #2– BY AGE GROUP

When responding to the question, **“Do you think there is an overall housing affordability issue in Fernie?”** on an age group basis:

- 87% of respondents between the ages of 20 and 30 indicated “Yes definitely”
- 88.8% of respondents between the ages of 31 and 45 indicated “Yes, definitely.”
- 78.1% of respondents between the ages of 46 and 60 indicated “Yes definitely”
- 71.4% of respondents age 61 and over indicated “Yes, definitely”

When responding to the question, **“Do you / your household have any challenges with housing affordability?”**, on an age group basis:

- 19.4% of respondents between the ages 20 and 30 indicated “Yes”
- 58.2% of respondents between the ages of 31 and 45 indicated “Yes”
- 15.8% of respondents between the ages of 46 and 60 indicated “Yes”
- 6.1 % of respondents 61 and over indicated “Yes”



APPENDIX B

June Consultations

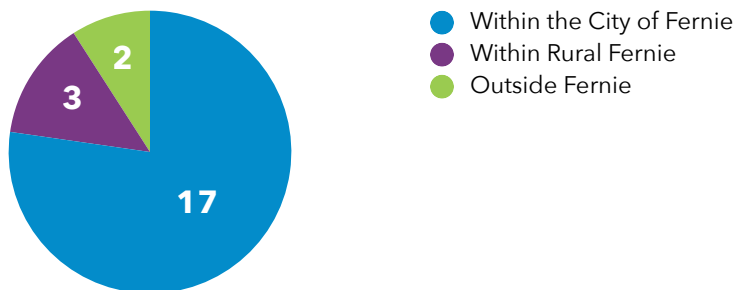
June Consultations

This appendix contains a summary of the consultations undertaken in Fernie on June 12th and 13th. Three events were hosted by the consultants:

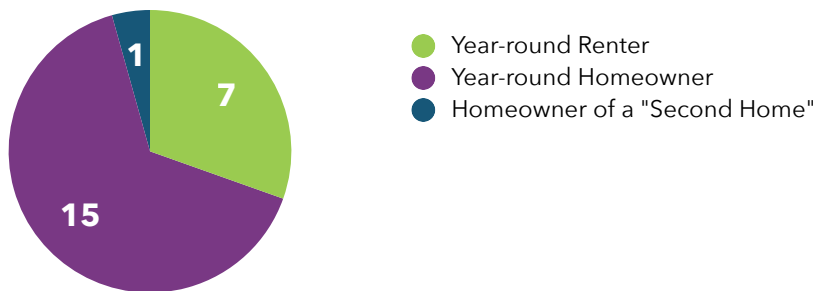
- June 12th, Open House 4pm to 8pm
- June 13th, Focus Group with Key Stakeholders
- June 13th, Focus Group with the project's Steering Committee

Open House - Results of Dot-mocracy Survey

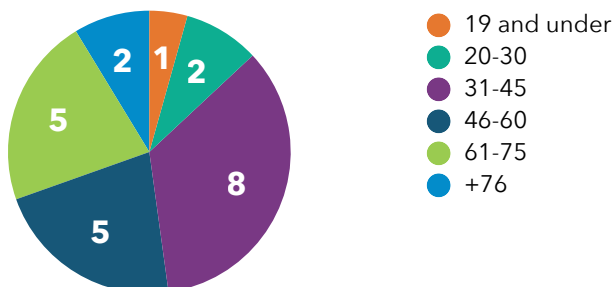
Where do you live?



What type of resident are you?



What is your age?



Housing Policies & Tools			
		Great Idea	Not So Great
1	Improve Access to Rent Supplements	11	1
	1. Promote through assistance and advice as to how to tackle the application		
2	Promoting the Home Adaption for independence Program	10	1
3	Encouraging Public-Private Partnerships	11	1
	1. Through incentives: Tax ? Waive fees, DCD, Co-operative zoning		
4	Short-Term Rentals Policy	10	6
	1. But not NIMBYISM 2. Owner present on property 3. Not great because it does not address the financial disincentive of having a long term rental at lower revenue, cannot raise rent due to restrictions of tenancy act. 4. Should allow AIRBNB etc. by licencing & requiring room only rentals other than condos like 901, Silver Rock and Riverside etc., which are totally allowed.		
5	Revisiting the Zoning Bylaw	18	4
	1. It's more than this, create more flexibility for ALL types of housing. We need diversity in housing stock 2. Eg, all secondary suites in ALL residential zone.		
Other Comments			
1. Tiny homes? 2. Building costs are approx. \$225/sq ft +, usually up. As BC Building Codes continues to get stricter this will go up. 3. Is an aesthetic issue & with today's design & quality has moved far beyond what was previously available? 4. Use property tax incentive.			

