Ready or Not:
Metro Migration to Smaller Communities

Report from the Virtual Panel Presentation and Discussion

Hosted by The Community Development Institute (UNBC) &
The Housing Research Collaborative (UBC)

November 25, 2021

Event Notes

Migration from large centres in British Columbia (BC) to smaller communities has been recognized as a trend for some time. Intra-provincial migration statistics between 2016 and 2020 confirm this trend. While Vancouver experienced net negative intra-provincial migration, most Census Agglomerations, as well as the areas outside of Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations overall, registered considerable net positive migration from within the province.

While growth, and the ability to attract residents, are good news for non-metropolitan BC communities, metro-migration to smaller communities has exposed challenges in the non-metropolitan housing market and created new pressures for those communities. Affordability challenges due to high demand, low supply, and a sudden influx of capital are one aspect; the state of the housing stock and a lack of appropriate housing meeting today's standards and expectations for people from all ages and stages of life pose another important barrier.

When non-metropolitan communities do not have enough housing supply, or not enough appropriate housing, community and economic development faces challenges, and social and economic momentum can be lost. Attracting new residents, housing a larger workforce, and enabling seniors to comfortably age in place, all while maintaining a high quality of life for all residents, becomes a challenge. Consequently, housing becomes a direct barrier to attracting businesses, growing industries, and expanding services and community amenities.

On November 25, 2021, the Community Development Institute and the Housing Research Collaborative jointly hosted a 2.5-hour virtual panel presentation and discussion with a focus on how communities are directly affected by metro-migration, and what ideas they have to address the barriers as well as realize the opportunities metro-migration presents.

The session was attended by over 120 professionals from communities throughout all regions of BC. Attendees included a breadth of occupations and fields of expertise, ranging, for example, from local government, to planners, consultants, building industry, education sector, and research.

Agenda

Ready or Not: Metro Migration to Smaller Communities
Thursday, November 25, 2021
9:00am – 11:30am
Virtual panel presentation and discussion via Zoom

Land Acknowledgement and Welcome

Dr. Penny Gurstein, Director, Housing Research Collaborative, UBC

Participant poll

Which best describes your role?
What type of organization do you work for?
What is the population of the community you work in most often?

Presentations

Data presentation outlining non-metropolitan demographics and housing stock
Marleen Morris, Co-Director, Community Development Institute, UNBC

Non-Metropolitan Municipal Government Perspective
Owen Torgerson, Mayor, Village of Valemount

Non-Metropolitan Business Perspective
Peter Bourke, Executive Director, Columbia Valley Chamber of Commerce

Developement and Building Industry Perspective
Frank Quinn, Principal, A&T Project Developments Inc.

Small group break-out sessions

What do you see that indicates your community is ready or not for migration from metro areas?
What specific ways is migration from metro areas impacting your community?
What ideas do you have to address this now (low hanging fruit) and into the future?

Plenary session

Groups reporting back and discussing highlights.

Closing

Closing remarks and next steps by co-hosts Dr. Penny Gurstein and Marleen Morris.

Acknowledgements

Land Acknowledgement

The Community Development Institute and the Housing Research Collaborative wish to begin by acknowledging that we live and work on the ancestral homelands of Indigenous Peoples across BC, each with their unique traditions and history. We offer our respect to their Peoples, past and present. For those among us who live in Prince George, we recognize that we are on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Lheidli T'enneh First Nation. Those of us in Vancouver recognize that we are on the traditional, ancestral, and unceded territories of the Musqueam, Squamish, and Tseil-Waututh First Nations.

Event Acknowledgement

The HRC and the CDI would like to express our appreciation for the funding received from the Real Estate Foundation of BC that made this event possible. Furthermore, we would like to thank the small-group discussion facilitators for supporting this session and making the break-out room format possible. Thank you also to the UBC students who took on the task of note taking in the small-group discussions. Finally, a big thank you goes to the participants for taking an interest in the session, giving their time, actively sharing their perspectives, and making the session a valuable learning and information sharing experience for all involved.

Availability

This report will be posted on the following websites of the CDI and HRC:
- https://www.unbc.ca/community-development-institute/research-projects
- https://housingresearchcollaborative.scarp.ubc.ca/

It will furthermore be distributed to all session registrants and participants.

Host Organizations

Community Development Institute

The Community Development Institute (CDI) at UNBC was established in 2004 with a broad mandate in the areas of community, regional, and economic development. Since its inception, the CDI has worked with communities across the northern and central regions of British Columbia to develop and implement strategies for economic diversification and community resilience.

Dedicated to understanding and realizing the potential of BC's non-metropolitan communities in a changing global economy, the CDI works to prepare students and practitioners for leadership roles in community and economic development, and to create a body of knowledge, information, and research that will enhance our understanding and our ability to deal with the impacts of ongoing transformation. The Community Development Institute is committed to working with all communities – Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal – to help them further their aspirations in community and regional development.

In recent years, the CDI has turned its focus to non-metropolitan housing. The report series *Building Foundations for the Future: Housing, community development, and economic opportunity in non-metropolitan BC and Canada* explores demographic change and the housing stock outside of larger centres, and how these two factors impact community and economic development.

https://www.unbc.ca/community-development-institute

The Housing Research Collaborative

The Housing Research Collaborative (HRC) launched in 2017 as a part of the formal announcement of the Housing Research Collaborative, at the Pacific Housing Research Network Symposium in Richmond, British Columbia. HRC is a community of housing researchers, providers, and policymakers focused on understanding systemic impediments in the housing system and to address housing unaffordability.

The starting point is the need to re-conceptualize the housing delivery system in British Columbia and Canada to make it equitable and secure for all forms of tenure. The path forward is unclear, and the HRC has set out to identify important new directions for the provision of such housing.

https://housingresearchcollaborative.scarp.ubc.ca/

Table of Contents

Executive Summary

This session consisted of four panel presentations. This was followed by small group discussions in virtual breakout rooms. The discussions were guided by three questions encouraging thoughts about the level of readiness for metro-migration in participants' communities, noticeable impacts of metro-migration, and possible solutions. A plenary discussion then provided opportunities for the small groups to share their discussion points, and the entire group built on those discussion points and highlighted priorities.

Panel Presentations

Panelists included Marleen Morris, the Co-Director at the Community Development Institute (CDI) at UNBC, who set the context with non-metropolitan demographic and housing data; Owen Torgerson, Mayor of the Village of Valemount, who shared the perspective of a small resource and resort/amenity community; Peter Bourke, Executive Director of the Columbia Valley Chamber of Commerce, who presented the perspective of the business community in a non-metropolitan region of resource and resort/amenity communities; and Frank Quinn, Principal at A&T Developments Inc., who introduced the developers' and construction industry perspective on non-metropolitan housing development.

Non-Metropolitan Housing Context

As CDI research has shown, non-metropolitan British Columbia (BC) housing stock is overwhelmingly old, a comparatively large proportion is in need of major repairs, and available housing is dominated by larger single detached homes, lacking options and choice. Consequently, housing in non-metropolitan British Columbia (BC) communities is not meeting demand and has effectively become a barrier to community and economic development.

The other panelists confirmed the CDI's findings and the impacts on their communities and sectors. Migration from large centres in BC to smaller communities has exposed and exacerbated housing challenges. While it holds potential for growth and economic stability for non-metropolitan BC communities, metro-migration to smaller communities has created pressures that many smaller communities are not ready for. Affordability challenges due to high demand, low supply, and a sudden influx of capital are one aspect; the state of the housing stock and a lack of appropriate housing meeting today's standards and expectations for people from all ages and stages of life pose another important barrier. Attracting new residents, housing a larger workforce, and enabling seniors to comfortably age in place, all while maintaining a high quality of life for all residents, becomes a challenge.

Breakout Groups

Readiness
In small-group discussions, session participants from non-metropolitan communities in all regions of BC confirmed the impacts of metro-migration and related housing challenges, and reported on signs of readiness, or the lack thereof, in a variety of topic areas. An open community and leadership mindset were considered a fundamental prerequisite for readiness. Municipal government and administrative

capacity were generally thought to be a limiting factor. Strategic planning, and adequate and appropriate research and assessments for informed decision making, played an important role in readiness and the ability to capitalize on the potential benefits of metro-migration. The existing infrastructure in many non-metropolitan communities was reportedly at capacity and near the end of its lifespan so that the ability to accommodate growth and address related infrastructure challenges is crucial. Construction industry capacity, and a number of barriers they face with development projects in small and remote communities, were another element affecting community readiness. Finally, the housing stock itself was confirmed to be inadequate to accommodating growth.

Impacts
The impacts of metro-migration already felt by the communities represented in the session included some opportunities and positive developments, such as new housing development, a more diverse demographic, and diversification of local businesses. However, most impacts discussed by session participants pose challenges to their communities. They range from conflict and disagreement about welcoming change and how to handle it, to increasing delays in administrative processing timelines due to capacity shortages, lagging regulation trying to catch up with the realities of housing needs and developments, increased infrastructure maintenance costs and overtaxed utility and traffic networks, and increasing wait times for contractors and trades. The housing shortage, as well as lacking quality and choice of housing, are affecting all demographics. As affordability has been impacted greatly with supply shortages and an influx of metropolitan capital, a lack of affordable middle-class housing has become more pronounced. Local tourism sectors are affected by a lack of vacancies to accommodate visitors: Metro-migrants and industry workers occupy hotel rooms and short-term rentals, making them unavailable for tourists. Meanwhile local residents are at risk of being displaced by the influx of metro-migrants.

