

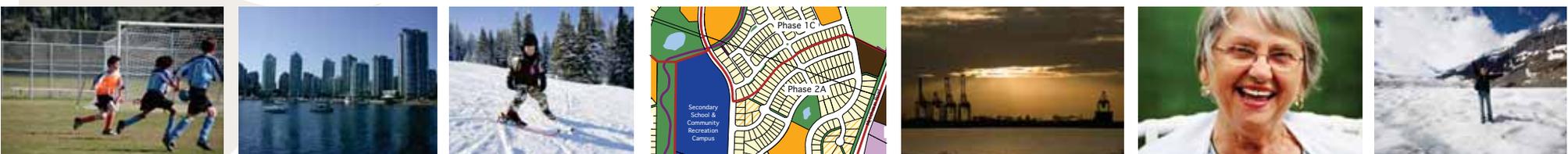


Connecting Housing Needs and Opportunities

Regional District of Nanaimo | March 2009

CITY SPACES

Planning | Project Management | Applied Research



Highlights – Connecting Housing Needs To Housing Opportunities

This is the second of two reports of the Affordable Housing Study. The first report, the Regional Housing Needs Overview, was submitted in January 2009, and reviewed by staff from the Regional District and member municipalities. This second report is funded solely by the Regional District. Its focus is on making the connections between the Region’s housing needs and where and how the RDN could assist in facilitating more affordable housing in six Electoral Areas.

Key Findings – Report #1

- Housing needs are greatest among households with low incomes (either income assistance recipients, and low-income workers).
- Among low-income households, there are several sub-groups with unique housing needs – large families, Aboriginal families and seniors, recent immigrants, youth-at-risk, women in vulnerable situations, temporary foreign workers, and students, among others.
- Moderate income families and fixed income retirees are also challenged to find or maintain affordable housing.

Observations, Research And Analysis – Report #2

- The majority of low-income households are drawn to Nanaimo where they rely heavily on “low end of market” rental housing that is located near transit, shops, social networks and support services. Low-income households also live in rural areas and small settlements, in low-rent mobile home parks, RVs and other non-traditional housing.

- Although the RDN’s Strategic Plan references social sustainability, including affordable housing, the 2003 Regional Growth Strategy (RGS) does not. The land use pattern established in the RGS directs growth in the Electoral Areas to 11 Village Centres and three Urban Areas. Very few of these areas have community water and sewer systems.
- From an existing “infrastructure” perspective, there are nine schools in the Electoral Areas. There are no hospitals, health centres or care facilities. Few areas outside the main urban centres are served by transit, but Village Centres are on, or near, the main highway system. Very few of the Region’s 1,300 non-market housing units / beds are located outside the urban centres.
- Rural communities self-identify as being different from urban areas – lower-density, lower scale, with fewer “rules and regulations”. This makes it more challenging to apply more urban-oriented “smart growth” planning principles.
- The initiatives “most likely to succeed” in rural areas are those that are the “best fit” with the existing scale and character of development. These include secondary suites, secondary dwellings,



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

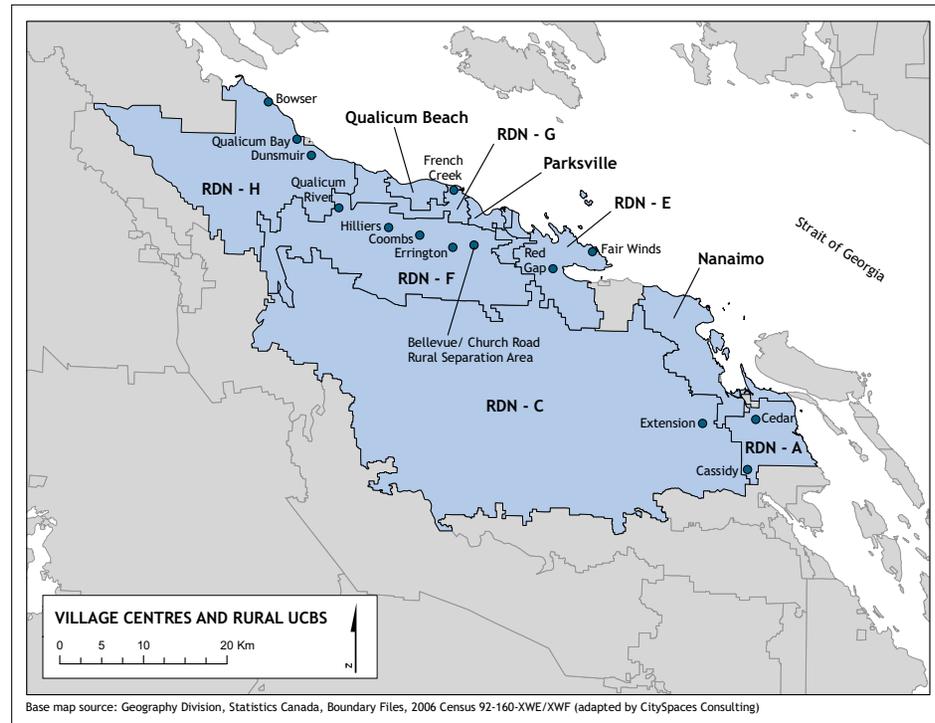
March 2009

manufactured home parks, cluster housing, and small-scale townhouses.

- Cross-continent research into affordable housing in rural areas and small settlements revealed a number of interesting approaches and examples. These include cluster housing, infill, reduced lot size, prefabricated homes, conversion of non-residential buildings (e.g., school, motel, rectory). The US Department of Agriculture also funds a Housing Preservation Grant to repair and rehabilitate housing for very-low and low-income households.
- **Electoral Area A.** The Cedar community offers a number of advantages for affordable market and non-market housing suitable for families. It is served by transit and has three schools. Cassidy has limited services and amenities.
- **Electoral Area C. Extension** is the only Village Centre in this EA. In view of its lack of transit, community and support services, it is not regarded as a suitable location for non-market housing.
- **Electoral Area E.** The Red Gap community is compact with a commercial area, community centre, doctor's office and a school. It is served by transit and is popular with seniors. There is a large, well-maintained mobile home park. Red Gap would be a suitable location for affordable housing, well suited to both families and seniors.

The “master planned community” of Fairwinds may present opportunities for resort employee housing.

- **Electoral Area F.** This part of the Region has the highest incidence of low income and a high unemployment rate. It currently plays an important role in providing affordable market housing (mobile home parks, small homes and non-conventional housing), some of which is poorly maintained. There are four Village Centres. Of these, Coombs has the largest concentration of services, as well as a school and a church. The area is not served by transit. Strong interest has been expressed by a non-profit society to develop co-housing.



Connecting Housing Needs to Housing Opportunities

Prepared for Regional District of Nanaimo

March 2009

- **Electoral Area G.** This EA surrounds Parksville and Qualicum Beach and includes the Growth Concentration Area of **French Creek**. It is served by transit. The OCP supports secondary suites. At this time, growth is limited by a lack of water. Low-Income workers who are employed in health care, retail and tourist services are drawn to this area as rents are lower than in Parksville, Qualicum Beach and Nanaimo.
- **Electoral Area H.** There are three Village Centres in this EA. There are a high percentage of seniors living in this area. **Bowser** and **Qualicum Bay** may be good candidates for locating seniors affordable housing. Two local societies have indicated an interest in pursuing affordable housing.

Where To From Here?

The Affordable Housing Study provides contextual information for use by the RDN and other interested stakeholders – it was not intended to be a Regional Housing Strategy. However, to facilitate continuing discussion about affordable housing, the consultants ask a series of questions and provide associated commentary.

1. *Are there any opportunities in the Electoral Areas that currently exist and can be capitalized upon to accelerate the provision of affordable housing? For example:*
 - Capacity of existing non-profit societies; recent needs assessments;
 - Regeneration possibilities of existing non-market projects;

- RGS, OCP and zoning reviews to encourage and remove barriers to affordable market housing.

2. *Are there opportunities for the RDN to become more directly involved in facilitating the development and maintenance of affordable housing in the Electoral Areas?*

- Raising awareness of existing government programs and initiatives (e.g., tax deferral, home adaptation, residential rehabilitation, rental assistance, etc.);
- Establishing a Housing Trust Fund; and
- Working with employers and employer groups.

