

GREATER NELSON HOUSING ENTITY STUDY

Project Summary

July 2024

PROJECT OVERVIEW

In Fall 2022, Community Futures Central Kootenay and its partners at the City of Nelson, the Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) and the Nelson and District Chamber of Commerce commissioned the Greater Nelson Housing Entity Study on behalf of the Nelson and Area Economic Development Partnership (NAEDP). The goal of the study was to assess the need for a local government supported housing entity and to explore other strategies and tools to facilitate the creation of non-market, affordable housing in the Greater Nelson area. The project had a specific focus on housing options to meet the needs of moderate-income, working families and individuals, also known as workforce housing.

This project was completed with the support and collaboration of M'akola Development Services.

PHASE ONE

In phase one, the project team conducted a review of best practices for local or regional government supported housing models. This included a review of prominent housing corporations across western Canada, local government supported non-profit models, and other relevant organizations. Though none of the case studies perfectly matched conditions within Greater Nelson, the most relevant case studies to Greater Nelson included Revelstoke Community Housing Society (RCHS), Tofino Housing Corporation (THC), Squamish Community Housing Society (SCHS), and Cowichan Housing Association (CHA). Key commonalities, structures, partnerships, and funding mechanisms were identified, and a findings report that included a high-level benefit and relevance analysis was completed.

Based on the research completed in phase one, the consulting team presented short and medium-to-long-term recommendations to support non-market housing initiatives in Greater Nelson for consideration by the project partners. In preparation for phase two engagement to determine the most appropriate approach, preliminary evaluation matrix categories with criteria to assess the recommendations were developed. City of Nelson Council and RDCK Regional Board feedback as well as confirmation of local non-profit capacity were needed to clarify and confirm the recommended approach.

The Phase One Report was presented to council on March 28, 2023.

PHASE TWO

The focus of phase two was to generate feedback and input from City of Nelson Council, the RDCK Regional Board, the NAEDP, local non-profit housing providers, and other relevant housing organizations and committees. The consulting team, with support from project partners, hosted visioning and education sessions with City of Nelson Council and RDCK Area Directors and the NAEDP, as well as met with non-profit housing operators. Additionally, the consulting team spoke with current and former staff from housing organizations most relevant to the study.

Based on findings from phases one and two, the project team recommended that the City of Nelson support the work of local non-profit housing operators through land contributions, pre-development funding, and in-kind development services support. Nelson is home to multiple established and respected non-profit housing operators with significant experience developing and operating affordable and workforce housing. The fastest, cheapest, and most effective way of getting new non-market housing built in the City of Nelson is to continue to support the existing non-profit housing expertise in the community.

In the longer term, a housing development corporation may become necessary if non-profit operator goals or capacity changes. In that case, the City may choose to lead the development of new units and partner with housing organizations to operate the units. Starting up a housing corporation is a significant, ongoing expense. The consulting team recommends pursuing a housing development corporation only if the interest and capacity of existing non-profit operators shifts and is no longer aligned with City goals.

The Phase Two Findings Report was presented to council on October 24, 2023.

PHASE THREE

In phase three, the project team developed multiple tools to support the actions identified in phase two. A Pre-Development Action Plan (Public Resource) with corresponding templates provides a high-level overview of the pre-development process for non-market, affordable housing to be developed in partnership with non-profit operators in Greater Nelson. This document is a resource to support municipal and regional staff alongside non-profit operators as they navigate the pre-development process and prepare for future funding calls (e.g., [BC Housing Community Housing Fund](#), [BC Builds](#)).

The Phase Three Deliverables and Project Summary were presented to council on June 17, 2024.

RECOMMENDED NEXT STEPS FOR COUNCIL

This project highlighted the importance of working closely with the non-profit housing sector in the community to build their non-market, affordable housing development capacity and housing portfolios. The project team recommends the following key actions for council to initiate:

- Direct staff to identify municipal land that is suitable for non-market, affordable housing and develop a land disposal process/strategy.
- Direct staff to explore financial options to establish a Pre-Development Fund (PDF) to assist non-profit operators with the planning and pre-development costs of building new affordable housing.

FINAL REPORTS AND DELIVERABLES

- Phase 1 Final Report
- Phase 2 Final Report
- Pre-Development Action Plan
 - Regional Housing Service Bylaw Memo
 - Expression of Interest Template for Non-Profit Operators
 - Request for Proposal Template for Development Consultants
 - Memorandum of Understanding Template
 - Municipal Land Disposal Policy Example

CONTACT INFORMATION

For questions about this project, please contact:

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