

Township of  
Langley



Est. 1873



# Housing Action Plan



February 4, 2013



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### Three Companion Documents

Report on Consultation with Key Informants and Focus Groups  
CitySpaces, July 2011

Population and Housing for the Township of Langley  
Urban Futures, April 2011

Situational Report + Appendix on Relevant and Promising Practices in Affordable Housing  
CitySpaces, January 2012

**Endorsed by Township of Langley Council**

**February 4, 2013**



## 1. Introduction

Langley Township is one of the fastest growing communities in the region, a trend that can be attributed to its relative housing affordability, local employment opportunities, availability of services and community amenities.

Recent projections show an almost doubling of today's population to more than 211,000 by 2041. This translates into a demand of about 49,300 additional housing units — an average of more than 1,600 annually. In contrast to today's demographic mix, the Township will also noticeably age – projections indicate that the plus 65 population will increase by 213%. This will lead to growing demand for apartment living, both owned and rented.

Recent projections indicate another 49,300 dwellings will be needed by 2041.

While the vast majority of housing to be built by 2041 will be market housing, as the population grows and diversifies, there will also be an ongoing need for non-market housing for seniors, lower income families, adults with disabilities, youth-at-risk, and others with special needs.

Early in 2011, the Township commissioned CitySpaces Consulting, and sub-consultant Urban Futures, to undertake a four-part housing study, culminating in this Housing Action Plan. The primary motivations for undertaking this study were to gain a deeper understanding of housing needs and issues in the Township, develop clear policy directions, and set out actions for the short-term (1-2 years), medium-term (3 to 5 years) and long-term (beyond 5 years). The Housing Action Plan, when adopted by Township Council, will guide decision-making related to market and non-market housing for many years to come.

The four parts of the Housing Action Plan include:

- ▶ **Part 1** – Population and Housing Projections, January to April 2011. Cohort survival forecast modelling to the year 2041.
- ▶ **Part 2** – Consultations, March to June, 2011. Interviews and focus groups with developers, seniors, youth, young families, business people, non-market housing providers, and social service providers.
- ▶ **Part 3** – Situational Report, July 2011 to January 2012. Description and analysis of many factors that have an influence on housing type, tenure, cost, availability, and affordability. Identification of gaps, issues and needs. Benchmarking in comparison with nearby municipalities. Identification of relevant and promising practices.
- ▶ **Part 4** – **draft** Housing Action Plan, December 2011 to February 2012. A policy framework and proposed implementing actions, all of which are consistent with the objectives and strategies of the Metro Vancouver Affordable Housing Strategy (2007), and in conformance with the Township's Sustainability Charter.

## 2. The Housing Continuum

The housing continuum is a visual concept used to describe and categorize different types of housing and related services. On the non-market end of the continuum are emergency services and transitional housing, which often require the most public funding, moving towards supportive and social housing options in the middle of the continuum and then towards independent housing options on the right, where housing is typically provided by the private market. The continuum implicitly suggests that residents should have the opportunity to move across the housing continuum and find the housing that is most appropriate and best suited to their needs and circumstances.



### 2.1. GAPS ALONG THE CONTINUUM

The consultation and research leading up to this Action Plan identified four gaps in the Township's current housing supply. That said, it is recognized that the nearby City of Langley's housing stock is notably different than that of the Township's, with a broader range of housing options. The companion document, Situational Report, contains a much more thorough discussion of gaps and issues.

- ▶ **Gap: Lack of rental housing close to transit, jobs and services.** This is a particular issue for students, seniors and people who are reliant on transit to get to work. Employers noted that the lack of transit affects some businesses' recruiting ability, especially for those located in business parks, which tend to be located at a distance from transit stops. The lack of rental housing options is equally challenging for modest income households, who neither qualify for government rental supplements nor the purchase of a home.
- ▶ **Gap: Lack of a variety of affordable homeownership options.** This is not an issue unique to Langley Township, but it is particularly important in a family-friendly municipality. The Township's Sustainability Charter speaks directly to this though the goal of developing livable and vibrant communities with flexible, affordable and mixed housing options. The wider the choice of housing types and sizes, the more options are available for homeownership.