Solutions
Exploring how to address the challenges, participants suggested steps local governments and administrations can, and should, take, as well as a role for higher levels of government. Locally, fostering open mindsets through public consultation and education was identified as a first important step. Strategic planning with updated data and turning towards innovative solutions was thought to create the foundation, while improving and adjusting regulations and bylaws would aide in creating more efficient and effective processes. Local government strategies, according to participants, should consider incentives to guide development in the desired directions and offset challenges. Another measure that could be taken on relatively short notice is to increase administrative capacity and build relationships with developers. Communication with other communities to share information and experience, collaborate regionally, and coordinate efforts and approaches was thought to be an important factor in efficient and positive development. Finally, research and more diverse perspectives in planning were mentioned to achieve well-informed and balanced development.

For higher levels of government, it was highlighted that there is an urgent need for support. Given the capacity shortages, and similarities in challenges across communities, regulatory support and the elimination of regulatory barriers, a greater role in infrastructure funding and maintenance, and a role of guidance and information sharing to lighten the overwhelming load for non-metropolitan BC were considered to be of utmost importance.

Plenary Discussion

Highlights
In a final plenary conversation about the key takeaways from small-group discussions, and an opportunity for all participants to verbally or in the chat share their priorities, many of the points recorded previously were reiterated and expanded. In order of urgency, based on how often a topic was mentioned as a key takeaway and on the urgency that was conveyed in elaborations, the housing stock, including challenges and opportunities, was the most discussed topic. The importance of the role of higher levels of government was equally emphasized, and the nature of possible provincial supports was discussed in detail. This was followed by, and related to, the overwhelming nature of the pressures on local administrative staff and elected officials that was made very clear. Infrastructure, while not the most visible issue, was identified as a crucial element to be considered and addressed in the early stages of planning and development. Strategic planning was regarded as equally important and was mostly viewed as an opportunity for positive action. Economic development was discussed mostly in terms of the barriers it faces due to housing challenges. Community and leadership mindsets, as well as community development, were discussed to a smaller degree, but their importance was highlighted in the discussions again. While suggestions for zoning and regulation barriers and measures were numerous in the small-group discussions, they were less prevalent as a highlight but rather considered an obvious element in many of the other processes.

The shortage, affordability issues, and lacking quality of rental accommodation, also in the context of tourism-related short-term rentals, were discussed in detail during the last opportunity for session participant input. This included highlighting the importance of the problem, gaps in data and information, and possible solutions in the privately-owned rental market that is dominant in most non-metropolitan communities but underrepresented in rental data. Given the opportunity to stress personal highlights, participants emphasized again the need for provincial support. Climate change and natural disaster risks were also brought up as they are fresh on BC communities' minds due to recent disasters that have highlighted the need for emergency preparedness and risk mitigation.

Closing

In closing, the co-hosts acknowledged the need to pay attention to non-metropolitan housing, both at local and provincial levels. Furthermore, the need to continue the dialogue and facilitate information sharing and knowledge mobilization, as expressed by participants, was mentioned again, and plans for future events to that end were announced.

Introduction

Recent research conducted by the CDI has confirmed that housing in non-metropolitan British Columbia (BC) communities is not meeting demand and has effectively become a barrier to community and economic development. The housing stock is overwhelmingly old, a comparatively large proportion is in need of major repairs, and available housing is dominated by larger single detached homes, lacking options and choice.

Migration from large centres in BC to smaller communities has been recognized as a trend for some time. Intra-provincial migration statistics between 2016 and 2020 confirm this trend. While Vancouver experienced net negative intra-provincial migration, most Census Agglomerations, as well as the areas outside of Census Metropolitan Areas and Census Agglomerations overall, registered considerable net positive migration from within the province.

While growth, and the ability to attract residents, are good news for non-metropolitan BC communities, metro-migration to smaller communities has exposed the challenges in the non-metropolitan housing market and created new pressures for those communities. Affordability challenges due to high demand, low supply, and a sudden influx of capital are one aspect; the state of the housing stock and a lack of appropriate housing meeting today's standards and expectations for people of all ages and stages of life pose another important barrier.

When non-metropolitan communities do not have enough housing supply, or not enough appropriate housing, community and economic development faces challenges, and social and economic momentum can be lost. Attracting new residents, housing a larger workforce, and enabling seniors to comfortably age in place, all while maintaining a high quality of life for all residents, becomes a challenge. Consequently, housing becomes a direct barrier to attracting businesses, growing industries, and expanding services and community amenities.

The virtual panel presentation and discussion *Ready or Not: Metro-Migration to Smaller Communities*, co-hosted by the Community Development Institute and the Housing Research Collaborative, focused on how communities are directly affected by metro-migration, and what ideas they have to address the barriers as well as realize the opportunities metro-migration presents.

The session was attended by over 120 professionals from communities throughout all regions of BC. Attendees included a breadth of occupations and fields of expertise, ranging, for example, from local government, to planners, consultants, building industry, education sector, and researchers.

Participant Poll

The poll explored who was in the virtual room to give an indication of what perspectives and what types of expertise were represented in the discussions.

Which best describes your role?

(42%)   Planner
(25%)   Other
(12%)   Administrator
(8%)   Developer
(6%)   Contractor
(4%)   Architect/Designer
(1%)   Building Official
(1%)   Housing Manager/Coordinator

What type of organization do you work for?

(41%)   Local Government
(15%)   Private Sector
(12%)   Other
(8%)   Self-Employed
(7%)   Provincial Government
(7%)   Regional Government
(5%)   Non-Profit Sector
(3%)   First Nations Government

What is the population of the community you work in most often?

(43%)   Less than 10,000
(30%)   More than 100,000
(10%)   10,000-29,999
(9%)   50,000-100,000
(7%)   30,000-49,999

Speaker Biographies

Marleen Morris, Co-Director, Community Development Institute, UNBC

Marleen Morris is Co-Director of the Community Development Institute (CDI) and an Adjunct Professor of Geography at the University of Northern British Columbia.

Marleen has been involved in the housing sector in BC for more than 40 years. She was appointed to the board of BC Housing, was on the management committee of the BC/Yukon Region of Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation, chaired the boards of The Bloom Group and Katherine Sanford Housing Society, and was appointed to the Vancouver City Planning Commission.

In addition, Marleen has over 20 years' experience in community-based research, the last 15 of which have been focused on non-metropolitan regions. As President of Marleen Morris & Associates, she worked in communities across BC helping organizations in the public, business, and non-profit sectors develop strategies for revitalization and change. Marleen also served as Vice-President, Public Affairs and Health Education at Vancouver Coastal Health and on the management team of Capilano University. She also served on the board of the Prince George Community Foundation.

Marleen holds an MSc (Management) from HEC (France) and Oxford University (England) and a BA (International Relations) from UBC.

Owen Torgerson, Mayor, Village of Valemount

Owen Torgerson is a life-long resident of Valemount and currently serving as its Mayor. He also leads operations in the mining sector, particularly earth works, and oversees Crown tenure permits, land-use planning, mapping, 3D-modelling, emergency response, Indigenous relations and provides multi-organizational logistics on larger projects.

Beyond the telling of many fishing stories, Owen is very well-versed with Kinbasket Reservoir and its operations. Since 2011, Owen continues to volunteer on the Kinbasket Debris Management Committee and now relaxes as Past-President of the Valemount Marina Association, a non-profit organization that manages Canoe Reach Marina.

He has been actively involved with local government since 2011, volunteering at first with the Village of Valemount Advisory Planning Commission, their Integrated Sustainable Community Planning Team and the Columbia Basin Trust Community Initiatives Adjudication Committee. In 2014 he was elected municipal Councillor where he advanced recreational development and tourism, forestry, municipal infrastructure asset management and emergency planning.

In 2018, Owen was elected Mayor of his hometown, where he and wife Korie live, work and play. As a municipal representative to the Regional District Fraser-Fort George, Owen sits as Chair of their Public Safety and Emergency Management Committee as well as Chair of their Agricultural Land Use Committee. Owen has been the Regional District's nominee to the Columbia Basin Trust Board of Directors for the past three years and has been appointed as Chair of the Trust's Housing Initiatives Committee.

Peter Bourke, Executive Director, Columbia Valley Chamber of Commerce

With over 20 years of senior management experience throughout tourism, hospitality and customer service sectors, Pete Bourke is a culture focused leader with a coach approach mindset.

He understands the value of enhancing managers and business leaders with the tools to succeed. Having owned his own business in Invermere and worked in senior roles with some of the larger employers in the region, Pete has a firsthand appreciation for what it takes to be successful in the Columbia Valley. Pete places high importance on building a sense of community and giving back to others, as evidenced through his continued commitments to non-profit organizations.