Low Density Housing		
	Great Idea	Not So Great
Secondary Suite	12	
Laneway House	9	1
Coach House	11	
Compact Lot Single Detached	9	
Duplex	11	
Triplex	9	

Moderate Density Housing		
	Great Idea	Not So Great
Quadrplex (Fourplex)	8	3
Cluster Housing	12	
Townhouse	12	1
Modular Housing	16	
Apartments	11	3
Mixed-use Residential	11	

Other Comments		
<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Tiny Home - 5 2. Co-op Housing - 7 3. Parking is an issue especially in the winter 4. Small lot guidelines: Missing, Sizing, Spatial relationships 		

Housing Policies & Tools			
		Great Idea	Not So Great
1	Infill Housing Design Guideline	12	2
	1. Good idea IF tied to zoning otherwise not an incentive 2. Legalize and not do case by case, takes away bad feeling & provide clear direction. Make the rules, no vacancy.		
2	Ground-Oriented Multi-Unit Housing Design Guideline	11	1
	1. If tied to zoning. If we make it EASY to build, it will get built.		
3	Seniors-Friendly Rental Housing Design Guideline	11	1
	1. I'm not sure how the guidelines would ENCOURAGE the building of these homes.		
4	Family friendly Rental Housing Design Guideline	7	2
OTHER COMMENTS			
1. In filling sounds good, people live in Fernie for space and view, not overcrowding. 2. Give property, tax incentives, to landlords who have LT residential space.			

Housing Objectives From OCP						
		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important	No Opinion
1	Encourage a spectrum of residential dwelling types, locations and densities in order to accommodate various socio-economic groups, age groups, and lifestyles in Fernie.	15				
2	Ensure new developments are connected to Fernie's pedestrian, cycling, and trail networks.	11	5	3		
3	Utilize financial incentives and instruments (e.g., density bonusing, DCC incentives, permitting incentives) to encourage infill development (cluster, small lot infill, narrow lots, granny suites, etc.) wherever appropriate and feasible.	8	3	1	1	
4	Support infill and redevelopment throughout the City, locating housing close to existing services, in accordance with each neighbourhood plan.	5		1		

Housing Objectives From OCP

		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important	No Opinion
5	Encourage and support more diverse housing stock in each neighbourhood to meet priority needs for seniors, low-income families, young families, and people with disabilities.	10	2			
6	Update the Zoning Bylaw to support innovative and flexible housing options, including conversions of single-family homes to multi-unit dwellings, and to accommodate garden or granny suites, small lot infill and narrow lot housing that fits the neighbourhood character.	10	4			
7	Work towards increasing the overall density of housing in the existing urban area as a means to optimize the City's investments in infrastructure and as a means to reduce service delivery costs.	10	1			
8	Encourage the use of cluster housing and density averaging so that new developments can set aside and protect environmentally sensitive areas, visually sensitive areas, open spaces, and trails.	12	1			

Housing Affordability Policies From OCP

Housing Affordability		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important	No Opinion
1	Encourage a variety of residential dwelling types in order to accommodate the different socio-economic groups, age groups, and lifestyles in Fernie.	19	1			
2	Support and implement relevant recommendations from the (2007) Fernie Affordable Housing Strategy that have not yet been implemented.	8	2			
3	Update the Fernie Affordable Housing Strategy and consider including non-market housing, annual targets for social and affordable housing, and an attainable housing program to create a supply of affordable, below-market housing units for Fernie residents with moderate incomes.	10		1		
4	Require all new medium and high-density multi-family developments requiring a rezoning to create 15% affordable housing units, which could be built within the development or off-site.	9	1			