- ▶ **Gap: Lack of housing for people with special needs.** The Township has little transitional and affordable supportive housing for special needs groups, including youth-at-risk of becoming homeless, low fixed income seniors, and mental health clients. Service providers working with at-risk clients who qualify for rent supplements indicate that it is very difficult to find market rental housing as there is very little turnover in the existing supply.
- ▶ **Gap: Limited supply of social housing for seniors and families.** Relative to neighbouring municipalities, Langley Township has very little subsidized family or seniors housing. Less than 1% of all dwellings are subsidized in the Township. In the City of Langley, this figure is 9%; in Coquitlam, it is almost 5%.

### 3. Key Elements of the Housing Action Plan

There are four key components to the Housing Action Plan, set out as a series of objectives, each with short, medium and long-term actions by the Township of Langley.

- ▶ Policy and Regulations: Clarity and Consistency
- ▶ Market Housing: Choice and Affordability
- ▶ Non-Market Housing: Facilitation and Support
- ▶ Information and Outreach

The Plan concludes with a framework outline for implementation.

#### 3.1. POLICY AND REGULATIONS: CLARITY AND CONSISTENCY

One of the key reasons for undertaking this Housing Action Plan was to identify actions that would assist the Township in making well-informed and consistent decisions.

##### 3.1.1. Recommended Actions

<i>a) Objective: Adopt clear and consistent policies, guidelines and standards</i>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Formally adopt Housing Action Plan</li> <li>• Amend OCP to supplement existing statements related to affordable housing</li> <li>• At the time the OCP is amended revise the zoning bylaw to incorporate a definition of affordable housing</li> <li>• Establish a system to regularly track key housing indicators</li> <li>• Dedicate staff resources to monitor the implementation of the Housing Action Plan</li> </ul>	Short Term Actions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare an inventory of market rental housing, affordable, rental and special needs policy statements in existing Community and Neighbourhood Plans-share this among Township staff as a tool for use in developing policies of future Neighbourhood Plans</li> <li>• Ensure new Neighbourhood Plans include affordable, rental and special needs policy statements</li> <li>• Update the tracking of key housing indicators on a regular basis</li> <li>• Continue to dedicate staff resources to monitor the implementation of the Housing Action Plan</li> </ul>	<p>Medium Term Actions</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to update the tracking of key housing indicators on a regular basis</li> <li>• Continue to dedicate staff resources to monitor the implementation of the Housing Action Plan</li> </ul>	<p>Long-term Actions</p>

### 3.2. MARKET HOUSING: CHOICES AND AFFORDABILITY

Langley Township compares favourably with benchmark municipalities of Abbotsford, Maple Ridge, Coquitlam and Surrey on policies related to market housing.

#### 3.2.1. Market Housing – Choices

The Township has made a number of commitments to facilitating housing choices, almost all of which have been delivered through market housing development. This approach has been effective at achieving a mix of medium density, particularly townhouses and small lot single detached units.

- The Township’s OCP promotes development of complete communities and increased community diversity by setting objectives, policies and planning principles that lead to the provision of economic range of housing types, tenures, densities and sizes.
- For almost 30 years, the Township has been proactive in requiring new developments to include a mix of housing types. Community Plans are the primary vehicle for detailed policies and regulations. Many of the recently-updated Community and Neighbourhood plans include policies and regulations. Many of the recently-updated Community and Neighbourhood Plans are the include policies that would achieve higher densities and mixed use development. Examples include:
  - ▶ Provide housing with approximately 20% single family, including single family homes with suites, coach houses and granny flats; 5% attached housing in single family areas; 25% townhouses and 50% apartments. (Willoughby Community Plan, 1998)
  - ▶ Coach houses, granny flats and secondary suites are considered accessory to single family dwellings and are not considered in density, development cost charge or amenity charge calculations. (Willoughby Community Plan, 1998)
  - ▶ Work with community groups and other agencies to increase well-managed, supportive or transitional housing for special needs groups, especially the physically or developmentally disabled, young people and others with unique social and health needs. (Aldergrove Community Plan, 2010)



- ▶ Develop partnerships to create innovative housing that is accessible to residents with low incomes and/or special needs. (Aldergrove Community Plan, 2010)
- There are, however, some elements which the Township has not yet implemented – using legislative tools to increase the supply of affordable rental units; and facilitating affordable housing development through incentives, regulatory relaxations, fiscal measures, and use of municipally-owned land.

