



Official Community Plan

Nelson 2050

Leading the way, together.

# OCP 1-Pager Series: Growth Management

By 2050, projections from the forthcoming 2024 Housing Needs Report say we can expect 4,020 more Nelsonites (an increase of 35% from our 2023 population) and 2,125 more households (a 42% increase from 2023). The Official Community Plan Update presents the opportunity to think about how we can minimize the inconveniences of growth and maximize the benefits for Nelsonites. We need to ensure that housing options are accessible to all by meeting people’s budgets, providing the appropriate number of bedrooms, and ensuring that the housing is safe and in good condition. At the same time, we will need to think about the environment and our community’s capacity to service a growing population.

## Why is the growth rate for households significantly surpassing the population growth rate?

Families are getting smaller and more and more people are living on their own. That means that we can’t rely on the same strategies we did in the past and that we need to build more housing per person than we used to.



**64%** of Nelson households consisted of only one or two people in 1991, but this number has since risen to **70%**



As household size decreases, we are seeing an increase in overall households as well as a slight increase in people living with relatives and non-relatives. This indicates that not only do we need more housing to accommodate more households, but we need a variety of housing types to accommodate different living situations (living alone, single parents, roommates, multigenerational families).

## Does Nelson need to expand its boundary?

While new property tax revenue would be generated with boundary expansion, significant upfront investments would be required to expand our infrastructure. A 2021 study by the City of Ottawa found that Ottawa loses \$465 per person, per year to service new homes on the city’s outskirts, over and above what it receives from property taxes and water bills.

- Nelson already has the land necessary to accommodate the projected population growth, without resorting to high-density housing or even rezoning.
- There are still over 100 small undeveloped lots in Nelson and dozens of large lots that can be subdivided.
- Current zoning allows for over 6,000 new dwellings to be built.

*If every residential property added just one dwelling unit, 100% of Nelson’s 2050 housing needs could be met.*

## What if we said no to growth?

Due to legislation, the City cannot just shut our doors. Even if we tried to severely restrict growth, it would inevitably result in more people looking to move to and build in the regional district. This doesn't solve any problems for Nelson. The City's tax base wouldn't grow and when the new regional residents come into town to access City services, there will not only be more pressure on our amenities but also on our roads and parking.

## Opportunities



**Improved Infrastructure** - With more people per square-kilometre paying taxes, existing infrastructure (roads, servicing, transit, waste collection, healthcare, etc.) can be improved for the benefit of all, including longtime residents. Infrastructure and services can be provided more efficiently and at a lower cost per person.



**Meeting Everyone's Housing Needs** - Growth provides the opportunity to diversify the housing supply. It's in everyone's interest to ensure that people can afford to stay here. Nelson's housing deficit is already high for low-income people, especially for one-person households.



**Reduced Cost of Living** - People who live in town spend less on transportation, whether that means walking, biking, or simply having fewer kilometres between them and their destination. By creating more opportunities for people to live in town, we can offer a better quality of life at a lower cost.



**Strong, Resilient Local Economy** - Growth can create more diverse jobs and business opportunities.

## Project Information

OCP Update: [Nelson2050.ca](https://nelson2050.ca)

Email: [OCP@nelson.ca](mailto:OCP@nelson.ca)

1 Federation of Canadian Municipalities (Nov 23, 2023): <https://fcm.ca/en/news-media/news-release/new-research-canadas-housing-challenge-also-infrastructure-challenge/backgrounder>

## Challenges



**Employment** - Planning for growth means making sure that everyone will be able to find work. Nelson has higher unemployment and a higher percentage of people living in poverty (20%) than the Canadian average (11%). Many recent newcomers to Nelson have brought their own job because they work remotely. Nelson's aging population also means that more and more residents will not be in the job market - however, this means more demand for numerous services, which will in turn require a larger workforce.



**Infrastructure Costs** - In Canada, a new housing unit means spending on average \$107,000 in new municipal infrastructure.<sup>1</sup> It costs 5 to 9 times more per capita to service new single-family homes than apartments. Growing the city outwards is a costly strategy.



**Social Infrastructure** - Will schools, recreation facilities, and health and social services be able to keep up with demand? We need to work with other levels of government to ease any growing pains.



**Water & Hydro** - Can we guarantee sufficient water supply for a growing city, particularly in the context of climate change? How many more people can our electric grid and power production capacity take? Can we manage the storm water created by heavy rain? Nelson is committed to 100% renewable energy by 2050. In turn, meeting this commitment will require a larger workforce.

## Initiatives Snapshot

### Development and Amenity Cost Charges

In addition to infrastructure upgrades (sewer, water and drainage) required for new housing, Nelson could also require that people who build housing contribute to parks, roads, fire protection, police, and waste services or amenities such as daycares, recreation facilities, and libraries.

### Housing Needs Report (HNR)

Local governments in BC must complete housing needs reports every 5 years and have policies in their OCP to address those needs. The City of Nelson is preparing a 2024 HNR to inform the OCP Update.

### Regional Growth Strategies

The Regional District of Central Kootenay does not currently have a Regional Growth Strategy. There are only 10 of these strategies in the province of BC. They are strategic plans that intend to make efficient use of public facilities, land and other resources to support and enhance regional sustainability and resilience.