

## Recommended Changes Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw A 'Working' Framework for Affordable Housing

This framework identifies options for the City of Grand Forks to implement strategies to facilitate and support market, affordable and non-market housing units.

It aims to be **strategic**, identifying policy options to implement through planning documents such as the Official Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw, and confirming the type and scope of leadership and assistance provided by the City in non-profit and private sector partnerships to affordable housing.

The framework is **adaptable** to changing community conditions and available data, to be updated at a minimum during periodic OCP updates.

### What is affordable housing?

- **Definition:** Housing for which the lifecycle costs of rent or mortgage, insurance, energy use, maintenance, repair, and servicing are within the means of the occupant(s), and that limits offsite costs to municipal infrastructure, natural assets and ecosystems, and the climate system (collectively, the *commons*) to levels that can be sustained indefinitely. Affordable housing is by definition adaptable, durable, resource-efficient, and functional.
- **Occupant criteria:** Affordable housing costs less than 30% of before-tax household income. For renters, shelter costs include, as applicable, rent and payments for electricity, fuel, water and other municipal services. For owners, shelter costs include, as applicable, mortgage payments (principle and interest), property taxes, condominium fees and electricity, fuel, water and other service fees.

### The Challenge

- Respondents to a recent web-based survey on affordable housing reported that finding affordable rental housing is extremely difficult. 27% of survey respondents also indicated that their monthly energy costs were greater than \$250, which can be critical if rental costs are over 50% of household income, which applies to 75% of the lowest income-earning renters.
- Recent inquiries to people searching for rental properties have found availability of only one or two units at any one time, often only available through word of mouth.
- Currently, there are a limited number (approximately 50-60) of *designated* affordable housing units in the City. Across the Regional District, the Canadian Rental Housing Index indicates that current supply is inadequate by at least 391 rental units, with an additional 101 units required by 2026.<sup>1</sup> This translates to a demand in Grand Forks for approximately **70-80 new** affordable rental units between now and 2026, in addition to demand for rental homes not based on affordability criteria.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> <http://rentalhousingindex.ca/#> - Affordable Housing Plan / Supply Required

<sup>2</sup> Grand Forks has ~2,000 of the 13,900 households across RDKB, so demand for rental homes is assumed to be proportionate.



## Policy Approach

The current OCP encourages diversity in housing stock including for low income families, housing for the elderly and housing for people with special needs, and supports development of higher density in residential infill / intensification land use designations. Unfortunately, there is no specific policy guidance for how much to consider allocating for financial and in-kind support, and where to direct these resources. The proposed new policies and objectives in this framework provide more specific and extensive guidance for City support of affordable and sustainable housing.

This document defines a **three-tier approach** to supporting affordable and sustainable housing in Grand Forks, supported by amendments to the OCP and Zoning Bylaw (Figure 1). The first tier prescribes changes to planning documents to lower barriers to affordable housing, including lowering minimum dwelling size and increasing options for accessory dwelling units. This tier is the lowest cost to the City and is deployed through planning and development processes that include cost recovery (development permits, variances, zoning amendments, building permits) and promote smart growth and infill development.

The second and third tiers would be developed as amendments to the Official Community Plan – updating objectives and setting specific policies – and implementing these policies as actions through the Strategic Plan and other bylaws and policies as appropriate. These policies would provide guidance and enabling language for **servicing, land tenure, and financial and operational contributions** to community collaborations and major investments in affordable housing. The second and third tier may involve a higher level of investment (waiving fees, supporting servicing costs, donating land). This investment will likely be required to increase availability of designated affordable rental and owned dwellings.