Glossary Of Terms, Programs And Initiatives

The report has an Appendix which provides definitions of terms used in the report. It also identifies current federal and provincial housing programs that could benefit many RDN residents.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

TABLE OF CONTENTS

1. Introduction.....	1
Focus of This Report.....	1
Contents of this Report.....	2
Housing Needs Overview – RECAP.....	2
2. Housing Forms and Tenures.....	4
Housing Forms and Tenures Related to Needs Groups.....	4
Summary Comments.....	7
3. Policy and Infrastructure Affecting Housing Forms and Tenures In Electoral Areas.....	9
Regional Growth Strategy.....	9
Community Water and Sewer.....	9
Schools.....	11
Hospitals, Health Services, Care Facilities.....	11
Highways.....	11
BC Transit Services.....	11
Non-Market Housing Infrastructure.....	11
4. Affordable Housing in Rural and Small Settlements.....	12
Increasing Density in Non-Serviced Rural Areas Beaubassin, New Brunswick.....	12
Strata-Based Manufactured Home Park River Run Homes, Nanaimo BC.....	12
Cluster Housing, Soquel California.....	12
Infill / Small Lot Detached Housing Mt. Angel, Oregon.....	13
Multiple Units in Detached Home Lincoln, Massachusetts.....	13
Pre-Fabricated Detached Homes Trinity County, California.....	13
Conversion of Buildings From Non-Residential Use to Rental Units.....	14
Rehabilitating Existing Affordable Housing US Department of Agriculture.....	15
5. “Connecting the Dots”: Locations for Affordable Housing.....	16
Electoral Area A.....	16
Electoral Area C.....	16

Electoral Area E..... 17
Electoral Area F..... 17
Electoral Area G..... 19
Electoral Area H..... 19
6. Where To From Here?..... 20

Appendix A – Glossary of Term, Programs, Initiatives

List of Figures

- Figure 1: Affordable Housing Continuum
- Figure 2: Housing Forms and Tenures: Four Broad Needs Groups
- Figure 3: Housing Forms and Tenures: Unique Groups
- Figure 4: Map of Village Centres and Urban Containment Boundary Settlements
- Figure 5: Servicing For Designated Urban Areas Within Electoral Areas

1. INTRODUCTION

The Regional District of Nanaimo (RDN) has engaged CitySpaces Consulting to undertake a Regional Housing Affordability Study. The study’s foundation is found in the *RDN 2006-09 Strategic Plan*.

“Housing is affordable, and a variety of different types and sizes of housing are available to accommodate the current and future needs of residents.” — Page 11, 2006-09 RDN Strategic Plan, Vision Statement

This report, *Connecting Housing Needs to Housing Opportunities*, follows from the *Housing Needs Overview*, which was completed in January, 2009. The latter-referenced report was funded jointly by four jurisdictions – the RDN, City of Nanaimo, Parksville and Qualicum Beach. This component of the study was funded solely by the RDN.

1.1. FOCUS OF THIS REPORT

This component of the Housing Affordability Study focusses on affordable housing opportunities for the rural areas of the Region – six Electoral Areas. Facilitating affordable housing in rural areas is a challenging task: affordable housing solutions and related best practice research is heavily weighted in favour of urban situations. In addition, many current best planning practices work for urban growth, and are difficult to translate to rural settings. They rely on the development of high-density, compact centres with good transportation networks and/or walkable neighbourhoods where people can walk or easily reach work, shops and services. This requires a critical mass of people to thrive.

Rural settings are by nature, less populated and less densely developed. They appeal to some people for these very reasons, and for the amenities that come with this type of land use: privacy, quiet and easy access to large areas of nature.

This report attempts to expose in more detail the challenge of affordable rural housing, review best practices in



What is “affordable housing”?

In the context of this report, affordable housing refers to both market housing and non-market housing that does not cost more than 30% of a household’s gross income on a monthly basis.

What is “non-market housing”?

This refers to housing that receives a subsidy from government on an ongoing basis. The housing is either managed directly by BC Housing or via a non-profit housing society.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

addressing those challenges, and identify opportunities to facilitate the provision of affordable housing in rural RDN.

1.2. CONTENTS OF THIS REPORT

The introduction, which includes a recap of housing needs, is followed by five report components:

- Identification of the forms and tenures of housing best matched to housing needs groups;
- Identification of key factors that influence where housing of varying forms and tenures will be built within the Region;
- Examples of affordable housing in rural areas and small settlements;
- Locations for affordable housing in the Electoral Areas; and
- Questions and commentary designed to facilitate further discussion about affordable housing.

Appendix A is a glossary of terms, programs and initiatives referred to in this report.

1.3. HOUSING NEEDS OVERVIEW – RECAP

The Housing Needs Overview (under separate cover) is a descriptive analysis of the housing needs of residents whose income is “at or below the annual median income” in six of the seven electoral areas of RDN, Nanaimo, Parksville and Qualicum Beach. Interviews with housing providers, local government planners and social service agencies were conducted in November and December 2008. As part of the Housing Needs Overview, **four broad groups** were identified as being particularly challenged to find suitable affordable housing.

1. **Income Assistance Recipients.** People whose sole source of income is provided by the BC Government in the form of income or disability assistance have the greatest challenges and least choice in the housing market. Almost 8,300 residents between birth and age 64 receive income assistance, representing about 5.6% of the region’s population.
2. **Low-Income Workers.** Nanaimo and Oceanside area residents who work in low wage sectors, typically retail and services, also struggle to find suitable, affordable housing. The average hourly wage of service sector employees falls in the range of \$8.10 (fast food cook) to \$15.00 (housekeeping supervisor in a resort hotel). In both the Parksville and Nanaimo Census Agglomerations, 90% of people aged 15 to 24 who earned employment income made less than \$25,000 annually.
3. **Retirees on Fixed Incomes.** Many seniors with fixed incomes also have challenges finding suitable, affordable housing. Currently, 21,200 residents of the region receive Old Age Security; of these, 7,200 receive partial or a maximum Guaranteed Income Supplement, representing almost 5% of the population. Today, one in five regional residents is age 65 or higher; by 2018, this will be one in four.
4. **Moderate Income Families.** Couple families earning between 80% and 120% of the median income (approximately \$50-\$80,000) find it difficult to purchase an entry-level home without spending more than 30% of their income on housing. In the Nanaimo Census Area, 6,000 married couple families had incomes in this range in 2005, about 32% of all married couple families.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

The households in the first three groups view housing as shelter, not wealth generation. A safe, private and affordable place to call home is likely always to be rented accommodation. People on income assistance and low-wage workers have very little ability to acquire assets, whether a car, a home, a savings account, or a private pension.

There are **sub-groups** within the broad groups that have special housing needs:

- Low-income families, particularly large families;
- Aboriginal families;
- Young single parents;
- Recent immigrants families;
- Mental health clients, including adults, youth and geriatric;
- Elderly frail seniors;
- Aboriginal seniors;
- Youth (16-25) at-risk of being homeless;
- Men (age 25-45) at-risk of being homeless;
- Women in vulnerable situations; and
- Temporary foreign workers.

Note to Reader:

It is difficult to identify precisely where individuals and families who comprise the broad groups and sub-groups live within the RDN's rural Electoral Areas. The research did reveal that many low income households, some mental health clients, seniors and low income workers live in rural areas, but no service or housing providers were able to give numbers. It is widely believed that low income households find accommodation in manufactured home parks, RVs and in non-conventional housing.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

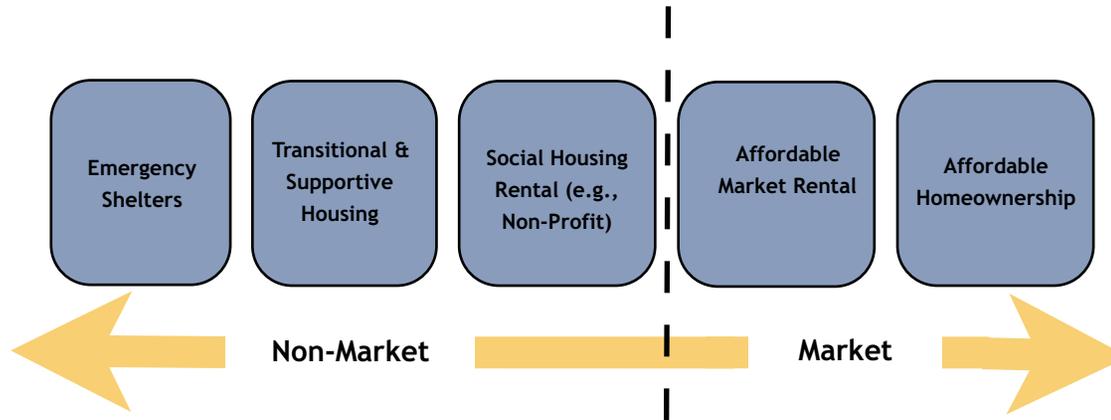
Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

2. HOUSING FORMS AND TENURES

Connecting housing needs to housing opportunities requires an assessment of the housing form and tenure best suited to people in housing need. It is helpful to understand the range of housing types and tenures along a continuum (Figure 1).