Housing Affordability Policies From OCP

Housing Affordability		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important	No Opinion
5	Work with Fernie Alpine Resort, industry groups, the Chamber of Commerce, and other stakeholders to develop an Employee Affordable Housing Strategy for both seasonal workers and year-round employees earning a low wage.	8				
6	Where feasible and appropriate, encourage development of secondary suites, laneway housing or coach suites, multi-family, rental and special needs housing to improve affordable housing options through available development incentives (e.g., DCC, and permitting incentives, density bonusing, reduced parking requirements, etc.).	8	2			
7	Educate the community about best practices for infill, compact, and mixed-use development to create a range of affordable housing options.	6	1			
8	Waive or reduce the application and notification fees for rezoning for affordable housing developments.	9	3	1		
9	Provide development incentives and fee reductions to redevelop and/or rehabilitate poor quality housing, with an emphasis on housing owned by seniors.	7	2	1		
10	Identify City owned residential lands that are suitable to lease to non-profit housing societies or for affordable housing development and rent controlled rental suites.	11	3			
11	Continue to acquire land as opportunities become available, and bank this land for the use of affordable and special needs housing in the future.	9			1	
12	Consider the strategic sale/disposition of existing land holdings in developing neighbourhoods in order to leverage land purchases in other parts of the City.	4	3			
13	Encourage non-profits, supportive housing groups, developers, senior levels of government and others to develop, or facilitate the development.	3	2			

Housing Affordability Policies From OCP

Housing Affordability		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important	No Opinion
14	Continue to support non-profit agencies that provide short-term emergency and transitional shelter, food and access to social services for those in need.	10	3			
Other Comments						
We as a community approved the OCP and these policies so not sure why we are ranking them again.						

Housing Diversity Policies From OCP

Multi-Family Housing		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important	No Opinion
1	Encourage the development of ground-oriented townhouses and garden apartments for multi-family residential development.	6	1		2	
2	Discourage "walled" or "gated" communities.	13	2		4	
3	Develop energy efficiency and greenhouse gas (GHG) reduction guidelines for multi-family developments.	6	1	1	1	
4	Encourage and support development of affordable multi-family housing options.	8	3			
5	Ensure that new multi-family developments have reasonably direct and convenient access to the City's existing road network.	12				

Housing Diversity Policies From OCP

Secondary Suites		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important	No Opinion
1	Provide incentives for the development of secondary suites to increase affordable housing options in the community.	6	3	4		
2	Consider permitting secondary suites or lock-off units within townhouses, row houses and apartments.	5	2	3		

Housing Diversity Policies From OCP						
Secondary Suites		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important	No Opinion
3	Complete a Secondary Suites Implementation Strategy to address the legalization, phase-in process, and utility connection policy for existing secondary suites within R-1 dwellings.	9	2	2		
4	Require those seeking to build secondary suites in a detached building (e.g., above a garage) to rezone their parcel to R1-B.	3	4	1		
5	Consider amending the R-1B zoning to reduce the minimum square foot floor area for secondary dwelling units, and reduce the allowable height of any detached building containing a secondary dwelling unit, in order to ensure that all secondary suites in the Annex and Maintown fit with the neighbourhood character.	6	1	1		
6	Establish a secondary suites public education program promoting their value to the community.	3	2	2		
Other Comments						
The question is HOW the City will accomplish all of this! Incentives and changes to zoning.						

Housing Diversity Policies From OCP						
Seniors Housing		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important	No Opinion
1	Work with CMHC to secure funding for secondary and garden suites for low income, independent seniors and people with disabilities that meets universally accessible standards.	7		2		
2	Work with CMHC to offer the Shelter Aid program for Elderly Renters (SAFER) to help make rents affordable for Fernie seniors with low and moderate incomes.	9	1			
3	Encourage diverse housing and development in Maintown for seniors.	12				
4	Advocate to Interior Health for the return of the home care and homemaker program in Fernie for independent Fernie seniors.	8				

Housing Diversity Policies From OCP						
Seniors Housing		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important	No Opinion
5	Explore and consider the inclusion of pocket-infill housing to expand senior housing options.	5	1	1		
6	Plan for the development of a second seniors' care lodge modelled on the success of Trinity Lodge.	9	3			
7	Work with the development community and seniors to develop affordable, single level cluster homes that include on site care and maintenance through strata fees.	12	1	1		
8	Waive or reduce the application and notification fees and all DCC fees for affordable housing developments targeted toward seniors	14			1	

Housing Diversity Policies From OCP						
Staff Housing		Very Important	Somewhat Important	Not Very Important	Not Important	No Opinion
1	Work with major regional employers (e.g., Teck, Fernie Alpine Resort) to address seasonal and temporary staff housing issues.	16				
2	Lobby the Fernie Alpine Resort to provide staff accommodations for seasonal employees in town or on the mountain.	16	1			
3	Encourage larger employers to provide staff housing or a housing allowance to aid in housing affordability.	8	2	1		
4	Require the provision of staff housing of all new major resort developments.	12	1		1	
5	Consider zoning that will encourage the development of hostels as a means of providing accommodation for seasonal employees in the community.	11	1	1		

