



2023 Elk Valley Housing Report

Taylor Jenkins
EVEI Coordinator
Elk Valley Economic Initiative



Elk Valley
Economic Initiative

www.theelkvalley.ca | (250) 425 3608 | coordinator@theelkvalley.ca
Copyright © 2022 Elk Valley Economic Initiative

ABOUT THE EVEI

The purpose of the Initiative is to collaboratively pursue regional economic development projects and initiatives in the Elk Valley, striving to expand opportunities for existing businesses, attract new ones and diversify the types of businesses. In addition, we aim to increase the number of permanent, full-time residents who spend their money locally thereby contributing to the region's sustainability.

The Elk Valley Economic Initiative will champion, support and articulate opportunities for projects and initiatives while creating a network and increasing communications among individuals and organizations involved in economic development.

PARTNER ORGANIZATIONS





TABLE OF CONTENTS

Section 1 – Executive Summary	4
Introduction	4
Business Retention and Expansion Action Items.....	5
Data Sets.....	6
Conclusion.....	7
Housing Recommendations for Local Government and the Elk Valley Region.....	9
Section 2 –Housing Partner Key Findings	10
Introduction	10
Key Findings.....	10
Planning Departments.....	11
Section 3 - Local Business BRE Housing Data	12
BRE Data Overview	12
Summary	13
Section 4: Municipal Housing Needs Reports	14
Anticipated housing units.....	14
Areas of Local Need	14
Quantitative Data - Sources and Limitations	15
Community Consultation	15
RECOMMENDATIONS	15
Appendix	16
Key Housing Partners Qualitative Data	16
Qualitative housing data from BRE survey	19
Sources	22



SECTION 1 – EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION

The 2023 Elk Valley Housing Report was commissioned through the Elk Valley Economic Initiative (EVEI) and intended for EVEI committee members, partner organizations, and key housing partners in the Elk Valley.

The focus of this report was to collect and consolidate housing data in the Elk Valley through a variety of data sets. The data sets were:

- Local housing partner interviews
- Local business retention and expansion data
- Municipal housing need reports
- Planning department interviews

The data was then used to recommend action items for the EVEI and its partner organizations on how they can support housing in the Elk Valley, as well as provide clear and concise information for housing organizations, including businesses, developers, and housing societies. Through this, the Elk Valley region can collaboratively pursue data driven solutions to address the housing shortage and increase workforce housing in the Elk Valley.

The EVEI committee tasked the EVEI Coordinator with compiling this housing report through the coordinators 6-month extension workplan. This task coincides with the EVEI's strategic objective, the EVEI's 2021-22 Strategic Plan and the three workforce housing action items identified in the 2021 Elk Valley BRE Report.

Elk Valley Economic Initiative Strategic Objective: Increase the number of permanent, full-time residents who support our local economy.

2021-22 Strategic Plan Focus Area 2: Business Retention and Expansion

Elk Valley Business Retention and Expansion Report: In this 2021 report, published by the EVEI, local businesses highlighted workforce housing and the overall shortage of housing in the Elk Valley as a key issue affecting their businesses.

The Housing Report is broken down into five sections:

- 1) Executive Summary
- 2) Housing Partner Key Findings
- 3) Local Business BRE Housing Data Summary
- 4) Municipal Housing Needs Reports
- 5) Appendix – Qualitative Data

BUSINESS RETENTION AND EXPANSION ACTION ITEMS

In 2021-22, the EVEI published four business retention and expansion (BRE) reports for the Elk Valley and each community. The local business data showed housing as a major issue for employee recruitment, listed as a top community weakness, an underlying issue for employee retention, and viewed by most businesses as very important to their success.

Three housing action items were created from the data and these action items, along with the corresponding data, were the catalyst for the EVEI committee tasking the coordinator with compiling this report.

The first two housing action items from the Elk Valley BRE report are listed below. The EVEI Coordinator focused on integrating these action items into the housing report to ensure they were completed.



UTILIZE PARTNERSHIPS TO FOCUS ON A REGIONAL APPROACH TO HOUSING IN THE ELK VALLEY

Facilitating conversations between communities and support organizations to share housing information and data is crucial to ensuring a collaborative and streamlined approach to housing in the Elk Valley. The EVEI should bring key partners together to discuss regional demands and appropriate regional responses. Beforehand, the EVEI can review housing needs reports & housing market studies to help identify these demands through data analysis.

Over 200 businesses operate in all three communities in the Elk Valley and nearly 30% of businesses operate in at least two of the communities, highlighting the need for enhanced communication and collaboration on these identified barriers.