Figure 1: Affordable Housing Continuum



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

2.1. HOUSING FORMS AND TENURES RELATED TO NEEDS GROUPS

Figure 2 identifies the housing forms and tenures best suited to the four broad groups identifies in the Housing Needs Overview. Figure 3 provides similar information for each of the sub-groups previously identified as having unique needs.

Figure 2: Housing Forms And Tenures – Four Broad Needs Groups

Group Profile	Housing Form Best Suited Most Likely Tenure	Supports	Key Locational Needs
Income Assistance Recipients	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - depends on household type, disability - individuals may share, or may require studio, small apartment/suite - families require ground access - rowhousing or secondary suite - some with special needs require accessible housing - market rental, non-market rental 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - depends on the client group (see following table) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - proximity to public transit, commercial and medical services

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

Group Profile	Housing Form Best Suited Most Likely Tenure	Supports	Key Locational Needs
Low-Income Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - studio, one bedroom units - some two+ bedroom units for shared accommodation - units in multi-unit housing (apartments) - secondary suites in single-detached, semi-detached, row houses - secondary units (e.g., laneway housing) - market rental, non-market rental 	- not applicable	- proximity to employment, commercial and medical services, public transit
Retirees on Fixed Incomes	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - studio, one bedroom units - some two+ bedroom units for couples - units in multi-unit housing (apartments) - secondary suites in single-detached, semi-detached, row houses - manufactured home parks - home ownership, life lease, market rental, non-market rental 	- potentially, assistance with daily living, access to common amenities, food service	- proximity to commercial and medical services, public transit
Moderate Income Families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - two or more bedroom units - single-detached, semi-detached, row houses - ground-orientation preference - market rental, home ownership 	- not applicable	- proximity to schools, playgrounds, recreational facilities, commercial services



Connecting Housing Needs to Housing Opportunities

Figure 3: Housing Forms And Tenures – Unique Needs Groups

Group with Unique Needs	Housing Forms Best Suited Most Likely Tenure	Supports	Key Locational Needs
Low-Income Families with children	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - ground-oriented units - 2, 3 and 4 bedrooms - semi-detached, row-house or ground floor of multi-unit building - manufactured homes - market or non-market rental 	- tenants rights and responsibilities awareness training, including home maintenance. (This need was identified in particular by Aboriginal housing and service providers.)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - short walk to elementary school; further to middle/high school; - close to playground, recreational facility, convenience stores, medical services

Prepared for Regional District of Nanaimo

March 2009

Group with Unique Needs	Housing Forms Best Suited Most Likely Tenure	Supports	Key Locational Needs
Mental Health Clients – Adults and Youth	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - purpose designed multi-unit housing with studio or one-bedroom units with staffing and support services attached - for high functioning clients, apartment or secondary unit - market or non-market rental 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - varying degrees required - region could use at least one facility with 24/7 staff to accommodate individuals with challenging behaviors (need has been recognized by Parksville Housing Society and District 69 Housing Society who are pursuing funding for such a facility) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - close to medical services, public transit, support services
Working People with Substance Abuse Issues	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - purpose designed multi-unit housing with studio or one-bedroom units with staffing and support services attached - predominantly non-market rental 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - staffed housing (harm-reduction or abstinence-based models) with programming support to assist individuals deal with addictions 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - proximity to support services
Frail Elderly Seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - multi-unit housing with accessible units - studio and one-bedroom units - common space that allows for socializing, activities - consider cluster housing - attached units with easy access to outdoors - predominantly non-market rental or life lease 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - socialization opportunities - personal care services - access to emergency response - programs, staff to support network of support for isolated seniors 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - proximity to services, safe outdoor areas - access to transit or volunteer drivers
Aboriginal Seniors	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - studio or 1-bedroom units - multi-unit housing with accessible units; - lock-off suites suitable for extended families - non-market rental 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programs to support socializing and combat isolation - cultural opportunities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - proximity to services, other family members - access to outdoors, public transit, volunteer drivers
At risk of being homeless – Youth, Age 16-25	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - studio units, or lockable bedrooms in a shared accommodation situation - non-market rental 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - programs to facilitate transition to more independent living situation; counselling 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - proximity to services, employment, schools, public transit



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

Group with Unique Needs	Housing Forms Best Suited Most Likely Tenure	Supports	Key Locational Needs
At Risk of being homeless – men, Age 25-45	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • studio units with private bathroom • units in a multi-unit housing building, or in triplex, fourplex or secondary suites situation • non-market rental 	- support services, food service and programming	- proximity to commercial/ support services, employment, public transit
Women In Vulnerable Situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • emergency shelter • transitional housing - private units • non-market rental 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 24-hour staffing - emergency shelter - Support services in transitional housing 	- proximity to commercial/ support services, employment, public transit
Temporary Foreign Workers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • studio or one-bedroom • secondary suites • modular housing • market or reduced rental provided by employers 	- Not applicable	- proximity to employment, public transit, services
University Students	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • studio, one bedroom units • 2+ bedroom units suitable for students willing to share • secondary suites • market rental or provided by educational institution 	- Not applicable	- proximity to university, services, public transit



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

2.2. SUMMARY COMMENTS

Figures 2 and 3 describe the housing forms best suited and tenure type most likely to suit the needs of low income households – people who live in both urban and rural settings. However, as the analysis indicates, almost everyone in these groups depend to some extent on proximity to medical, support and commercial services, social networks, and access to public transportation. These amenities and services are generally associated with urban settings, locations where a critical mass of population is required to enable such services to function.

The question that arises is: “What factors affect development and therefore, forms of housing, in rural areas?”

- Rural communities self-identify as being different from urban areas – lower-density, lower scale, with fewer “rules and regulations”. This makes it more challenging to apply more urban-oriented “smart growth” planning principles, when these approaches rely heavily on compact communities linked to main transportation nodes.

- The distances between rural areas in the RDN and the urban centres of Nanaimo and Parksville are relatively small. This makes it difficult to justify development of larger scale housing facilities in outlying areas when the natural tendency is for people to gravitate toward urban centres.
- Some groups in need are crucially dependent on support services, including for example round the clock on-site medical care and/or support staff. These include mental health clients and frail elderly seniors. Both of these groups would be well-served by housing in urban centres, where the necessary services already exist and can therefore be delivered in a cost-effective manner. The development of non-market, purpose-built, multi-unit affordable housing relies on a limited pool of government resources.
- Development of new, purpose-built, multi-unit affordable housing in rural areas is challenging:
 - non-market housing relies on limited pool of government funds and few government programs. It is difficult to make the case to for a new build in a rural areas with relatively small population;
 - the density needed to make market housing, that includes an affordable housing component, financially viable does not typically match the level of demand in rural areas. Moreover, rural communities resist housing forms that are not in keeping with rural character and architecture;

The initiatives “most likely to succeed” in rural areas are those that are the “best fit” with the existing scale and character of development. These include secondary suites, secondary dwellings, manufactured home parks, cluster housing, and small-scale townhouses.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

3. POLICY AND INFRASTRUCTURE AFFECTING HOUSING FORMS AND TENURES IN ELECTORAL AREAS

This section of the report identifies and describes key factors that greatly influence where housing of varying forms and tenures could be built within the Electoral Areas of the Region.

3.1. REGIONAL GROWTH STRATEGY

The RDN’s Regional Growth Strategy (2003, now being updated) commits the Regional District and its member municipalities to limit sprawl and focus development within well defined “urban containment boundaries”. These are shown on the Regional Growth Strategy’s “Map of Land Use Designations”. Urban Containment Areas within the rural Electoral Areas are referred to as “Village Centre” and “Urban Area”. Village Centres “are intended to provide for limited development of service centres outside existing urbanized areas, and be developed into mixed-use communities.” There are 11 Village Centres and three Urban Areas in the Electoral Areas. Figure 4, a map of the RDN, shows the location of these non-incorporated settlements.

There are no specific goals or policies related to “affordable housing” in the 2003 Regional Growth Strategy. Under Goal 2, however, there is the following statement,

“Nodes should be designed to accommodate people from a variety of cultural, economic and employment backgrounds. Nodes should not be allowed to become exclusive places. ... Nodes should provide for the housing needs of many groups – families, singles, retired, working, the aged, the disadvantaged, and those of lavish or modest means” (p.8)

3.2. COMMUNITY WATER AND SEWER

Very few of the designated Village Centres have community sewer and water systems (see Figure 5). Only French Creek (and to a limited extent, Fairwinds) and Cedar have both.

