



Regional Summary: Interim Housing Needs Report - 2024

APPENDIX G to the Report Introduction and Regional Summary: Electoral Area Housing Needs Report produced in 2021

INTRODUCTION

This appendix is the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako's regional summary of the Interim Housing Needs Reports (Interim HNRs) prepared for each Electoral Area. The Provincial Government requires local governments, including 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 Regional Summary is attached as Appendix G as an update to the Regional Summary produced in 2021



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 **325** new dwelling units are needed in the next five years and a total of **890** new dwelling units are needed in the next 20 years to address anticipated housing needs in the Regional District’s Electoral Areas. The following tables present this information by Electoral Area.

Electoral Area A (Smithers/Telkwa Rural)		
Component	5-Year Need	20-Year Need
Extreme Core Housing Need	3.30	13.21
Persons Experiencing Homelessness	9.32	18.65
Suppressed Household Formation	35.47	141.89
Anticipated Growth*	41.69	48.22
Rental Vacancy Rate Adjustment*	1.25	5.02
Additional Local Demand*	0.00	0.00
Total New Units – 5 years	91	N/A
Total New Units – 20 years		227

Electoral Area B (Burns Lake Rural)		
Component	5-Year Need	20-Year Need
Extreme Core Housing Need	8.15	32.59
Persons Experiencing Homelessness	2.86	5.71
Suppressed Household Formation	22.90	91.59
Anticipated Growth*	13.83	16.00
Rental Vacancy Rate Adjustment**	0.40	1.59
Additional Local Demand***	0.00	0.00
Total New Units – 5 years	48	N/A
Total New Units – 20 years		147

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

Electoral Area D (Fraser Lake Rural)		
Component	5-Year Need	20-Year Need
Extreme Core Housing Need	2.33	9.34
Persons Experiencing Homelessness	2.66	5.33
Suppressed Household Formation	9.76	39.03
Anticipated Growth*	13.64	15.77
Rental Vacancy Rate Adjustment**	0.44	1.76
Additional Local Demand***	0.00	0.00
Total New Units - 5 years	29	N/A
Total New Units - 20 years		71

Electoral Area E (Francois Lake/Ootsa Lake Rural)		
Component	5-Year Need	20-Year Need
Extreme Core Housing Need	1.12	4.50
Persons Experiencing Homelessness	2.50	4.99
Suppressed Household Formation	18.11	72.45
Anticipated Growth*	12.08	13.97
Rental Vacancy Rate Adjustment**	0.40	1.59
Additional Local Demand***	0.00	0.00
Total New Units - 5 years	34	N/A
Total New Units - 20 years		98

Electoral Area F (Vanderhoof Rural)		
Component	5-Year Need	20-Year Need
Extreme Core Housing Need	0.66	2.66
Persons Experiencing Homelessness	5.87	11.75
Suppressed Household Formation	42.56	170.25
Anticipated Growth*	26.01	30.08
Rental Vacancy Rate Adjustment**	0.71	2.84
Additional Local Demand***	0.00	0.00
Total New Units - 5 years	76	N/A
Total New Units - 20 years		218

Electoral Area G (Houston/Granisle Rural)		
Component	5-Year Need	20-Year Need
Extreme Core Housing Need	0.17	0.68
Persons Experiencing Homelessness	1.42	2.85
Suppressed Household Formation	17.72	70.88
Anticipated Growth*	7.01	8.11
Rental Vacancy Rate Adjustment**	0.06	0.25
Additional Local Demand***	0.00	0.00
Total New Units - 5 years	26	N/A
Total New Units - 20 years		83

* 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 **325** dwellings or **65** additional dwellings per year. Since 2022, the Regional District has issued an average of **41** new building permits for dwellings annually (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					
Year	Electoral Area⁺	Single Family Dwelling	2 Family Dwellings	Secondary Suites	Multi-Family Dwelling
2022	A	22	0	4	0
	B	11	0	0	0
	C	2	0	0	0
	D	3	0	0	0
	F	18	0	0	0
	G	1	0	0	0
	Totals	57	0	4	0
2023	A	15	0	0	0
	B	5	0	0	0
	C	5	0	0	0
	D	5	0	0	0
	F	5	0	0	0
	G	2	0	0	0
	Totals	37	0	0	0
2024 (Jan - Oct only)	A	11	0	0	0
	B	5	0	0	0
	C	3	0	0	1
	D	1	0	0	0
	F	4	0	0	0
	G	0	0	0	0
	Totals	24	0	0	1
3-Year Total		118	0	4	1