An alumnus of Royal Roads University, he holds a Graduate Executive Coaching Certificate and is EQ-i2.0 & EQ360 certified for Emotional Intelligence. Pete is also currently challenging for his Associate Certified Coach credential through the ICF and undertaking his Masters in Business Administration.
Pete calls Invermere home where he lives with his wife and two teenage children.

Frank Quinn, Principal, A&T Project Developments Inc.

Frank Quinn brings over 30 years' experience as a lawyer, developer, corporate strategist and governance leader to his role with A&T. He is a visionary who identifies opportunity then pairs it with relevant knowledge, prudence, and the right partnerships to make good ideas happen. He oversees the company's land negotiations and acquisitions, and leads the research and analysis required to ensure its major developments and projects are not only feasible but successful. He also directs and supervises the investment, design, and planning decisions required for each of A&T's major multi-family and commercial projects.

He has helped guide and govern several provincial, regional, and local business, community, health, and educational organizations. Frank's commitment to the community has also led him to sit on the board of directors for the Kamloops Food Bank, an organization that he values deeply.

Together with his wife Cathy, he is a father to three, a grandfather to five and a trusted and devoted friend to many. He is uncompromising in his commitments to others but equally devoted to the intense pursuit of his interests – which include heli-skiing, mountain climbing, and mountain biking.

Panel Presentations

Data Presentation: Non-Metropolitan Demographics and Housing Stock

This data presentation set the context for the session. Marleen Morris introduced the two factors driving housing issues: population and demographic change, and the housing stock itself.

The CDI has been conducting non-metropolitan housing research for many years. The most recent dataset consists of demographic and housing data for 39 non-metropolitan BC communities, collected from the most recent available Census data products (2016 Census).

According to Census data, the population of BC has been growing across all geographies over the last decades. BC overall registered 5.6% growth from 2011-2016. During that time, Census Metropolitan Areas (CMA), with populations of 100,000 or more, grew by 6.7%, and non-metropolitan areas (NMAs), with populations under 100,000, noted a population increase of 4.6%. Intra-provincial migration data, i.e. BC residents moving between BC communities, furthermore confirmed that there was a trend of residents migrating out of CMAs and into NMAs.[1]

Population characteristics and demographic change determine housing needs and expectations. NMAs populations are, on average, older than metropolitan populations. The average median age in the CDI's NMA sample was over 44 years, compared to under 41 years in the Vancouver CMA. Population pyramids confirm the prevalence of population age groups of retirement, or pre-retirement, age.

Another relevant demographic indicator in the context of housing is household size. Average household size in NMAs in 2016 was 2.2 persons. This means NMA communities have to house smaller households than the Vancouver CMA, where household size was at 2.5 persons. Compounding the challenges NMA are facing in meeting smaller households' needs is the fact that they have experienced significant change in household size over the past four decades. Between 1981 and 2016, NMAs saw a 21% decline in household size, while it has stayed relatively stable in the Vancouver CMA with only a 3.5% decline during the same time.

The housing stock in NMAs is considerably older than CMA housing. On average, 57% of the NMA housing stock in the sample was built before 1981, while only 40% of Vancouver CMA housing dated back that far. Older housing translates to lower energy efficiency and a higher need for major repairs, which is reflected in the data. This need for major repairs is even more noticeable in rented NMA dwellings; close to 10% of NMA rental units are in a state disrepair, compared to less than 7% in Vancouver.

Another common characteristic of the NMA housing stock is the lack of diversity. Close to two-thirds of the NMA housing stock consists of single detached dwellings. In comparison with less than 30% in the Vancouver CMA, this shows that NMAs face a significant shortage of typically smaller units requiring less

---

[1] Credit for collecting and processing intra-provincial migration data: Craig Jones, Research Coordinator, HRC.

maintenance, such as apartments or condos, duplexes, and other forms of housing. Adding to the lack of choices in the NMA housing market, a comparison of the prevalence of small households with the prevalence of small dwellings highlights a notable shortage of smaller dwellings. Data for larger households and larger dwellings confirms an oversupply of homes with four or more bedrooms.

Finally, affordability data exposed a pronounced vulnerability among NMA tenants, especially seniors. Households spending 30% or more of their income on shelter costs are considered vulnerable. In NMAs, on average, 40% of tenants fell into that category, compared to 43.5% in the Vancouver CMA. While this was the average, tenants in many NMA sample communities were significantly more vulnerable than Vancouver tenants. Another relevant affordability indicator is the average price of a dwelling. While many NMA communities have seen enough of an increase in housing prices in recent years to create their own affordability challenges with displacement of local residents and home ownership moving out of reach for many, the equity in NMA housing remains relatively low compared to larger centres. This makes home ownership seemingly more affordable; however, it impacts mobility and limits NMA residents' opportunities for intra-provincial migration.

Within these overarching trends in the NMA demographics and housing stock, a pattern emerged, pointing to three major community 'archetypes' in BC: amenity/resort communities, aging resource-based communities, and retirement communities. Most communities will not fit perfectly into one archetype, but may be in transition between two or embody elements of all three. The presentation focused on 3 communities that represent these archetypes: Invermere (amenity/resort), Kitimat (aging resource-based), and Parksville (retirement).

Retirement communities are attractive to older adults, usually 55 years plus, because they are seen as desirable places to live in their senior years. Retirement communities are characterized by population growth, often dating back to the 1980s, and a significantly older population than CMA or NMA averages. Given the population growth, these communities also have a higher percentage of newer housing development; however, many still lack diversity of dwelling types. These communities also tend to have only a small family-formation/working age population. While there is some financial vulnerability among homeowners in these communities, tenants, especially senior tenants, tend to be particularly vulnerable in terms of affordability.

The aging resource communities thrived from the 1950s to the 1980s thanks to the strong growth of BC's natural resources sector, including forestry, mining, and fishing. After the global economic downturn in the early 1980s, however, these communities experienced boom and bust cycles that gradually resulted in long-term economic decline. Aging resource communities are characterized by population decline and an older median age. The housing stock in these communities is generally old and in need of major repairs. New housing development is almost non-existent because it is seen as too risky in a community experiencing boom and bust cycles.

Finally, the resort/amenity communities, historically, had ties to both the resource sector and to the tourism economy. Other communities are, just now, transitioning from a resource community to a resort/amenity community. These communities are characterized by a younger median age and a larger proportion of the population in the family-formation/working age cohorts. They are also characterized by population growth, although for some, this growth is very recent. As population growth results in

housing demand, the housing stock in many resort/amenity communities is in the process of renewal. Given that many households in resort/amenity communities have relatively low incomes, housing affordability and vulnerability are issues.

While most communities will not reflect these archetypes perfectly, understanding how economic and social transition impacts the housing stock, and vice versa, can help communities anywhere on a spectrum of community 'types' better understand their challenges and anticipate trends and trajectories.

Non-Metropolitan Municipal Government Perspective

Mayor Owen Torgerson shared the metro-migration trend from the perspective of the Village of Valemount. Located in eastern central BC, Valemount is a community of around 1,020 people (2016 Census) in the mountainous region close to Jasper National Park and Mt. Robson Provincial Park. Leading up to the 1980s, Valemount was a booming forestry community; however, with the global recession in the 1980s, forestry in Valemount went into decline. While value-added forestry products continue to be a vital part of its local economy, Valemount has since then continuously reinvented itself as a tourism and amenity destination. It has become BC's most northern resort community and offers a variety of outdoor activities for all seasons with world class facilities and conditions. The municipality adopted a role of supporting and leading recreational opportunity development, as well as policy development.

Since Valemount's attractions are mainly outdoor activities, tourism has stayed mostly stable throughout the COVID-19 pandemic with an initial decline followed by growth as the pandemic has progressed.

Due to work on the Transmountain Pipeline in its vicinity, Valemount has also seen a considerable influx of workers. Initially, the community could absorb the worker population thanks to its tourism accommodation capacity. However, as the influx of workers continued and increased, housing and accommodation became a problem.

Beyond visitors and temporary workers, Valemount has also seen an increase in lifestyle migrants. "If their job allows them to work from anywhere, they choose Valemount as a home due to its lifestyle and amenities."

This growth from multiple types of in-migration has led to a significant increase in land sales. Land transactions within Village boundaries alone increased six-fold, and single-family home construction increased three-fold as a result. However, since these developments could not absorb the worker population, the Village Council also passed a temporary resolution to allow recreational vehicles for housing. Uptake has been strong for this new opportunity. In terms of managing this housing option, applications require a public hearing and an opportunity for community consultation. Building services inspect electrical connections, RV certification, water back flow prevention valves, and holding tank content removal plans. In addition, non-profit organizations in Valemount have stepped up and are contributing to an expected increase of eight or nine percent in housing stock over the next year or two.

Mayor Owen Torgerson invited participants with further questions to contact him at otorgerson@valemount.ca.

Non-Metropolitan Business Perspective

As the Executive Director of the Columbia Valley Chamber of Commerce, Peter Bourke from Invermere brought the business perspective on NMA housing to this session. The Columbia Valley is located in south-eastern BC, approximately three hours from Calgary. The Columbia Valley Chamber of Commerce works in close collaboration with communities, regional districts and First Nations in the area. The region has ongoing ties to the forestry and mining sectors; however, it also has strong roots in the tourism and amenity sector.