SUPPORT AFFORDABLE HOUSING

The EVEI should bring together all housing organizations in the Elk Valley for a roundtable discussion on how the EVEI can provide support to these organizations to increase affordable housing for the Elk Valley workforce. The strongest support could come from political advocacy by the EVEI committee to all levels of government. In this discussion, the EVEI should present housing specific data, obtained in the BRE report, to the housing organizations.

Instead of hosting a roundtable discussion for affordable housing, the EVEI coordinator interviewed each housing organization separately, to obtain robust qualitative data.

The 3rd action item, highlighted below, was completed last summer with three reports titled, “Local Government Regulations and Development Constraints Feedback” sent to the respective municipal members on the EVEI Committee.



STIMULATE THE DEVELOPMENT OF NEW HOUSING BY ENHANCING GOVERNMENT PROCEDURES TO HOUSING CONSTRUCTION

Businesses that operate as “Construction” disproportionately selected local government regulations as a top 3 biggest challenge facing their business at 37.8% compared to overall at 15.3%. The EVEI should bring forward qualitative data obtained from business responses in the BRE survey to the planning departments of each community to provide data driven research on housing barriers in local government regulations. This data can be used to support planning departments and streamline development processes.

DATA SETS

Local business retention and expansion data: The BRE housing data is summarized in section three of this report and the full qualitative housing data obtained is listed in section five - Appendix.

Local housing partner interviews: There were nine key housing partners interviewed for this report, and that data is summarized in section two of this report, with the full qualitative data listed in section five -Appendix.

Housing need reports: The three municipal housing needs reports were reviewed to identify specific issues and the corresponding recommendations that coincided in all three communities. Key information from the reports is summarized in section 4, highlighting these shared issues and recommendations. This information provides more accessible data for housing partners, local businesses, and developers and includes consolidated data for the Elk Valley.

Planning department interviews: The three municipal planning departments were interviewed to gain further knowledge of municipal regulations to ensure the action items identified to help increase the housing supply in the Elk Valley could be delivered in a timely and efficient manner.



CONCLUSION

Throughout the following sections of this report there are three re-occurring problems highlighted by housing organizations, local businesses, and the municipality's housing needs report. They are:

- ① Lack of affordable housing in the Elk Valley
- ② Lack of workforce and rental housing in the Elk Valley
- ③ Land constraints to building housing in the Elk Valley

From the qualitative data provided in this report, there are three action items identified that the EVEI should take the lead on, in collaboration with the Chambers of Commerce, municipalities, and housing societies to create a streamlined and regional approach to increasing the housing supply in the Elk Valley. They are:

Housing Society Support

- The EVEI should bridge the communication gap between housing societies and housing partners, including local developers, and planning departments. There should be a focus on increasing collaboration with all non-profits, including the EVEI organizing a bi-yearly meeting with Elk Valley housing societies. After the meetings, the EVEI could send out meeting minutes, sharing these with each municipality to ensure ongoing communication and collaboration. Creating an official contact list for housing societies and sharing that with planning departments, and vice-versa, would also help bridge the communication gap.
- Coordinate communication between municipalities and housing societies to identify land for housing projects and possible land provisions for supportive and affordable housing. The EVEI can advocate to municipalities about identified land provisions and land zoning reviews from housing societies to increase density and multi-unit family housing throughout the Elk Valley from the above-mentioned meetings. Through this work, a focus should be on increasing awareness and transparency of development cost charge (DCC) waivers for affordable housing.

Regional Data Collection

- There is a lack of data on housing in the Elk Valley. The EVEI should advocate for the coordination of the housing needs assessments through one consultant firm for all regions of the Elk Valley, including electoral area A. The housing needs assessments should feature localized data by including non-profits and be standardized across the region so that community data sets can be combined to create official Elk Valley housing data. The EVEI can support this process by interviewing non-profits to obtain crucial non-market housing data (emergency shelters, housing for the homeless, assisted living, social housing, and rent assistance) to cover the entire housing continuum.



- A future large-scale economic development project should be to quantify the “transient/shadow” population in the Elk Valley to obtain accurate housing demand numbers. Housing societies identified a lack of local and regional data as a barrier, and all three municipal planning departments stated that shadow population data would benefit them in working towards increasing the housing supply in the Elk Valley. There are opportunities to obtain grant funding to conduct regional data collection that would assist municipal governments, developers, and housing societies. This data could identify actual market rent, housing types in demand, and the true population. Identifying types of workforce housing in demand through employee data and communicating that demand to developers and municipalities would be a beneficial part of this project.

Enhance communication between planning departments on developer incentives, bylaw amendments, and regional infrastructure projects that stimulate the building of workforce, rental, and affordable housing.

