

## 4- PA – AHLN - AFFORDABLE HOUSING AND LIVABLE NEIGHBOURHOODS

### AHLN - Background

One of the most significant requirements for a healthy and sustainable community is the availability of a range of comfortable, appropriate, and affordable housing options within livable, safe neighbourhoods.

The City's Housing Needs Assessment provides additional background information on trends in housing and ways of addressing housing needs. Key identified housing needs include:

- **Affordability;**
- **Adaptability; and**
- **Accessibility.**

Housing choices are shaped by many factors:

- **Availability of different housing types;**
- **Housing price and household income;**
- **Household composition;**
- **Lifestyle; and**
- **Neighbourhood and location.**



### *Housing Affordability*

Housing needs vary greatly amongst different people in the community according to their financial circumstances.

| Housing Continuum  |                               |                           |               |                |
|--------------------|-------------------------------|---------------------------|---------------|----------------|
| Emergency Shelters | Transition/Supportive Housing | Non-market Rental Housing | Market Rental | Home Ownership |

While housing in Williams Lake is considered affordable by B.C. standards, with average home prices less than half the average provincial cost, many households are under-housed, meaning that either their home is inadequate for their needs, or consumes a disproportionate amount of household income to maintain. In keeping with national trends, low income households, and

renters in particular, find it more difficult to find affordable housing, with almost 2 in 5 spending more than 30% of their household income on rent, while only 1 in 10 home owners are paying more than 30% of their income for shelter.

### *Livable Neighbourhoods*

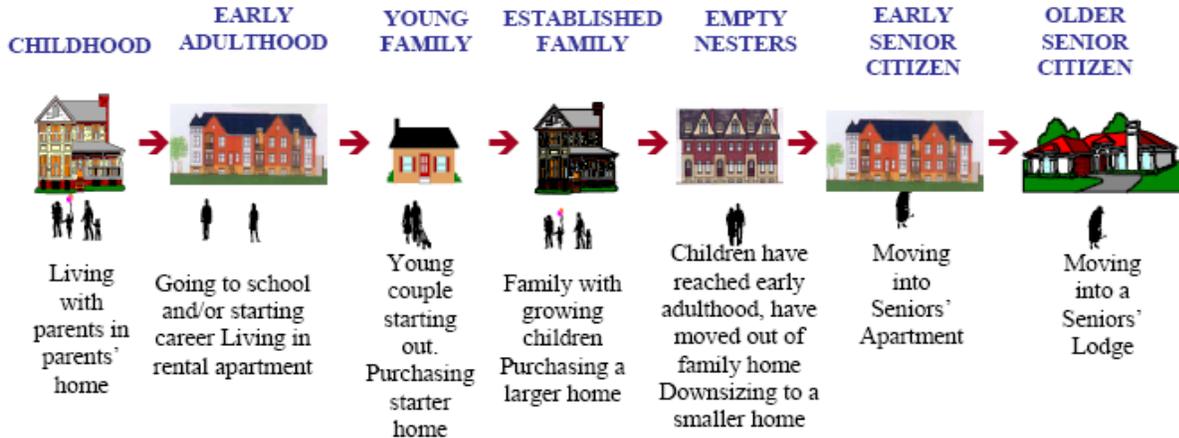


Cities can be thought of as a collection of neighbourhoods. While residents would generally say that they were from Williams Lake when out of town, when asked by a local where they live, chances are that they would say “Downtown,” “Westside,” “Glendale,” “North End,” “South Lakeside,” or one of the city’s other diverse neighbourhoods.

As discussed above, location is a key factor in housing choice. “Location” can be thought of as a “neighbourhood” - a combination of convenient access to household needs, including schools, services, employment, and the Sense of Place of the neighbourhood – the “look and feel” of where you live.

Neighbourhoods are usually thought of in terms of geographical areas and distinguishing features. Features can include schools, health care centre, sports and recreation complex. A centre can contain a geographical area such as a “main street” or a “node”, which are generally higher density, mixed use area that is the heart of the neighbourhood.