Figure 5. Servicing For Designated Urban Areas Within Electoral Areas

EA	Village Centre/Urban Area	Community Water	Community Sewer
A	Cassidy	No	No
A	Cedar	Yes	Partial
C	Extension	Yes	No
E	Red Gap	Yes	No
E	Fairwinds	Partial	Partial
F	Errington	No	No
F	Coombs	No	No
F	Hilliers	No	No
F	Qualicum Village Estates	No	No
F	Bellevue/Church Rd Rural Separation Area	No	No
G	French Creek	Yes	Yes
H	Dunsmuir	Yes	No
H	Qualicum Bay	Yes	No
H	Bowser	Yes	No

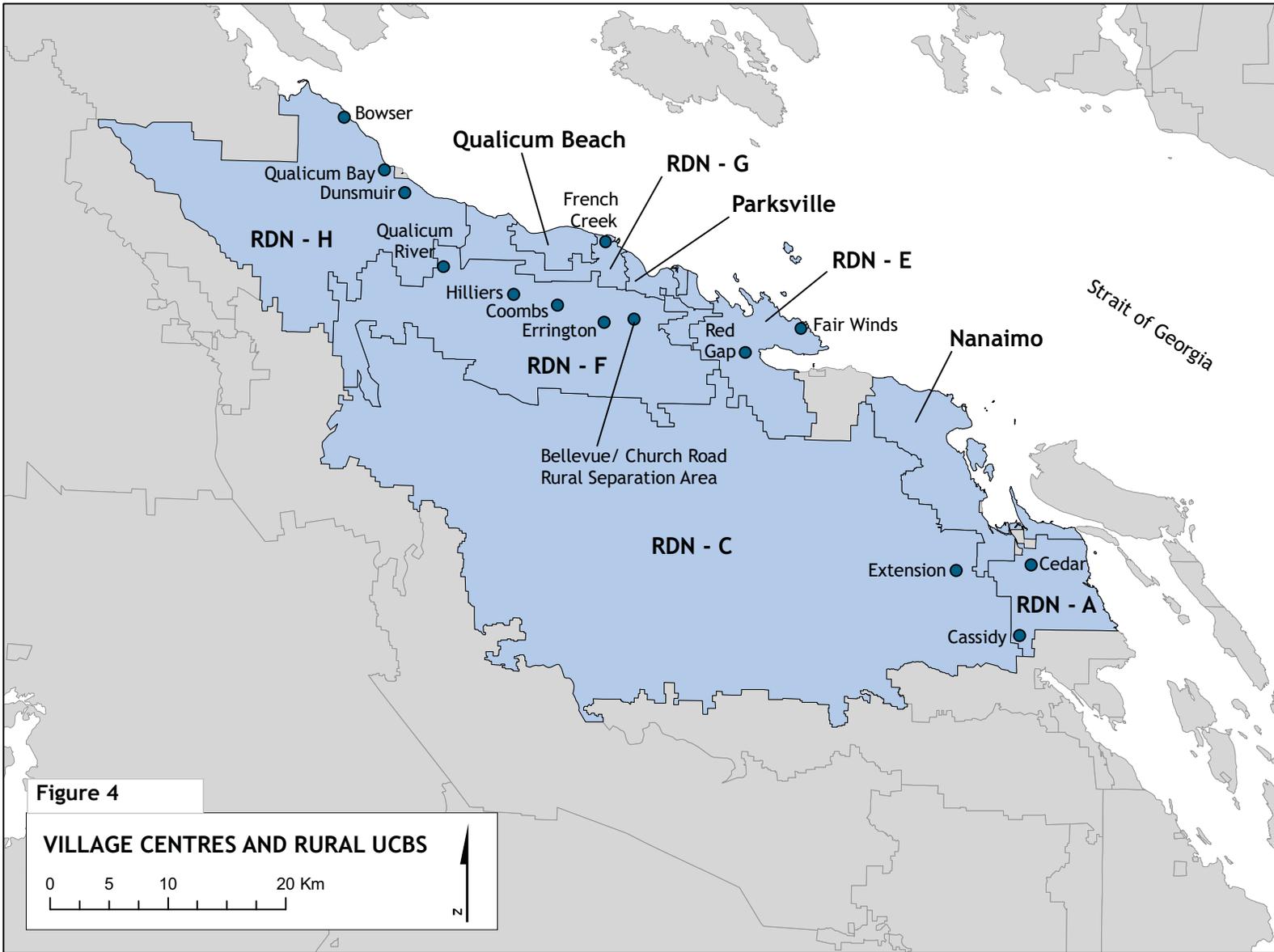
Source: Regional District of Nanaimo, October 2008.



Connecting Housing Needs to Housing Opportunities

Prepared for Regional District of Nanaimo

March 2009



Base map source: Geography Division, Statistics Canada, Boundary Files, 2006 Census 92-160-XWE/XWF (adapted by CitySpaces Consulting)



Connecting Housing
 Needs to Housing
 Opportunities

Prepared for
 Regional District of
 Nanaimo

March 2009

3.3. SCHOOLS

Families with young children tend to seek out locations where there are elementary schools. In the Electoral Areas, there are nine schools:

- ▶ Woodbank Primary, North Cedar Intermediate, and Cedar Community Secondary in the Cedar Village Centre and South Wellington Elementary, in EA-A
- ▶ Nanoose Bay Elementary School, located in Red Gap in EA-E
- ▶ French Creek Community School, in Coombs and Oceanside Middle School in French Creek, in EA-G
- ▶ Errington Elementary school is located about 1.5+ kilometers east of the Errington Village Centre, in EA-F
- ▶ Bowser Elementary School is located approximately 2 kilometers northwest of the Bowser Village Centre, in EA-H

There are also two elementary schools in the City of Nanaimo's Cinnabar valley area, 2+ kilometers from the Extension Village Centre in EA-C.

3.4. HOSPITALS, HEALTH SERVICES, CARE FACILITIES

The primary health facilities, within the Vancouver Island Health Authority (VIHA) are located in the City of Nanaimo, Parksville and Qualicum Beach. These include hospitals, health units and home & community care facilities, elder care-extended care / intermediate care, and Mental Health and Addiction Services. Health care and residential services (which include 24-hour professional care and supervision for people who have complex health needs) are provided by service providers contracted to VIHA. Twelve facilities provide these services in the region; all are located in the urban centres of Nanaimo, Parksville or Qualicum Beach.

3.5. HIGHWAYS

The TransCanada Highway #1 begins in Victoria and terminates at the Departure Bay Ferry Terminal in Nanaimo. From here, the new Island Highway (Highway 19) begins. Highway 19A is a slower scenic route along the coast.

Cassidy is located immediately adjacent and west of the TransCanada, and across from Nanaimo's airport. Cedar is located some distance east of the TransCanada, but closer to the section of Highway 19 that leads east to Duke Point. North of Nanaimo, a number of settlements are strung along the Old Island Highway, including French Creek, Dunsmuir, Qualicum Bay and Bowser. Coombs and Hilliers are located along the highway to Port Alberni, Highway 4/4A. Errington is located south of highway 4A.

3.6. BC TRANSIT SERVICES

Few areas outside of the main urban centres are served by public transit. One bus, Route 7, serves Cedar, and the Cinnabar Valley, relatively close to Extension Village Centre. An Intercity bus, Route 90, travels to and from Qualicum Beach to Nanaimo via Parksville and Nanoose serving Red Gap and French Creek.

3.7. NON-MARKET HOUSING INFRASTRUCTURE

There are approximately 1,300 units/beds that are funded on an ongoing basis within the RDN and its member municipalities. About 86% of these subsidized units are located in the City of Nanaimo, with almost all of the remainder located in (or close to) Parksville.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

4. AFFORDABLE HOUSING IN RURAL AND SMALL SETTLEMENTS

Building affordable housing in rural areas presents a unique set of challenges, including creating housing that fits in with local rural character, providing convenient access to services and amenities, and building in unserviced locations. The following case studies describe affordable rental and home ownership drawn from cross-continent research conducted by the consultants.

4.1. INCREASING DENSITY IN NON-SERVICED RURAL AREAS BEAUBASSIN, NEW BRUNSWICK

The Beaubassin Planning Commission (BPC) examined ways to concentrate development in rural areas with a view to curtailing sprawl and providing greater housing choice and affordability. The outcome of their study was a set of regulatory changes that resulted in increased densities. The key to these changes was permitting the use of alternative sewage treatment and storm-water system technologies. The regulatory changes included:

- reducing the minimum lot size on non-serviced lots to 2,000 m² from 4,000 m²; and
- allowing property owners to build a second unit for an elderly relative who no longer can, or wants to, live alone.

