



Official Community Plan

Nelson 2050

Leading the way, together.

OCP 1-Pager Series: Growth Management

The 2024 Housing Needs Report projects that we can expect 15,470 residents by 2041 and over 17,000 residents by 2050. The Report also estimates over 3,100 housing units across the housing spectrum will be required to meet anticipated demand over the next 20 years. The Official Community Plan Update presents an opportunity to ensure Nelson has a wide variety of housing options that are accessible to all types of people. This includes a wide variety of housing budgets, appropriately sized housing, and housing that 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. We need to build more housing per person than we used to.



In 1991, **64%** of Nelson households consisted of only one or two people. As of the 2021 census, this number has risen to **70%**.

As household size decreases, there is an increase in overall number of 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?

New property tax revenue would be generated with boundary expansion; however, 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 projected population growth, without having to rezone properties.
- There are 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?

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 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 be more pressure on our amenities, 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

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

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.¹ 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.

Potential Initiatives Snapshot

Development and Amenity Cost Charges

Developers are required to complete infrastructure upgrades (sewer, water and drainage) when building, Nelson could also require that developers contribute to parks, roads, fire protection, police, and waste services or amenities such as libraries and, 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 recently completed 2024 HNR informs the OCP Update.

Regional Growth Strategies

The Regional District of Central Kootenay (RDCK) does not currently have a Regional Growth Strategy (RGS). An RGS is a regional plan to decide when and where new growth and development should occur. The City could encourage the RDCK to create a RGS.