

Electoral Area C (Fort St James Rural): Interim Housing Needs Report - 2024

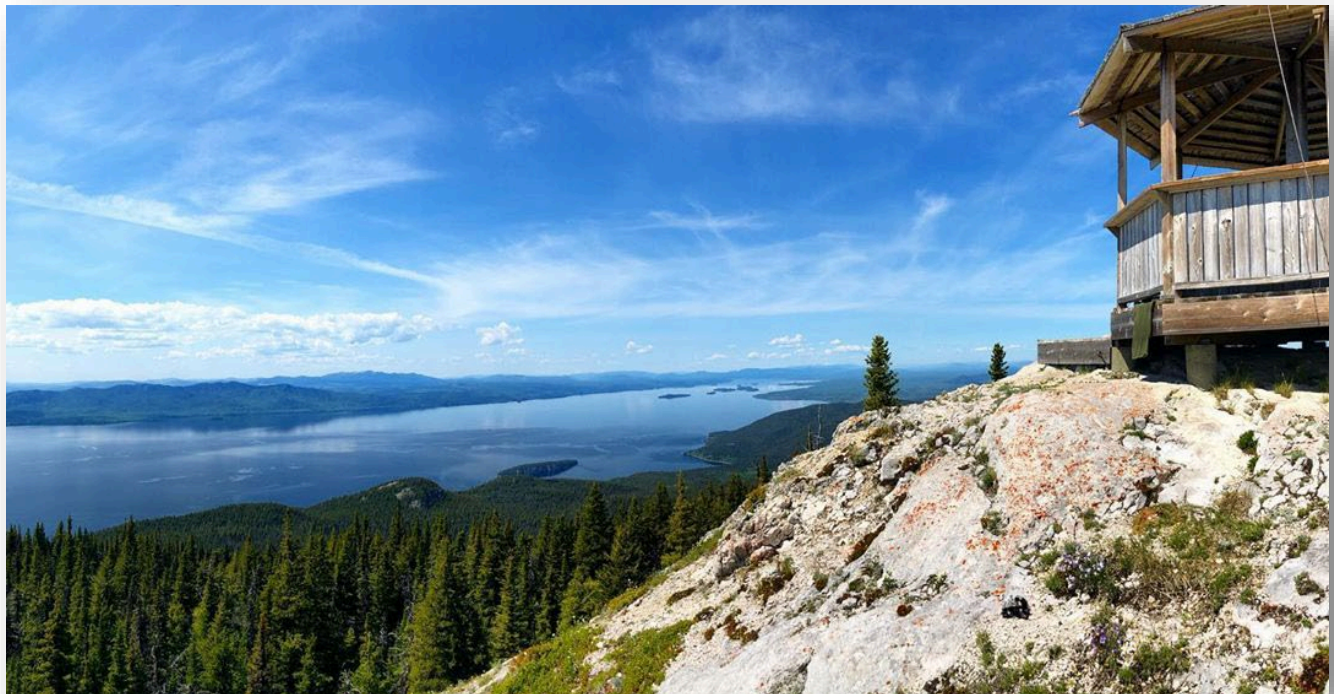
APPENDIX B to the “Electoral Area C – Fort St James Rural: Electoral Areas Housing Needs Report”
produced in 2021

INTRODUCTION

This is the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako's Interim Housing Needs Report (Interim HNR) for Electoral Area C (Fort St James Rural). The Provincial Government requires Regional Districts to complete Interim HNRs by January 1, 2025. These reports must contain the following:

1. the number of housing units needed over five and 20 years;
2. the actions taken by local government since their last Housing Needs Report (HNR) to reduce housing needs; and
3. a statement about the need for housing close to transportation infrastructure that supports walking, bicycling, public transit, or other alternative forms of transportation.

This Interim HNR is attached as Appendix B as an update to "Electoral Area C – Fort St James Rural: Electoral Areas Housing Needs Report" produced in 2021. The results of each Interim HNR for the RDBN's Electoral Areas have been compiled in the document titled "Regional Summary: Interim Housing Needs Report – 2024".



SECTION 1: FIVE-YEAR AND 20-YEAR HOUSING NEED – HNR METHOD

The Province requires local governments to use the provincially established HNR Method to calculate the total number of housing units their communities will need for the next five and 20 year periods for six components: extreme core housing need, persons experiencing homelessness, suppressed household formation, anticipated growth, rental vacancy rate adjustment, and additional local demand. For Regional Districts, the data must be gathered for each Electoral Area.

The HNR Calculator has been made available to assist local governments in calculating the six components of housing need based on publicly available data, that is totalled to calculate the housing units needed in each Electoral Area. The HNR Calculator, developed by the University of British Columbia’s Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) program in collaboration with Licker Geospatial Consulting was utilized in this Interim HNR (data sourced on November 6, 2024).