4.2. STRATA-BASED MANUFACTURED HOME PARK RIVER RUN HOMES, NANAIMO BC

The Province of BC has purchased eight acres of land in south Nanaimo, near Cedar, zoned for a 50-unit manufactured home site, to be used as part of a pilot project. The project will allow mobile home residents to own, rather than rent. Typically, mobile homes are located on rented pads, leaving the residents vulnerable to eviction, if and when the owner chooses to sell or

redevelop the land. The River Run Homes lots will be sold as strata title properties, providing a more secure source of long term affordable housing.

4.3. CLUSTER HOUSING, SOQUEL CALIFORNIA

Cluster housing concentrates a number of smaller buildings on one part of the site, leaving the remainder of the site undeveloped by housing. The units often surround a central common green space or community garden plots. Each building typically contains a small number of dwelling units (one to three). This model can reach medium densities creating a sense of community while still retaining benefits associated with rural living. The buildings can be built to fit in with and enhance local rural character and they provide ground level access to yards and open space. Clustering the homes also allows shared amenities and services to be located on site.

The Farm is situated in a semi-rural area, adjacent to existing large single detached homes. The 45-unit development preserves the character of the area and the rural setting. The development incorporates two or three townhomes into new “farmhouses” with composition, materials, colours, and detailing. In addition to townhomes, the development includes stacked flats and a small number of market rate single-detached homes.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

Market rate single-detached homes helped fund the affordable housing units, which account for 87% of all units. The development targets very low- and low-income families with incomes less than \$US 31,200 and average income of \$16,720. Affordability strategies include cost-effective construction, donated materials/equipment and land, permit fees waived, tax credits, low interest loans and financial subsidies.

**4.4. INFILL / SMALL LOT DETACHED HOUSING
MT. ANGEL, OREGON**

The Sheridan Senior Estates development consists of seven cottage-style buildings that accommodate fourteen two-bedroom rental units, attaining a density of 18 units per acre. The homes face inwards towards a centrally located laundry/storage facility and a small community center featuring two outdoor patios. The units were designed with two bedrooms to provide additional space for a caregiver.

The rental units target low-income seniors, seniors with ailing spouses and/or caregivers so that residents can age-in-place for as long as possible. Affordability strategies include downsizing, cost effective construction, tax credits, low interest loans and financial subsidies. Each residence has its own private outdoor garden and front porch to support personalization and a second bedroom that allows for aging-in-place and changes in the household's circumstances over time.

**4.5. MULTIPLE UNITS IN DETACHED HOME
LINCOLN, MASSACHUSETTS**

This approach has been used in new builds and renovations of single-detached homes. In the case of new builds, the multi-unit development is designed to look

like single-detached homes. Such buildings can blend into the existing rural surroundings while attaining higher densities and associated benefits.

At Battle Road Farm, 120 condominium units are constructed in 34 buildings designed to appear like traditional large New England homes and outbuildings. The units are clustered, freeing up sizable wetlands and a 120 x 500 sf green "commons". The Town played a large role including acquiring and rezoning the site, and subsequently selling the site to developers at below-market cost, an action that had been approved by voters. Forty percent of the units are affordable home ownership units. The affordable units are deed restricted to remain affordable in perpetuity.

**4.6. PRE-FABRICATED DETACHED HOMES
TRINITY COUNTY, CALIFORNIA**

Building a house off-site can bring efficiencies in the construction process that can make the resulting dwelling more affordable. Trinity County, California operates a home ownership rehabilitation program to upgrade or replace substandard dwellings in rural areas, owned by low- and moderate income homeowners. In instances when the housing is deemed to be beyond repair, it is replaced. Manufactured housing has been found to provide many advantages; it is less costly to build than site-built housing, faster to complete, and less complex to manage, because of less stringent requirements for local oversight. The county has built skill in the area of working with pre-fabricated homes including developing relationships with manufactured house dealers who understand and are willing to follow the procedures of the replacement program.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

4.7. CONVERSION OF BUILDINGS FROM NON-RESIDENTIAL USE TO RENTAL UNITS

Small communities sometimes have access to properties that have outlived their original use, are unused or under-used. Four examples below illustrate how such assets have been converted into affordable housing. Two of the examples from Quebec illustrate how co-operatives can successfully play a role in the provision of affordable housing.

- ***Historic Elk Park School, Elk Park, North Carolina***

This project involved the rehabilitation of a historic elementary school in the town of Elk Park into 40 housing units for low-income seniors and people with disabilities, including 16 one-bedroom apartments, a community meeting room with a stage, greenroom, kitchen, and office space in the old gymnasium. A new building constructed behind the school contains four 2-bedroom units. The improved five acre site includes community gardens, a gazebo, exterior courtyards and a walking trail. All units are rental, and residents pay no more than 30% of their adjusted family income or the minimum rent of \$50 per month. All residents are offered financial literacy and health option supportive services.

- ***South Cape Apartments, West Dennis, Massachusetts***

With the Town's support and affordable housing bylaw regulations, a 24-unit **motel** in West Dennis was converted to housing that includes 12 affordable units. The town allowed the conversion of the nonconforming use (motel) to another nonconforming use (housing) and reduced the amount of land required for each unit. Because the applicant could show that the structure was adjacent to a transit route, the town also agreed to reduce the number of required parking spaces. In return,

12 of the 24 units had to be reserved for those earning less than 80 percent of the median income. The owner also agreed to convert the motel manager's unit into a two-bedroom unit. The completed project will contain six studios, 17 one-bedroom units, and one two-bedroom unit.

- ***Coopérative d'habitation La Corvée, Saint-Camille, Quebec***

Community leadership in the village of Saint-Camille simultaneously saved a heritage building and provided affordable housing units for seniors who were leaving to find suitable housing elsewhere. Community members created a co-op and purchased a historic **rectory** that was for sale. The co-op's membership now includes young people, a person with a disability and seniors living alone and in couples. The village of Saint-Camille gained nine units of affordable housing – five subsidized – enabling seniors to age in place, as well as a community garden, kitchen and meeting space, and a health clinic. One year after opening, the housing development had a waiting list.

- ***Coopérative d'habitation Beauséjour, Saint-Fabien-de-Panet, Quebec***

An existing co-op in the small town of Saint-Fabien-de-Panet capitalized on an opportunity to address an acute shortage of affordable housing by buying houses that older people could no longer maintain. The co-op bought and renovated 15 houses for young families and mental health clients and signed a service agreement with an agency that would screen, help and monitor clients. In addition to providing affordable housing, the new housing benefitted the community by providing a demand for local building trades and other businesses.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

4.8. REHABILITATING EXISTING AFFORDABLE HOUSING US DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE

The USDA - Rural Development manages a Housing Preservation Grant (HPG) program to repair or rehabilitate individual housing, rental properties, or co-ops owned and/or occupied by very low- and low-income rural persons. Assistance is available to very-low and low-income homeowners to repair and rehabilitate their homes and to rental property owners to repair and rehabilitate their units, providing they agree to make such units available to very-low and low-income families. Financial assistance may be in the form of a grant, loan, interest reduction on commercial loans, or other comparable assistance. The population limit of towns served is 20,000. Also, the Very Low-Income Housing Repair program provides loans and grants to very low-income homeowners to repair, improve, or modernize their dwellings or to remove health and safety hazards.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

5. “CONNECTING THE DOTS”: LOCATIONS FOR AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The consultants have tried to “connect the dots” between “Housing Needs Overview” and RDN’s land use patterns, services and growth intentions as set out in the Regional Growth Strategy and the OCPs for Electoral Areas. Our commentary follows, presented on an Electoral Area Basis.

5.1. ELECTORAL AREA A

Electoral Area A residents’ strong desire to preserve the rural character of the area is reflected in the OCP’s Community Vision statement: “The community’s vision for the future has, as its highest priority, the protection of Area ‘A’s rural atmosphere and character ...”.

The community of **Cedar** offers a number of advantages for affordable market and non-market housing, particularly for low and moderate income families. It is relatively densely populated, situated close to South Nanaimo and served by the region’s transit system. There are three schools in the community. Unlike most Village Centres, Cedar has community water and a partial community sewer. While the consultants did not undertake a real estate analysis, it appears that land values are more affordable than in some areas of the region.

A clustered housing development that sites buildings close to one another and leaves relatively untouched areas of green space, wetlands or streams could be effectively integrated in the community of Cedar. Clustering the units would also permit space for a wastewater disposal system. Ideally, the development would be owned by a single non-market owner. This would facilitate the use of a communal sewage disposal and water system if the existing community systems are not able to adequately served the development. Careful attention to the scale of the units and the architectural design including detailing,

colours and materials, would ensure that the new development would fit comfortably in the existing rural context.

