



NEWS RELEASE



June 8, 2021

For Immediate Release

800 new housing units needed in Central Cariboo and Chilcotin by 2028

WILLIAMS LAKE, BC – 800 new units of housing needed within the decade. That’s the challenging finding of a housing needs study of the Central Cariboo and Chilcotin commissioned by the City of Williams Lake and Cariboo Regional District. Encompassing a broad area stretching from Anahim Lake (Ulkatcho) in the west to Likely/Horsefly in the east, 150 Mile House in the south and McLeese Lake in the north, the project focused on housing needs in Williams Lake, with an impact analysis of the population flow between Williams Lake and surrounding communities.

The Province of BC has legislated that local governments must complete housing needs reports by 2022 and every 5 years thereafter. To meet this requirement, the City of Williams Lake partnered with the Cariboo Regional District to conduct a Central Cariboo Study, encompassing electoral areas D, E, F, and K, , as well as the Williams Lake area. The project commenced in September 2020, with CitySpaces Consulting Ltd. as the successful candidate to the RFP process. The findings of the study will go to Williams Lake City Council on Tuesday, June 8, 2021 for endorsement, and then to the CRD Regional Board on June 18, 2021 for the District’s review. The results will also be available online.

The study found that the Central Cariboo’s housing composition has met the needs of households in Williams Lake and surrounding communities for many years. In the past, the housing market was relatively stable, with ebbs and flows related to resource market commodity fluctuations. However, a central finding from this Housing Capacity and Gap Analysis was the sudden, swift change in market conditions in recent years and the impact it is having on various households in the region. These growth pressures are yet another challenge in an already complex socio-economic situation in the region; particularly in Williams Lake, where a shortage of affordable housing exacerbates issues such as homelessness. A key observation of the Central Cariboo housing situation is the need to scale-up multiple sectors in order to have the capacity to accommodate current and future housing needs.

“Housing development is a priority for our community,” says Mayor Walt Cobb. “We know the need is there and City staff and Council have been working hard through the term of the study to start moving on new housing development in our community. The results of this study show just how immediate and dire the situation in Williams Lake and surrounding communities has become. We hope the findings will get the attention of the Province, who we need to work with us to fill these gaps. We believe it is well past time for BC Housing to make some serious investments in Williams Lake. The need for low-income housing for vulnerable populations continues to grow as our hot housing market pushes prices upwards, adds pressure and demand on existing rentals, and results in many families and individuals either under-housed or without shelter. The situation impacts the entire community, not least of all the First Nations that need in-town housing for their community members who want to attend school, training, or work in Williams Lake.”

“It is distressing to know that there are families, young adults, and seniors living in housing that is falling into disrepair and yet still remains unaffordable,” notes Margo Wagner, Chair of the Cariboo Regional District. “It is important that our region be pro-active in driving development to serve our future needs. All too often we hear stories from areas in the province of people being forced out of housing because of urban migration driving up prices. We need to ensure we address this trend and work towards developments in our rural areas that serve our future needs before we face yet another crisis situation. We’re hopeful this study will encourage action and investment toward long-term solutions.”

Beth Veenkamp, Economic Development Officer for the City of Williams Lake, is pleased that the study provided sites of opportunity for consideration. "Housing is a regional issue affecting us all," says Veenkamp. "Having sites of opportunity highlighted in this study provides us with a starting point to consider potential developments and understand what servicing costs might be. Understanding the full scope of development yields and costs is vital. With that information in hand we can get to work finding solutions to our housing challenges."

The full study and potential sites of opportunities report can be found on the City of Williams Lake and Cariboo Regional District websites.

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