



ALBERTA
REAL ESTATE
FOUNDATION

Enabling Housing Choice Project

Attracting
Diverse Housing
Development
in Mayerthorpe

Town of Mayerthorpe

September 2023





LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

We, the Rural Development Network (RDN) and the Enabling Housing Choice (EHC) project acknowledge that the Town of Mayerthorpe is located in Treaty 6 territory signed in 1876.

We acknowledge the ancestors of all Treaty 6 Nations who have lived on this land and their descendants who will continue to live here. This territory is the shared traditional and ancestral home of the Plains and Woods Cree, the Stoney First Nation, as well as the Tsuu'tina Nakoda Nation. We also acknowledge that this territory is home to the Metis Nation of Alberta. We appreciate and honour the traditional Knowledge Keepers and Elders who are with us today and those who have gone before us.

RDN is committed to supporting the implementation of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada's Calls to Action, and believes in the need for meaningful engagement and consent with Indigenous peoples in the community. As this project specifically touches on development and planning concepts which are built on a colonial system of governance and land use management, we also recognize that we have more work to unpack the systems in which we are upholding and working within.

It is our sincere hope that the findings provided in this report will serve to address Mayerthorpe's diverse housing needs and provide greater housing security and inclusion for both Indigenous and non-Indigenous peoples in the community and surrounding area.



PROJECT ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thank you to the Alberta Real Estate Foundation for their funding and support of this project. We would also like to express our appreciation for the Town of Mayerthorpe's efforts in helping tackle housing diversity and choice in Albertan communities through participation in the Enabling Housing Choice project.

Furthermore, we would like to express our appreciation and gratitude to all the individuals from the Town of Mayerthorpe who participated in the internal interview process for this project. Your willingness to share your valuable insights, experiences, and perspectives has been instrumental in shaping the recommendations provided in this report.

Lastly, we extend our gratitude to all the external interview participants from the local housing industry in Mayerthorpe and surrounding area. We greatly appreciate the time and effort you dedicated to sharing your insights, identifying key challenges, highlighting opportunities, and suggesting ways to advance Mayerthorpe's diverse housing goals. Your expertise and contributions have played a vital role in shaping the understanding of the current housing landscape and guiding us towards meaningful solutions. Your generosity and willingness to collaborate have been instrumental in our goal to create a more affordable, inclusive and complete community in Mayerthorpe.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Introduction	1
Purpose	1
Project Scope	2
Methodology	2
Report Overview	3
Section 1 - The Importance of Housing Diversity for Mayerthorpe	4
1.1 Importance of Housing Diversity	4
1.2 Housing Needs in Mayerthorpe	6
1.3 Addressing Mayerthorpe’s Housing Needs	8
Section 2 - Incentive Policy Recommendations	9
2.1 Enhance Existing Development Incentives	10
2.2 Further Policy Incentive Approaches	16
Section 3 - Municipal Tools and Areas of Opportunity Recommendations	17
3.1 Mayerthorpe Land Use Bylaw Amendments	17
3.2 Repurpose Existing Vacant Buildings and Sites into Residential Use	25
3.3 Facilitate Continual Community Engagement	26
3.4 Continue With Education, Promotion and Marketing	27
3.5 Facilitate Housing Partnerships and Collaboration	29
3.6 Address Legislation and Regulations That Affect Residential Development	30
3.7 Conduct a Housing Needs and Demand Assessment	34
Next Steps	36



EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

On the behalf of the Rural Development Network (RDN), the Sustainable Housing Initiative (SHI) partnered with the Town of Mayerthorpe to prepare *Attracting Diverse Housing Development in Mayerthorpe*, that offers recommendations for enabling diverse housing development and housing choice in the community.

The Enabling Housing Choice Project aims to provide insight on how Albertan municipalities can support growth in their communities¹ and help provide more housing options and choices to their residents through local policy changes and capacity building strategies.

SHI and the Town of Mayerthorpe's partnership will support the project's goals in constructing transformational policy change while contributing to the creation of an Enabling Housing Choice Guidebook. Furthermore, it is intended to assist the Town of Mayerthorpe in determining municipal tools and areas of opportunity for enabling diverse housing development that meets the needs of Mayerthorpe's residents.

PURPOSE

The purpose of the *Attracting Diverse Housing Development in Mayerthorpe* is to investigate and analyze the current barriers to diverse housing development in the Town of Mayerthorpe, while also identifying municipal tools, incentive policies, and areas of opportunity that can be leveraged to enable more diverse housing options. By examining the existing landscape, the report seeks to provide actionable recommendations and strategies that the municipality can implement to foster a more inclusive and sustainable housing environment, accommodating the diverse needs of its residents.

Furthermore, this report is intended to support and advance objectives and policy directions outlined in the Town of Mayerthorpe's *Municipal Development Plan (2017)*, *Municipal Strategic Plan (2021-2025)* and *Municipal Sustainability Plan (2012)*. These key objectives, goals and policy directions include:

- The Town of Mayerthorpe encourages a diverse residential community offering a range of housing types (*Municipal Development Plan, 2017*)
- Decent and affordable accommodations for permanent and temporary residents will be available (*Municipal Sustainability Plan, 2012*)
- Attract housing developments to support population growth (*Municipal Strategic Plan, 2021- 2025*)

PROJECT SCOPE

The scope of *Attracting Diverse Housing Development in Mayerthorpe* consisted of the following main elements:

- Researching best practices and reviewing Town of Mayerthorpe statutory plans, strategies and relevant guiding documents.
- Understanding the context that characterizes Mayerthorpe's current housing landscape through a review of published housing related data.
- Gathering locally informed opinions on Mayerthorpe's housing situation through conducting interviews and focus groups with subject matter experts and housing stakeholders. Interview participants included members of Town Administration, planning consultants, and local developers and home builders.
- Identify the various opportunities and challenges associated with diverse housing development within Mayerthorpe's housing landscape.
- Make recommendations on municipal tools and approaches that will have the highest potential to encourage diverse housing development in Mayerthorpe.

METHODOLOGY

The methodology used to obtain the overall findings for *Attracting Diverse Housing Development in Mayerthorpe* consisted of the following:

- **Internal Interviews:** The internal interview process consisted of interviewing approximately 6 Town of Mayerthorpe staff to gain a variety of key insights and opinions on the current state of Mayerthorpe's housing landscape. The interviews were conducted from April 4 to July 10, 2023.
- **External Interviews:** The external interview process consisted of interviewing approximately 5 separate developers and homebuilders that currently operate within Mayerthorpe and the surrounding region. The interviews were conducted from June 14 to June 29, 2023.
- **Key Topics/Themes of the Internal and External Interview Process:** The following key topics and themes were discussed throughout the course of the internal and external interview process:
 - Barriers/challenges for developing diverse housing types in Mayerthorpe
 - What municipal tools the Town can utilize to encourage diverse housing development
 - How the Town can further incentivize diverse housing development while strengthening partnerships with the development industry.