The community of **Cassidy**, while close to a major highway is not served by transit and has few amenities, no school and limited services. It has several mobile home parks and, in this respect, is contributing to the affordable housing supply. Some units are in disrepair. Upgrading the poorer quality units would serve to maintain and improve the existing stock, and increase the standard and quality of affordable housing available in this area.

- **Note:** The Provincial government recently announced the purchase of a strata-titled mobile home park for low-income seniors, in South Nanaimo, just north of Cedar. http://www2.news.gov.bc.ca/news_releases_2005-2009/2009HSD0011-000133.htm

5.1. ELECTORAL AREA C

Electoral Area C covers a large rural area and has a small but, fast-growing population. It is the youngest of all the RDN Electoral Areas – but still older than the BC median age – and has a high couple income. **Extension** is the one Village Centre in the Electoral Area. The village is not served by transit, and has no schools, but is relatively close to Cinnabar Valley in Nanaimo which has schools and



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

transit. Also, while the area has ample water, it is not serviced with a community sewer system.

The Electoral Area OCP emphasizes the desire of residents to preserve, protect and enhance the area's natural resources including agriculture, forest and mineral resources, and accommodate a moderate rate of residential growth in order to preserve the established rural lifestyles and rural character that have made the area attractive to residents. Growth is directed to within the Extension UCB and otherwise urban development is limited.

In view of its lack of transit, community and support services, it is not regarded as a suitable location to promote non-market housing.

5.2. ELECTORAL AREA E

Electoral Area E includes the **Red Gap** Village Centre, which the OCP designates as the primary commercial and service centre for the Nanoose Bay area. Red Gap is a compact community with a commercial area, community centre, doctor's office and a school. The community is attractive to seniors and there is a well-maintained mobile home park. It is well-situated with a south facing orientation and pleasant views. The village is not particularly close to Nanaimo or Parksville, but is served by the Intercity Bus Route 90 between Qualicum Beach, Parksville and Nanaimo. Service is every couple of hours, and more frequently during peak periods. Red Gap has community water but no community sewer.

Red Gap is a potential location for a small number of affordable housing units for seniors and/or young families. Young families seeking a rural setting would benefit from close proximity to the elementary school,

although as their children grow, they would have to travel further afield to attend middle and high school. The disadvantage to adding affordable housing units in Red Gap is the lack of community sewer system.

Fairwinds, a relatively new "master planned community" located on the waterfront is still being built-out. While this presents an opportunity for the Regional District to work with the developer to incorporate some affordable housing units, particularly for resort staff in Schooner Cove community, Fairwinds' car-dependent location, "upscale" development style, and lack of an identified source of sustainable water to supply all potential new development, suggests that this community does not lend itself readily to broader incorporation of non-market housing.

5.3. ELECTORAL AREA F

Electoral Area F is an area characterized by high incidence of low-income, relatively low median income and high unemployment rate. It has the second lowest median age of all the RDN Electoral Areas and experienced rapid growth between 2001 and 2006. A relatively high proportion of residents moved within the last year. This mirrors a high proportion of rental dwellings, the highest among the Electoral Areas.

Electoral Area F has no community services and is not served by transit. It currently plays an important role in providing market housing that is affordable for low-income workers, seniors and mental health clients. Some of this supply is substandard, posing health and safety challenges for renters. This housing takes the form of mobile home parks, secondary suites in homes, suites in accessory buildings such as modified garages and sheds, and sometimes campers parked on someone's property.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

The OCP for the area reveals a strong preference among residents for minimal regulation. The OCP fully supports existing and future home-based businesses both within a residence and in accessory buildings, but it also emphasizes that residents are opposed to any form of business licensing.

There are four village centres and one rural separation area, where manufactured home parks are located and where future commercial, institutional, recreational facilities and higher density residential development will be directed. The centres include **Coombs**, which contains the largest concentration of commercial and tourist-related services as well as a school and church. The other village centres are **Errington**, **Hilliers**, and **Qualicum River Estates**.

The OCP also indicates that residents want to protect the semi-rural and rural areas, emphasizing the desire of residents for privacy, quiet and quality of life. As a result parcel sizes are large and densities low.

Notwithstanding the challenges of developing in this area, it is important to recognize its role in providing affordable housing. There is an opportunity to improve the existing supply of affordable housing. Legalizing secondary suites within primary residences as well as in accessory buildings could help increase the standards of this type of accommodation, as well as the number of units of housing in a rural area. This may require the use of alternative wastewater treatment systems to allow additional units on existing parcels, as illustrated in the Beaubassin Planning Commission example in Appendix B. It is recognized that this may be difficult to do within the existing context of resistance to regulation as indicated in the OCP.

There is a need to address the poor quality of some of the housing, in particular the mobile home parks in the area. The Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP) may be a source of funds for low-income households.

Mobile home parks are a common form of housing in these rural areas. Consider developing a mobile home park that allows residents to own the land as well as the home in the Coombs village centre (track the success of the River Run Homes project just announced by the Provincial government for seniors' affordable housing). If possible, target young low-income workers, allowing them entry into a home ownership situation.

Lack of transit remains a challenge for low-income workers and seniors. A location in Coombs gives direct access to Highway 4; however, for residents without cars they will be forced to rely on car-pooling, friends and neighbours, hitch-hiking or cycling.

Strong interest has been expressed by one non-profit organization in developing co-housing type of accommodation. This type of accommodation is typically not used to provide affordable housing because it is developed by the owners of the property themselves. However, with leadership of a knowledgeable non-profit, this type of housing offers some advantages. Co-housing emphasizes strong community relationships within the development. A mixed-generation co-housing development that included some affordable housing units for single seniors could offer the support they need, including social interaction, a sense of security, and also practical assistance with shopping and drives to medical appointments. A co-operative model of housing could play a similar role.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

5.4. ELECTORAL AREA G

Electoral Area G surrounds the municipalities of Qualicum Beach and Parksville and includes a relatively densely populated neighbourhood between these two municipalities. **French Creek** has been designated for future urban growth and is within the Urban Containment Boundary. Its proximity to Parksville and Qualicum Beach, and location along the Island Highway served by Intercity Bus Route 90, add to its suitability for low-income worker housing, particularly as future land use planning and development is effectively coordinated with transit planning. French Creek is also well suited for housing for seniors' care-givers and service industry workers employed in the retail and tourism sectors in Parksville and Qualicum Beach. French Creek is serviced by community water and community sewer, however there is no identified source of water to support larger new developments.

Smaller scale infill and secondary suites could provide additional affordable housing units in this area. The policy to support secondary suites is already in place suggesting that it may be necessary to introduce some mechanism to increase the attractiveness of building secondary suites for low-income worker housing. Reduction of the requirement for two additional off-street parking stalls may work to encourage developments of secondary suites.

5.5. ELECTORAL AREA H

There are three village centres defined by Urban Containment Boundaries in Electoral Area H – **Bowser**, **Qualicum Bay** and **Dunsmuir**. All three have community water service but no community sewer. In keeping with OCP sustainable development principles that aim to

direct development into village centres, Bowser and Qualicum Bay are good candidates for seniors affordable housing. Bowser's commercial centre would also benefit from the addition of seniors housing units.

One of highest median ages occurs in Electoral Area H. The Bowser Seniors Housing Society conducted a study that identified a need for supportive seniors housing in Bowser. The society also identified a possible site for such a development. It would be useful to initiate contact with this non-profit organization to provide support for their efforts to develop seniors supportive housing. This would ideally target moderate income seniors requiring support services, but unable to afford private facilities.

A second opportunity for affordable seniors housing exists in the village of Qualicum Bay. The existing Bayview Seniors Haven, a Lions project, is a low density affordable seniors housing development. It provides 10 one-bedroom units for low-income seniors. It is located within the UCB and within relatively easy walking distance to the community centre along the coast. A project to update and increase the number of units on the site could deliver additional affordable housing units for seniors. The Lions have the experience and knowledge in developing and operating affordable housing and are a potential resource to facilitate the development of additional units. The project would have to provide on-site sewage treatment, if community service is not possible for the village centre.

The OCP designates a Resort Commercial area in anticipation of increased tourism activity. Consider building in a requirement for developers of resort commercial properties to provide accommodation for workers who would work at the resort, or make an equivalent cash contribution.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

6. WHERE TO FROM HERE?

This study was **not** intended to result in a regional housing strategy, but to provide contextual information related to existing housing needs and housing opportunities in the Electoral Areas of the Region. The material of the two reports will be taken into account as the RDN completes the 2009 update of the Regional Growth Strategy. The findings of these reports will also be made available to other levels of government, housing providers and interested stakeholder groups.

