

Town of Creston

Quick-Start Affordable Housing Project

This document includes the sections listed below. Please review all content and prepare for the June 13th meeting by giving some thought to the questions in the 'Main Moves' section.

- Project Overview
- Housing Needs Assessment Key Findings
- Priority Housing Needs
- Scope of Work
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Project Overview

What: The Town of Creston is embarking on the development of a “Quick Start” Affordable Housing Action Plan (the Action Plan) that will recommend the actions needed to address the community’s priority housing needs.

How: The Plan will be developed based on the findings of the Greater Creston & East Shore Kootenay Lake Housing Needs Report, confirming our priority housing needs, and then identifying the immediate actions required to address our priority needs, including the responsibilities, resources, and timelines, etc. to implement each of the actions.

Why: All BC municipalities and regional districts are required to develop a housing needs assessment report by April 2022. However, this requirement does not include a requirement for the local government to develop a housing strategy or action plan. Communities around BC continue to face significant affordable housing challenges as housing prices continue to escalate, and the gap between income and housing also continuing to grow; there is generally very little housing diversity to meet different needs; and there is often a lack of rental housing.

Who: The Creston Affordable Housing Advisory Committee will be involved in developing the Action Plan and community engagement opportunities will involve the public in the process. Town of Creston staff will help to guide and inform the project, along with the project consultants that include WCS Engagement + Planning and Ian Scott Planning Services.

When: The project launched with background work in May and will be completed by February 2023.

Cost: The total project cost is \$25,000, half of which is being funded by a grant from the Real Estate Foundation of British Columbia and half from the Town of Creston.

Housing Needs Assessment Key Findings

Source: Greater Creston & East Shore Kootenay Lake Housing Needs Report, 2020

Greater Creston's population grew modestly, and may continue to do so, but not evenly across age categories. Greater Creston's population grew about 5% between 2006 and 2016, while projections anticipate smaller growth of 1% until 2025. The increase in residents comes mostly from the Town of Creston and the jump in senior aged persons (65+); youth and working age people declined and may continue to do so. Families with children grew from 2006 to 2016, but the number of children fell, highlighting the move towards smaller family sizes.

By 2025, Greater Creston may demand 7,040 units, equivalent to about 565 more units from 2016 to 2025 (about 63 annually). Based on historical construction starts, Creston may not build enough to keep up with resident needs year to year.

There is a general lack of affordable and available housing in the Greater Creston sub-region. Access to appropriate housing is very difficult for families, people on income assistance, and anyone with a specialized need. Interviews with residents and responses from surveys universally pointed to a lack of available and affordable housing as the main challenge impacting Greater Creston's housing market. This was especially apparent for older residents who lived on a fixed-income or who wished to downsize to a smaller unit that was easier to maintain. Younger residents also struggle to find appropriate housing, especially those individuals or families who may be relying on only one income. Detached home ownership is generally out of reach for most singles or single-income households, and renting (when units are available) is similarly challenging.

Incomes are rising while housing costs remain relatively stable, but key segments of the population still struggle to meet the basic needs of themselves and their families. The median Greater Creston household earned more in 2015 than it did in 2005, even with inflation removed from the comparison. Also without inflation, home prices did not increase significantly, suggesting that sub-regional affordability should be improving. However, a reason for the income increase was the distributional shift towards more households earning \$100,000 or greater; this segment grew 54%. Both owner and renter household incomes did grow over the decade, but the former did so at a faster rate, increasing the disparity of the purchasing power between both tenure types.

However, about 22% of households are reported by Statistics Canada as being "low income," illustrating that a noticeable portion of the population is truly experiencing financial hardship. When broken down by segments, it is shown that about 35% of households with children younger than 6 are likely struggling financially. Making matters more difficult is the cost of regional utilities (electricity, water, and gas for vehicles); the average Greater Creston household is considered to be in energy poverty relative to the average income.