The HNR calculator has determined that a total of **21** new dwelling units are needed in the next five years and a total of **46** new dwelling units are needed in the next 20 years to address anticipated housing needs in Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural). The table below presents this information by the six required components.

Electoral Area C (Fort St. James Rural)		
Component	5-Year Need	20-Year Need
Extreme Core Housing Need	0.59	2.35
Persons Experiencing Homelessness	2.18	4.36
Suppressed Household Formation	6.26	25.02
Anticipated Growth*	11.20	12.96
Rental Vacancy Rate Adjustment**	0.34	1.34
Additional Local Demand***	0.00	0.00
Total New Units – 5 years	21	N/A
Total New Units – 20 years		46

* The Anticipated Growth figure for Electoral Areas is based on the regional growth rate rather than an Electoral Area specific growth rate as more specific quantitative data is not available.

**The Rental Vacancy Rate Adjustment figure for Electoral Areas is set at the Provincial vacancy rate as more specific quantitative data is not available.

***Additional Local Demand is set at zero for Regional Districts as the Province has not made Regional Districts subject to demand functions.

New Housing Supply Trends

To meet the five year new housing demand established by the HNR Method, the RDBN requires an additional **21** dwellings or **4.2** additional dwellings per year. Since 2022, the Regional District has issued an average of **3.7** new building permits for dwellings annually in Electoral Area C (see Table 1 below). A small portion of these new dwellings are replacement dwellings and not additional dwellings. Also, it is noted that new dwellings are being built without building permits that are not accounted for in Table 1.

Table 1 - Issued Occupancy Building Permits in Electoral Area C				
Year	Single Family Dwelling	2 Family Dwellings	Secondary Suites	Multi-Family Dwelling
2022	2	0	0	0
2023	5	0	0	0
2024 (Jan - Oct only)	3	0	0	1

**Note: Electoral Area C has lands that lie outside of the building inspection service area.*



SECTION 2: HOUSING ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE 2021 HOUSING NEEDS REPORT

The Regional Summary: Interim HNR - 2024 document outlines the full list of actions taken by the RDBN to reduce housing needs since the last HNR was released in 2022. This section outlines the actions taken specific to Electoral Area C.

RDBN Action to Reduce Housing Needs

In 2024 a new Official Community Plan was adopted for Electoral Area C. “Fort St. James Rural Official Community Plan Bylaw No. 1954, 2024” ensured that adequate land is available, and policies are in place to accommodate the region’s housing needs.

The Regional District processed **one** zoning bylaw amendment that may contribute to reducing housing needs in Electoral Area C. The numbers are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Electoral Area C Bylaw and Land Use Permit Applications (Housing-Related)	
Adoption Year	General Description
2022	Rezoned H1 to R4 to allow a 19-lot subdivision.
2023	None
2024 (Jan – Oct only)	None

SECTION 3: NEED FOR HOUSING IN PROXIMITY TO ALTERNATIVE AND ACTIVE TRANSPORTATION

The Interim HNR must contain a statement regarding the need for housing in close proximity to transportation infrastructure that supports walking, bicycling, public transit or other alternative forms of transportation. The Regional District recognizes the need for housing in close proximity to transportation infrastructure that supports walking, bicycling, public transit or other alternative forms of transportation. However, the densification of housing in the rural area in association with transportation infrastructure is not appropriate from a sustainability perspective and is an issue to be addressed within the Regional District's member municipalities.

Given the RDBN's low rural population density, and significant distances between population centres the RDBN focus has been on the following:

- Facilitating multi-use trail development within existing highway corridors where conditions may support active transportation infrastructure for rural area-to-municipality and municipality-to-municipality connections.
- Operating a public transit system providing service between RDBN member municipalities, with connections to adjacent regions.

The RDBN continues to encourage the Ministry of Transportation and Transit to play a greater role in funding, building, and operating active transportation infrastructure within their road right-of-ways.

Public (Alternative) Transportation Initiatives

The Regional District is serviced by the Bulkley-Nechako Transit System, BC Bus North, and Via Rail Canada, with additional community-based and First Nations operated local services throughout the region. The Bulkley-Nechako Transit System provides public bus transportation between most Regional District member municipalities, with connections to adjacent regions along the Highway 16 corridor. It is provided through a partnership between the Province of British Columbia, BC Transit, and the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako with the assistance of funding partners (City of Prince George, Stellat'en First Nation, and Nadleh Whut'en). Electoral Area C is not directly serviced by the Bulkley-Nechako Transit System, BC Bus North, or Via Rail Canada.

The Regional District has been challenged to secure adequate long-term funding for this service. Part of this challenge is the limited certainty regarding the Province's long-term commitment to the current funding formula and future capital costs. The Regional District also has concerns regarding the efficiency and effectiveness of the existing public transportation services in the RDBN.

The RDBN has asked the Province to work with local governments, First Nations, and stakeholders to rationalize public transportation services in the north and develop a regional transportation service model which better meets the needs of northern BC.