As a result of the tourism and amenity role, communities in the Columbia Valley have relatively high proportions of part-time residents and short-term rentals. This creates a unique set of opportunities and pressures on the local housing market.

In an effort to understand the needs before taking action in various housing development projects, the Chamber of Commerce has recently launched a survey to inform its workforce housing goals for the coming years. The responses to the survey paint a clear picture of the impacts of housing challenges on the business community. A total of 67 businesses have participated in the survey.

- One-third of respondents listed a shortage of housing, in particular rental housing, as one of the main factors contributing to staff shortages for their businesses.
- The businesses who responded currently employ over 1,100 full-time staff and would employ another 220 if staff were available. In addition, the current number of part-time positions (155) could be increased by 44% to over 220 positions.
- Two-thirds of respondents paid at least the current living wage in the Columbia Valley ($17.18), confirming that unattractive wages are not a factor in staff shortages.
- A total of 16% of respondents are already either providing staff accommodation or providing support to their staff in finding accommodation. Some restaurants, for example, have purchased a condo, or similar dwelling unit, to house staff.
- Exploring possible solutions, 22% of respondents declared an interest in a co-op housing project.

A housing workshop will be hosted to share the results with the business community. The Chamber is planning to invite a range of players that may be interested in the data or can answer questions, including for example builders, developers, and lawyers.

Traditionally, stakeholders in the Columbia Valley work closely together to build relationships, exchange best practices, and collaborate on solutions. Partnerships between municipalities and First Nations, for example, lead to opportunities related to land and build mutual support systems.

Some of the goals and strategies of the Chamber of Commerce include the promotion of lifestyle housing. There is a noticeable shortage of entry-level rental units, but there is also a pronounced need for housing for professionals and their families, including for example teachers and nurses. A recent collaboration with a developer is in its final stages as they are completing a low-income housing project. Other areas of interest for future surveys include transit, seasonality, and short-term rentals.

Development and Building Industry Perspective

As a principal at A&T Project Development Inc., Frank Quinn presented to the session participants the developers' perspective on housing development in non-metropolitan communities.

His first piece of advice to municipalities was to be aware of interest rates if they want to invest in housing, in particular rental housing. Changes in interest rates can change the supply and demand situation significantly, and as soon as the interest rate reaches 5% or higher, there is no incentive for developers to build rental units. CMHC provides an effective vehicle to reduce rates and provide long-term security; however, there are limitations to their program where they consider the market too unstable to fund. In effect, this means it is a challenge for smaller communities to get CMHC insurance. Innovative and unique development projects, for example an opportunity for a non-profit organization like a food bank to invest into affordable housing as a means to meet their clients' needs and to become less dependent on donations, are also less likely to qualify.

Frank Quinn then shared the developers' perspective on three areas of great importance for municipal governments and administrations wishing to attract development to their communities and achieve a diverse housing landscape.

The first area of consideration is the land that is to be developed. A lot of developers who are interested in investing in a community, or are invited to consider the community, find that the properties they are shown have unresolved issues that make investment unattractive or would delay development to a degree that makes it unfeasible. These issues can include geotechnical issues, floodplains, rezoning requirements, and lacking utilities. "The golden rule for developers is, 'always build your best property first.' That also goes for municipalities," Quinn highlighted and advised communities to show their best land first, have completed geotechnical work, ensure rezoning has already happened and allows for flexibility, and have the utilities in place, or at least a plan and schedule for servicing the land.

The second area of concern was the cost associated with remoteness. The more remote the community, the more expensive it is to build there. From a developer's point of view, there are several common reasons for that, all of which fall into one two categories: material and trades capacity.
- Material:
  - The longer transportation routes drive up material costs.
- Trades:
  - There are a limited numbers of trades people in smaller communities, and they often do not have any experience with large developments.
  - Remote communities are often located close to resource development projects, and their trades people choose to work in the resource sector and are not interested in residential housing development projects.
  - Protectionism among local developers, who understandably dislike outside developers securing projects in their community, keeps local trades intentionally out of reach for larger outside developers.
  - The resulting trades shortages mean that a developer has to tender work more broadly to bring in trades from farther away. This leads to increased travel and live-in payments, and consequently to higher costs.

While some of these factors are out of any one party's control, Frank Quinn's advice to municipalities was to help local developers and trades understand the importance of cooperation. "Growth will bring growth." In addition, we highly recommend that 'out-of-community' developers explore opportunities for joint ventures with local governments and local trade companies.

A third barrier commonly encountered in non-metropolitan communities lies in administrative priorities and capacity. Quinn conceded that he was touching upon some sensitive subjects and began by elaborating on questions of environmental sustainability and municipal priorities. While many developers, including himself, value and prioritize "green" practices, housing development cannot take place entirely without impacting the environment. It is difficult, or impossible, to create a small development project with the latest 'green' technology, for example green energy, integrated green space, and electric charging stations, that people can afford to live in. His experiments with 'green' practices and technology have shown that many are not feasible or functional in remote and northern communities; green roofs are too expensive, geothermal heat does not work in many places, and the costs of alternative solutions in general are too high. Therefore, his advice to non-metropolitan communities was that it is a good idea to offer incentives for 'green' development solutions but not to make the mistake of making 'green' practices a dogmatic requirement if they want to attract development.

Another capacity concern was that of municipal administrations being pressured to cut costs and employing too few people to carry out the administrative and regulatory work. When permit approval timelines are too long, the project becomes less interesting as an investment. Any permitting timelines over six months mean that the developer's money is tied up for too long. Therefore, the advice would be to expedite processes wherever possible. Quinn saw small communities at an advantage in this regard as they have the ability to make things happen faster. He strongly suggested making processes as fast and convenient as possible, "do not turn a rezoning application into a subdivision application."

Small Group Discussions

After the panel presentations, session participants were assigned to virtual breakout rooms. Each room had a designated facilitator, a note taker, and three to five participants at large. The small group discussions were structured by three questions:

1. What do you see that indicates your community is ready or not for migration from metro areas?
2. What specific ways is migration from metro areas impacting your community?
3. What ideas do you have to address this now (low hanging fruit) and into the future?

Many small group discussions confirmed that metro-migration is happening, and all non-metropolitan communities are feeling it in some form. Some of the more remote communities reported seeing a cascading out of the migration pattern. Where metro-migration may traditionally have focused mainly on smaller communities immediately adjacent to the larger centres of origin, it now affects more remote and northern communities than before. Many participants also recognized the effects of the COVID-19 pandemic and the normalization of working from home as many metro-migrants are maintaining their old jobs and are moving to non-metropolitan areas to enjoy the lifestyle.

The following sections will outline the small group responses to the discussion questions.

What do you see that indicates your community is ready or not for migration from metro areas?

Participants in all groups agreed that communities in non-metropolitan BC are not ready for the metro-migration trend. However, some recognized signs of readiness or elaborated what signs of readiness could look like in their opinion. Table 1 outlines the responses to the readiness question. The signs of readiness for metro-migration fall into a number of categories. The mindset of a community, including its residents and its government, creates a foundation for readiness. A community that is open for change, welcomes newcomers, and sees opportunity in growth and renewal is more likely to take action and look at innovative ways of accommodating growth and change. Communities where growth and change are embraced are also more likely to have diversified their local economy. A diverse economy, and the presence of job openings, offers opportunity to newcomers and can be an effective tool in attracting and retaining new residents. Research and strategic planning are another area where participants saw a level of community readiness. A community which has recently created, or updated, a housing strategy is more likely to be able to take a coordinated and targeted approach to accommodating metro-migration.

More palpable signs that a community is not just open to in-migration but actively supporting it can be found in the area of regulatory frameworks. Some communities represented in the session reported having passed bylaws to allow secondary suites and buildings; some have rezoning in place to attract development to the community; reduced parking standards have effectively lifted some limitations on higher development density; and a number of communities reported having accelerated their permitting processes.

Finally, the existing built environment, at any given point in time, determines the limit of how much growth a community can accommodate at that moment. A small number of communities felt they have a robust infrastructure envelope in place to accommodate growth for some time. In addition, geographical, or topographical, limitations may determine how much growth a community can accommodate, and a few felt they have enough land available for development to be ready for growth. Some very small communities which have registered increased building activity felt optimistic about the level of growth in their community. An active focus on infill housing and denser development in their communities also gave some participants a sense of readiness in the face of increasing metro-migration.

Discussions about the many ways in which non-metropolitan communities are not ready for metro-migration dominated most of the virtual breakout rooms. While an open mindset is the foundation for a community to prepare for growth and change, a majority of session participants felt that opposition to growth, opposition to change, and opposition to density in particular, among both local residents and local politicians is holding many communities back. It was also noted that municipal governments and administrations are commonly suffering capacity shortages, which is one reason for long timelines for rezoning and other measures to accommodate change. Limited resources both in terms of human resources and finances put limitations on what municipalities can achieve. Some local or regional governments are not ready to prioritize housing, and even among those who do, some participants saw a lack of political will to diversify the housing stock and to undertake rezoning. Whether due to capacity shortages or an opposition to change, session participants noted a lack of strategic action in their municipal leadership. While some municipalities have commissioned housing studies or needs

assessments, they reportedly appear unwilling or unable to follow through with actions. Another point of lacking readiness on the municipal level is a lack of regional collaboration. In more general terms, some session participants described their municipal approaches as reactive instead of proactive.

