

Convening Partnerships for Housing on the North Shore: Preliminary Considerations

Challenge Question

How might we convene partners, led by the Squamish First Nation, to help create new housing concepts that support both the needs of Squamish members and North Shore residents at large?

Shared Considerations

- Increased housing options in any community benefit the entire North Shore
- Each partner faces capacity and resource challenges when it comes to housing, though they may look different
- Partnership would help leverage opportunities not otherwise available
- Each partner must be able to demonstrate benefits to their respective residents
- Partnership requires political direction
- Ways of working across jurisdictions should continue to evolve to meet changing leadership and community needs
- Desire to understand each partner's priorities, processes, and timelines
- Effective cross-jurisdictional relationships and coordination could have benefits for infrastructure, services, transportation, etc. on the North Shore
- Indigenous and non-Indigenous residents live in all partners' communities
- Many North Shore residents are not aware of jurisdictional boundaries
- Housing has ripple effects on economy, transit and community vibrancy
- There is limited cross-jurisdictional engagement on housing and land use decisions between First Nations and local governments

Past Partnerships Success

- North Shore Homelessness Task Force
- Integrated North Shore Transportation Planning Project (INSTPP)
- Spirit Trail development
- Cultural events and public art

Partnerships

- Partnerships must be based on reciprocity
- Historical decisions have created skepticism about the benefits of partnerships
- Opportunity to address persistent North Shore housing needs
- Many North Shore residents have limited knowledge of land use on the North Shore and how it has negatively affected Squamish Nation
- Desire for consideration of Squamish Nation's needs to be a part of planning for the North Shore

Housing

- Engage broader Squamish Nation in identifying housing needs and development goals
- Creation of the new Hiyám ta Sḵwáwú7mesh Housing Society helps address questions about the enforcement of the Residential Tenancy Act on reserve lands
- Legal structures on reserve require new ways of generating taxes and revenue for infrastructure (being explored)
- Private developers have demonstrated interest in working with Squamish Nation
- Developing on reserve lands has different challenges than local government – community buy-in, services, etc.
- Servicing and infrastructure agreements are key to unlocking development potential of reserve lands
- Squamish Nation has historically had limited internal capacity for planning and development approvals, but is currently working to develop these functions

Squamish Nation

- Objectives**
- Positive legacy for future generations
 - Housing for Squamish members and North Shore community at large
 - Capacity building related to planning and managing housing development
 - Economic development and employment opportunities

Partnerships

- City, as well as other North Shore communities, have seen significant administrative and political changes in recent years which means a lack of continuity as well as the creation of new opportunities
- Lack of protocols around partnerships
- Limited internal expertise for working effectively with First Nations communities
- City is limited in addressing the scale of this housing challenge alone
- Beneficial for partners to know housing development plans, scale, and opportunities to leverage other community benefits such as housing
- A risk of City involvement is that it could slow things down – approvals, community opposition, etc.

Housing

- City prioritizes limited housing resources for low-income households and there is limited ability for the City to invest in middle-income earner housing
- Historically, municipalities have had limited role in housing, beyond land use
- The City's primary tool for addressing housing need has been leveraging private development for affordable housing units, but the number of large projects each year is small
- Affordable Housing Reserve is limited in relation to cost of building housing
- Small city, limited resources and tax base

City of North Vancouver

- Objectives**
- Housing for local workers
 - Suitable and affordable housing for families and connection between housing and childcare

Partnerships

- Limitations to investing in projects across jurisdictional boundaries
- District can share technical knowledge – planning, engineering, urban design
- Most effective partnerships live beyond specific individuals or elections cycles
- A risk of District Involvement is that it could slow things down - approvals, community opposition, etc.
- District can't address local housing needs alone – number of units that District can create through own initiatives is far smaller than number needed

Housing

- Land value in District is much higher than neighbouring communities – limits ability of private or non-profit sector to respond to the housing challenge
- Employers across sectors are struggling to attract workers
- Vocal opposition to change and housing development
- Mismatch between housing stock, demographics, and needs of healthy economy
- Limited financial resources for direct investment in housing
- Small tax base, primarily residential
- Limited public lands for housing development

District of West Vancouver

- Objectives**
- Housing to support a more diverse demographic (e.g., aging population, families, local workers)
 - Leveraging limited resources to support community needs