

STAFF REPORT TO COUNCIL

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DATE: October 5, 2020

TO: MAYOR AND COUNCIL

NAME AND TITLE: Ian Wells, General Manager of Planning and Development

SUBJECT: Resolution of Support – Funding Application for UBCM Housing Needs Reports Program

ATTACHMENT(S): 2014 City of Prince George Housing Need and Demand Study
Housing Needs Report – 2020 Program Guide

RECOMMENDATION(S):

That Council AUTHORIZES Administration to submit a funding application to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities for the development of a Housing Needs Report for the City of Prince George.

PURPOSE:

In April 2019, the Province of BC announced that municipalities and regional districts in B.C. are required to complete housing needs reports by April 2022 and every five years thereafter. These reports are intended to help local governments and the B.C. government better understand and respond to housing needs in communities throughout B.C. and help inform local plans, policies and development decisions.

The Housing Needs Reports program supports local governments in undertaking housing needs reports in order to meet the provincial requirements. The Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing has provided \$5 million for this program, and has advised that based on available funding, this will be the final intake of the funding program. Communities with populations between 50,000 to 99,000 are eligible for funding of up to \$50,000 and must apply by the October 16, 2020 deadline. The program can contribute a maximum of 100% of the cost of eligible activities.

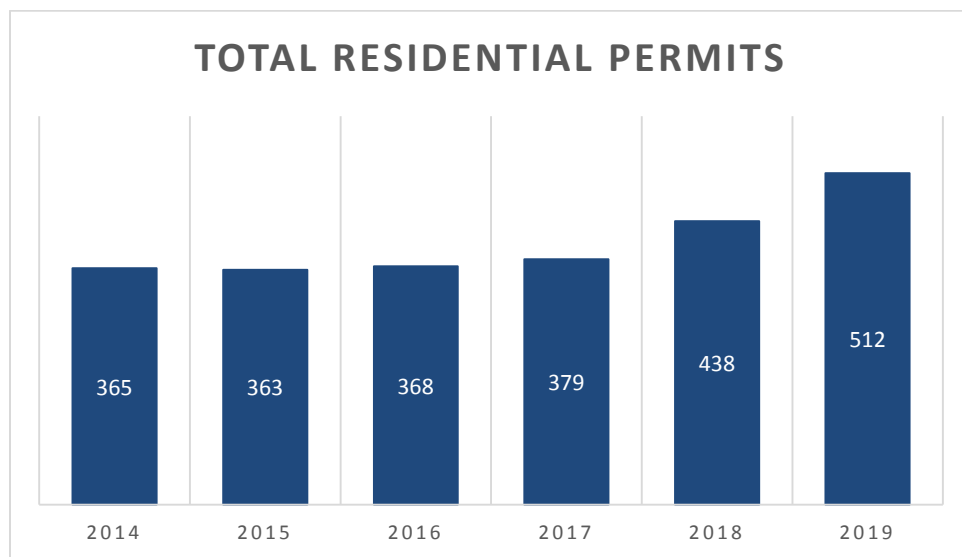
To meet the provincial requirements, Administration intends to prepare a Housing Needs Assessment to learn where gaps in housing may currently exist, where there may be barriers to finding and maintaining housing, and to identify future housing needs across the housing spectrum. The Housing Needs Assessment will include statistical analysis of the local population and housing trends as well as a community engagement process with residents, non-profit housing providers, educational institutions, realtors, homebuilders and developers. This data will be used to forecast and prioritize future housing needs for all residents including market, rental, low income and subsidized housing.

The results of this report can possibly be used to inform the future development of a housing strategy and action plan for non-profit, rental and market housing development in Prince George. This strategy will inform the City on how to prioritize the sale and development of City owned land and will complement the Economic Development Strategy which includes activities meant to attract private sector development to the city.