Closely tied to municipal capacity, regulatory circumstances also came up as barriers to development and readiness. Confusion over building codes and overlapping regulatory frameworks were mentioned as slowing down change. In addition, a lack of incentives, for example through taxation, was considered a problem in some communities. Hinting at limitations to non-metropolitan development due to over-generalized provincial frameworks, it was mentioned that provincial energy efficiency requirements can be unfeasible in remote northern communities.

As some participants saw signs of readiness in the built environment, most also saw significant limitations in infrastructure and housing stock as a major barrier to development and readiness for metro-migration. The existing infrastructure in many non-metropolitan communities is reportedly at capacity and at, or near, the end of its lifespan. Land shortage due to the natural topography of a community near mountains and waterways exacerbates the lacking growth and development. Adding the service element to the built infrastructure, session participants considered their municipal services at capacity and mentioned a lack of services, for example curbside recycling, as a barrier to welcoming metro-migrants seamlessly into their communities. Remote working has become the norm, or at least a feasible possibility, in many workplaces. This is one of the factors driving metro-migration since many metropolitan jobs are no longer tied to metropolitan residence. However, many session participants in remote communities noted poor internet connectivity as a barrier to successfully attracting and accommodating metro-migrants.

The construction industry plays a big role in community readiness for in-migration. Non-metropolitan communities reported a shortage of builders. The resulting difficulties and delays of new development are increased by material shortages and rising material costs. While costs are increasing with market developments and with increasing remoteness, financing for non-metropolitan development projects seems to constitute another barrier to community readiness.

Finally, the housing stock itself was often described as a sign of lacking readiness. Communities were reported to have low housing stock that is not meeting the increasing demand. The existing housing is overwhelmingly old and of poor quality. An explicitly mentioned lack of small and affordable units reflects the general lack of diversity in the housing stock, a lack of rental housing, and a lack of seniors housing.

Table 1: Signs that non-metropolitan communities are ready for metro-migration

Ready
Mindset
• Open to development
• Welcoming newcomers
• See opportunity for local economy
Economy
• Diversification
• Job opportunities
Research and strategic planning
• Updated housing strategy
Regulations
• Bylaws for secondary suites or structures
• Re-zoning in place
• Reduced parking standards
• Accelerated processes
Infrastructure
• Infrastructure built to accommodate more development
• Land available for development
Housing stock
• Increased building activity
• Actively building infill and denser housing

Not Ready
Mindset
• Opposition to growth
• Opposition to change and new people
• Opposition to density
Municipal government and administration
• Capacity shortage
• Long timeline for rezoning
• Limited resources
• Not prioritizing housing
• Lacking political will to diversify housing stock
• Lacking strategic action
• Lacking regional collaboration
• Reactive instead of proactive approach
Regulations
• Confusion over building codes
• Lacking incentives for developers
• Provincial energy efficiency requirements challenging
Infrastructure
• Existing infrastructure at capacity
• Existing infrastructure at end of lifespan
• Land shortage
• Municipal services at capacity
• Lack of municipal services
• Poor internet connectivity

HOUSING RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE
CDI
UNBC

Construction
- Shortage of builders
- Material shortages
- Material costs
- Financing challenges

Housing Stock
- Low housing stock does not meet increasing demand
- Old housing stock
- Poor quality housing stock
- Expensive to build
- Lack of small units
- Lack of affordable units
- Lack of rental stock
- Lack of diversity
- Lack of seniors housing

What specific ways is migration from metro areas impacting your community?

The second question guiding the small group discussions invited participants to share the impacts of metro-migration that their communities have been experiencing. The impacts described by participants included opportunities and challenges as outlined in Table 2. Many of the impacts are direct results of a community's readiness, or lack thereof. Some participants noted an increase in multi-family developments in their communities. This is a result of in-migration and changing demands but also reflects a community's willingness to diversify its housing and recognize the diversity and current-day needs and expectations of the residents. Mixed-use development is another new direction reported in zoning and housing stock development. While the example also showed that the transition into mixed uses can be challenging, this is another instance of taking a new direction with non-metropolitan housing stock.

There are also opportunities in community development. These are impacts felt beyond housing and housing-related regulations and development. For example, some communities mentioned increasing enrollment in their K-12 educational system. As young families move into the community, they bring their kids, who enter the local schools. Increasing school enrolment is a sign of a growing younger demographic. A further diversification of the community demographic in some communities is an influx of seniors. A diverse demographic makeup holds opportunities on many social and economic levels, which leads to the next area of opportunity. The local economy in many non-metropolitan communities benefits from metro-migration. A number of participants had observed new businesses in their communities, for example to meet increasing service needs. The in-migration of metropolitan residents was also seen as an opportunity in terms of new skill sets in the community.

However, given that almost all participants considered their communities ill-prepared for metro-migration, it is not surprising that the majority of the observed impacts were considered challenges. The municipal and residential mindset have already been mentioned as signs of readiness. When it comes to impacts of metro-migration, some participants felt the influx of newcomers has led to further conflict and disagreement in the community. Some tourist destinations reported tourism fatigue that has led to a certain level of fatigue against all newcomers. "NIMBYism" (Not In My Backyard attitudes) and a propensity to oppose change have led to opposition to new and more diverse types of development and resistance against affordable housing projects in some communities. Conversely, in some cases newcomers are the ones to oppose change in the community. They have moved to a non-metropolitan area for its lifestyle, and now expect it to be preserved its current state.

At the municipal level, the existing staffing shortages and lengthy permitting and approval processes have become exacerbated by metro-migration. In terms of regulations, many processes are reportedly still catching up with the reality of population growth and increased development. This is also true for some of the First Nations communities who were represented among participants. Recent changes in governance, for example, have not yet led to complete sets of housing regulations. Communities are consequently dealing with supply shortages and informal housing solutions that urgently need to be addressed. Similar informal settlements or illegal suites were also noted outside of First Nations communities. Unregulated housing situations constitute safety concerns but also beg the question how to develop, or streamline, a process of legalizing them. Another aspect of development-related

regulations can be found in the increased metro-migration into un-zoned and unregulated rural areas outside of communities, as regional districts reported an increase in development in their jurisdictions.

With much of the non-metropolitan infrastructure at capacity or at the end of its lifespan, it is, again, not surprising that some of the impacts of metro-migration are increased maintenance costs. In addition, an increase in vehicle traffic is cause for infrastructure concerns in some communities.

The capacity shortages in the construction industry, which have been mentioned earlier as a sign that communities are not prepared for metro-migration, has become more evident with in-migration into non-metropolitan communities. In part due to the long permitting and approval timelines, non-metropolitan trades were noted to be commonly tied up in projects for months, or even years, into the future.

Exacerbated by the common shortage of available construction trades and contractors, many NMA representatives confirmed a housing shortage in their communities. The current housing stock is not sufficient to house the workforce that is needed in the communities, or could be employed in the existing job openings and potential employment opportunities. Increased metro-migration has also resulted in a loss of housing options for young local households wanting to start out on their own. Related to this, another common observation was that too much of the housing stock is high-end housing, while there is a shortage of 'middle ground' housing options. Further illustrating this lack of affordable options for the middle class, many noted a lack of units for service sector workers.

As indicated, affordability is closely related to housing stock and availability, as well as demand and the capital coming into the communities with metro-migrants. Metro-migration means an increased demand for housing as well as an increased influx of capital. Metro-migrants often have more capital and the ability to bid higher on the non-metropolitan housing stock. This can lead to displacement of local residents. Some NMA communities noted an increase in homelessness and in informal settlements, caused by rising housing prices and a shortage of housing units. Even for middle-class households, however, an increase in housing prices and overall cost of living is reportedly felt across the board. As a result, local businesses are sometimes unable to pay current living wages that would offset the higher cost of living. Wages not high enough to compensate for higher cost of living in turn reinforce vulnerability in housing. The increases in cost of living were noted to be more pronounced the closer an NMA community is located to a larger centre.

NMA communities with a significant tourism sector face very particular challenges in terms of housing stock. In some cases, demand on housing is so great that hotels are used to house a workforce, meaning a loss for the local tourism industry. Most non-metropolitan tourism destinations experience seasonal variations in their housing demand. In some communities, permanent local residents temporarily give up their housing for seasonal residents or visitors and move into recreational vehicles or other non-permanent structures.

Many of the factors discussed above were noted to lead to displacement of local residents, for example to areas outside of communities or to other communities, either due to lack of available housing or, in many cases, due to affordability challenges. The rapid growth, as well as change in community make-up,

and a focus on monetary-driven development plans were noted to have led to a loss of the sense of community that is unique to smaller non-metropolitan communities.