### 3.2.2. Market housing – Affordability

Compared to Metro Vancouver, Langley’s detached home prices have remained relatively affordable, roughly 30% less than those in the City of Vancouver. However, this does not mean that housing is affordable for everyone.

Household income plays a very large role in determining what type of household can afford to rent or purchase. To illustrate: In 2010, the medium income for couple families was estimated at \$91,664. If this couple had a few debts and solid downpayment, they would qualify for a house up to \$ 434,000. Only a small proportion of single homes are available at this price point, and the Township does not have a large supply of townhouses and condominium apartments, which would be affordable to median income family households. Single parent families have far less choice- the median income was \$43,227. Smaller condominiums and rental dwellings are more realistic options. The median income for a single person is \$31,977. This income would be sufficient to pay rent of approximately \$850 monthly.

### 3.2.3. Recommended Actions

<b>Objective: Create more opportunities for innovation and a broad mix of types and tenures</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to set housing mix policies and targets in Community and Neighbourhood Plans</li> <li>• Continue to implement a regulatory environment that supports innovative housing types and tenures-freehold townhouses, shared equity homeownership, flex housing, modular housing</li> <li>• Encourage builders to use green technology to achieve energy efficiency, higher environmental standards</li> </ul>	Short Term Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate opportunities for infill and regeneration of underused sites, encourage developers to densify with incentives</li> <li>• Encourage developers to investigate market homeownership options, including innovative financing, shared equity, and ownership on leased land</li> <li>• Set targets of 30-50% for medium to high density in new Neighbourhood Plans</li> </ul>	Medium Term Actions

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with non-market funders and groups to support innovative demonstration initiatives</li> <li>• Provide grants of fee reductions for developers who will develop a demonstration initiative</li> <li>• Investigate ways to raise the minimum energy efficiency standards of new buildings</li> </ul>	Long-term Actions
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***b) Objective: Increase the supply of rental housing in walkable centres where transit is available***

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Use these tools available to encourage/increase the supply of rental housing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Give future consideration to density bonusing for market rental or rentals for employees</li> <li>▶ Encourage rental apartments above commercial</li> <li>▶ Reduce parking requirements for purpose-built rental housing in walkable centres and along main roads, as transit improves</li> <li>▶ Reduce development fees for rental housing, secured with a Housing Agreement</li> <li>▶ Reduce property taxes for a limited time period (e.g., 10 years,) and secured with a Housing Agreement</li> </ul> </li> </ul>	Short Term Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a “good practice” guide of rental housing projects and their successes throughout municipality/elsewhere in region</li> </ul>	Medium Term Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support pilot initiatives of rental housing projects and partnerships that would serve as a demonstration for others</li> </ul>	Long-term Actions

***c) Objective: Facilitate the development and legalization of secondary dwellings***

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Investigate reasons for low take-up of registered secondary suites and amend bylaw to encourage take-up <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▶ Introduce health and life safety standards for existing houses as alternative to Building code: and</li> <li>▶ Charge extra/double utility fees for houses known to have illegal secondary suites. Remove charge if suite is registered</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Draft a policy on suite-ready homes and encourage builders to put suites in all new single detached houses</li> </ul>	Short Term Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Distribute information pamphlets about suite safety and requirements to home owners</li> <li>• Remove requirement for owner occupancy in the zoning bylaw</li> </ul>	Medium Term Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to monitor legalization and creation of secondary suites and amend policies over time further encourage take up</li> </ul>	Long-term Actions

<b>d) Objective: Preserve and improve the quality of existing rental housing</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review the existing mobile/manufactured home park policy to minimize impact on tenants from redevelopment</li> <li>Develop a policy that requires consideration, such as additional compensation, tenant notification standards, first right of refusal, and a rent-to-own provision in rental buildings, non-market housing projects, and mobile home parks being redeveloped</li> <li>When a rezoning is applied for as part of mobile home park redevelopment a minimum percentage of units to be affordable rental</li> </ul>	Short Term Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Review and update the “unsightly premises” bylaw</li> <li>Consider requiring a minimum percentage of units to be affordable rental when a rezoning is applied for any purpose-built rental housing.</li> </ul>	Medium Term Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Continue to monitor legalization and creation of secondary suites and amend policies over time further encourage take up</li> </ul>	Long-term Actions

