

## Thoughts on Future Land Use and Housing in Grand Forks

### ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT:

A major message of the recent Canadian Rural Revitalization Foundation's Annual Conference was the obvious and critical need for available, affordable, diverse housing "*as a foundation and starting point for successful **Economic Development. A work force attracted to local industry, farming, retail or entrepreneurialism, with no appropriate home to live in, is not viable.***"

### DIVERSITY IN HOUSING:

The second message from the Conference was the need to move beyond our conventional, old-fashioned concept of '*one size fits all*' and **adopt a housing strategy that demonstrates diversity.**

Many millennials are among those who are now making housing choices based on their values ...rather than on their income and the need for housing as a status symbol. Our economic survival is linked to how well we can embrace and demonstrate this paradigm change.

Some of the important values inherent in the decisions of 'small house' enthusiasts are environmental concerns, an outdoor lifestyle, sustainability, local food security, a greater sense of *community* and having more disposable income to spend in town.

While small housing may indeed be a viable choice for low-income earners, it is irresponsible to suggest that these are the *only*, or even the most relevant, demographic attracted to a smaller footprint and a more nature-oriented lifestyle. It is irresponsible to depict a small-house community as primarily low-income, socially undesirable and visually unattractive. It is also irresponsible not to service the financially disadvantaged.

With responsible planning and appropriate bylaw language requiring a clear '*form and character*', a small, well-planned cluster housing community can be equally as attractive as any other form of housing - to some millennials and seniors it would be substantially *more* attractive. To suggest otherwise seems patronizing and elitist.

### HIGHER DENSITY:

Higher density development, laneway housing and smaller infill housing can take civic, social and financial advantage of the existing infrastructure. All residents will gain through lower individual infrastructure tax due to greater cost-sharing, more disposable income being circulated, greater diversity and less isolation.

To arbitrarily define a person choosing to live in a Tiny House as '*low income*' is discriminatory and condescending. It is as uninformed as defining a person on a bicycle as 'low income'. When we are freed from the high emotional and financial cost of conventional home-ownership, we have more time available for volunteering, socializing, outdoor activities, health pursuits and supporting local business.

I believe that it is important for council to project a positive and inclusive definition of 'high density' - free of judgmental, outdated, historical and arbitrary stereotypes attached to 'low income'.

May I suggest adopting a **local** example of a **positive** diverse neighbourhood as the yardstick that council and staff might consider as their definition of inclusive, sustainable, harmonious and desirable real estate?

### A MODEL DIVERSE NEIGHBOURHOOD:

Consider Riverside Drive as a clearly successful example of healthy and attractive diversity:

**Riverside Drive** offers an **extremely wide range** of housing options within a confined geographical area: A sprinkling of large lots with conventional housing, expansive green lawns and vegetable gardens - mixed with affordable older cottages on small lots ...luxury estates for the affluent - mixed with older rental housing on small lots ...green spaces ...a large Mental Health Clubhouse ...walkable riverside trail to town ...multi-unit strata duplex development ...backyard Baba's ...well-maintained parks ...multi-family homes ...off-grid housing ...a visible industrial slag pile ...laneway housing ...conventional new residential housing ...home occupation auto mechanics and cabinet makers ...tennis courts and pickle ball courts ...a tiny house on wheels ...garages and basements converted to

affordable rentals ...gracious bed and breakfast accomodation ...relocated houses ...fully xeriscaped properties ...contemporary manufactured housing ...a wide mix of styles, eras and incomes *within each city block* ...young families, singles, seniors, social assistance recipients, the cognitively challenged, the affluent - all this variety integrated and living harmoniously side-by-side.

This incredibly diverse mix of lifestyles and housing is obviously very attractive to a wide range of people as a place to live. Newcomers looking for large lots, affluent retirees wanting riverfront mansions, low-income folks wanting affordable rents, young families looking for 'fixer-uppers', developers looking for small building lots and an attractively wide range of available middle-income housing and rental.

All this in a friendly, diverse, inclusive, pedestrian-friendly neighbourhood close to downtown stores, restaurants and services.

The council needs to embrace their fiduciary and civic responsibility to provide for more than one single demographic, to recognize the attraction to diversity that they have embraced in their own personal lives.

#### A VIBRANT AND HEALTHY COMMUNITY:

Mono-culture farming doesn't support healthy and sustainable food production - and mono-housing doesn't support healthy community growth and Sustainable Economic Development. Small housing and high density are only TWO of the many ingredients of a truly healthy and vibrant community.

If we wish to diversify our tax base, to attract young families for our schools, and to maintain a sufficient population to support our health care services and our local business merchants, then we must provide housing choices specifically aligned with that goal.

Thank you for this opportunity to have a voice in my community.

Peter Matheson  
Grand Forks resident