Table 2: Impacts of Metro-Migration

Opportunities

Housing stock
   • More multi-unit development
   • Mixed use development, chaotic neighbourhood transitions
Community
   • Increased school enrolment
   • Increase in seniors
Economy
   • New businesses
   • New skill sets

Challenges

Mindset
   • Tourism fatigue
   • Conflict and disagreement with new development types
   • Resistance against affordable housing developments
   • Newcomers opposed to change
Municipal government and administration
   • Increased delays in permitting and approval processes
Regulations
   • Processes still catching up with growth
   • Illegal suites
   • Metro-migration into unregulated areas, resulting subdivisions outside of OCP
Infrastructure
   • Increasing maintenance costs
   • Traffic concerns
Construction
   • Trades are tied up in future projects
Housing stock
   • Housing shortage, cannot house workforce
   • Loss of housing for young households
   • Too much high-end stock
   • Lack of affordable units, cannot house service sector workers
Affordability
   • Increased homelessness
   • Increase in informal settlements
   • Higher cost of living increases closer to large centres
   • Increase in housing prices
   • Increase in cost of living
   • Local businesses cannot pay living wages
Economy
   • Hotels used for housing, loss for tourism
   • Seasonal variations
   • Seasonal residents take up housing
Community
   • Displacement of local residents (affordability and geography)
   • Loss of sense of community

HOUSING RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE CDI UNBC

What ideas do you have to address this now (low hanging fruit) and into the future?

Finally, facilitators steered the small-group dialogues towards exploring solutions and strategies to resolve challenges and realize opportunities. While the question encouraged participants to identify immediate steps as well as longer-term measures, the reality of housing challenges is that there are no instant solutions. The ideas that were brought forward are sorted by area of responsibility. Many ideas are items that can be initiated now by the respective levels of government; however, most processes can be expected to take time to be completed, take effect, and show results. Generally, community consultation and public education can be early steps in setting the stage for targeted development. Capacity issues at municipal administrative levels, and optimizing processes at that level, could begin to be targeted immediately as one of the first steps. Other processes follow a logical order that is important to making informed decisions and strategically strengthening the community, beginning with assessments and information gathering, followed by strategic identification of objectives and steps to get there. This will set the stage for taking action and ongoing development.

As Table 3 shows, the majority of suggestions fall into the realm of municipal and regional governments and administrations. In order to address metro-migration challenges and realize their potential for healthy community and economic development, participants agreed that both community leaders and residents have to have a mindset that embraces change and is open to exploring how to direct that change to the community's advantage. Many communities fear change, including residents and community leadership, which is why session participants suggested public education efforts. Leaders have to be willing to inform themselves and explore their options; then the opportunities for positive change have to be communicated to the local residents. It is also important for municipal leadership to gain a detailed insight into their residents' concerns and preferences. For example, it was the participants' experience that many non-metropolitan residents still prefer owning over renting, and having "their own front door" as opposed to condo living. When exploring options for higher density and ways to increase rental stock, for example, these preferences have to be kept in mind to ensure that lifestyle is not sacrificed for the sake of growth alone. Finally, it was also suggested that communities get a sense of how satisfied metro-migrants are with their new non-metropolitan life. In long-term planning, it will be helpful to know what attracts them or drives them away, and to anticipate possible trend reversals.

In addressing challenges and seizing opportunities, the importance of planning strategically was emphasized in many small-group discussions. A number of communities have found the completion of mandatory housing needs assessments helpful in understanding their housing situation. Therefore, housing needs assessments were mentioned as one of the first steps to an informed and strategic planning process. The idea of more targeted planning as a community-led process with a focus on people and their lifestyle needs and preferences, as opposed to a strictly monetary growth focused strategy, was also brought forward. An Official Community Plan (OCP), guided by BC's *Local Government Act*, supports a community in developing a long-term vision and developing policies to achieve that vision. As a crucial piece in strategic planning, a review and update of OCP with metro-migration in mind is the next step identified in addressing the challenges and ensuring that opportunities are maximized. In more concrete terms, ideas for strategic responses to metro-migration included measures that allow for "gentle density", a concept of accommodating higher density development without losing the non-metropolitan lifestyle and single-family home character of many non-metropolitan communities.

Another concrete goal is to specifically consider the housing types that have been identified as lacking, such as middle-class housing for example. Participants thought that innovative housing solutions such as currently unregulated and unrecognized tiny homes, should be considered. Regulated tiny home subdivisions might offer safe, budget-friendly, and desirable housing for small households, thereby increasing density while still maintaining single-family home living. In order to further respond to affordability challenges, and an acute shortage of affordable housing due to the limited feasibility of such projects, an affordable housing reserve fund was suggested to support non-profit housing providers.

When a vision and concrete objectives are identified, policies and regulations have to be designed to support and guide development towards those goals. Many ideas illustrated what those regulations could and should look like to address challenges related to metro-migration and population influx into non-metropolitan communities. It was suggested that communities with a moratorium on building new housing units should consider eliminating this barrier to growth. Given abundant struggles with "red tape" and compatibility issues with provincial requirements in small and remote regions, participants suggested that expectations and regulatory barriers should be lowered for rural development projects to adjust to their realities and enable development. Parcel sizes should be changed to encourage higher density. At the same time, zoning should be more inclusive of diverse development rather than making single detached dwellings of a certain size the default. The importance of allowing accessory dwelling units (ADU) was emphasized. In order to maintain single-family home subdivisions while encouraging density, offering diverse housing options, and increasing affordability, it was also suggested to include a requirement for a suite or ADU in single detached zoning areas. In an effort to simplify regulations and requirements, participants proposed that municipalities consider waiving public hearing requirements for developments that are compatible with their OCP. Of particular importance to non-metropolitan tourism destinations, it will be crucial to address the seasonal use housing, for example by bringing a vacancy tax to smaller communities and by introducing more stringent regulations for short-term rental development and use.

Beyond regulations guiding would-be development, local and regional governments can also take a more active and supportive role in steering development in their communities in the desired direction through incentives and supports. Participants generally mentioned the need for tax incentives and deferrals to attract and direct development. Other targeted incentives that were mentioned include incentives for affordable housing. Finally, the idea of being proactive as a municipality in the redevelopment of old housing stock can take many forms; it can be identified as a strategic goal and opportunity in an OCP; it can be captured and directed in regulations, requirements, and zoning; and it can be designed in the form of incentives through taxes or grants, as well as support models with stock re-design plans and conversion templates.

Another area that was viewed as important in addressing the current housing situation was the topic of capacity. The idea of providing supports for businesses might fall into that category of building local capacity with the influx of population, capital, and new skill sets. However, the need for increased capacity was seen mainly as a shortage of human resources, and relevant and adaptive skill sets, in municipal and regional administration. Many discussion groups mentioned the need for more staff and better staff support. Administrative staff should also receive training to assist developers. Together with reviewing and streamlining application and permitting systems, these measures should lead to shorter

timelines and more feasible development opportunities. One group suggested exploring the model used in the Province of Alberta, where developers provide third party building inspectors in order to free up municipal and regional administrative capacity, shorten project timelines, and increase development feasibility.

Turning towards the built environment of the community, a few infrastructure considerations were brought forward. Especially in the light of recent natural disasters, it was suggested that communities actively consider the limitations of their infrastructure. The impression was that larger centres seem to be better prepared for such events, and that non-metropolitan communities could learn from comparing infrastructure adaptability and quality. Given the usually relatively small infrastructure envelope and limited utility network capacity in many smaller non-metropolitan communities, and the resulting development limitations, participants expressed the importance of exploring options to expand non-metropolitan infrastructure and utility capacity within the existing footprint. Following the developer advice to "show your best land first", it was also proposed to consider expanding the infrastructure envelope if the existing one contains undesirable land, for example in flood plains or with other geotechnical complications. In this context, several participants also mentioned the possibility of leveraging crown land for new development and to provide additional housing.

The construction industry is a crucial piece in moving from plans to action. While the industry is not in direct control of municipal and regional governments and administrations, participants felt that there were steps and efforts that could be made to support development. One goal that was mentioned was to attract more experienced developers to the communities. This could mean numerous things in terms of regulation and infrastructure ideas to support such efforts; it also points towards communication and relationship building with the industry on a larger level. As such, a concrete suggestion was to cooperate with developers to have agreements on zoning in place to make the process more attractive to them. However, besides a focus on bringing in outside help, there was also a call to rely on local knowledge. Local contractors and local First Nations have first-hand knowledge of the land and should be consulted and actively involved in development. A last proposed step to addressing current housing challenges was to look towards innovative building methods. This is a call to the construction industry to give more consideration to alternatives such as prefabricated construction and modular homes to make affordable development more feasible and shorten development timelines. Municipalities may have a role in this in their planning and regulation processes, as well as in making this a part of staff training and their communications with developers.

Taking a step back from planning and implementation, knowledge mobilization was also considered essential in addressing the housing challenges and opportunities of metro-migration. Many participants emphasized the importance of communication and collaboration between municipalities to avoid "having to re-invent the wheel" in every single community. In addition, communication and collaboration with and among community groups would increase knowledge sharing about needs and realities on-the-ground and potentially free up capacity both at the municipal level as well as within community groups. Overall, a more open and accessible communication of best practices in planning, also between non-metropolitan and metropolitan planners, would be welcomed and was thought to greatly increase the ability to plan strategically using successful models.