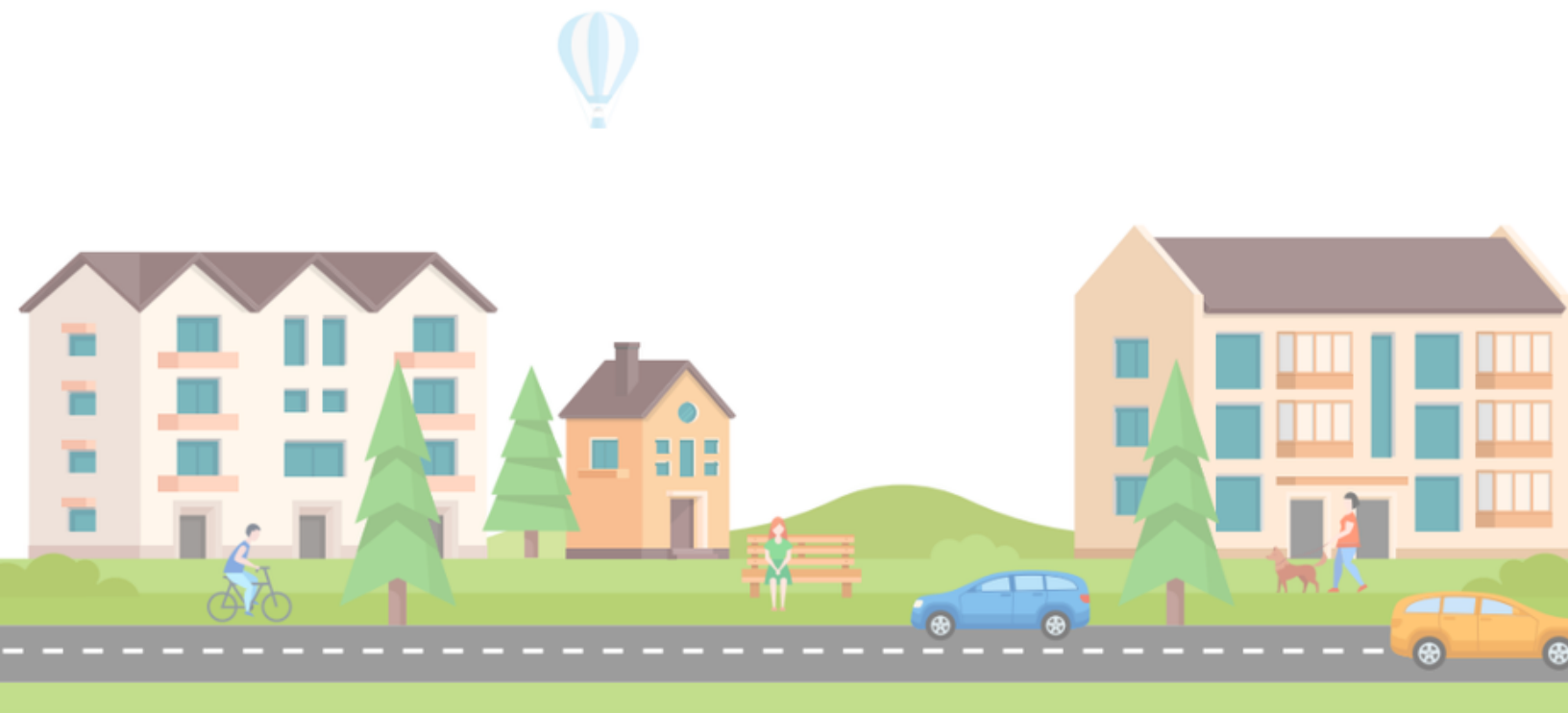
REPORT OVERVIEW

Section 1 provides an overview of the importance of housing diversity for Mayerthorpe, while highlighting key areas of housing needs in the community.

Section 2 provides a comprehensive exploration of the Town of Mayerthorpe's development incentive policies. The primary focus of this section is to analyze and enhance existing incentive policies while simultaneously identifying and assessing novel avenues for incentivizing developers to undertake housing projects within Mayerthorpe.

Section 3 presents the report's key recommendations for enabling diverse and affordable housing development in Mayerthorpe. It consists of primary tools and approaches that the Town can utilize to address the lack of diverse housing availability. The section also outlines areas of opportunity and additional approaches the Town can explore to take action on diverse housing needs in Mayerthorpe.

Section 4 outlines next steps of the project as the Enabling Housing Choice team will continue to monitor progress and key milestones related to diverse housing development in Mayerthorpe



SECTION 1: THE IMPORTANCE OF HOUSING DIVERSITY FOR MAYERTHORPE

INTRODUCTION

This section aims to emphasize the value of housing diversity for Mayerthorpe while sharing viewpoints from interview participants. It underscores how diverse housing options are crucial for the town and offers insights into why various participants believe such housing is necessary. By showcasing these perspectives, we can better understand the significance of housing diversity in meeting the town's needs and aspirations.

1.1 IMPORTANCE OF HOUSING DIVERSITY

Housing diversity refers to the range of housing types and forms in a community. A diverse community has various different dwelling types and sizes – which may be achieved by flexible zoning that promotes a variety of building forms. By providing greater housing choice, communities can meet the housing needs of increasingly diverse residents and household types (such as young families, professionals, retirees, people with disabilities).

The importance of housing diversity for a town like Mayerthorpe, or any community for that matter, is significant and can have various positive impacts on the residents and the town as a whole. Such impacts include:

- **Social and Economic Diversity:** Housing diversity attracts a broader range of residents with varying income levels, backgrounds, and lifestyles. This fosters a more diverse and inclusive community, creating a vibrant social fabric and supporting local businesses with a broader customer base.
- **Population Growth and Retention:** Offering a diverse range of housing options can attract new residents to Mayerthorpe and encourage existing residents to stay. Young professionals, families, retirees, and individuals with different housing needs can all find suitable accommodations, helping to sustain or increase the town's population.
- **Attracting a Skilled Workforce:** If Mayerthorpe aims to attract businesses and industries, a diverse housing market is crucial. Potential employees will be more likely to consider moving to the town if there are housing options that cater to their preferences and needs.

- **Aging Population and Accessibility:** As populations age, the need for accessible and age-friendly housing becomes more important. Housing diversity can include designs that accommodate people with mobility challenges, ensuring that older residents can continue to live comfortably in their community.
- **Community Stability:** A mix of housing types can contribute to community stability. If the town's housing market is solely reliant on one type of housing, fluctuations in that market can have a disproportionate impact. A diverse market can mitigate these effects by spreading risk across different housing sectors.

What We Heard

When asked about the importance of housing diversity in Mayerthorpe, interview participants provided the following comments:

- “An important aspect to consider is developing housing that is suitable and meets the needs for a variety of demographics.”
- “Diversity has to do with the price range in the various levels of housing that’s built. For example, in the low and mid-price range of housing, there are different types/kinds of homes that are available. Diversity occurs through the price points where people want to enter the market and what the options are in that price range.”
- “Housing diversity means having housing that is affordable for an array of incomes. It is also crucial for municipalities to have housing that is available and accessible for those with physical disabilities, mental, emotional or more severe disabilities. Lastly, it is important to have housing that can accommodate a variety of needs and preferences for all demographics, including young families, single individuals, seniors, people with disabilities, etc.”



1.2 HOUSING NEEDS IN MAYERTHORPE

While an updated Housing Needs and Demand Assessment will provide a statistical analysis of Mayerthorpe's overall housing needs, the EHC team instead gauged interview participant's perspectives on what they believe are Mayerthorpe's key areas of housing need.

1.2.1 INCREASED RENTAL HOUSING OPTION

During the interviews, participants consistently emphasized the urgent need for increased rental housing options in Mayerthorpe. Participants noted that a shortage of rental properties is affecting both newcomers seeking temporary accommodations and long-term residents in search of more flexible living arrangements. The participants underscored how additional rental housing would not only address housing scarcity but also support the town's economic growth by attracting a diverse workforce. Their insights emphasized the tangible impact that an enhanced rental housing market could have on Mayerthorpe's overall livability and community vitality.

What We Heard

- “People in Mayerthorpe are buying single detached housing and turning them into rental units due to the shortage of rental apartments. New commercial investment is generating jobs, but rental accommodations are full.”
- “The lack of available rental housing for Mayerthorpe’s workforce, means people will look elsewhere (such as Whitecourt) to accommodate their rental housing needs.”
- “There are currently not enough diverse housing options for renters - forcing prospective renters to live outside of Mayerthorpe and commute into the town for work. This in turn has impacts on the local economy - the economic base suffers from people who live elsewhere and come to Mayerthorpe to work and then go home.”
- “Currently Mayerthorpe only has one apartment building with 13 suites. More rental apartment buildings are needed.”
 - **Note:** The Town of Mayerthorpe Administration confirmed that there are two apartment buildings in town with 12 and 6 units, respectively.

1.2.2 HOUSING FOR SENIORS

Interview participants also underscored the urgent requirement for additional housing options tailored to Mayerthorpe's senior population. Participants expressed concerns about the limited availability of suitable housing for seniors, emphasizing the need for age-friendly accommodations that promote independence and community engagement. With the town's aging demographic in mind, interviewees stressed the importance of expanding housing options that cater to the unique needs of seniors, ensuring their comfort and well-being while fostering a sense of belonging within the community.

What We Heard

- “A large number of seniors are living in 3 or 4 bedroom single detached housing. However, there are limited alternative housing types (of good quality) available for seniors to move into - such as apartments and complexes for seniors.”
- “Senior residents have left Mayerthorpe because they don’t want to move into older housing stock - There is a strong need for more seniors housing (such as smaller, easily accessible 4-plexes) that can accommodate them.”

1.2.3 DIVERSE INFILL DEVELOPMENT TO REPLACE OLD HOUSING STOCK

Another focus area that participants emphasized is the need for increased infill development within Mayerthorpe. They specifically pointed out the importance of replacing older housing stock that exists in the community, noting that older housing types often do not accommodate the needs of larger families. This sentiment underscores the practical and strategic value of infill projects, as they not only address the aging infrastructure but also promote efficient land use. By redeveloping underutilized or aging properties, Mayerthorpe can revitalize neighborhoods, meet modern housing standards, and contribute to the overall aesthetic and functionality of the town.



What We Heard

- Participants noted that Mayerthorpe is currently seeing a large number of RTMs, modular or manufactured homes being purchased by community members and then moved onto their property (not by homebuilders). Mayerthorpe should continue trying to encourage infill with RTM's that have single detached housing characteristics, while working with property owners to add infill housing that works with the character of the neighborhood.
- "Mayerthorpe does what it can to rid itself of older/derelict housing stock so that they can open a lot for infill - but the overall age of housing stock is a problem in Mayerthorpe currently."
- "Because the housing stock is older, it's not meeting the current needs of new families. Furthermore, people of different ethnicities have difficulty finding housing that can accommodate larger families (such as 6 or 7 bedroom homes)."
- "Some of Mayerthorpe's younger families desire larger lots/houses, but without newer housing on larger lots in the town, these families move out to acreages."