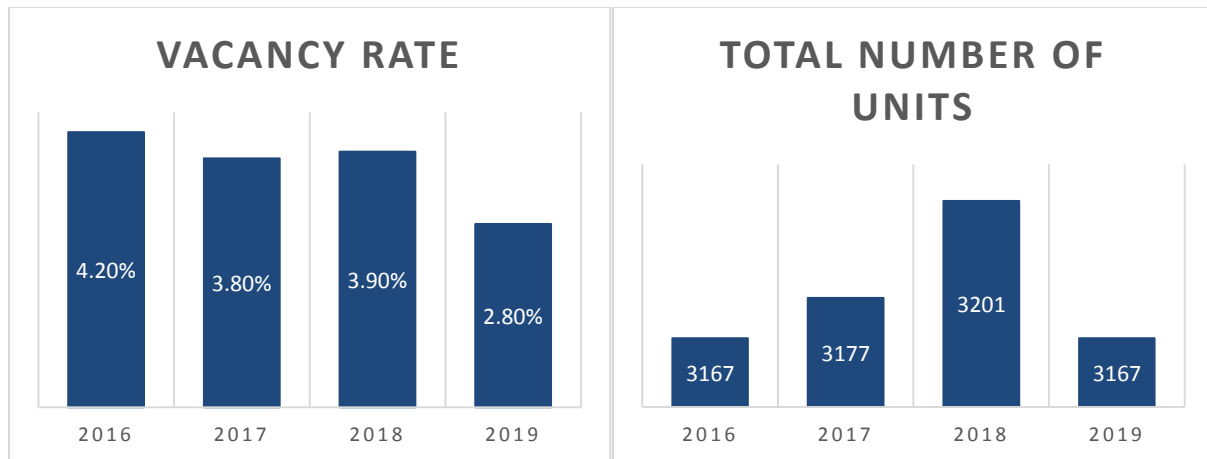
BACKGROUND:

The most recent City of Prince George Housing Need and Demand Study was released in June 2014 and, since then, there has been significant development in Prince George which has resulted in out dated information.

Recent developments have included seniors housing, social housing, market housing including condos, apartments and single family homes as well as a significant number of rental units. Specifically, between 2014 and 2019, the City issued development permits for 225 multi-family units and 2,200 single family homes for a total of 2,425 new residential homes.



Rental vacancy rates have declined over the past four years, indicating a demand for additional rental units in the city. In 2019, vacancy rates for two or more bedroom units were less than 2% and an average vacancy rate for all sizes of 2.8%. Notably, the number of rental units in Prince George has also declined to 2016 numbers; however, there are several projects currently under way which will result in an increase in numbers once construction of the various projects is complete.



STRATEGIC PRIORITIES:

This project is in alignment with the City of Prince George Workplan and MyPG Goals:

Social Health and Wellbeing:

- MyPG Goal: Affordable, accessible housing.
- Council Focus Area: Support initiatives that provide access to safe housing, healthy food, and community services.

Economic Growth and Development:

- Council Focus Area: Target development at community commercial, housing, and transportation nodes, and in the downtown.
- Prioritize infill developments and diverse housing options in targeted growth areas.

FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS:

It is estimated that the project cost will be up to \$75,000 of which \$50,000 will be covered through the UBCM Housing Needs Reports Program funding as offered by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

SUMMARY AND CONCLUSION:

Based on the April 2019 direction from the Province of BC, municipalities and regional districts in B.C. are required to complete housing needs reports by April 2022 and every five years thereafter. Further to this requirement, Prince George is currently reliant on data that was generated in 2014, which is now outdated.

With funding available through UBCM on behalf of the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, it is an ideal time for the City of Prince George to prepare a new housing needs report while meeting the required timeline to do so. As such, it is recommended that Council support an application for funding to UBCM.

RESPECTFULLY SUBMITTED:

Ian Wells, General Manager, Planning and Development

PREPARED BY: Melissa Barcellos, Manager, Economic Development

APPROVED:

Walter Babicz, Acting City Manager

Meeting Date: 2020/10/05