The size and quality of housing is improving, allowing residents to live more comfortably and securely. Unfortunately, the compromise appears to be less affordable housing. New construction is often larger and of higher quality than the past, pushed by changes in building regulations and consumer preference; however, their prices tend to be higher than the existing stock. Those who cannot afford newer homes seek older, smaller, and less up to date alternatives to fit their budgets. Single person and low-income earning households, who are often younger and hold lower wage jobs or older and living off investments and/or savings, do not earn enough to comfortably rent or purchase a dwelling in Greater Creston. This emphasizes the importance of non-market support, particularly for those segments that can be looked over when metrics like household income are rising. It is always important to remember that when looking at median figures it means that half of the people or households are worse off than what is reported.

Priority Housing Needs

While the COVID-19 pandemic has changed a lot of things since early 2020, when it comes to the findings of the Housing Needs Report (released in 2020), the pandemic has generally amplified rather than changed the key findings.

In-migration to Creston has jumped through the pandemic, significantly reducing the inventory of homes available for sale or rent, and significantly increasing the cost of home ownership and rental. Anecdotally, the increase in home ownership has been in the range of approximately 50-60%.

Based on the key findings from the Housing Needs Report, key directions from Creston's OCP (2017) and observations of the housing market since the pandemic, Creston, like so many other communities in BC, is in need of affordable housing that fills the gap between the current (and predominantly single-family/detached) market housing that is now out of reach for many residents, particularly seniors, youth, young families, and single-parent families.

To best fill this gap, the following priority housing needs/types have been identified for Creston:

- New multi-family rental housing
- Infill rental housing (e.g., secondary suites and accessory dwellings)
- Entry-level and/or price restricted ownership - "missing middle" and other
- Supportive and emergency housing

Project Scope of Work

An Affordable Housing Action Plan (Action Plan) will be developed to address Creston's priority affordable housing needs, which are (as above):

- New rental housing (multi-family)
- Infill rental housing (e.g., secondary suites and accessory dwellings)
- Entry-level and/or price restricted ownership - "missing middle" and other
- Supportive and emergency housing

The Action Plan will consist of recommended actions the Town of Creston (and potentially other partners) can take – bylaw changes, new policies, new initiatives – to advance the delivery of the priority housing needs.

These items will be considered for inclusion in the Action Plan:

- Zoning – density, density bonus, parking regulations, lot coverage, height, uses
- DCCs
- Property Tax Exemptions
- Amenity contribution / inclusionary guidelines
- Affordable housing fund
- MRDT OAP
- Pre-zoning
- Other TBD

Secondarily, the following additional deliverables are proposed:

- Recommended specific zoning bylaw changes to support the housing priorities
- A Secondary Suite / Accessory Dwelling Guide and FAQs. Examples:
 - [Cumberland](#)
 - [Port Moody](#)

Main Moves – presented for feedback

The numbered statements below represent the general directions or ‘main moves’ that will provide focus for the development of the recommended actions for Creston’s Action Plan. Please review them and give some thought to these questions in preparation for the June 13th meeting:

- *Which of these ‘main moves’ are keepers? Why?*
- *Which of these ‘main moves’ are no-go? Why?*
- *What are we missing?*

1. Make building suites more attractive to existing owners

- Larger, more per lot, less parking

2. Allow duplexes on smaller lots and allow them to have suites

3. Reduce the size of new homes

- Maximum home sizes, but bigger if rental suites are included

4. Make development of smaller multi-family units more attractive for developers

- More density, less parking, even more density for rental, DCC waiver for rental, reduced amenity space requirements
- Smaller lot size for rowhouses

5. Start an affordable housing reserve fund to support social/supportive housing development undertaken by non-profit housing providers

- Taxpayer contributions

6. Provide land for social/supportive housing development undertaken by non-profit housing providers

7. Require the provision of affordable housing for a portion of new single-family developments

- Require % of in new subdivision to be “title”/”deed” restricted