In addition, neighbourhoods require a variety of housing options to meet a diversity of needs and allow people to transition throughout their lives through different housing forms, depending on their income, family situation, and preferences.



Source: Smart Growth BC

## AHLN - Goals and Objectives

*The goal of affordable housing and livable neighbourhoods is to create friendly, convenient, safe, affordable, sustainable, and attractive places to live, work, and play, while providing abundant opportunities for social interaction and attractive and affordable housing options.*

From Imagine Our Future, in 2035, we know we will have achieved this goal when:

... the **form and character** of our neighbourhoods are walkable, well treed, well served by public transportation, contain community gardens and green space, and offer safe pedestrian and bike linkages with other neighbourhoods, the downtown and with neighbourhood centers where places of work, shopping and recreation are offered.

...people are engaged and **participate** in community life and decision making and there are plenty of planned and impromptu neighbourhood activities for people of all ages to participate in. This in turn contributes to a sense of trust and safety amongst our neighbours.

...our neighbourhoods are unique, vibrant, diverse and inclusive and offer a range of dignified housing that is **affordable** to residents of a variety of income levels, life stages and lifestyles.

...all **new residential development** is directed as infill within our existing neighbourhoods, towards the downtown or as higher density mixed-use buildings within neighbourhood commercial centers.

...20% of the energy used to heat, cool and power our neighbourhood homes and buildings is supplied by **sustainable energy systems** (e.g., district heating, biomass, geothermal, solar heating, etc.).

...all new buildings and retrofit projects utilize **sustainable building materials and practices**.

## AHLN - Specific Policy Directions

Affordable Housing and Livable Neighbourhoods policies can be grouped into four policy directions being:

- [\*\*Affordable and Appropriate Housing;\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Special Needs Housing;\*\*](#)
- [\*\*Neighbourhood Livability;\*\*](#) and
- [\*\*Neighbourhood Centres.\*\*](#)

In addition to the policies later in this section that are related to the four policy directions, the following “overarching” policy will be applied consistently within the city:

**AHLN.1** Apply “Smart Growth<sup>1</sup>” principles in community planning and development processes:

1. Create a range of housing opportunities and choices;
2. Create walkable, human-scaled neighbourhoods;
3. Encourage community and stakeholder collaboration;
4. Foster distinctive, attractive communities with a strong sense of place;
5. Make development decisions predictable, fair, cost-effective and based on sustainability criteria established in the ICSP;
6. Mix land uses;
7. Preserve open space, farmland, natural beauty and critical environmental areas;
8. Provide a variety of transportation choices;
9. Strengthen and direct development towards existing neighbourhoods; and
10. Promote compact building design.

### **Affordable and Appropriate Housing**

Create a range of housing that is affordable and appropriate for all household types within Williams Lake, whether this is market or non-market housing. Affordable means housing that is within a household’s budget, leaving adequate resources for other essentials. Appropriate means housing that is safe, accessible, comfortable, and large enough for the household, including sufficient bedrooms for families with children or members with special needs.

**AHLN.2** Facilitate the development of a strategic framework for Affordable Housing in Williams Lake that incorporates the Community Action Plan on Homelessness and ensure it is successfully implemented.

**AHLN.3** Work with all housing providers as part of the Affordable Housing Strategy to strengthen capacity to develop new housing.

**AHLN.4** Develop a community housing roundtable to support the drafting and implementation of an Affordable Housing Strategy.