1.3 ADDRESSING MAYERTHORPE'S HOUSING NEEDS

Recognizing the pressing need for diverse housing development in Mayerthorpe, the subsequent sections of this report delve into a comprehensive analysis of current development incentives, land use regulations and municipal initiatives related to housing development in the community. Through a thorough examination of these factors, this report aims to provide an understanding of Mayerthorpe's existing housing landscape and identify areas for improvement.

Furthermore, the recommendations provided in the following sections of this report are grounded in rigorous research, and are enriched by the comprehensive insights gathered through our extensive community engagement efforts. Collaborative discussions with developers, homebuilders, and internal staff from the Town of Mayerthorpe have provided a multifaceted perspective on the challenges and opportunities related to housing development. This synthesis of input from key stakeholders has been instrumental in shaping recommendations that are not only practical but also tailored to the unique dynamics of Mayerthorpe. By leveraging these collective insights, the proposed recommendations seek to enable a planning environment that fosters diverse housing development, while aligning with the aspirations of both the community and local stakeholders.

SECTION 2: INCENTIVE POLICY RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This section delves into a comprehensive exploration of the Town of Mayerthorpe's development incentive policies. The primary focus is to analyze and enhance existing incentive policies while simultaneously identifying and assessing novel avenues for incentivizing developers to undertake housing projects within Mayerthorpe. By closely examining the current incentives and identifying potential areas of opportunity for additional incentives, this endeavour aims to chart a strategic course that will not only attract developers but also contribute to the Town's overall prosperity and continued progress.

Furthermore, this section contains key insights and perspectives obtained from our engagement process with internal and external participants. These perspectives included comments that are relevant to development incentive policies as they are currently structured in Mayerthorpe, while offering suggestions for exploring additional development incentives. It should be noted that these perspectives outlined below are not necessarily endorsed by the Town of Mayerthorpe, nor are they deemed to reflect the views of the Town Administration.

The following What We Heard informational box consists of general comments related to incentive policies in Mayerthorpe, and are not directed at any particular incentive policy.

What We Heard (General Comments on Incentive Policies)

- “While these incentives are not likely going to bring new developers to the town, they may help the local builder who builds one or two homes at a time and waits for them to sell.”
- “The best incentive for a developer is the postponement of costs. This is not asking to be taken off the hook for costs, but if the upfront costs are deferred to the end of the project, then lot sales can cover the startup costs.”
- “There is interest in having the Town provide incentives that would encourage people/general workforce to move to Mayerthorpe.”
- In general, participants mentioned that better advertisement is needed for Mayerthorpe’s development incentives and opportunities. Additionally, it was suggested that the Town should consider extending timelines or enhancing the incentive policies where possible.

2.1 ENHANCE EXISTING DEVELOPMENT INCENTIVES

The Town of Mayerthorpe has taken proactive steps to stimulate housing development within its community by offering a range of incentives to potential developers. However, there is significant potential for further enhancement and expansion of existing incentive policies to spur housing development in the community. By bolstering its existing incentives, the Town can more effectively entice developers to invest in its real estate landscape.

The following amendments to existing incentive policies are recommended for consideration by the Town to help attract housing development in the community.

Note: Each incentive policy section outlines its current existing purpose, key definitions, principles, recommended enhancements/amendments and perspectives obtained from the stakeholder engagement process.

2.1.1 DEVELOPMENT TAX INCENTIVE (POLICY X-005)

Current Purpose

To establish a rebate structure for municipal tax incentives to encourage new housing, commercial and industrial development stimulating the economy in the Town of Mayerthorpe.

Current Definitions

Development: Means newly constructed buildings, excluding accessory buildings, garages, portable buildings, temporary buildings, mobile homes and manufactured homes.

Current Principles

- This policy applies to housing, industrial, and commercial new construction authorized by Development that is subject to municipal tax. The municipal tax rebate is structured as follows:
 - Supplemental Municipal Tax - 100%
 - 1st Year Municipal Tax – 75%
 - 2nd Year Municipal Tax – 50%
 - 3rd Year Municipal Tax – 25%
- This policy does not apply where Policy X-006 Infill Tax Rebate is applicable.

Recommendations

- To extend the overall duration of the rebate structure to a five year or more period;
- To clearly define what is meant by “housing” within the policy;
- To broaden the current definition of “development” to include more diverse housing types such as:
 - Manufactured homes;
 - Modular homes and RTM (ready-to-move) homes;
 - Accessory dwelling units (such as garden suites, secondary suites, garage conversions, basement suites).
- To provide an additional 5% municipal tax rebate to encourage the construction of additional units for apartment developments.

Benefits

- A lengthened timeline for municipal tax incentives provides developers with a longer horizon for their investment to mature along with a sense of stability and predictability.
- Broadening the current definition of “development” as part of the Development Tax Incentive policy expands the range of housing choices available to residents. This diversity accommodates different lifestyles, preferences, and income levels, fostering a more inclusive and integrated community.
- Diversifying housing types can create a more cost-effective approach to housing development. Incentivizing developers and builders to focus on diverse housing types can lead to the creation of more affordable housing options, addressing the pressing issue of housing affordability within the community.
- The 5% municipal tax rebate incentive for additional apartment units can be used to encourage mixed use developments in commercial areas by offering property owners an incentive to add residential units above their business.

Important Considerations

- The Town should assess the potential impact of increased timelines for municipal tax incentives on their local revenue. This includes projecting the expected reduction in municipal tax revenue and determining whether the benefits of increased housing development outweigh the financial costs.

- Expanding the definition of "development" requires careful deliberation to strategically prioritize and incentivize the necessary housing types that will best serve the community's needs. By thoughtfully redefining this concept, Mayerthorpe can proactively address housing challenges and create a more inclusive and diverse housing market.
- Incentivizing the construction of additional apartment units will require that proposed developments adhere to height and setback requirements stipulated in the Land Use Bylaw.

What We Heard

- While a majority of participants felt this incentive was a positive step in the right direction to incentivize housing development, some commented that the three-year period could be extended to five years to make it potentially more enticing.
- “This incentive is progressive in the sense that it can be applied to all types of development. In general, it was received relatively favorably by the development industry with respect to residential development.”
- “Tax incentives are a reasonable idea. These will be most useful for a developer who will be there long-term (especially purpose built rentals). However, this is not as enticing for someone who is trying to quickly build and sell a house and then leave.”

2.1.2 REDEVELOPMENT TAX INFILL REBATE (POLICY X-006)

Current Purpose: To encourage redevelopment in areas where the housing stock is older and in need of replacement.

Current Principles

- This policy shall cover new home construction and moved in housing that has been brought up to current building code standards for residential construction only and new building construction for commercial construction only. It applies to single-family dwelling, multi-family dwellings, modular homes, manufactured homes and commercial buildings. It does not apply to old manufactured homes, garages, porches, sheds, decks and fences or other moved in buildings.
- It does not apply to additions to existing buildings. It does not apply to any development where a development permit has not been issued. The difference between the residential/commercial minimum tax and the entire amount of the municipal tax will be rebated for a two-year period after the completion of construction for new home construction and moved in housing that has been brought up to current building code standards.

Recommendations

- That the Redevelopment Tax Infill Rebate be amalgamated with the Development Tax Incentive (Policy X-005).

Benefits

- By amalgamating the Tax Infill Rebate with the Development Tax Incentive, Mayerthorpe will take a strategic step towards promoting balanced growth and inclusivity. This merger broadens the scope of the Development Tax Incentive, encompassing a wider eligible development area.
- Ensures the equitable distribution of priorities between infill and new development, while providing incentive opportunities for smaller property owners or those with limited resources.

Important Considerations

- Expanding eligible geographical boundaries for development incentives requires a thorough and thoughtful approach to ensure positive outcomes for both the targeted areas and the broader community.

What We Heard

- This policy received mixed responses, with some participants indicating that the two-year period could be extended, while others suggested providing a full tax refund rather than a rebate.
- One participant noted that this policy is hard to use to attract infill housing development. There are considerable challenges in attracting infill when adjacent properties are older/unsightly, which has led to the vacancy of many lots that could otherwise be infilled.
- Another participant noted that the intent behind this incentive is to provide builders with a two-year infill rebate that gives them more time to sell the development. Similarly to Policy X-005, it has been received favorably by developers/builders, but it could potentially be extended for a longer period of time.
- A third participant suggested that infill is “where it's at” - as there are lower additional infrastructure costs required per new unit developed. Some lots in small communities are worth more without the current buildings (old, small, in need of repair). Redeveloping with infill can be a good way to improve the lots and a rebate will help encourage that.