- The EVEI can coordinate communication between the planning departments about ongoing work and identified incentives that would increase the variety of housing in the Elk Valley. To ensure this is happening, the EVEI should facilitate a bi-yearly meeting between all planning departments in the region.
- The EVEI should advocate for municipal bylaws that will increase housing in the Elk Valley and share data with the planning departments to help address the three key housing issues. The below section titled, “Housing Recommendations for Local Government and the Elk Valley Region” outlines specific recommendations municipal governments could take to stimulate the building of workforce, rental, and affordable housing, sourced from the housing needs reports.
- The EVEI should ensure communication extends to local businesses by operating in between Chambers of Commerce and planning departments. Local businesses should understand how planning departments operate, their current work, and government regulations. Inversely, the EVEI can convey local business sentiment and development barriers to the planning departments in a professional and constructive manner. An example of this work was the EVEI submitting “Local Government Regulations and Development Constraints Feedback” documents to each municipal planning department, created through local business BRE qualitative data.



HOUSING RECOMMENDATIONS FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT AND THE ELK VALLEY REGION

Each bullet point listed below **represents a shared recommendation from all three housing needs assessments.** These recommendations were reinforced by qualitative data from key housing partner interviews and local businesses. This list provides more specific recommendations to the EVEI and its partner organizations to address Elk Valley housing needs, building on the three action items outlined above. There are benefits of a regional approach to addressing these recommendations by reducing additional work for each community, ensuring collaboration, better supporting housing societies in the Elk Valley, and more efficiently working towards decreasing our regions housing needs.

Land

- Identify municipal owned residential lands that are suitable to lease to non-profit housing societies or affordable housing development and rent controlled rental suites (Fernie Housing Need Report)
- Developing available land and locating seniors housing close to services (Sparwood Housing Need Report)
- Explore revisions to the Zoning Bylaw that will encourage greater housing affordability as well as support a broader range of permanent and temporary housing options (Elkford Housing Need Report)

Support

- Working with partners to provide affordable and emergency housing - Demonstrating leadership by researching the need for an emergency shelter (Fernie & Sparwood Housing Need Report)
- Developing strong community partnerships with non-profit organizations and the development community (Fernie Housing Need Report)
- Providing support for non-profit groups seeking funding from senior levels of government. (Fernie Housing Need Report)

Incentives

- Provide density bonus programs, or other zoning tools, which allows a higher level of density on a class of sites in exchange for amenities or affordable housing (Fernie Housing Need Report)
- Developing policies and incentives for affordable housing (Elkford Housing Need Report)
- Reducing or waiving development cost charges, building permit fees, or property taxes for buildings owned or held by a charitable, philanthropic, or other non-profit corporation (Fernie Housing Need Report)



SECTION 2 – HOUSING PARTNER KEY FINDINGS

INTRODUCTION

The EVEI Coordinator was tasked with interviewing housing partners & organizations in the Elk Valley to obtain data and report back to the EVEI Committee. Housing interviews focused on 11 key questions designed to obtain quantitative data. Interviewees were encouraged to “Think Elk Valley”. The full qualitative data provided by the housing partners and questions asked are listed in the appendix section at the end of the report.

Key Housing Partners Interviewed:

Fernie Family Housing Society
Elk Valley Family Society
Elkford Housing Society
Elkford Housing Committee
Elk Valley Seniors Housing Society
Interior Health
Parastone Developments
Elk River Homes
Fernie RV Resort (Handshake Holdings Ltd)

KEY FINDINGS

Question three of the interviews focused on specific barriers experienced by housing societies on current and new projects. Housing societies in the Elk Valley identified multiple barriers facing them:

- Lack of staff
- Lack of local and regional data
- Lack of regional support and communication between municipalities and other societies
- Land constraints to build affordable housing
- Lack of awareness and communication around available land

These key findings formed the basis of the first recommended action item in the conclusion section, “Housing Society Support” and reinforced the second action item, “Data Collection”, where the EVEI can help address these barriers and improve housing data at local and regional levels.



Two other possible roles the EVEI could take on to increase housing in the Elk Valley were identified in the interviewee answers:

- A regional approach to attracting developers to build purpose-built workforce and rental housing. Identifying regional incentives to attract these developers.
- Reviewing bylaws with municipalities to identify incentives to increase the variety of housing in the Elk Valley and ensuring a regional approach to this work

These roles were integrated into the third recommended action item in the conclusion section and were further bolstered by local business retention and expansion data.