As another part of improved communication, but going a step further, participants suggested that coordination across regions would greatly aid with capacity shortages and avoid many complications and delays in planning and development processes. For example, standardization of BC Energy Step Code requirements at the regional level would minimize complications and time-consuming adaptations for every single project. Political alignment across various levels of government to prioritize housing, including municipalities and regional districts, would further enable a focus on solutions, and simplified regulations and permitting processes.

Finally, research was mentioned as an important support in making informed decisions and strategic plans. Local and regional leaders were urged to engage the public to see new visions and ensure that the perspectives of their communities are included in planning and development. Participants also identified a need to include more diverse perspectives in planning and policy. The call for research, moreover, went beyond the municipal realm. For example, there is currently a need to update data and get a more accurate sense of the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic on metro-migration and non-metropolitan housing challenges. Communities need support in defining what exactly they are getting ready for, including not only the pandemic but also longer trends of remote working, as well as their risks for natural disasters like floods, fires, and seismic activity. This calls for collaboration with academia in the form of active involvement of municipalities, as well as municipalities taking the initiative of commissioning research or communicating what type of information they need.

A few suggestions were also made for higher levels of government. In terms of regulations and standardization, it was suggested that BC look at the Washington State model of zoning. This refers to the idea of a state-wide ban on single-family zoning. A ban or financial incentives at the provincial level were considered as a potentially helpful measure to initiate a province-wide focus on zoning alternatives. Furthermore, participants felt that bidding wars in real estate transactions should be addressed. There may be a role for higher levels of government in regulating, for example, the transparency of bidding processes.

In regards to the built environment in non-metropolitan BC, some participants saw a greater role for the province in infrastructure funding and maintenance.

The most commonly mentioned role for higher levels of government in addressing metro-migration opportunities and non-metropolitan housing challenges was a role of lending greater support. "Small communities cannot do all the heavy lifting", was a sentiment repeatedly expressed in the session. Provincial leadership and guidance in matters of intra-provincial migration, economic and community development opportunities throughout all regions of the province, and province-wide patterns of non-metropolitan housing challenges were thought to be essential in effectively, efficiently, and equitably putting municipalities of all sizes and all latitudes in a position to realize their full potential. Such a support structure should include advice and knowledge sharing, but should also go beyond and set aside dedicated funding for support as an investment in province-wide economic prosperity as well as quality of life. Addressing some more concrete ideas, participants brought up a need for a support structure for re-zoning plans and processes. It was also proposed that provincial and federal governments utilize funds from business licensing for affordable housing projects in non-metropolitan areas.

Table 3: How to Address Housing Challenges

Municipal and Regional Government

Mindset
- Foster openness to development, address fear of change
- Public education
- Raise awareness
- People prefer owning over renting
- People prefer to have their own front door, feel of their own home
- Get a sense of how satisfied metro migrants are, anticipate reversal of migration direction

Strategic planning
- Housing needs assessments
- More targeted planning: community-led, focus on people and preferences rather than monetary aspects
- Review and update OCP
- "Gentle density" through duplexes and townhouses
- Missing middle-income housing
- Creative housing solutions, e.g. tiny home subdivisions
- Affordable housing reserve fund to support non-profit providers

Regulations
- Eliminate moratorium on building new housing units in some communities
- Lower expectations for rural development projects
- Change parcel sizes to encourage density
- Stronger zoning to allow more diverse development
- Include requirement for suite or garden suite with every new single-family home
- Expand zoning for middle ground housing
- Allow accessory dwelling units, and secondary suites and buildings
- Waive public hearing requirements for OCP compatible development
- Vacancy tax to address seasonal use housing in smaller communities
- More stringent short-term rental regulations

Incentives
- Tax incentives and deferrals
- Incentives for affordable housing
- Proactive in redevelopment of old stock

Business
- Support for small businesses with population influx

Administrative capacity
- Need more staff and support
- Understand staff shortages
- Staff training to assist developers
- Streamlined processing for quicker timelines
- Follow Alberta model: developer provides third-party building inspector

Infrastructure
- Consider infrastructure limitation in case of natural disasters
- Explore options to expand utilities and infrastructure capacity
- Expand infrastructure if existing envelope is not desirable land
- Leverage crown land to provide housing

Construction
- Attract more experienced developers

- Cooperate with developers to have agreements in place for new zoning
- Use local knowledge instead of relying on big non-local developers alone
- Innovative building methods, pre-fabricated construction, modular homes

Communication/collaboration
- Communication and collaboration between municipalities and community groups
- More collaboration between smaller communities
- Better communication of best practices among planners, including metro planners with small community planners

Coordination
- Standardizing step-code across multiple municipalities
- Political alignment

Research and data
- Need updated data to reflect COVID-19 impacts
- More diverse policy and planning perspectives
- Public engagement to see new visions
- Define what communities are getting ready for (include considerations of COVID, remote working, floods, fires etc.)

Higher Levels of Government

Regulations
- Washington State model: Ban single-family zoning
- Address problem of bidding wars in real estate

Infrastructure
- Greater role for province in infrastructure funding

Support
- Provincial leadership and guidance, small communities cannot do all the heavy lifting
- Need for better support structure around re-zoning
- Dedicated funding and support from provincial and federal governments
- Utilize funds from the business licensing system for affordable housing projects (Prov, Fed)

Plenary Discussion and Session Highlights

What were the two key takeaways from your group discussion?

After the small-group discussions in the virtual break-out rooms, all participants came back to a virtual plenary discussion. All small-group facilitators were given the opportunity to share two key takeaways from their group discussion or, if their key points had already been made by previous facilitators, to share insights that had not yet been mentioned in the plenary session.

Table 4 lists the key takeaways that were presented by facilitators. They generally fell into categories of either challenges and barriers, or opportunities and ideas for solutions. As with the comprehensive summaries of discussion notes in the previous tables, the challenges as well as opportunities could be allocated to specific levels of government and particular community development aspects. The key takeaways are mostly congruent with the comprehensive discussion notes; in some instances, facilitators added their lived experience for context when presenting their groups' key priorities. Table 4 sorts the topics that were brought to the plenary by priority of how often and urgently they were mentioned and discussed. The shortcomings of the housing stock, and its various facets, dominates much of the key points that were made.

Notably, while the role of higher levels of government in addressing non-metropolitan housing challenges in the context of metro-migration only constitute a small part of the small-group discussion points, the plenary discussion made it obvious how strongly non-metropolitan representatives of all walks of life feel about the need for a supportive framework on a provincial level. Neither human resources nor financial means of non-metropolitan municipalities are sufficient to address their challenges. Given the similarity of challenges in communities across the province, provincial level frameworks and templates to streamline processes and address various challenges could offer solutions so long as they are designed in a way that respects communities' authority and unique circumstances. No one solution fits all; but not every small community should have to "re-invent the wheel", and no regional developer should have to adapt every single project to a different set of requirements. In addition, the common inability to secure financing for non-metropolitan development projects has to be addressed with banks by a higher level of government to remove barriers and create equal opportunity.

This leads to the next prioritized item among the key takeaways: administrative capacity. A number of challenges and barriers to successful development and strategic growth were linked to staff shortages and underqualification born from the need to "wear many hats" in a small community. A number of solutions were suggested, as previously listed in the comprehensive notes. However, facilitators and many session participants at large described what the situation looks and feels like on-the-ground for the administrative staff. It became clear how overwhelming the pressures are to the individuals in those positions, which added a sense of urgency to this set of key takeaways.

Discussions about infrastructure came up repeatedly throughout the facilitator reports. While there is a strategic element to growing a community within an existing infrastructure envelope, many noted that the current limitations of their utilities, and the age and quality of their infrastructure networks, are

immediate limiting factors and are often neglected in strategic planning processes. While a focus on housing stock is necessary to guide strategic growth and development, in reality, the plenary discussion showed that infrastructure limitations will have to be addressed as a first step in many non-metropolitan communities.

Closely connected in context, strategic planning was equally prioritized. The plenary discussion highlighted that, even though most communities have an OCP in place, the relatively new challenges of metro-migration and accelerated growth require a review and update of existing visions, objectives, and strategies. Beyond the obvious strategic planning steps of doing research, knowing what the needs are, and anticipating the trends, the discussion highlighted another aspect in drawing attention towards the need to consider the community character and lifestyle priorities.

In the context of economic and business development, it became clear that most communities are facing no shortage of job opportunities but are rather limited in realizing their economic potential by the limitations of the housing stock. Lack of housing, and appropriate housing, was mentioned several times as a very real barrier to recruitment, including any positions from industry labourers, to service sector workers, and professionals.

As mentioned in previous notes, local mindsets play an important role in what a community can achieve and how well it adapts to changing circumstances. In terms of leadership mindsets, a lack of political will to push for change in housing development, or even to acknowledge the role of housing and make housing a priority, was expressed very clearly by a number of participants. Similarly, opposition to change among local residents as well as newcomers in some cases poses a barrier to improved and adapted housing development, although local and regional variations were noted. While displacement of local residents through housing or land shortages as well as rising housing prices is a palpable problem, an influx of young families has meant a more diverse demographic makeup and has revitalized the primary and secondary school systems in some communities. This shows that many communities have been feeling both negative as well as positive impacts.