2.1.3 SUBDIVISION TAX REFUND PROGRAM (X-003)

Current Purpose: To encourage creation of new lots within the corporate limits of the Town of Mayerthorpe.

Current Principles

- Municipal Government Act RSA 2000, c. M-26, S. 347(1) states: If a Council considers it equitable to do so it may, generally or with respect to a particular taxable property or business or a class of taxable property or business, do one or more of the following, with or without conditions:
 - cancel or reduce tax arrears;
 - cancel or refund all or part of a tax;
 - defer the collection of a tax.
- Program applies to a subdivision where the number of new lots being created are equal to or greater than five (5+).
- Qualifying municipal tax refund:
 - 75% of the first year municipal tax.

Recommendations

- Extending the municipal tax refund period beyond one year for a subdivision where the number of new lots being created are equal to or greater than three (3+).

Benefits

- A multi-year extension provides stability and predictability for developers while also encouraging long-term planning, making it easier for developers to commit to larger projects and investments.
- Some development projects are designed to be implemented in phases, which might span several years. Extending the Subdivision Tax Refund Program allows developers to complete projects in phases without the concern of the incentive expiring between phases. This promotes a smoother and more coherent development process.

Important Considerations

- Evaluate the projected impact on subdivision development activity and the Town's municipal tax revenue, to understand the potential benefits and costs of extending the length of the program.

What We Heard

- Although this policy received limited comments from participants, one participant noted that this policy is likely to be more impactful for commercial developments rather than residential developments. A key challenge is the cost of servicing these subdivisions and the market value of the lots - as there is not a strong return on investment for developers. It is difficult to find a residential investor who's willing to stick with a project over a longer time period. Most investors want a quick return and the ability to move on to another investment.
- One participant noted that while this policy (and the others) look good on paper - they are apparently not enticing enough to incentivize housing or subdivision development in Mayerthorpe.

2.1.4 UTILITIES BYLAW WATER/SEWER SERVICE CONNECTION COST DEFERRAL INCENTIVE (UTILITIES BYLAW - NO. 1046)

Current Purpose: To provide a cost deferral incentive for developers that reduces upfront costs related to water/sewer service connections. These costs are then recovered by the Town over a certain period of time (i.e. 12 months).

Recommendations

- For the Town to amend the Utilities Bylaw (No. 1046) to include a Forgivable Cost Incentive that will forgive a portion of the water/sewer service connection costs for newly created lots.

Benefits

- A full cost forgiveness is an attractive incentive that can stand out in the eyes of developers considering different projects or locations. This can contribute to attracting investment and spurring development activity.
- Deferring costs can introduce financial risk for both the developer and the Town. If market conditions change or the development faces challenges, deferred costs can become a burden that impacts the viability of the project. Implementing a Forgivable Cost incentive eliminates this risk entirely.

What We Heard

- While this incentive policy received minimal feedback, one participant suggested there should be a deposit required by the developer, especially if the project is not developed and the line needs to be cut off.

2.2 FURTHER POLICY INCENTIVE APPROACHES

The following policy incentives have been implemented by other rural municipalities throughout Western Canada. The intent of outlining these incentives is to provide an initial starting point for exploring alternative incentive approaches that enable housing development in Mayerthorpe.

1. Vermillion Multi-Family Development Incentive

Purpose: To encourage the creation of new multi-family residential dwellings through a one-year tax cancellation initiative.

2. Drumheller Multi-Unit Residential Rental Incentive Program

Purpose: To incentivize the development of affordable multi-unit residential rental dwellings through a 4-year property tax abatement.

3. Edson Home Builders' Incentive Program Policy

Purpose: To aid and promote timely development through the incentivised sale of specified Town owned residential properties to registered home building companies for the construction of urban housing. This is accomplished by deferring the balance of the purchase price of land through a mortgage and deferring the municipal portion of the property tax.

4. Martensville Development Incentive Program

Purpose: To provide a tax abatement on vacant lots to encourage residential, commercial and industrial land development.

5. Dauphin Housing Incentive Program

Purpose: To encourage the creation of new residential dwellings to address Dauphin's housing shortage, the City provides an incentive of \$1,000 per new dwelling unit created (house, apartment, basement suite etc.)



SECTION 3: MUNICIPAL TOOLS & AREAS OF OPPORTUNITY RECOMMENDATIONS

INTRODUCTION

This section outlines recommended changes to the Mayerthorpe Land Use Bylaw in light of the responses from the community survey, developers, realtors, home builders and community stakeholders. It also provides recommendations for other initiatives that are intended to encourage increasing housing diversity and choice in Mayerthorpe. With all the recommendations, the intention is to reduce development barriers, increase housing supply and enable housing diversity.

The intention of these recommendations is to initiate and promote discussion among community stakeholders - town administration, developers, businesses, and residents. They are suggestions that may help to reduce development barriers, increase housing supply and encourage housing diversity in Mayerthorpe. The most important consideration with these suggestions is that they be used as a platform for discussion about the status quo, whether the community feels the status quo should be changed, to what degree it should be changed, and then how to facilitate that change.

The first part of this section will outline suggested amendments to the current Land Use Bylaw to enhance and enable diverse housing development in the town. The following parts will outline other areas of opportunity that can be explored to facilitate diversity and inclusion in the town.

3.1 MAYERTHORPE LAND USE BYLAW AMENDMENTS

The following amendments to the Land Use Bylaw are recommended for consideration by the Town to help diversify the types of housing that may be built, increase density in a way that will not adversely affect existing neighborhoods, and shorten the process for development permit approvals.

It has been noted by Town Administration that these recommendations will be discussed at the next review of the Land Use Bylaw to ensure that they are in alignment with the Town of Mayerthorpe's statutory plans and documents.

3.1.1 RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

Typically, land use bylaw regulations restrict the type of housing that may be built in residential districts. It has been identified that allowing more types of housing to be built in residential districts will help diversify housing, increase housing choice, and potentially influence affordability of housing in the town.

The following the Land Use Bylaw amendments are recommended for consideration by the Town to diversify housing options in the community:

3.1.2 REDUCE THE NUMBER OF RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

Current:

There are 7 residential land use districts in Mayerthorpe. This reduces the flexibility of what can be built on a parcel and it makes the residential development application process more onerous than necessary. For example, if the proposed use doesn't comply with the district, an applicant must go through a lengthy and costly redistricting process before applying for a development permit.

Recommended Action:

Reduce the number of residential land use districts by:

1. Combining the R1 and R2 districts;
2. Combining R3 and R4 districts;
3. Keeping the RW, R5P and R5S districts.

Benefits:

- Simplifies zoning districts in the community, making it easier for landowners to understand and comply with the requirements of the zone;
- Allows more flexibility in what can be built on the parcel, increasing inclusion of different housing and family types;
- Removes (some of) the need to redistrict a parcel to accommodate a non-compliant use, which reduces the length of the development approval process;
- Reduces the costly and lengthy process of redistricting a parcel to accommodate a different residential use. Under the MGA, the redistricting process requires circulations, public notifications and requires 3 readings of Council, which typically takes 8 weeks or more, depending on how often Council meets. After redistricting is complete, then a development permit application may be submitted. If it's a discretionary use, processing will take another 4 to 6 weeks, depending on how often MPC meets.

What We Heard

- “Everything is very black and white in terms of development procedures and permitted use within the Land Use Bylaw; Current land use regulations are outdated and require updating.”

3.1.3 INCREASE HOUSING DIVERSITY IN THE NEW RESIDENTIAL DISTRICTS

Current:

Each of the 7 current residential districts in the Land Use Bylaw allows a different variety of dwellings as permitted and discretionary uses. Simplifying the districts and changing some of the uses from discretionary to permitted will increase the diversity and density in each district.

Recommended Actions:

For the combined R1 and R2 districts (rename district after combining):

- Combine all the listed permitted use housing types from these districts into a new consolidated residential district. This will bring the following housing types into one residential district as permitted uses: single detached dwelling, duplex, triplex, fourplex, row housing, manufactured home;
- Add Ready-to-Move homes in the new residential district as a permitted use (Not currently defined in the LUB);
- Add secondary suites, accessory dwelling units, garden suites, basement suites, etc (same concept, different name) to the district(s) as a permitted use, or use accessory dwelling units as a catch all use.

Benefits:

- Simplifies zoning districts in the community, making it easier for landowners to understand and comply with the requirements of the zone.
- Making all of these uses permitted reduces the length of the permit approval process from 6 or more weeks to 2 or 3 weeks for a permitted use application. A discretionary use application must be circulated for comment and then approved by MPC, which can take 6 or more weeks depending on how often MPC meets. In addition, a discretionary use permit may be appealed, which can add several more weeks to the process.