Infrastructure challenges in the Elk Valley were identified as a possible barrier to developers looking to build workforce housing. Due to a limited number of local developers, the data on this topic is currently incomplete. The EVEI Coordinator could continue to interview developers to expand on this data and obtain further information.

PLANNING DEPARTMENTS

Planning departments were interviewed on the possible roles identified to gain information on municipal regulations and expand on the qualitative data. Through this work, the action items were reviewed to ensure they could be delivered in an effective, beneficial, and timely manner.

Planning departments interviewed:

City of Fernie Planning Department
District of Sparwood Planning Department
District of Elkford Planning Department

Questions on development approvals processes, land inventories, and investment are covered in additional projects. The EVEI has taken part of the City of Fernie’s development approvals enhancement project and submitted the aforementioned “Local Government Regulations and Development Constraints Feedback” document. Information and recommendations about municipal land and investment can be found in EVEI’s report, “ [Investment, Economic Development and Land-First Point of Contact Report](#)”.

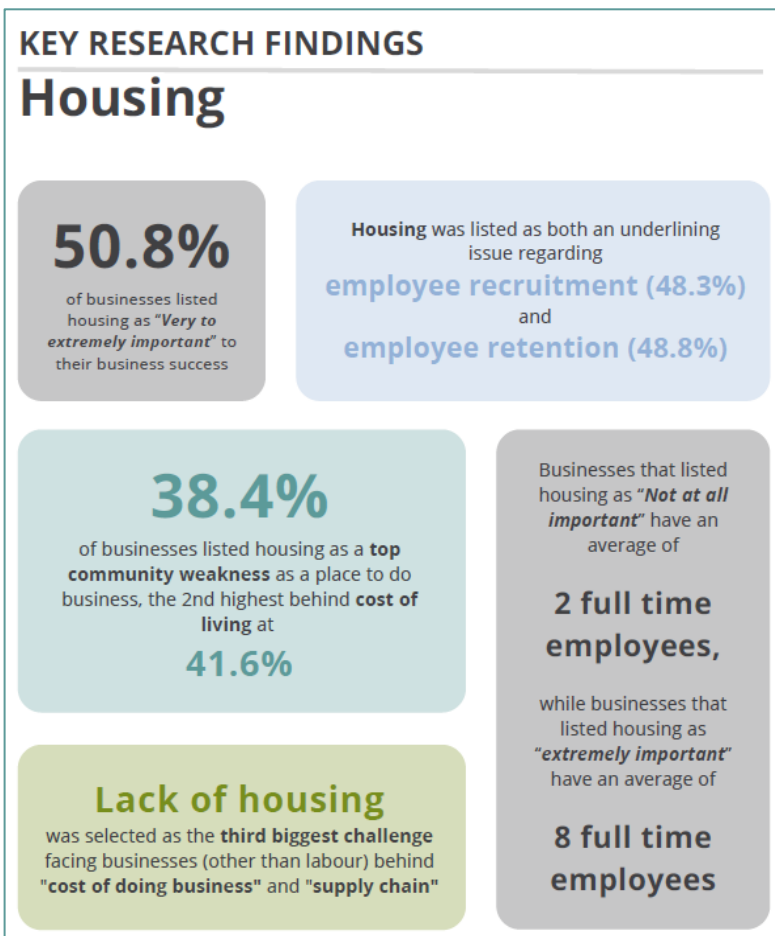
Municipal planning departments were also interviewed on infrastructure barriers. There could be regional infrastructure projects that are beneficial to increasing the housing supply in the Elk Valley. These discussions quickly expanded outside of the scope of this report, but regional infrastructure projects could be discussed at the EVEI’s facilitated planning department meetings, as outlined in the conclusion section of this report. Municipal engineering departments could be included in one of these meetings to expand regional communication levels.



SECTION 3 – LOCAL BUSINESS BRE HOUSING DATA

BRE DATA OVERVIEW

In 2021 the EVEI published the Elk Valley Business Retention and Expansion (BRE) Report. The report describes findings from a BRE survey conducted online via Survey Monkey from October 22nd to December 22nd, 2021, by the EVEI for businesses operating in the Elk Valley. 318 individual business responses were received, amounting to approximately 1 out of 3 licensed businesses in the Elk Valley.



This image shows the key research findings for housing highlighted through local business data.

50.76% of businesses listed "Housing" as "Very to Extremely important" to their business success. 34.5% of businesses listed "Housing" as "Not at all important" or "Slightly important" to their business success.

This difference in answers is starkly contrasted when analyzing the number of full-time employees. Businesses that listed housing as "Not at all important" list an average of 2 full time employees, while businesses that listed housing as "extremely important" list an average of 8 full time employees, a 300% increase.