The comprehensive small-group discussion notes showed a breadth of ideas for solutions through regulations and zoning; however, in the plenary discussion on key points and highlights, zoning did not take up a lot of time. There seemed to be a general understanding of the role of zoning in facilitating, supporting, and guiding development and housing stock improvements. Contradictions and barriers have to be eliminated, while zoning should be considered a tool to specifically solve issues related to lacking diversity, lacking density, short-term rental circumstances, and other concrete challenges.

Table 4 Key Takeaways from Small-Group Discussions in Order of Priority

Challenges and Barriers	Opportunities and Solutions
Housing	**Housing**
Housing stock • Overwhelmingly old and poor quality • Other extreme is new very high-end, large housing • Missing diversity • Missing middle-field housing, e.g. duplexes, row houses, townhouses	Housing stock • Consider and plan for renovation and conversion, as well as demolition
Affordable housing • Building too costly to make affordable housing development feasible	Affordable housing • Make community attractive to developers and non-profit sector • Offset high cost of building with incentives • Example of community creating fund to invest in capacity and affordable housing
Rentals • Shortage of rentals • Shortage of affordable rental options	Rentals • Privately owned rentals underestimated as crucial in affordable rental housing • Prevent conversion of long-term rentals into short-term
Seniors • Lack of seniors housing	Seniors • No opportunities were discussed
Higher levels of government	**Higher levels of government**
Regulatory frameworks • Small communities caught between overlapping regulatory frameworks • Provincial level regulations pose barriers for small community development	Regulatory frameworks • Need to provide more support and guidance • Involvement through *Local Government Act*: turn to Washington State approach
Emergency preparedness • Many small resource towns located on flood plains • Lack of resources for smaller towns to assess and address challenges	Emergency preparedness • Role for province to support/undertake assessments
Communication and collaboration • Importance of opportunities for collaboration between local governments, developers, community, and non-profit sector • Lacking platform for best practice sharing	Communication and collaboration • Provide resources to facilitate information sharing, communication, and collaboration
Financing	Financing • Collaboration with banks

• Challenges to secure financing from banks for unique or innovative projects • Challenges to get CMHC support for small community projects	
Administrative capacity • No follow-through of studies because of staff shortages • Small administrations overwhelmed by magnitude of challenges • Staff commonly not trained for all "hats" they need to wear • Permitting delays pose large cost. • Building inspector shortage	**Administrative capacity** • Streamline processes to save time and cost • Make navigating processes easy • Turn to Alberta model: Third party inspectors provided by developers
Infrastructure • Increased demand affects access to water • Internet connectivity not great in small/remote communities • Disconnect between planning and reality	**Infrastructure** • Consider access to utilities • Ensure capacity for densification • Develop and densify within existing envelope • Be prepared to upgrade and replace existing older infrastructure
Strategic planning • Lacking execution of study recommendations • Difficult to move from recommendations to action given staff shortages	**Strategic planning** • OCP reviews to adjust housing goals and strategies • Update OCP with accurate flood plain information • How to meet demand is prevalent; add considerations how to maintain community character • Move away from purely financial and population growth goals and include people and lifestyle in planning • Understand and communicate circumstances of building in remote communities • Explore housing development corporation to actively build what you need
Economic development • Lack of housing barrier to recruitment and growth in industry • Lack of housing barrier to recruitment for local businesses • Type, quality, affordability of available housing impacts type of labour force • Lack of satisfactory internet connectivity limits home office migrants and business in-migration	**Economic development** • New businesses developed or moved to town with newcomers

HOUSING RESEARCH COLLABORATIVE

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT INSTITUTE

CDI UNBC

• Tourism impacted through vacancy shortages.	
Leadership mindset • Lacking political will to prioritize housing at regional levels • Elected officials insist on direct involvement in all housing decisions	**Leadership mindset** • Need to push for change in housing development • Political alignment across levels of local and regional government to ensure housing is prioritized • Better processes to have adequate staff and trust them to handle housing • Address stigma around renting
Community mindset • Newcomers not open to change, expect communities to be preserved in current state • Expectation that newcomers adapt to local lifestyle, "look like locals", own homes	**Community mindset** • Local communities more open to change and growth • Mix of excitement and hostility towards newcomers
Community • Local residents being displaced either through lacking availability of housing or through increasing housing prices	**Community** • More young families moving in diversifying demographic • Enhanced school enrolment saves schools from closure
Zoning and regulations • Contradictions in bylaws: e.g. encouraging ADU but limiting floor space on lots	**Zoning and regulations** • Create opportunities for housing other than single-family homes • Stressing importance of right type of housing

What stood out most to you about your group discussion?

As a last discussion opportunity, the virtual floor was opened up to all participants to express their priorities and impressions inviting everyone to comment on what had stood out to them in the session. A number of participants commented in-person and in the chat, and reiterated the various steps that are part of the process towards solutions, including strategic information gathering and planning, policy adjustments, and specific measures to tackle community-specific pressing issues. It was also stressed again that it is crucial to "have the community on board". Resident opposition poses a considerable barrier to changing plans and revisiting risk assessments, for example. The step of community consultation and education should not be underestimated, including local residents and newcomers.

While much of the conversation revolved around housing concerns typical to resort and amenity communities as well as communities in various stages of transition, the question was also asked how to plan for, and support development through boom and bust cycles, a concern most intensely felt by aging resource-based communities.

Cooperatives, as commonly found in European countries, and community trusts, as already tested in some of BC's larger centres, were mentioned as options worth exploring at local and regional levels of BC non-metropolitan communities.

Rentals

Addressing short-term rentals and vacancies was a major concern. While the challenges related to short-term rentals are mostly concerning resort and amenity communities, a number of rental-related considerations were brought up again, underlining the importance of the issue. The role of small rental properties, and how they are represented in the data, was a new aspect in the discussion. Since CMHC rental surveys only include properties with at least three units and only communities with a population of at least 10,000, many small, privately owned rental units are not captured in official data. Considering that a large proportion of the non-metropolitan rental stock consists of such small rental units, smaller communities have little reliable and consistent data to capture the extent, condition, and vacancy of local rental stock.

The discussion turned towards the underestimated role of privately-owned rental units in finding solutions to shortage of units and affordability challenges. Would private rental unit owners in small communities be open to densifying the occupancy of their buildings? What could be incentives for conversion? Participants with experience in development plans that allow and encourage that type of densification noted that the risk of investing into conversion of their property should not rest with the private owners alone. Small municipalities are not usually in a position to invest in this either, therefore, a role for the province to set up programs and work with financial institutions was identified in densifying the privately-owned rental stock. It was also noted that, in reality, small-scale long-term rentals are often outfitted with illegal and unsafe additional units. It is therefore of utmost importance to create a framework that ensures the creation of legal and safe units. One idea for provincial support was to redirect BC Housing funds that are spent on large scale affordable, and subsidized, rental units towards upgrading and densifying small-scale rentals.

Another fundamental barrier to maximizing the benefit of privately-owned rental units in a community is the *BC Residential Tenancy Act*, which was drafted as a response to tenancy issues in downtown Vancouver and Victoria, and focuses on protecting tenant rights. It consequently provides little or no support to landlords, which scares many private owners away from putting their units on the open rental market or converting them to several units.

Provincial support

The crucial role for the province to guide efforts and provide support was revisited in the discussion and chat. It was highlighted by numerous participants that standardizations of zoning definitions, infrastructure designs, and regulation templates would free up capacity in small municipal administrations and would eliminate costs for developers. Emphasis was placed on standardized definitions while maintaining flexibility for small communities to decide what to use when, how, and where.

Furthermore, the need for knowledge sharing and mutual support was emphasized again. Participants commented that other sectors have software and platforms to facilitate communication and enable members to learn from each other and share advice. A system to make this possible, and to make it easy, would greatly benefit all parties involved in non-metropolitan housing and development.

Climate change

In the wake of a summer of unprecedented forest fires and a fall with devastating floods in BC, climate change and natural risks were top-of-mind for many participants. Smaller communities are commonly built in high-risk areas, such as flood plains, along steep slopes, and in forested areas at risk of forest fires. Barriers to risk assessments and mitigation measures are a lack of necessary resources as well as a fear that updated risk assessments create more "red tape" and drive away developer interest.

Closing comments

In closing, the session hosts reiterated that non-metropolitan housing needs attention, including from higher levels of government. Communities outside of the large centres in BC are important to the province's economy, and provincial attention to their challenges will be important to the viability of the province. No one solution can fit all non-metropolitan communities, but help in the form of resources and direction from the province will be an important step to moving forward and successfully maximizing the potential that metro-migration holds for non-metropolitan communities.

The need for communication and knowledge mobilization has been heard "loud and clear". The CDI's recent webinar series on building knowledge about non-metropolitan housing demand, as well as this session exploring non-metropolitan BC communities' readiness in the face of increasing metro-migration, are steps in fostering and building communication platforms. Future efforts of the host organizations will focus on the need to come together to share ideas and challenges, and aim to continue the dialogue. The next steps identified by both hosts will be to communicate findings and the need for attention to the province, and to host another CDI webinar series focused on knowledge mobilization.