**Note: building inspection services are not available in Electoral Area E and Electoral Areas A, C, D, F, and G have lands that lie outside of the building inspection service area.*

SECTION 2: HOUSING ACTIONS TAKEN SINCE 2021 HOUSING NEEDS REPORT

This section outlines the actions taken by the RDBN since the last HNR was released in 2022 to reduce housing needs in the RDBN.

RDBN Action to Reduce Housing Needs

- The Board's Strategic Plan for the 2022-2026 term identified housing supply as a strategic focus with the goal "to ensure there is an adequate supply and variety of housing options for our citizens". The Plan contained three objectives:
 - provide support to the non-profit sector in their pursuit of affordable housing projects and initiatives;
 - advocate with the Province for appropriate rules and regulations to reduce impediments to housing development and better reflect the needs of northern residents; and
 - investigate opportunities for the Regional District to plan for and/or support the development of workforce housing.
- In 2022 and 2023 the RDBN undertook a review of the manner in which dwellings were regulated in the RDBN. This review process included consultation with member municipalities, Electoral Area Advisory Planning Commissions, the Ministry of Transportation and Infrastructure, and Northern Health. This review included consideration of options to simplify the regulation of housing.
- In 2023 the RDBN Board approved the RDBN's Regional Housing Initiative which included the allocation of approximately \$400,000 over three years to increase market and non-market housing. Key features of the Initiative include:
 - Development of a template agreement for on-reserve building inspection;
 - hiring a Housing Planner;
 - housing sector and community relationship building;
 - housing advocacy with other levels of government; and
 - non-market and market housing initiatives.
- In 2023 a digital building permitting and reporting system was launched to further streamline the building permitting process.
- In 2023 parkland dedication policies were added to the RDBN's Rural Official Community Plans. Clarity around parkland dedication requirements will assist developers in moving through the subdivision process in a more efficient manner.

- In 2024 a Housing Planner was hired as part of the Regional Housing Initiative. Highlights of the Housing Planner’s work in 2024 includes:
 - reviewed housing legislation, programs, and funding opportunities;
 - coordinated meetings with municipalities, First Nations, and housing providers to discuss areas where the RDBN may assist and fill capacity gaps;
 - established communications networks including a housing website; and
 - organized workshops with BC Housing and the BC Builds program.
- In 2024 staff researched and reported to the Board on various Provincial Government initiatives relating to multi-unit housing requirements, short term rentals, HNRs, and Interim HNRs.
- In 2024 the RDBNs Rural Official Community Plans and Zoning Bylaw were amended to streamline regulations and increase housing flexibility in alignment with the mandatory Provincial Small Scale Multi Unit Housing (SSMUH) regulations.
- In 2024 a second round of Zoning Bylaw amendments were proposed to enhance flexibility of housing form. These changes exceeded the Provincially mandated changes and followed up on the RDBN review of housing regulation begun in 2022.
- 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 **10** OCP and/or zoning bylaw amendment applications and **five** land use permits that may contribute to the housing supply in the region. These applications are shown in Table 2.