- Increases density in an existing neighborhood incrementally. By allowing these types of housing on infill lots, the change in density will occur slowly and over a long period of time, which makes the changes less noticeable and more acceptable to neighbors.
- Density can be added to the neighborhood without the need to update or build additional infrastructure to support it.
- Attached housing and manufactured homes can be more cost-effective to build than single-family homes.
- Increases housing diversity for both rental and home ownership for residents throughout the community, rather than in specific areas, which increases inclusion.
- Secondary suites provide revenue for the homeowner and additional tax revenue to the municipality.
- May contribute to expanding the supply of less expensive housing and/or affordable housing.

Further Recommended Actions:

For the combined R3 and R4 districts (rename district after combining):

- Combine all the listed permitted use housing types from these 2 districts into a new consolidated residential district - R2. This will bring the following housing types into one residential district as permitted uses: duplex, triplex, fourplex, row housing, apartment;
- Remove single-detached dwelling and secondary suite as a discretionary use; these 2 uses are not compatible with medium and high-density residential development.

Benefits:

- Simplifies zoning districts in the community, making it easier for landowners to understand and comply with the requirements of the zone.
- Allows more flexibility in what can be built on the parcel, increasing inclusion with different housing and for different family types.
- Removes (some of) the need to redistrict a parcel to accommodate a non-compliant use, which reduces the length of the development approval process.
- Removes the costly and lengthy process of redistricting a parcel to accommodate a different residential use.

What We Heard

- “The Town should change bylaw regulations to allow for more manufactured homes.”
- “We should look at land use classifications to expand the potential for secondary suite options.”

3.1.4 ENABLE ADDITIONAL RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT IN COMMERCIAL AND INDUSTRIAL DISTRICTS

The current standard in the Land Use Bylaw is to restrict residential development in commercial and industrial areas. Through the community engagement process, it has been identified that commercial areas in the Town may benefit from limited residential development, which may help to diversify housing and potentially influence housing affordability in the town.

- **Note:** Concerns were raised by Mayerthorpe’s Planning Consultant with respect to adding residential uses to Commercial and Industrial Districts as this could potentially create conflict between residential and non-residential activities. These concerns will need to be discussed in depth as part of making the following proposed changes to the Land Use Bylaw.

The following Land Use Bylaw amendments are recommended for consideration by the Town:

Current Uses:

In the Commercial - C1 (Downtown Core) district of the Land Use Bylaw, the following dwelling types are allowed as discretionary uses: secondary suites and mixed use.

In the Commercial - C2 (General Commercial) and Industrial - M1 districts of the Land Use Bylaw, no dwelling types of any kind are allowed, except for a caretaker’s residence as a discretionary use.

Recommended Actions:

Diversify the types of housing that are allowed as permitted uses in the commercial and industrial districts of the Land Use Bylaw by making the following changes:

1. Make secondary suites a permitted use in the C1 and C2 districts;

- **Note:** Rename ‘caretaker’s residence’ to ‘accessory dwelling unit’ (definition needed); add this as a permitted use in the C1 and C2 districts.

2. Add mixed use development as a permitted uses in the C1 and C2 districts;

- Mixed-use development is defined as a blend of multiple uses, such as residential and other uses into one space, where those uses are physically and functionally integrated. It may apply to a single building or to an entire block;

• **Note:** this will allow another level of residential use to be added to commercial or industrial development (both new and existing).

3. Add hotels and motels as permitted use in the C1 district;

- Add a residential component to hotel development in the C1 and C2 districts;

• **Note:** this use will need to be defined and building code regulations will need to be addressed.

4. Add accessory dwellings and mixed use development to the Industrial M1 district as permitted or discretionary uses.

Benefits:

- Increases the range of housing that may be built as a permitted use in a commercial or industrial district.
- Provides flexibility for businesses to have dwellings for workers or themselves when needed.
- Making a use permitted instead of discretionary reduces the length of the permit approval process.
- Housing units can be added to an existing development or area without the need to update or build additional infrastructure to support it.
- Increases the ability for businesses to house new workers. This can take form in different ways: as temporary housing until the worker is able to rent or purchase; as longer term housing for a worker who doesn't need more than what the unit offers.
- Expands the housing supply; may contribute to the supply of less expensive and/or affordable housing.



What We Heard

- Participants noted that Mayerthorpe should enable zoning that can further accommodate the development of mixed-use buildings (commercial & rental units) as well as more broadly permit secondary suites across the community.
- “In an area of 70 undeveloped acres of land in the Town, the Area Structure Plan (ASP) allows for mixed use development. The Town should promote these types of developments to allow for more rental dwellings in commercial areas”.

3.1.5 IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS AND MITIGATION MEASURES

It is important to discuss the recommended changes and benefits listed above in terms of additional considerations and impacts to existing residential neighborhoods and commercial areas. Mitigating measures have been suggested, but should be discussed further by Town Administration, the planner, and Council.

1. After reviewing the Mayerthorpe Land Use Bylaw, and given the scope of the recommended changes to its current districts, it is recommended that the Town explore ‘Form Based’ coding to update the next Land Use Bylaw.

- **Note:** This will require a fairly major overhaul of the current Land Use Bylaw. See additional discussion in Section 4.3.

- [This is a current example of this type of land use document being used in Alberta:](#)

2. Building code regulations may require unexpected and expensive construction costs for the homeowner or business owner. (i.e. fire code requires fire-rated walls between home and suite).

Consider: Ensuring that residents taking advantage of these changes understand the importance of following code requirements and what the costs of those requirements are.

3. Additional parking may be needed where density is increased, which may add to parking issues in the area.

Consider: Reviewing and adjusting parking requirements as necessary in the Land Use Bylaw to ensure they meet the needs of both the landowner and the surrounding area.

4. Adding density to residential areas and adding dwellings to commercial areas over many years may have a cumulative effect that creates a need to upgrade infrastructure (water, sewer, etc);

Consider:

- Preparing an inventory and analysis of the town's existing infrastructure to determine which areas can support additional density;
- Preparing an overlay in the Land Use Bylaw that shows areas where density may be increased without the immediate need to upgrade infrastructure.

5. Increasing density in residential areas and adding dwellings to commercial areas could create pushback from surrounding neighbors or businesses from the increase in people and cars in the area. Changing the zoning to allow 'undesirable' housing in the area may result in pushback from community members

Consider:

- Engaging residents, Council and community stakeholders to discuss the benefits and implications of this change;
- Early and continuous communication is key; make sure people understand the pros and cons of this change;
- Discuss where this type of use would be best applied in the town.

6. Making a use permitted instead of discretionary can have far-reaching effects on the community. Permitted applications are approved by the Development Officer rather than MPC, which speeds up the permitting process. While this can have a positive effect on how quickly a use may be built, it also removes the ability for neighbors to speak against an application or appeal a decision that may have a negative impact on them.

Consider:

- Determining whether it is in the Town's best interest to change uses from discretionary to permitted, or to add these uses to the district as permitted;
- Engaging residents in the discussion early and continuously; make sure people understand the pros and cons of this change.

7. The above recommended changes to the residential, commercial and industrial districts may impact other areas of the Land Use Bylaw that are not discussed above. It is important to have a thorough discussion about how these recommendations will impact the entire bylaw and not just the sections being changed.

3.2 REPURPOSE EXISTING VACANT BUILDINGS AND SITES INTO RESIDENTIAL USE

Vacant buildings and sites, in both residential and commercial areas, can be a valuable resource to provide additional housing in a rural community. Many rural communities have a few vacant buildings and lots that could be repurposed as housing. A common example of this is repurposing a local motel into residential apartments.

Note: While it is suggested that a steering committee be created to facilitate the tasks in **Sections 3.2, 3.3, 3.4** and **3.5** of this report, it is acknowledged that there may be limited availability and capacity of potential committee members to sit on 4 separate committees. Therefore, it is further suggested that one steering committee be created to address the tasks outlined in these Sections, with regular reports and updates from the committee being provided to Council.

Recommended Actions:

To explore future opportunities that facilitate upgrading vacant residential buildings or repurposing vacant retail or commercial buildings, it is recommended that the Town consider the following:

- Set up an ad hoc committee to facilitate this initiative; suggested members include community leaders, realtors, developers, home-builders, Town employees, business owners;
- Prepare a mandate and/or guidelines for the group that outlines the project objectives and goals; this mandate would be updated by the committee as they take ownership of the project;
- Prepare an inventory of vacant buildings or properties with notable characteristics and features (this could include heritage/historical characteristics) that have potential for conversion to dwellings;

[Example: Converting a school to affordable housing in Lunenburg, NS](#)

- Prepare an inventory of brownfield sites that have potential for residential development.

• **Note:** Development of any brownfield site will require the developer to conform to the Alberta Remediation Regulation and other provincial policies that apply to brownfield remediation.

• **Disclaimer:** This initiative has been added by Mayerthorpe Town Administration and is not endorsed by RDN.