Notes from Key Stakeholders Focus Group

1/ Attendees

- Brenda Sutherland, ELK Employment / WorkBC
- Robert Holmes, Board member, Fernie Family Housing Society
- Pearl Jones, Salvation Army / Fernie Food Bank
- Mike Delich, Fernie Home Builders Inc.
- Ingrid Sombrowski, IGS Enterprises Ltd.
- Kate Taylor, Elk Valley Family Society
- Patrick Sorfleet, Manager of Planning, City of Fernie
- Sharon Strom, Teck Elkford
- Gayle Vallance, President, Fernie Family Housing Society

2/ Identify one key issue or need/gap with regards to affordable housing in Fernie

- Lack of accessible housing for seniors.
- MD: housing provided should follow Best Practices; decisions for provision of (affordable) housing should follow empirical data.
- GV: there is a lack of affordable rentals and subsidies for renters in Fernie.
- There is a lack of affordable rental housing in Fernie; currently renting a suite in Sparwood upwards of \$1,400/mo; single mom.
- Not enough housing in Fernie for seasonal workers, primarily those in the tourism, hospitality and service.
- There is a lack of affordable housing in Fernie, and no emergency shelter for men.
- It is expensive to build new housing in Fernie, therefore there are no new buildings or rental housing being developed; there is a need to find other ways to make things work in Fernie with regard to rental housing – e.g., look at European models; landlords/property owners have challenges with regard to tenants – the RTA favours the tenant.

3/ General Comments

- Emergency shelter required for men.
- Consider transitional housing for those that require short-term assistance/housing (i.e., 3-6 months?), also need for subsidized housing that includes childcare facilities.
- Employers have trouble finding employees local to Fernie.
- There is a lack of pet-friendly rental housing in Fernie.
- Consider zoning that imposes a tax collected on properties where units are provided for tourism purposes.
- Support for OCP policy to require all new medium- and high-density multi-family developments that require rezoning to include 15% affordable housing units.
- Support for OCP policy suggesting education on Best Practices for infill, compact and mixed use developments to create a range of affordable housing options.
- Support for OCP policy to waive or reduce application and notification fees for rezoning affordable housing developments.

4/ Employee Housing Discussion

- Teck employees are typically paid above the median income range. Teck provides short-term/temporary/transition accommodations (3-month term) in Sparwood and Elkford for senior employees transitioning from outside of the Fernie area.
- Retirees from Teck move to Fernie – have high equity and are able to afford the 'high priced' housing.
- Employers – typically hire workers from outside of Fernie (foreign workers). (Young people in Fernie generally do not want to work minimum wage jobs in Fernie – it is challenging trying to get them back into the workforce.)
- Support for OCP policies under 'Staff Housing'.

5/ Housing Inspiration: Low Density

- Secondary Suites – there needs to be enforcement for bringing these suites up to code, but it is expensive; CMHC regulations = 100% rent as income.
- Secondary Suites – how should the City be involved?
- Secondary Suites – there could be problems if these are over-regulated.
- Secondary Suites – these have to be legal; for new homebuilders – permits, DCCs, inspections and bringing them up to code is expensive.
- Secondary Suites – these are a limited supply opportunity, but good/practical for reuse of older housing stock.
- Laneway House and Coach House – these are a limited supply opportunity, but could work for infill; potential issues with laneway/parking.
- Compact Lot Single Detached – zero lot line.
- Compact Lot Single Detached – economics and affordability clash.
- Duplex – party wall rules.
- Duplex, Triplex (and Fourplex) – better land use and economic density.
- Housing needs to be a fair price based on Elk Valley average and median incomes – not reflecting a municipal, regional, provincial or federal average.

6/ Housing Inspiration: Moderate Density

- Pocket Neighbourhood/Cluster Housing – this sounds more like a market housing solution versus a rental housing solution. Limited to selected incomes.
- Townhouse – ideally for a starter family home.
- Modular Housing – should use ‘Manufactured’ instead of ‘Modular’ here.
- Modular Housing – manufactured versus field-built would work for Fernie, but where would these be located/permitted?
- Apartments – best bet; economy of scale, good land use.