**3.3. NON-MARKET HOUSING: FACILITATION AND SUPPORT**

The Township has a relatively low supply of non-market and supported housing. The units that are available, primarily seniors subsidized housing, are reported to have long wait lists and other limitations, namely small unit sizes and management problems. Youth-at-risk are vulnerable group which have legal and financial barriers to finding shelter. There are few options along the spectrum of non-marketing. There are limited transitional options in either the Township or the City for victims of domestic violence, or shelters for residents who are homeless. The Gateway of Hope (partially funded by the Township) has 30 shelter beds and 25 supported living units for people transitioning out of homelessness. This is frequently at 100% occupancy.

**3.3.1. Benchmark Municipalities**

To date, the Township has not been active in facilitating the development of non-market housing. Among the benchmark municipalities:

- Within the last few years, Maple Ridge, Surrey, Abbotsford and Coquitlam have provided municipal land for non-market housing;
- Abbotsford and Coquitlam have established housing reserve funds, which are used to provide one-time capital grants for non-market housing projects;
- Coquitlam and Surrey have reduced DCCs for affordable housing and also committed to fast-tracking non-market housing projects; and
- Abbotsford has been using amenity zoning (density bonusing) for affordable housing since 2007.

### 3.3.2. Recommended Actions

<b>a) Objective: Facilitate the development of new housing and regeneration of older non-market projects</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Draft a community amenity policy that includes affordable housing (new units or cash) as one of the community benefits to be considered as part of major developments</li> <li>• Establish a Township of Langley Affordable Housing Reserve Fund- municipalities budget for annual contributions</li> <li>• Encourage private market/non-profit partnerships that result in non-market units being built on or off site</li> <li>• Offer parking relaxations for non-market units</li> <li>• Draft a policy on special needs or supportive housing that allows this type of housing to be distributed in all neighbourhoods and in majority of zoning districts</li> </ul>	Short Term Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Encourage a cash contribution from developers to the Affordable Housing Reserve Fund</li> <li>• Subject to availability of co-funding from other levels of government, develop a policy on municipal land banking for the purpose of future non-market housing development- consider the investigation of a Community Land Trust</li> <li>• Provide density bonus in exchange for non-market housing units</li> <li>• Provide property tax exemptions for non-market housing providers</li> </ul>	Medium Term Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a committee to review applications by non-profits for land/ grants new non-market housing projects</li> </ul>	Long-term Actions

### 3.4. INFORMATION AND OUTREACH

One of the most important actions that the Township can do is to share information – internally, with community stakeholders, builders and developers, and Langley’s residents and employers. This does not take significant staff resources, nor are there large expenses associated with the production and communication of information materials.

### 3.4.1. Recommended Actions

<b>a) Objective: Share Information about Affordable Housing and Programs</b>	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a guide with key messages around the benefits of affordable housing, what makes great neighbourhoods, and the positive outcomes of mixed-generational, mixed-income communities</li> <li>• Develop a secondary suites safety guide that outlines rights and responsibilities oriented to home owners who have a secondary suite</li> <li>• Host a workshop for developers and builders who are active in the Township – showcase innovative market homeownership models/ financing arrangements from Langley and other parts of Metro Vancouver</li> <li>• Communicate information about other levels of government housing programs for rental assistance for working families, property tax exemptions for seniors, home adaptations, etc.</li> <li>• Continue to participate in Metro Vancouver’s Housing Committee and Regional Planning Advisory Committee Housing Subcommittee</li> <li>• Participate as a municipal member of the Regional Housing Supply Coalition</li> </ul>	Short-term Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Provide training and leadership workshops for Council, stakeholders and the public on affordable housing choices and best practices</li> </ul>	Medium-term Actions
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Continue to update and distribute information, and dedicate staff resources to maintaining housing affordability and choices in the Township</li> </ul>	Long-term Actions

## 4. Implementing the Housing Action Plan

This Plan sets out eight key objectives and more than 50 “action items”. Tracking the implementation of these items is important and will require dedicated staff resources on a regular basis. Broadly, in the short-term, the scope of this work involves:

<b>Scope of work</b>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Make amendments to OCP and Zoning Bylaw</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Update or consider policies on the following: suite-ready detached homes, provisions for tenants of building, projects and mobile home parks proposed for redevelopment or regeneration, affordable housing as a community amenity for rezonings of major developments, inclusion of special needs and supportive housing in all newly developing areas;</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Consult with all stakeholders, including the Urban Development Institute, BC Housing, local housing sector groups and community non-profit organizations before any new policies are adopted or implemented</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Establish a Township of Langley Affordable Housing Reserve Fund</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Introduce health and life safety standards for existing houses with a secondary suite as an alternative to the Building Code</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Prepare a complete inventory of market rental, affordable, and special needs policy statements in existing Community and Neighbourhood Plans. The purpose of this is to provide staff and consultants who work on new community and Neighbourhood Plans with a basis to frame their policies;</li> </ul>

- Prioritize and secure funding for further research and investigative work. Items identified for follow-up work in the Housing Action Plan include:
  - ▶ ▶ Reviewing of the opportunities for infill and regeneration of underused sites – both market and non-market Investigate incentives to encourage infill and regeneration for affordable housing; and
  - ▶ ▶ Investigating the reasons for the low take-up of the registration of existing secondary suites
- Prepare information guides, and organize workshops / sessions on affordable housing. Items identified in the Housing Action Plan include:
  - ▶ ▶ A demonstration guide of successful market (or mixed market-non market) projects in Langley Township and elsewhere in Metro Vancouver; and
  - ▶ ▶ Host a workshop for developers and builders to showcase innovative market homeownership and rental models from Langley and other parts of Metro Vancouver
- Working from the baseline information in the Situational Report, monitor the “critical housing indicators” on an annual basis. Share this trending information via Townships communications channels.

#### 4.1. CRITICAL HOUSING INDICATORS

Indicators will be used to track the progress on identified housing priorities and re-assessment of local housing market on a year to five year cycles.

Indicator	Measurement	Data Sources
The financial ability of a household to purchase a home in the Township	Maximum home purchase price (with 10% downpayment) for those who earn the median income ( no more than 32% of gross income )	Benchmark home price by housing type: Fraser Valley Real Estate board (monthly) baseline 2010
		Median household income by household types: Statistics Canada (annual- custom tabulation)
		Mortgage rates: Canadian banks
The financial ability of a household to rent a unit in Langley	Maximum rent affordable for those who earn the median income (no more 30% of gross income)	Rental rates CMHC (semi-annual)
		Median household income by household type: Statistic Canada (annual-custom tabulation)

Indicator	Measurement	Data Sources
Market demand for new housing	Annual housing starts by housing type New Housing Price Indices (house and land, union wages)	CMHC: semi-annual reporting Statistics Canada, Construction Price Index: annual
Variance from average new units needed to meet projected annual demand	Annual housing starts relative to projected annual demand of 1,600 (Urban Futures, 2011)	CMHC: annual reporting
Market demand for resale homes	Number of resales and trending for benchmark prices of resale homes by housing type	Fraser Valley Real Estate Board: monthly
Market demand for purpose-built rental housing	Vacancy rate for purpose-built housing	CMHC: semi-annual reporting
Rental rates	Average rent in purpose-built housing by number of bedrooms	CMHC: semi-annual reporting
Demand for rental financial assistance	Number of families receiving financial rent assistance	BC Housing: Rental Assistance Program (custom tabulation)
Demand for shelter beds (seasonal and operating year-round)	Occupancy rates and turn-aways for shelter beds	Gateway of hope (on request)
Demand for transitional, second stage and recovery housing	Occupancy rates and turn-aways for transitional, second stage and recovery housing	Service providers (on request)
Prevalence of homelessness	Number of homeless people by gender, age (youth, seniors)	Metro Vancouver: Homelessness Count (yearly)
Demand for subsidized seniors and family housing	Number of individuals and families on wait lists	BC Housing central registry/ individual housing cooperatives (on request)
Core need affordability	Number and percentage of households paying 30%+ and 50%+ for housing	CMHC: Housing In Canada Online (HICO), updated following each Census
Tenure mix	Number and percentage of units rented and owned	Statistics Canada: Census of Canada (every five years)