3.3 FACILITATE CONTINUAL COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To achieve the goal of increasing housing diversity and choice in Trochu, the Town will benefit from early and continual engagement with community members. All residents - landowners, renters, young and old, couples with and without childrens, businesses, home-builders, developers - have important information to contribute about determining how to increase housing choice and diversity in Mayerthorpe. Without a doubt, having a diverse group of people involved in talking about housing diversity will inevitably lead to further discussions about affordable housing opportunities in the community.

Recommended Action

To facilitate continued community engagement in Mayerthorpe, it is recommended that the Town consider the following:

- Set up an ad hoc committee to facilitate this initiative; suggested members include community leaders, seniors, young people, couples, realtors, developers, home-builders, Town employees, business owners and anyone else who has something to say about housing;
- Prepare a mandate and/or guidelines for the committee that outlines its objectives and goals; this mandate will be updated by the committee as needed;
- Committee tasks could include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Review the changes/amendments that have been suggested in this report to update the current Mayerthorpe Land Use Bylaw;
 - Research **Form Based Code** as a land use planning tool;
 - **Note:** Changing to Form Based Code will require the current Land Use Bylaw to be completely rewritten. Through discussions with Town Administration, the Land Use Bylaw is due for updating, so this may be an ideal time to consider this change.
 - **Example:** High River used Form Based Code in writing their current Land Use Bylaw:
- Spreading the word about the changes that are happening in the community to help reduce perceived negative impacts or pushback.

Benefits

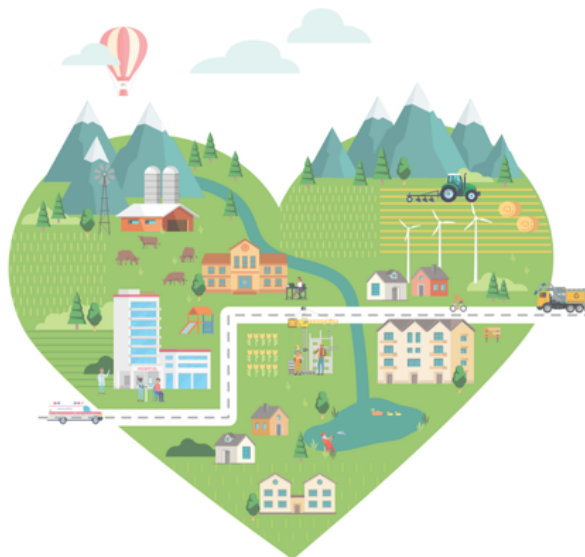
- Engaging residents and stakeholders early in the process, and having them review and take ownership of suggested changes to policy and bylaws about diverse or affordable housing will help to reduce negative reactions and pushback from the community;
- Having community members spread the word about the benefits and implication of the changes should help increase ‘buy in’ by the community.

3.4 CONTINUE WITH EDUCATION, PROMOTION AND MARKETING

There were several comments in the interviews and focus group discussions about Mayerthorpe promoting the community more fully and notifying residents about policies, events, and issues more often and with more complete information. This section provides a discussion about tools for Mayerthorpe to promote and market the community, both within the Town and outside of it.

3.4.1 RECOMMENDED ACTION: HIRE A MARKETING PROFESSIONAL

Through discussions with focus groups, it is recommended that the Town consider contracting a marketing professional with expertise in economic development, community engagement, and relationship-building within the real estate and development industry. This professional would serve as a valuable liaison between the municipality and potential stakeholders, helping to effectively communicate Mayerthorpe's unique strengths, development opportunities and incentives. This will enable the Town to take a proactive and dynamic approach to attracting investment, fostering growth, and enhancing its overall appeal. As a member of the community engagement committee suggested in Section 4.3, this position would also educate developers and residents about upcoming changes to the community.



3.4.2 RECOMMENDED ACTION: ESTABLISH COMMUNITY GROWTH COMMITTEE

As in Section 3.3, to continue with the community engagement theme, it is recommended that the Town consider the following:

- Set up an ad hoc committee to facilitate this initiative; suggested members include community leaders, seniors, realtors, developers, home-builders, town employees, business owners;
- Prepare a mandate and/or guidelines for the group that outlines the project objectives and goals; this mandate would be updated by the committee as they take ownership of the project;
- Committee tasks could include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Promote Mayerthorpe’s development incentives, outlined in Section 2;
 - Prepare a campaign to emphasize its growth opportunities, and as an ideal destination for housing development;
 - Create brochures that highlight local initiatives, incentives and land use or development information:
 - **Note:** Make this information available both in paper and digital format so that it engages all age-groups and demographics; people 50+ like to be given the option of getting information on paper;
 - Brochure Suggestions: Mayerthorpe As a Great Place To Build; Benefits of Residential infill; Development Incentives and Policies; What is an Accessory Dwelling Unit.

What We Heard

- Most internal participants emphasized that Mayerthorpe needs to better advertise and promote its local amenities, development potential and development incentives with the development community.
- “Mayerthorpe could explore assembling a package to show what the community offers in terms of permitted land uses Another example of allowed but not offered land uses is live/work communities - but this would require the development of a new subdivision. It could allow truckers/landscapers to keep their trucks/equipment at their housing, as housing and commercial yards are permitted on the same property.”

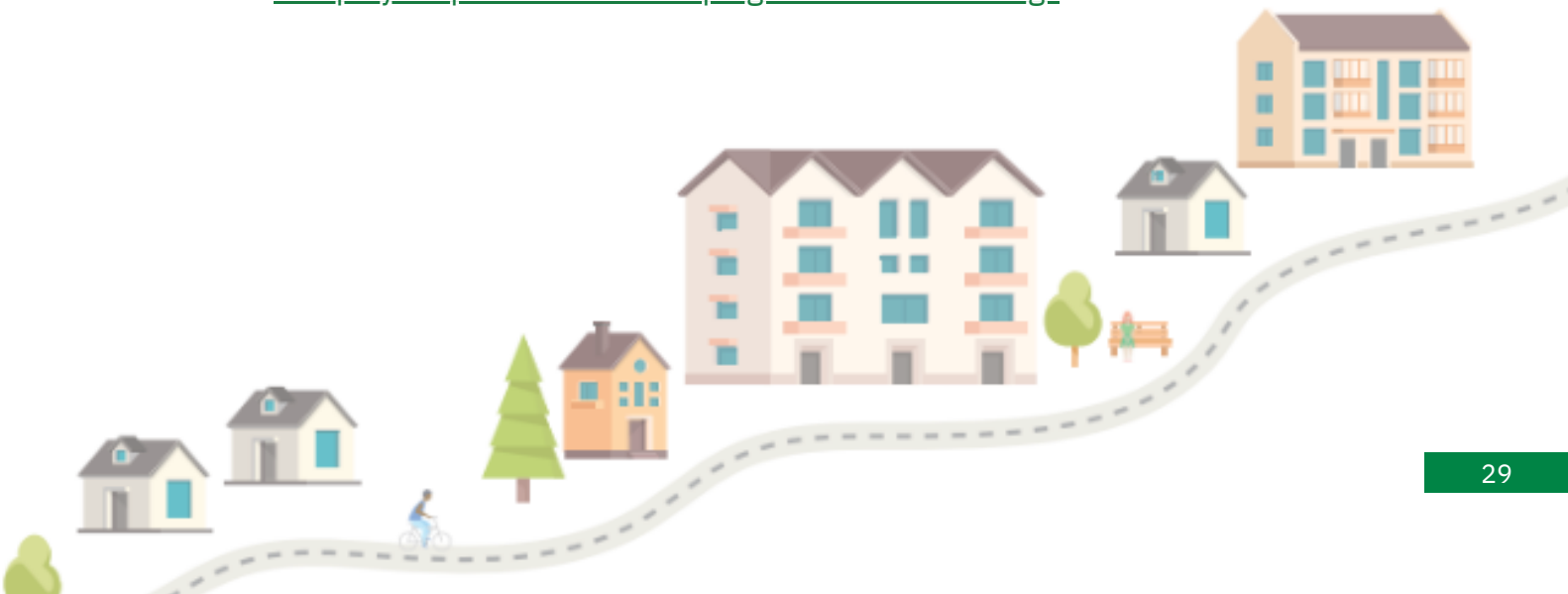
3.5 FACILITATE HOUSING PARTNERSHIPS AND COLLABORATION

Through the interviews and discussions from Mayerthorpe stakeholders, there were several comments about creating partnerships between the Town, developers and/or home builders and the community. This section will provide suggestions to connect developers and community members in creating partnerships to help the Town move forward with initiatives that meet the diverse housing needs of the community.