7/ Housing Policies and Tools: Preliminary Policy Directions

- Policy suggestion – like Vancouver, there should be a 15% tax on foreign homeowners which can be put towards affordable housing in Fernie.
- Rent Supplements – seems to be the way BC Housing wants to assist lower income families, rather than building new social housing
- Home Adaptation for Independence Program – this does not help with the overall housing shortage in Fernie.
- Private landlord developers have ‘left the game’; P3s are one way to bring them and resources back in.
- Policy suggestion – Fernie should work together with Elkford and Sparwood to address affordable housing issues.
 - The City should work with communities in the Elk Valley to identify lands that are suitable to lease to NFPs, or for affordable housing, or rent controlled rental suites (per the OCP policy on Housing Affordability).
 - Also to improve transportation between these communities – more bus service? Regulated by BC Transit.
 - SS: Teck offers shuttle bus service from Fernie to its site(s).
- Short term rental – there is a need for regulation; however there is no consensus on what they should be. There should be the same tax imposed on these as for hotels.
- Rent Banks – Emergency fund to provide those struggling with unforeseen/temporary financial hardship with interest-free* loan to assist with rental payment(s).
 - SS: this would be a great option and provides ‘invisible assistance’ to those who need support.

8/ Housing Policies and Tools: Suggested Design Considerations

- Consider mixed housing with a social and income mix.
- Stigmas associated with
 - Seasonal Visitors – migration to Fernie as their primary residence; end up potentially providing philanthropic support to the community.
 - Veneto/Chrysalis House – there is NO stigma associated with utilizing these accommodations. Fernie residents do not typically ‘judge’ those who require and obtain social support and subsidies; it is a welcoming community.
- Form of construction is important, and this is a challenge for Fernie – suggest looking into Cornerstone Architects for their portfolio of affordable housing projects.
- Ground-oriented Multi-Unit Housing – not so great idea (e.g., multi-family, 3-storey housing).
- Seniors-friendly Rental Housing – could work as market housing.
- Seniors-friendly Rental Housing – a real need for this in Fernie.

9/ Session Close: Final Thoughts

- There is a need for more affordable rentals in Fernie. There should not be a limit for duration of stay for Tom Uphill Manor or New Horizon Village – Fernie needs more developments like these. There is a lack of subsidized rents/rentals. It is difficult to run a Non-profit society in Fernie.
- There is a need for more affordable rentals in Fernie.
- There is a need for accessible housing for seniors in Fernie who have moderate incomes – they do not fit the criteria for subsidy.
- Fernie needs to adopt a ‘community living’ model to take care of all of its residents.
- Those challenged with disabilities have difficulty obtaining and retaining housing – they need assistance
 - Action is required versus just developing plans and strategies – these initiatives need to be implemented and put into practice.
 - Knowledge sharing is required so organizations and NFPs know what resources are available.
 - FFHS has equity, but need partnerships to get projects off the ground – funding is needed.

Notes from Steering Committee Focus Group

1/ Attendees

- Jill Gilhuly, Director, Fernie Family Housing Society
- Sheila Sherburne, General Manager, Fernie Family Housing Society
- Norm McInnis, Chief Administrative Officer, City of Fernie
- Bruce Lennox, Director of Planning, City of Fernie
- Lauren Fox, Executive Director, Fernie Women’s Resource Centre
- Lisa Janssen, Engineering Technologist, City of Fernie

2/ Opening Thoughts: identify one key issue or need/gap with regards to affordable housing in Fernie

- Moderate income families, and low-income families and individuals are the most challenged
- There is a need for housing that is accessible for seniors.
- Nowhere for single people who are low – to moderate-income to live affordably.
- Funding models in the City do not work – property tax is not the correct tool; there is a need for education – people are not aware of available programs.
- There is a need for affordable rental housing or assistance for employees who live and work in Fernie.

3/ General Comments

- There is low uptake of SAFER even though there are a lot of applications – the subsidy that is provided is so low that it doesn't make it worth applying for. This subsidy is income based (e.g., at Tom Uphill Manor, income threshold is \$57k/year).
- Blanket rezoning to permit Laneway Homes is to be completed in the Annex and Maintown.
- Small lot subdivisions are popular with younger families, but neighbours complain due to mass and scale of developments.
- Trinity Lodge – better connectivity to downtown and open space than Tom Uphill Manor.
- Should plan for cluster lots, which be affordable for families
- Consensus: There is not a good pool of designers or architects in Fernie.
- FFHS – Challenge for NFPs – have an asset, but no design or designers/architects, and no funding available to see a project through.

4/ OCP: Housing Objectives

- Objective 2 – mode of transportation plays a role in overall affordability.
- Objective 5 – there is a need for more multi-family housing options. These need to be planned appropriately and within the Fernie context. Developers missed the market with the 2006 Canyon Peaks development – poor design and location, 3-storeys and could not support the snow load which resulted in leaking roofs – homeowner insurance was pulled.
- Objective 7 – asset replacement/management and level of service is important.