To facilitate further discussion about affordable housing among the RDN's Electoral Area Directors, administration, and potential partners, the consultants have put together a series of questions, along with responses. This is accompanied by an Implementation Hierarchy that lists – in order of increasing complexity and need for resources – possible strategies to support the development of affordable housing in the RDN (Figure 6). The questions, responses and possible strategies are **not** intended to be comprehensive, nor definitive – they are meant to spark further discussion.

1. *Are there any opportunities in the Electoral Areas of RDN that currently exist and can be capitalized upon to accelerate the provision of affordable housing, for example:*

a) *existing studies regarding affordable housing, for example, needs assessments?*

In addition to this work, three other studies provide current information about housing needs in the Region – a needs assessment undertaken by District 69 Housing Society focussing on mental health clients; an assessment by the Bowser Seniors Housing Society examining the need for supportive seniors housing; and the City of Nanaimo's Response to Homelessness Strategy and Action Plan. Studies of this type help to demonstrate and quantify needs and are invaluable when applying for potential pre-development funding for specific projects from BC Housing or CMHC.

b) *initiatives to develop affordable housing currently underway?*

The Provincial government recently announced the purchase of land in Nanaimo to develop a mobile home park as a pilot project. The development will accommodate 50 units for seniors, who will own their property under a strata arrangement, unlike many mobile home parks where residents own their mobile unit but rent the pad on which it sits.

c) *organizations taking the lead on affordable housing in rural areas?*

There are a number of housing providers in the region that have experience in developing and running affordable housing – all with facilities in the urban centres. These providers were interviewed for the first phase of the project and include Nanaimo Affordable Housing Society, M'akola Housing, Parksville Lions Housing Society, and Nanaimo and District Senior Citizens Housing Society. To our knowledge, none have developed affordable housing projects in the rural areas.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

d) *land available – suitable sites available for development including those owned by local governments?*

There are currently no RDN-owned sites readily available or suited to development for affordable, non-market housing. There may be potential for “regeneration” of one or more of the older, low-density seniors projects in the municipalities. The Town of Qualicum Beach is currently examining this possibility, along with a local housing provider.

e) *proposed new developments that could incorporate new affordable housing?*

The current housing market is not favourable to new development. However, this may be an opportune time to develop a well-designed policy / program for “inclusionary” housing that is achievable through new development. This could include policies allowing for secondary suites that provide affordable housing, while serving as mortgage helpers for current home owners.

f) *existing housing stock that could be maintained, improved, expanded to provide better and/or more affordable housing.*

There is very little purpose-built apartment-style housing in the Electoral Areas, so the RDN is unlikely to need to implement a rental conversion policy that would address potential displacement of renters.

However, there are several manufactured home parks in the region that provide relatively affordable rents. The RDN does have a “Manufactured Home Park Redevelopment Policy” (adopted in March, 2006). The intent of the policy is to improve on the notification and assistance provided to tenants required to relocate from

the manufactured home park as a result of redevelopment.

g) *properties that could accommodate secondary units other than in-house suites, for example:*

- *existing guest cottages;*
- *residential units within detached buildings (e.g., carriage suites);*
- *garden suites (detached small residential units, possibly removable).*

Larger properties and rural “living” in the electoral areas, such as Electoral Area F, lend themselves to accommodating additional units that could provide affordable accommodation.

A number of BC local governments allow secondary dwellings that are detached from the main house. Their zoning bylaws specify minimum lot size, maximum unit size, parking requirements. Subdivision / strata-titling is not allowed. In implementing similar bylaws in rural areas, consider factors, such as availability and distance to transit, and unit size – to preclude the development of large secondary dwellings that do not address an affordable housing need.

h) *Policies and regulations that encourage the development of affordable market housing within Village Centres?*

When an OCP is updated, consideration should be given to the inclusion of goals and policies in relation to affordable, rental and special needs housing.

Small houses on small lots are inherently more affordable than large houses on large lots. Although infill housing is



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

typically seen as an urban exercise, it could be equally useful in some of the region's serviced Village Centres.

The RDN could update zoning bylaws in Village Centres where services are available to accommodate more affordable housing, particularly for families and seniors. These reviews could be undertaken through the lens of sustainability – to ensure more sustainable land use through such measures as reducing minimum lot size, setbacks and parking requirements; permitting secondary suites, mixed-use developments, multi-family forms of housing and bare-land strata title subdivision, and resubdivision of existing lots. All of these measures will also support more affordable land/building. Consideration might be given for pre-zoning of multi-unit sites.

2. *Are there any opportunities for the RDN to become more directly involved in facilitating the development and maintenance of affordable housing, for example:*

a) *by raising awareness about existing housing programs and initiatives?*

There are existing government housing programs that residents might benefit from, particularly seniors. Without increasing staff, and through existing communications channels, the Region could actively promote:

- Home Adaptation for Seniors Initiative (HASI);
- Property Tax Deferral Program;
- First Time Home Buyers' Property Tax Transfer Exemption;

- Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for Landlords (RRAP-L);
- Rental Assistance Program; and
- SAFER (Senior Assistance for Elderly Renters).

b) *by considering the establishment of a Housing Trust Fund?*

The Capital Region Housing Trust is a example of an initiative by a BC Regional District. Since its inception in 2005, the Fund has participated in funding more than 200 units of affordable housing. The Fund provides capital grants for “bricks and mortar” in the acquisition, development and retention of housing that is affordable to households with low or moderate incomes. The annual cost of the Trust Fund is split among the participating municipalities and electoral areas on the basis of 50 % by population, and 50 % by net taxable value of land and improvements. In 2009 the Fund will generate more than \$800,000 from participating local governments (10 of 13 municipalities within the Region).

c) *by working with major employers and business associations?*

The RDN could consider taking a proactive role in working with major employers and business associations to further examine the needs and opportunities for employer-assisted housing. (This is a common practice in resource agricultural, and resort communities). For example, the RDN could apply for funding from the Real Estate Foundation to study and facilitate an “Employer Assisted Housing Program”. Potential partners include Vancouver Island Real Estate Board, Oceanside Chamber of Commerce, BC Ferries, Nanaimo Airport Authority.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

For further discussion, Figure 6 provides a hierarchy of options to promote the development of affordable housing in the RDN. Progressing in complexity from raising awareness about housing needs and programs, to establishing a Regional Housing Corporation with the expressed purpose of building and maintaining affordable housing, the items in this list represent a potential framework for a Comprehensive Affordable Housing Strategy.

Given that this Housing Affordability Study was intended to serve as a preliminary step in determining the need for a larger Affordable Housing Strategy, elaboration of the financial implications, as well as the time and staff commitments necessary to accomplish the various items in this hierarchy is not provided. Rather, this provides an understanding of the scope of work that a complete strategy might entail, and gives the RDN the ability to assess the elements in this hierarchy, explore further as necessary, and determine which options are best suited to the residents and areas of the RDN.

Figure 6. Implementation Hierarchy

Potential Strategies To Support Development Of Affordable Housing In The RDN	
1	Raise Awareness. Of existing housing needs. Of existing housing programs.
2	Support for Others' Initiatives. Assist non-profit societies that are actively pursuing government funding for special needs groups. Encourage non-market housing providers to “regenerate” existing social housing sites.
3	Research and Networking. Work with major employers and business associations to investigate an “employer assisted housing program”. Seek funding from BC Real Estate Foundation
4	Policy. Continue to support infill/development, including manufactured housing, in serviced Village Centres.
5	Policy. Include housing policies in RGS. Include housing policies in OCPs.
6	Policy. Develop a region-wide policy on secondary units (suites, secondary dwellings) in Village Centres and rural parts of Electoral Areas.
7	Policy. Continue to implement the 2006 Manufactured Home Park Redevelopment Policy.
8	Regulatory Tool – Amenity Rezoning. Develop a policy / program to generate affordable home ownership through new development. AKA known as “Inclusionary Housing”.
9	Regulatory Tool – Zoning. Update zoning bylaws in serviced Village Centres to encourage small houses on small lots / infill or new subdivisions. Meets other sustainability objectives.
10	Financial Measure. Investigate the establishment of a Regional Housing Trust Fund.
11	Regional Housing Corporation. Build and maintain rental housing.



Connecting Housing
Needs to Housing
Opportunities

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

*Appendix A – Glossary of Terms,
Programs and Initiatives*

Appendix A – Glossary of Terms, Programs and Initiatives

Affordable Housing. This term is used in various ways, usually depending on local convention. In the context of this report, affordable housing refers to both market housing and non-market housing that does not cost more than 30% of a household’s gross income on a monthly basis.