3.5.1 RECOMMENDED ACTION: ESTABLISH A DEVELOPMENT RELATIONS COMMITTEE

As provided in Sections 3.3 and 3.4, and continuing with the community engagement theme, it is recommended that the Town consider the following:

- Set up an ad hoc committee to facilitate this initiative; suggested members include community leaders, seniors, young people, couples, realtors, developers, home-builders, Town employees, business owners;
- Prepare a mandate and/or guidelines for the committee that outlines the project objectives and goals; this mandate will be updated by the committee as needed;
- Committee tasks could include, but are not limited to, the following:
 - Research and prepare a plan to form partnerships between developers and other stakeholders, as listed above; include seniors in these partnerships;
 - Educate developers and community members about development issues and opportunities;
 - Review the Alberta New Home Warranty Program and Home Buyer Protection Act (refer to Section 3.6);
 - Review the Alberta Municipal Government Act (refer to Section 3.6);
 - Facilitate the creation of a housing cooperative between developers and local stakeholders:
 - [“Paths for Housing Co-ops: Guidebook”](#)
 - [“Step by Step Guide to Developing Affordable Housing”](#)



What We Heard

- “It is important to have open communication with developers to learn what barriers they are facing. What do they want? Same with realtors. What types of housing do people want but can’t find?”
- “The Town owns multiple pieces of land, one being a residential subdivision with 8 lots that are ready for modular housing. The Town also owns a large chunk of land that is vacant, and is a prime location for a vertical 3-5 storey apartment building (that could also be a mixed-used development). Owning these properties offers the Town the ability to enter into partnerships with developers, to help achieve more single family or multi family dwellings. If Mayerthorpe can make it easier for developers to come to Town and complete developments, that’s great for growth and the Town.”
- “P3 Partnerships present an opportunity for three parties (the Town, a builder and maybe a co-op such as Lac St. Anne Foundation) where if the Town supplies the land, and the builder agrees to construct the housing - then the other co-op partner can come in to help attain grant-funding to help fund part of the project. Creating P3 partnerships expands the envelope for what’s possible. One particular area of opportunity would be to partner with the Sangudo Opportunity Development Co-Op who have expressed interest in doing a co-op housing project with Mayerthorpe.”

3.6 ADDRESS LEGISLATION AND REGULATIONS THAT AFFECT RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

Throughout the stakeholder engagement process in Mayerthorpe, several interviewees commented that existing regulations and codes can have a detrimental impact on their ability to build housing quickly, efficiently and affordably.

The Alberta Municipal Government Act and the Alberta New Home Warranty Program regulate and impact municipal housing development. These 2 statutes are provincially regulated, and so are not in the realm of a municipality to change directly. However, municipalities have the ability to lobby the government to affect change. This section will summarize how this legislation regulates and affects municipal housing development and provide suggestions for the Town to address recommendations for change.

3.6.1 RECOMMENDED ACTION: ADDRESS MUNICIPAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT ISSUES WITH THE ALBERTA NEW HOME WARRANTY PROGRAM AND THE ALBERTA MUNICIPAL GOVERNMENT ACT (MGA)

The Alberta New Home Warranty Program came into effect on February 1, 2014. The program is part of the New Home Buyer Protection Act, most recently updated December 15, 2022.

This legislation makes home warranty coverage mandatory for new homes in Alberta. It requires builders to provide home warranty coverage on all new residential homes, including condos, manufactured homes and recreational properties; it does not apply to renovated homes. All new homes, built after February 1, 2014, must have the following minimum warranty coverage: one year on labour and materials, two years on delivery and distribution systems, five years for building envelope, and ten years for major structural components.

The intention of the program was (and is) to provide home owners with peace of mind, first, that their home had been built properly, and second, that their investment was protected. Whether this goal has been achieved is up for debate and requires further discussion.

In the case of small rural home-building companies, the Warranty has had a detrimental effect. By requiring that these small companies put money aside for ten years for warranty purposes makes it difficult for them to continue building homes because that money is no longer available to cover ongoing expenses. Larger home-building companies (operating primarily in larger urban areas) can more readily manage these warranty requirements.

In addition, rural areas typically have only a few home-builders, mostly small family-run companies that only build a couple of houses per year. The Warranty makes it much more difficult for them to continue operating if a portion of their finances is unusable. As a result, many of these small rural home-building companies have switched from home construction to home renovation. This switch has resulted in fewer new homes being built in rural areas.

The Alberta Municipal Government Act (MGA) provides direction regarding how municipalities must operate. It empowers municipalities to shape their community and plan for growth, and regulates how they are funded and how they should govern.

The Alberta MGA does not provide for or regulate any type of diverse or affordable housing development.

In the interviews and focus group discussions, a few people commented about the need for additional provincial government assistance regarding the provision of affordable housing. A good starting point would be for the MGA to provide guidelines and regulations that will compel developers to build affordable (and diverse) housing in municipalities.

Examples of where this type of regulation has been enacted are in the BC Local Government Act and the Ontario Planning Act. Both provide information and regulations in their municipal governing legislation that outline how affordable housing is to be provided through municipal policy and bylaws.

These documents could be valuable resources for the Alberta government to enact legislation that will address both diversity in housing and affordable housing.

Therefore, and continuing with the community engagement theme, it is recommended that Mayerthorpe set up a steering committee or task force to review the Alberta New Home Owners Warranty Program and the Alberta Municipal Government Act (MGA).

Considerations

- This task force could be combined with the ad hoc committee recommendation in Section 4.5;
- It should be composed of community stakeholders, such as, but not limited to: home-builders, developers, community leaders, seniors, realtors, young people, couples and business owners;
- It could also include Council members and Town Administration; however, this could be a community-driven project, with regular reports to Council;
- It will review the Alberta New Home Warranty Program and the MGA, identify the key issues that affect the Town, and then prepare recommendations to address the issues;
- The task force and Town would benefit from collaborating with other like-minded municipalities to prepare resolutions that address the issues identified by the task force, and present them at the annual Municipalities Association (MA) conference.

What We Heard

- “The homeowners warranty killed small home builders in rural Alberta because they can’t afford to pay the insurance costs and because they’re on the hook for warranty issues for so long.”
- “The New Homeowner's Warranty is a joke. A builder needs \$10,000 up front, just to give it away. It’s a money grab essentially.”

3.6.3 RECOMMENDED ACTION: ADDRESS BUILDING CODE ISSUES

A third regulation that several interviewees felt inhibited housing development were the Alberta Safety Codes regulations - aka building, plumbing, gas, and electrical codes and regulations).

It is important to state that Provincial Safety Codes provide important safeguards that ensure buildings are properly built and safe for habitation. At the same time, it is understandable that builders are frustrated by excessive or obsolete standards and codes that can add to their already high costs and hinder innovative construction ideas. However, since municipalities are not directly involved in home inspections and enforcing safety codes, it is recommended that the Town redirect home-builders who have issues with building or safety regulations to the Alberta Safety Codes Council.

What We Heard

“Historically, the Town has had very few builders in the community. There have been development hurdles because existing local builders weren’t meeting the current building code requirements. The Town isn’t accredited to issue or approve safety codes permits, and therefore must employ an outside permitting agency and operate under provincial safety codes regulations.”



3.7 CONDUCT A HOUSING NEEDS AND DEMANDS ASSESSMENT

Throughout the stakeholder engagement process, developers and homebuilders consistently underscored the significance of having statistical market indicators and comprehensive housing needs statistics as a foundation for well-informed decision-making. These data-driven insights enable them to identify housing trends, quantify demand for specific housing types, and substantiate the viability of various projects. By analyzing statistical indicators such as population growth, employment patterns, demographic shifts, and income distribution, developers gain a comprehensive understanding of the housing requirements within Mayerthorpe. This empirical evidence empowers them to tailor their developments to align precisely with the community's evolving needs, ensuring that each project is both economically viable and responsive to the current and future housing demands of residents.

3.7.1 RECOMMENDED ACTIONS:

As identified by numerous external stakeholders including developers and homebuilders, it is recommended that the Town consider the following:

- Conducting a housing needs and demand assessment;
- Disseminating the findings of the housing needs and demand assessment to local developers, homebuilders and other relevant industry stakeholders;
- Updating the Housing Needs and Demand Assessment every 5 years.

Benefits

- Accurate data on housing needs and demand allows for well-informed decisions regarding future housing development and policies.
- Reliable data attracts developers by showcasing evidence of demand, encouraging private investment in housing projects.
- Mayerthorpe can proactively collaborate with developers and homebuilders to initiate projects that not only meet housing needs but also contribute to the community's vibrancy and inclusivity

Funding Resources

- [Federation of Canadian Municipalities \(FCM\) Green Municipal Fund - Planning Grant](#)
 - Provides grants of up to \$25,000 to cover up to 80% of eligible costs.
 - Activities supported by the planning grant may include:
 - Needs assessment: evaluating housing stock, resident support, preliminary review of building opportunities.
- [Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation \(CMHC\) Housing Accelerator Fund](#)
 - If applicants are successful, funding can be allocated towards conducting a housing needs assessment.