5/ Housing Inspiration: Low Density

- There is a high diversity of housing stock in Annex and Maintown.
- Once an area has single family residential units, no one wants other diverse housing types.
- There is an issue with 'change management' – residents become concerned and typically do not be accept change; e.g., if the parking lot in downtown is redeveloped.
- Secondary Suites – many are decommissioned due to additional utilities charges (i.e., remove electrical and appliances). How can you leverage Secondary Suites, and persuade people to bring them up to code (legalize), in order to contribute to affordable housing? What kinds of incentives could be put in place?
- Coach House – prefer this over Laneway House; not all neighbourhoods have lanes, and there is an issue with snow removal.
- Coach House – R1B spot rezoning package.
- Compact Lot Single Detached – North Maintown there is a green fill development of 25 small lots (rezoning)
- Duplex – North Annex is zoned for this, but there is no movement; similarly, Riverside is zoned for this,
- Triplex – Consider a redevelopment incentive for areas such as downtown; e.g., Rue Mansion is a community with 9-units.
- Secondary Suites – making them mandatory for certain types of housing developments will not work as there are no financial incentives for wealthy homeowners.
- Empty House or 'Dark House' – owners pay higher taxes, and not too many people are aware of this.

6/ Housing Inspiration: Moderate Density

- Modular Housing – there are 'vacancies' in R3 and R4 zones that may be able to accommodate this housing type.
- Fourplex – Spruce Place = six 4-plex units.
- Fourplex and Modular Housing – North Annex is zoned for this and modular housing (R4).
- Pocket Neighbourhood/Cluster Housing – interesting option; there is currently one for seniors being considered, but it is expensive – more accessible housing for seniors is needed.
- Seniors housing – it is difficult for a NFP to recuperate costs and have enough income generation to support this type of housing; need density to finance it. Could Modular Housing be considered for this?

- LF: Townhouses – there is too much of this housing type already.
- SS and JG: Mixed-use Residential – this is a great option for family housing.

7/ Housing Policies and Tools: Preliminary Policy Directions

- Consider public-private partnerships
- Short-term Rental Policy – by requiring a licence for STRs, there is added pressure of inspections which is expensive.
- STR Policy – there is a regulatory framework being prepared before fall of 2017 (the premise is to 'level the playing field' versus make them illegal).
- Modular Homes –> currently permitted in R1S and R2 zones, but not in R1 or R1B.
- Rent Bank – Emergency fund to provide those struggling with unforeseen/temporary financial hardship with interest-free* loan to assist with rental payment(s). Consensus: This could be a good option to consider for Fernie.

8/ Housing Policies and Tools: Suggested Design Considerations

- There is a need for architectural support for Fernie.
- There is a need for design professionals that have expertise in multi-family housing.
- Consider creating a resource section on the City's website with links to Best Practices, types of housing, definitions and support to design and build housing types that would work well in the Fernie context.

APPENDIX C

List of Key Informants

List of Key Informants

The consulting team would like to acknowledge and sincerely thank the following key informants who were interested in sharing their views in connection with affordable housing and able to set aside time to be interviewed. The interviews were conducted between mid-February and mid-April, 2017.

Employers

Sharon Strom, Coordinator, Sustainability and Tammy Ogden, Community Liaison, Teck Coal

Sandy Mason, Human Resources Manager, Fernie Alpine Resort

David Kaiser, Owner/Operator, McDonalds Restaurant

Allan Moreau, P.Eng., Project/Construction Manager, BC Hydro

Gary Bergeron, Owner/Operator, Freshies Cafe and Creperie

Corrie Hurlburt, Executive Director, Elk Valley Family Society

Brenda Sutherland, Community Liaison, Elk Valley Job Seekers (Employment and Placement Agency)

Andy Cohen, Fernie Alpine Resort

Community, Social and Institutional

Patty Vadnais, Executive Director, Fernie Chamber of Commerce

Lauren Fox, Executive Director, Fernie Womens Resource Centre

Pearl Jones, Family Service Support Worker, Fernie Salvation Army and Food Bank

Anita Palmer, Fernie Campus Manager, College of the Rockies

Sheila Sherburne, General Manager, Tom Uphill Manor

Real Estate

Mike Delich, President, Fernie Vacation Properties

Sharon Taylor, Remax Real Estate Agent and Property Manager

Other

Ted Ralfe, Lawyer specializing in land use planning



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