Infill Housing. This refers to the development of vacant land within already settled areas.

Non-Market Housing. This refers to housing that is delivered and managed by an organization (non-profit society, local government, BC Housing) on a non-profit basis. The housing is usually subsidized on an ongoing basis, with the household who is housed paying on a “rent geared to income” basis.

Regeneration. This term is used to describe the redevelopment of an existing non-market project, usually one that is older and low-density. Depending on the specific project, today’s land value may financially support regeneration to a higher density, often resulting in both additional non-market and market housing.

Tenure Types

- **Co-housing.** This is a living arrangement where residents usually own their individual homes/units, and share common areas, such as a kitchen and dining room, children's playroom, workshops, laundry and more.

- **Condominium,** also referred to as strata-title in BC, is a form of property ownership where each owner holds a title to his or her unit, and shares ownership, operation and maintenance costs of the common elements of the development, for example, hallways, elevators, recreational facilities, gardens, mechanical or electrical services.
- **Housing Cooperative.** A legal entity formed to provide homes to its members on a continuing basis. In Canada, most housing cooperatives were initiated through Federal government programs in the 1970s.
- **Life Lease.** This is legal agreement that permits purchasers to occupy a home for life in exchange for an initial lump sum payment and subsequent monthly payments to cover the ongoing project management fees and maintenance and operating expenses.

Owner Occupancy is where the home/unit is owned by the person/household who occupies it. The home may be owned outright or may be mortgaged.

Rental Tenure occurs when rent is paid to a landlord, where the landlord is a private individual or company, a non-profit organization, or a government.

Housing Forms

Mobile Home. A single dwelling, designed and constructed to be transported on its own chassis and



Connecting Regional
Housing Needs to
Potential Housing
Solutions

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

capable of being moved to a new location on short notice. A type of manufactured housing.

Manufactured Housing. This form of housing is built in a factory, then transported to the site. Also referred to as modular housing.

Multi-unit housing / Apartments. A dwelling unit attached to other dwelling units, or other non-residential space in a building.

Row house / Townhouse. One of three or more dwellings joined side by side (or occasionally side to back), such as a townhouse or garden home, but not having any other dwellings either above or below.

Secondary Suite. A secondary suite is a self-contained dwelling unit that smaller in size than the primary dwelling unit.

Secondary Dwelling. A secondary dwelling is not attached to the primary dwelling but is on the same lot. It is smaller than the primary dwelling. Other terms for secondary dwellings are “coach house”, “carriage house”, or “guest cottage”.

Single-Detached House. A single dwelling not attached to any other dwelling or structure (except its own garage or shed). A single-detached house has open space on all sides, and has no dwellings either above it or below it.

Semi-Detached House. One of two dwellings attached side by side (or back to front) to each other, but not to any other dwelling or structure (except its own garage or shed). A semi-detached dwelling has no dwellings either above it or below it, and the two units together have open space on all sides.

Zoning Tools

Inclusionary Housing. Typically, inclusionary housing is a zoning-based approach to increase the supply of housing that is affordable to households with low to moderate income. At the time of rezoning, the local government requires developers of market housing to construct some proportion as “affordable housing”. This proportion varies from 10 percent to 25 percent, depending on the city. Cash-in-lieu, land, and other contributions of an equivalent value are sometimes accepted.

- **Housing Agreements** are the means to implement inclusionary housing. They provide local governments with a legally enforceable means of maintaining affordable housing over the long term. Housing agreements are filed in the Land Titles Office. The terms of the agreement continue in force even if ownership of the land changes.

Comprehensive Development Zoning. A customized zoning regulation applied to larger projects with several uses. This form of zoning enables a local government to negotiate detailed guidelines and specifications for all aspects of a development in an integrated manner. CD zones give local governments the flexibility to allocate densities and specify uses.

Density Bonusing. Local governments can adopt a density bonus scheme as an incentive for developers to provide an amenity, such as affordable housing, in exchange for variations in zoning requirements. Usually a developer is allowed a bonus to build more floor area when they opt to provide an amenity. The benefit of this approach is that the developer receives an increase in density than is not normally allowed under existing zoning while the municipality receives a desired amenity that furthers



Connecting Regional
Housing Needs to
Potential Housing
Solutions

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

public policy goals. This measure is most commonly used in downtowns and other higher density locations.

Incentive Tools

Differential Development Cost Charges / Fees.

Development Cost Charges (DCCs) are typically levied on new projects to help fund the costs incurred by growth. These charges are intended to reflect the capital costs that are imposed by new development and local governments usually charge a set rate per unit or per square foot. As an incentive or disincentive, development charges can be varied by geographic area, land use and density.

- Some local governments waive or reduce the development cost charges to minimize the financial barriers during the application and development review process and to facilitate the development of affordable housing, seniors housing, and care facilities. The same can be applied to building permit fees.

Housing Trust Fund. Housing trust funds are established and managed by a local government or a non-profit entity set up by local government. The revenue for this fund may come directly from a local government's revenues or via an amenity contribution from developers. These reserves provide a source of capital funding for affordable housing.

Subdivision Tool

Rental Conversion. Policies to limit the conversion of rental housing to condominiums help local governments preserve existing rental stock. These policies counteract the trend towards the redevelopment of rental housing for other uses. They also preserve rental housing where there is an absence of affordable rental housing development in the private sector.

Government Programs

BC Property Tax Deferral Program. Homeowners who have lived in BC for at least one year may defer payment of their property taxes on their principle residence if they are 55 years or over or have a disability. An applicant must have 25% equity in their home to qualify for tax deferment. The deferment is a low interest loan program that must be fully repaid before the home can be transferred to a new owner or upon death of the agreement holder.

- http://www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/individuals/Property_Taxes/Property_Tax_Deferment/about.htm

BC Financial Hardship Property Tax Deferment Program. This is a loan program that allows a homeowner who is currently experiencing financial hardship due to the current economic conditions to defer paying property taxes. The program is in effect for 2009 and 2010 taxes.

- <http://www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/>



Connecting Regional
Housing Needs to
Potential Housing
Solutions

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009

BC First Time Home Buyers Program. The program allows eligible purchasers, first time home buyers who meet the criteria, to claim an exemption from the Property Transfer Tax if the fair market value of the home is less than the threshold amount. In February 2008, the threshold was established as \$425,000.

- http://www.sbr.gov.bc.ca/business/Property_Taxes/Property_Transfer_Tax/first_Time_home_buyer.htm

BC Rental Assistance Program. This program, administered by BC Housing, provides eligible low-income, working families with cash assistance to help with their monthly rent payments. To qualify, families must have a gross household income of \$35,000 or less, have at least one dependent child, and have been employed at some point over the last year.

- <http://www.bchousing.org/programs/RAP>

BC Non-Profit Housing Programs. BC Housing is the Provincial government's agent for the delivery of programs that create new affordable non-market housing. The programs vary in response to housing needs and are communicated by a "proposal call" approach.

- <http://www.bchousing.org/programs/proposals>
- http://www.bchousing.org/programs/proposals/archive/Vancouver_Island_Region

Federal Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program (RRAP). This program offers financial help to low-income homeowners who need to make repairs to their homes. The program is aimed at people who live in substandard dwellings and cannot afford the repairs that are necessary to make their home safer and healthier to live in.

- http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/prfinas/prfinas_001.cfm

Federal Residential Rehabilitation Assistance Program for Rental Property. This program offers financial assistance to landlords of affordable housing to:

- modify dwellings for low-income persons with disabilities;
- perform repair, such as plumbing and heating upgrades, to apartments and rooming houses; and
- convert non-residential properties into affordable, self contained rental housing units or bed-units.

Landlords enter into an agreement which places a ceiling on the rents that may be charged after the repairs/renovations are completed.

- http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/prfinas/prfinas_008.cfm

Home Adaptation for Seniors Initiative (HASI)

The program offers financial assistance for minor home adaptations that will help low-income seniors to perform daily activities in their home independently and safely. Homeowners and landlords qualify if the occupant is 65 years or older and has difficulties with daily living and the total household income is at or below the program limit for the area.

- http://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/co/prfinas/prfinas_004.cfm



Connecting Regional
Housing Needs to
Potential Housing
Solutions

Prepared for
Regional District of
Nanaimo

March 2009



C I T Y S P A C E S

Planning | Project Management | Applied Research

5th floor, 844 Courtney Street, Victoria BC V8W 1C4 | 250.383.0304 | 866.383.0304

Suite 910, 688 West Hastings Street, Vancouver BC V6B 1P1 | 604.687.2281 | 888.687.2281

www.cityspaces.ca