**AHLN.5** Implement the Secondary Suite Bylaw and monitor its effectiveness.

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<sup>1</sup> Smart Growth Principles: <http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca/Default.aspx?tabid=133>



- AHLN.6** Consider the implementation of a policy that will expand Development Cost Charges (DCC) charges to include an affordable housing contribution for strata conversions, developments of more than 10 homes or a specific value threshold.
- AHLN.7** Consider establishing a policy to require a percentage of affordable units in larger multi-family developments.
- AHLN.8** Consider setting aside City-owned land for affordable housing developments.
- AHLN.9** Work with community organizations to establish a registry of affordable and safe rental housing.
- AHLN.10** Establish of a Standard of Maintenance Bylaw to enforce basic levels of maintenance for rental accommodation and ensure that apartment buildings, secondary suites, houses, condominiums, and any other types of rental housing that are rented, meet minimum standards of comfort and safety.
- AHLN.11** Work to ensure that development of affordable housing units is supported by all levels of government.
- AHLN.12** Review the City's existing Strata Conversion Policy to ensure that these conversions do not reduce the affordable housing stock in Williams Lake.
- AHLN.13** Encourage a mix of housing in major development projects with different types, sizes, tenures, and orientations, including ground-oriented and apartment style units, options for a variety of households.
- AHLN.14** Work with the development industry to create multi-family housing with features that support Williams Lake lifestyles, such as storage lockers and secure places to outdoors equipment, such as bikes, canoes, and other recreation equipment.
- AHLN.15** Direct mobile homes to manufactured home parks.
- AHLN.16** Encourage a high standard of design of manufactured home developments through the City's Mobile Home Park Bylaw.

### Special Needs Housing

Encourage and enable the development of sufficient housing, integrated within neighbourhoods and close to services, that is appropriate for persons with special needs through the provision of both market or non-market housing units.

**AHLN.17** Develop a variety of appropriate housing forms in different areas of the city that meet special housing needs.

**AHLN.18** Direct special needs housing in the proximity of downtown and accessible to transit to better integrate these residents with the rest of the community, including:

- Group homes;
- Extended care facilities;

- Community care housing;
- Transition houses;
- Seniors housing; and
- Other special needs housing.

**AHLN.19** Work with the development community to incorporate the principles of Universal Design in their buildings and sites.

### Neighbourhood Livability

Encourage attractive neighbourhoods with distinctive characteristics that are defined, safe, and create a sense of place. Existing neighbourhoods and new neighbourhoods should be designed and built as complete, livable neighbourhoods.

**AHLN.20** Seek opportunities for maintaining and enhancing buildings, landmarks, public art, and landscapes that contribute to the cultural and heritage character of the neighbourhood.

**AHLN.21** Identify and preserve green space and connections for pedestrian and bike corridors that link each neighbourhood centre and the downtown.’

**AHLN.22** Require that any development in areas outside of existing neighbourhoods have a Comprehensive Development Concept drafted, as indicated in the Land Use plan Chapter 6, that addresses sustainability objectives and meets all of the requirements for a neighbourhood, that it is complete, compact, and supports walking, cycling, and transit use.

**AHLN.23** Consider incorporating community amenities and facilities such as community gardens, and gathering spaces, into neighbourhoods and new developments.

**AHLN.24** Consider establishing institutional space in each neighbourhood for public or community space.

### Neighbourhood Centres

Within neighbourhoods strive over time to create higher density centres that are well connected to other centres within the city, including the downtown. These neighbourhood centres have the potential to provide a range of basic amenities and services, and offer a range of housing options to meet the affordability and lifestyle needs of residents.

**AHLN.25** Encourage the establishment and redevelopment of neighbourhood centers, which are compact, mixed use developments.

**AHLN.26** Work collaboratively with the community to develop concept plans for neighbourhood centres.

- AHLN.27** Encourage the development of a range of housing choices in neighbourhood centres that are affordable to residents of a variety of income levels, life stages and lifestyle.
- AHLN.28** Design neighbourhood centers where possible to act as hubs for transit that connect with other neighbourhood centres, the downtown and other major activity centres, such as public institutions, places of employment, recreation facilities, etc.
- AHLN.29** Prioritize the redevelopment and intensification of existing built up areas when creating neighbourhood centers.