What We Heard

- “We should look at communities within 100 km and then try to find if there are housing types in demand for the region that other communities are not offering - or types that Mayerthorpe can position to provide better. We should also make sure we are completing regular needs assessments as the types of demand changes over time. Maybe every 5 years?”
- “In order to consider diversifying housing types on other land parcels, a detailed housing needs analysis is required to demonstrate the overall demand for certain housing types in the community.”
- Another developer participant mentioned that when they are researching whether to build homes in a town, it’s not economically viable to build in a town where there are only two building permits issued per year. Only building on a few lots at a time isn’t cost effective. There needs to be proven growth in the town, or some other factor where the developer can be sure that growth is coming.



NEXT STEPS

This report on *Attracting Diverse Housing Development in Mayerthorpe* was initiated in response to the need for research about local housing challenges and barriers in the Town and an agreement with the Enabling Housing Choice (EHC) team to provide recommendations to facilitate the development of more diversity in housing options in the Town.

FACILITATE CONTINUOUS DISCUSSION

As stated previously, the purpose of providing these recommendations is to help facilitate discussion among community stakeholders - Town Administration, residents, home-builders, local businesses and others - to review, analyze and disseminate the suggestions in a way that will work best for the Town. It is expected that the recommendations will be implemented over a period of time, as funds become available, and as the community learns how to move forward in addressing its diverse housing needs.

HOUSING ACCELERATOR FUND (HAF) APPLICATION

Where it was applicable for Mayerthorpe, the recommendations in the report have been presented so that they will help support the initiatives outlined in Mayerthorpe's application for The Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation's (CMHC) Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF). The HAF will provide funding for municipalities to fund and support local initiatives aimed at increasing housing supply in the community, such as affordable housing, housing-related infrastructure or community infrastructure that supports housing.

MONITOR AND TRACK PROGRESS

Following the completion of this report, the EHC project team will develop a progress tracker to report on project milestones and achievements with respect to the report's recommendations. In addition, the project team will check in with Mayerthorpe Administration on a regular basis to keep track of progress and provide feedback or insights, as needed.

GUIDEBOOK FOR DIVERSIFYING HOUSING DEVELOPMENT IN RURAL COMMUNITIES

One of the final outcomes from this research project is the preparation of a Guidebook for Diversifying Housing Development in Rural Communities. The Guidebook will outline strategic planning tools and suggestions for accomplishing housing diversity goals in rural communities. The EHC team anticipates that the Guidebook will be ready for release in spring 2024.

FINAL WORDS

Pursuing the goal of diversifying housing in Mayerthorpe will be a complex and ongoing endeavor. It will require collaboration and commitment among numerous stakeholders. The Town of Mayerthorpe will have a pivotal role in being active and dedicated to diversifying housing in the community. In collaboration with other community stakeholders - residents, home-builders, local businesses - the Town will be able to address its housing needs and provide a positive example for other communities facing similar challenges.

With perseverance and collaboration, Mayerthorpe can pave the way for a more inclusive community, where all residents have access to diverse and affordable housing.



RESOURCES

[Alberta New Home Warranty Program \(2023\)](#)

[Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation \(2023\). Housing Accelerator Fund](#)

[City of Dauphin \(2022\) \\$1,000 Per Unit Housing Incentive Program](#)

[City of Martensville \(2020\). Development Incentive Program](#)

[District of Lunenburg \(2023\). Municipality Negotiating with NEST on the sale of the Former Centre School Property.](#)

[Federation of Canadian Municipalities \(2023\). Green Municipal Fund - Planning Grant](#)

[Government of Alberta \(2023\). Municipal Government Act \(MGA\)](#)

[Government of British Columbia \(2023\). Local Government Act](#)

[Government of Ontario \(2023\). Ontario Planning Act](#)

[Rural Development Network \(2021\) Paths For Housing Co-Ops Guidebook](#)

[Sustainable Housing Initiative \(2023\) Step-By-Step Guide to Developing Affordable Housing](#)

[Town of Drumheller \(2023\). Multi-Unit Residential Rental Incentive Policy](#)

[Town of Edson \(2020\). Home Builders' Incentive Program Policy](#)

[Town of High River \(2021\). Land Use Bylaw](#)

[Town of Mayerthorpe \(2012\). Mayerthorpe Sustainability Plan](#)

[Town of Mayerthorpe \(2017\). Municipal Development Plan \(Bylaw No. 1067\)](#)

[Town of Mayerthorpe \(2017\). Subdivision Tax Refund Program \(X-003\)](#)

[Town of Mayerthorpe \(2020\). Development Tax Incentive \(X-005\)](#)

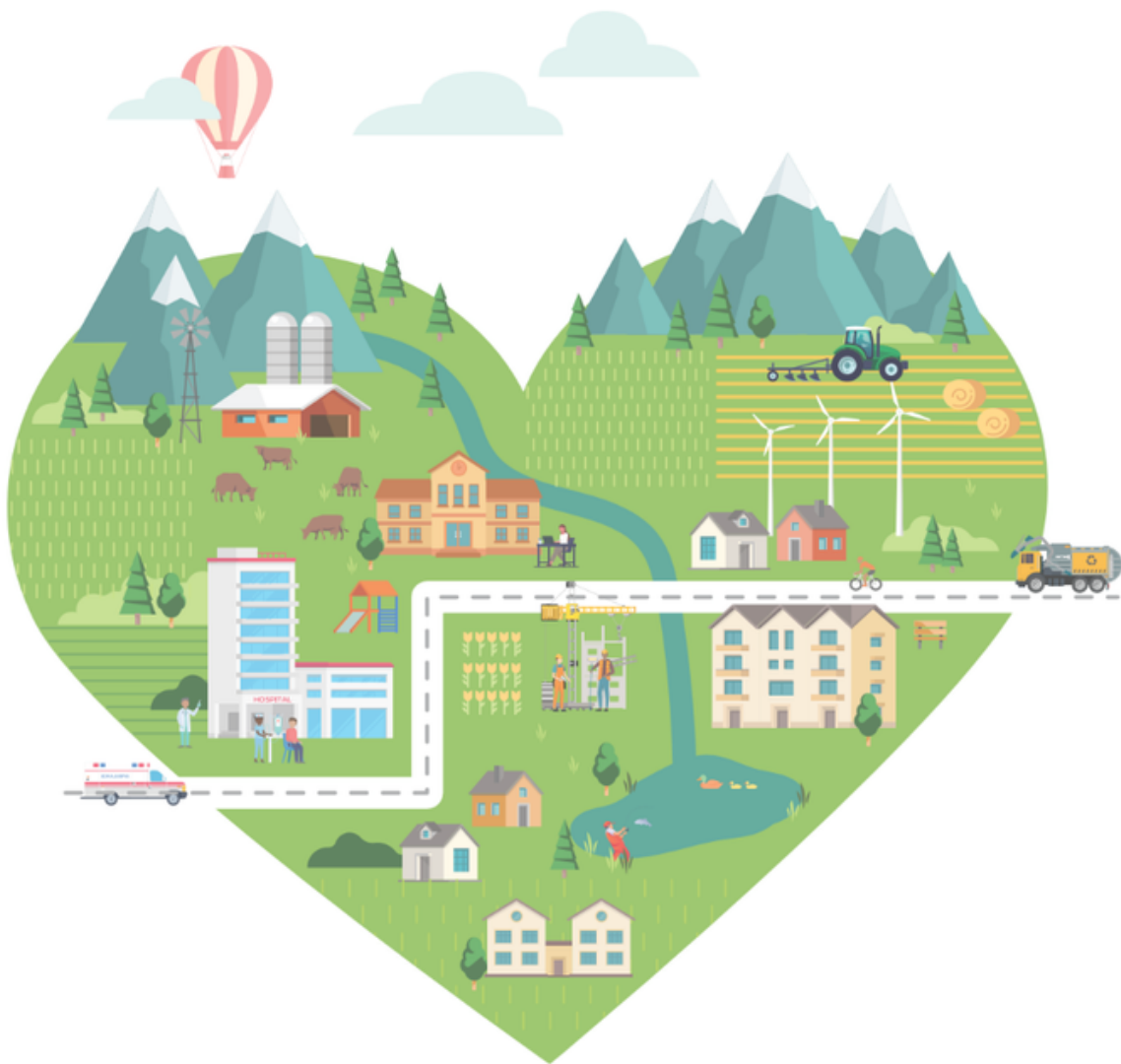
[Town of Mayerthorpe \(2020\). Land Use Bylaw \(Bylaw No. 1128\)](#)

[Town of Mayerthorpe \(2020\). Redevelopment Infill Tax Rebates \(X-006\)](#)

[Town of Mayerthorpe \(2022\). Municipal Strategic Plan](#)

[Town of Mayerthorpe \(2023\) Utilities Bylaw \(Bylaw No. 1046\)](#)

[Town of Vermillion \(2017\). Multi-Family Development Incentive Policy](#)





Email: housingchoice@ruraldevelopment.ca

Website: housingredefined.ca/enabling-housing-choice-project