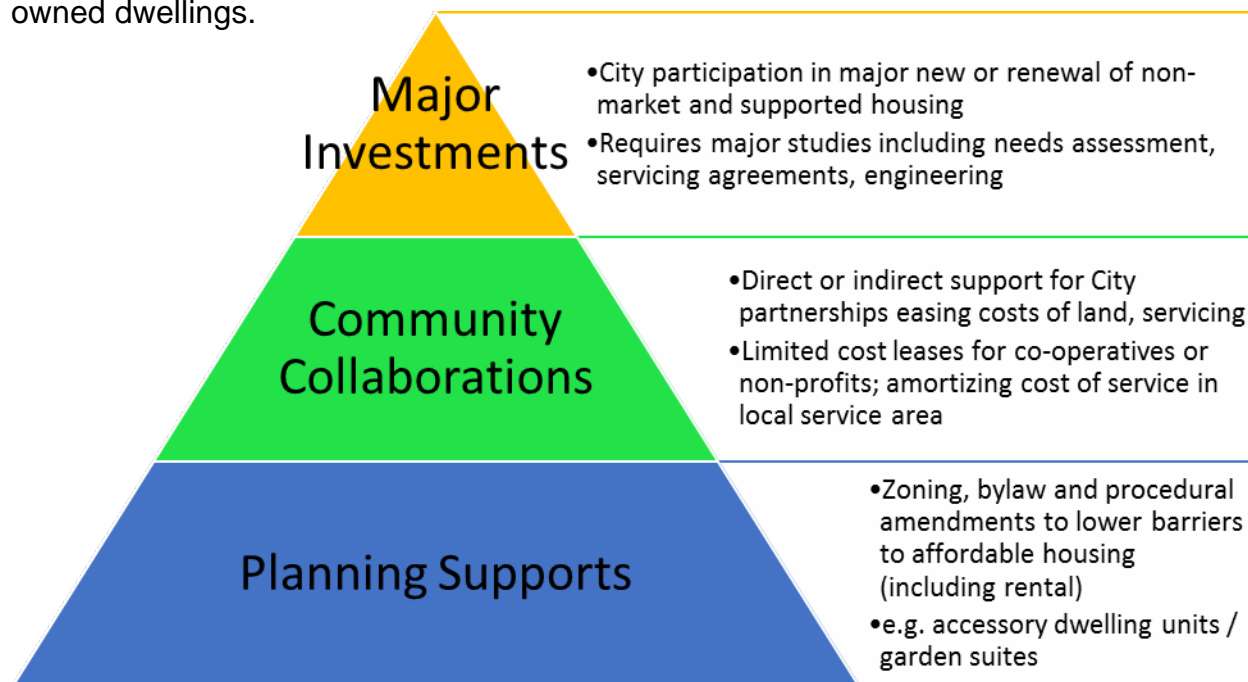


Figure 1. Policy Approach

**Table 1. Summary of OCP and Zoning Bylaw for Consideration**

Item	Document	Principle / Objective / Policy	Implication
1.	OCP	Guiding Principle 1: “Guide form, location and type of development towards sustainability with consideration for environmental health, sustainable infrastructure, affordable housing, and other ‘Smart Growth’ principles”	Explicitly recognizes <b>affordable housing</b> in guiding principles <b>as part of sustainability and smart growth</b>
2.	OCP	4.2.2 “... affordable housing for low-income families, seniors, individuals, and people with disabilities”. Include definition of affordable housing	Clarifies language to include support for individuals.
3.	OCP -> Strategic Plan	Section 4: “Implement an <b>affordable housing strategy</b> to encourage by policies and actions an increase in the supply of affordable housing”	Provides support for grant assistance from senior governments for non-profits and City; builds on this framework
4.	OCP	4.3 Support non-profit organizations in their work of <b>sponsoring, developing and managing housing projects</b> and addressing housing needs of homeless and at-risk families and individuals  Consider supporting through in-kind or financial resources major multi-family affordable housing projects in <b>partnership</b> with community organizations and outside funders. <sup>3</sup>	Requires ongoing collaboration with housing organizations, i.e. through item 10
5.	OCP -> covenants	4.3 Consider using City-owned land for affordable housing developments. Use Resale Price Restrictive Covenants to eliminate land speculation and keep properties affordable.	Retains affordable housing projects as a community trust
6.	OCP -> implementing financial bylaws	4.3 Use revenue from land sales for land-banking and replenishing City supply of <b>public land for affordable housing</b>	Dedicate a portion of land sales for item 5 in Land Sales Reserve Bylaw
7.	OCP -> implementing bylaws	4.3 Create an <b>affordable housing reserve fund</b>	To be funded from Inclusionary Zoning or Density Bonus funds as well as other allocations.
8.	OCP -> Development Cost Charge	4.3 Consider waiving, reducing, or deferring payment of <b>development cost charges</b> and other development / planning fees for affordable housing projects.	Costs to be determined property specific

<sup>3</sup> Full discussion of many of these policies available at <http://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/local-governments/taking-action-on-housing-affordability/>



	Bylaw		
9.	OCP	4.3 Consider entering into <b>housing agreements</b> with developers of new subdivisions or in neighbourhood plans to include mixed income / mixed use neighbourhoods and density bonuses to developers who provide affordable housing	Provides developer-provided amenities (specific number of affordable housing units; Energy Star rated energy efficiency to reduce occupancy costs) or funding that the local government can use for affordable housing developments.
10.	OCP	4.3 Consider initiating an <b>affordable housing advisory committee</b> with community stakeholders to assess the ongoing housing needs of the community	Enables ongoing collaboration
11.	Zoning	Change <b>minimum dwelling size</b> in Zoning Bylaw to 50 square metres from 75 in R1 and 18 m2 in all other zones except R1a and R1b	Brings in line with BC Building Code, lowers cost of construction
12.	Zoning Bylaw	New definition and regulations <b>Accessory Dwelling Units</b> for appropriate zones (defined and prescribed in zoning bylaw); Increase <b>% of dwelling in commercial zones and office space in R-3</b> for flexibility	Retain requirements for 50% maximum lot coverage, accessory building setbacks, and City servicing
13.	Zoning Bylaw	<b>Inclusionary Zoning:</b> Consider requiring inclusion of affordable housing in new housing developments, either as a percentage or as cash-in-lieu	Requires housing agreements with monitoring / renewal requirements
14.	OCP + Permissive Property Tax Exemption	Consider setting <b>Permissive Tax Exemption Policy Criteria for Supportive Housing</b> (transitional and second stage housing, supportive housing, group homes)	Requires establishment of a revitalization program, enter into agreements with property owners, and exempt property once all conditions are met
15.	OCP	Develop a residential energy conservation <b>program to support housing affordability; Provide incentives</b> for residential building retrofits	OCP and other tools as per Strategic Community Energy and Emissions Plan (SCEEP)



Fiscal Accountability



Economic Growth



Community Engagement



Community Liveability