Table 2 – Bylaw and Land Use Permit Applications (Housing-Related)		
Adoption Year	Electoral Area	General Description
2022	C	Rezoned H1 to R4 to allow a 19-lot subdivision.
	G	Rezoning and OCP amendment to allow a 2-lot subdivision.
	G	TUP to allow a temporary work camp for up to 1,000 for workforce housing.
	E	DVP to reduce the minimum parcel area that may be created at subdivision to allow a three-lot subdivision.
2023	A	Rezoned H1 to H1A to allow a second Single Family Dwelling.
	A	Rezoned H1 to H1A to allow a second Single Family Dwelling.
	A	Rezoned H1 to H1A to allow a second Single Family Dwelling.
	A	Rezoned H1 to H1A to allow a second Single Family Dwelling.
	A	Rezoned to streamline the R9 Zone regulations.
	B	Rezoned H1 to H1A to allow a second Single Family Dwelling.
	D	Rezoned and redesignated to allow a 3-lot subdivision.
	B	TUP to reduce the structural setback from a Highway for a SFD
2024 (Jan – Oct only)	E	Rezoned and redesignated to allow a 3-lot subdivision.
	A	TUP to reduce the structural setback from a Side Parcel Line for a SFD addition.
	A	TUP to reduce the structural setback from a Front Parcel Line and Highway for a SFD addition

Regional District Advocacy Regarding Construction Costs

Housing issues in northern and rural BC are not the result of excessive property values as they are in other parts of the province. The housing issue in much of northern and rural BC is associated with high construction costs in relation to property values. The resale value of a newly built dwelling may not adequately exceed construction costs, creating no incentive for builders and developers to construct dwellings. Therefore, housing stock is not being adequately replaced and housing form is not being diversified to meet community needs. While the Province is making efforts to address affordability issues in urban centres, northern and rural BC is negatively impacted by initiatives which increase the costs of construction and further discourage new construction.

The Regional District has sent letters to the Province over the last few years noting the negative impact of new housing regulations (BC Step Code, owner builder restrictions, builder licensing) and increased requirements for professional oversight on the housing supply in the north. The Regional District has noted that applying one size fits all solutions designed for a southern urban centre context has caused collateral damage to the housing situation in the north. The RDBN raised this issue at the Union of BC Municipalities Convention during multiple meetings with Provincial staff and Ministers.



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.

Active Transportation Initiatives

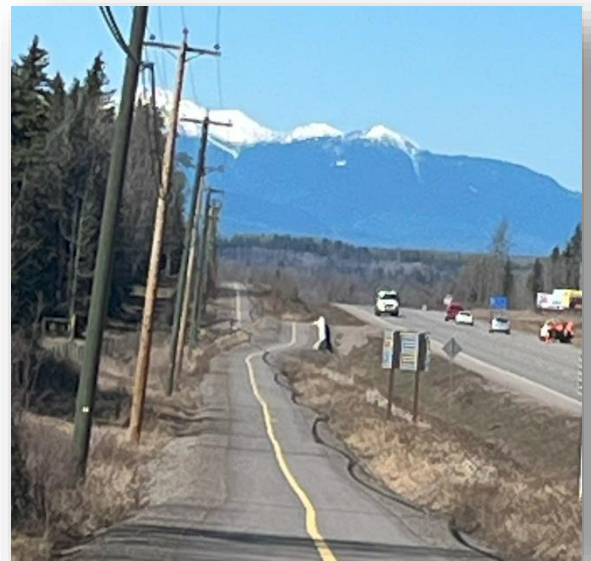
The RDBN continues to encourage the Ministry of Transportation and Transit to play a greater role in funding, building, and operating active transportation infrastructure within their road right-of-ways.

Electoral Area A Specific - Cycle 16

The Cycle 16 Trail Society and the Regional District of Bulkley-Nechako have worked together on the development of a multi-use non-motorized trail linking the Town of Smithers and the Village of Telkwa. Construction of phase one of the three phase trail was completed in 2024.

Electoral Areas B and E Specific – Highway 35 Trail

In 2023, the RDBN completed a Parks and Trails Master Plan (the Plan) for Electoral Areas B and E which includes the goal to “support active transportation and a connected community”.



From that Plan a long-term vision to connect the Village of Burns Lake to the Francois Lake Ferry Terminal with a multi-use trail on Highway 35 right of way was developed. A conceptual design study for the first phase of trail development was completed in 2024. It evaluated the design options for 13 km of multi-use trail connecting the Village of Burns Lake and Tchesinkut Lake.

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, Stelat'en First Nation, and Nadleh Whut'en).

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.