The full qualitative data from the Elk Valley business retention and expansion report is listed in the appendix section at the end of this report.



SUMMARY

There are three overriding issues listed in the local business BRE data about housing:

- ① Staffing issues for businesses because of a lack of housing, most notably a lack of affordable and rental housing for staff
- ② Lack of housing for the working class in the Elk Valley
- ③ Housing is not affordable / too expensive (driven by lack of supply)

The data provided by local businesses create the bulk of the third action item listed in the conclusion section of this report, with a focus on improving communication between planning departments and local businesses, and for the EVEI to advocate for municipal bylaws that will increase housing in the Elk Valley.

For the City of Fernie specifically, issues with Airbnb were frequently mentioned, by reducing the housing supply for people who live and work in the Elk Valley. The Fernie planning department has indicated there is a bylaw presentation being prepared for the Communities of Interest Advisory Initiative meeting to enhance communication on this subject and provide an update on their ongoing work. Ensuring this presentation is available to local businesses and other municipalities would be beneficial and correlates with action item three in the conclusion section. The City of Fernie could also review increasing the business license fee charged to short term rentals and put that money into their new Affordable Housing Reserve.

Reviewing the qualitative data provided by local businesses highlights how important that the Elk Valley, in a collaborative effort, urgently address the housing shortage. This affects not only residents' quality of life, with marginalized communities and low-income workers disproportionately affected, but also local business growth and workforce attraction. While this report focuses on how the EVEI can support housing in the Elk Valley, it also supplies robust data for municipalities to act on these barriers identified by local businesses.

To ensure effective economic development practices for local business, the Elk Valley must first address the underlying quality of life issues in the community.



SECTION 4: MUNICIPAL HOUSING NEEDS REPORTS

In 2019, the BC Government announced: “Municipalities and Regional Districts in B.C. are required to complete housing needs reports by April 2022 and every five years thereafter. These reports will help local governments and the B.C. government better understand and respond to housing needs in communities throughout B.C.” (1)

The recurring theme in the three reports was a lack of data on the housing continuum in each community. Missing data around invisible homelessness and those at risk of homelessness, and thus the lack of shelters for this population segment, was a re-occurring data point. This was outlined in the “Areas of local need” and “Community consultation” sections of all three of the housing need reports and strengthened by key housing partner qualitative data in this report.

ANTICIPATED HOUSING UNITS

Anticipated housing units are the number of housing units needed to house the projected increase in households from 2021 to 2026 based on the regional household growth rate.

It was stated in the Fernie and Sparwood Housing Needs Reports that these projections are, “based on a statistical approach recommended by the province to calculate the minimum number of dwellings required for... *(the Elk Valley)* to house residents. As such, they do not consider actual growth since 2016, nor take demographics and other contextual information into account.” (2)

Since the housing need reports have been published, the 2021 census data was released, showing a greater than anticipated population increase in the Elk Valley. While these calculations do not consider actual growth, it is important to note that the anticipated housing units are likely greater than listed below.

	Fernie	Sparwood	Elkford	RDEK A	Elk Valley
Current & Anticipated housing demand (2016-2026)	187	176	120	135	618

AREAS OF LOCAL NEED

Each housing needs assessment includes a section of specific housing areas that are in need. There were 5 areas of local need identified in all three municipal reports:

- Affordable housing
- Rental Housing
- Housing for seniors
- Housing for families
- Shelters for individuals experiencing homelessness and housing for individuals at risk of homelessness



QUANTITATIVE DATA – SOURCES AND LIMITATIONS

The Elkford Housing Needs Report outlined that with the lack of data, the report could not be properly finished. It was recommended to obtain further housing data and complete the housing needs report again in 2023.

For Fernie and Sparwood’s reports it was noted that, “several data used in this report are compiled from the long-form census and may not match data found in other sources such as the City’s Official Community Plan. In 2011, the long-form census.... led to low response rates and resulted in poor data quality. Non-market housing data, including emergency shelter and housing for the homeless, assisted living, social housing, and rent assistance, were provided by BC Housing. BC Housing only tracks units where they have a financial relationship. There may be other subsidized housing units in the community.” (3)

This lack of data identified, correlated with housing societies who identified a lack of local and regional data as a barrier to housing projects and their organizations overall. The sources and limitations on quantitative data from the housing needs report was a key factor in the second action item in the conclusion section, “Data Collection”, that recommended the EVEI, in collaboration with municipalities and housing societies, obtain local non-market housing data, as well as advocate for the next housing need reports to be cooperative in nature.

COMMUNITY CONSULTATION

Each housing needs report includes a section titled, “community consultation” where certain individuals were interviewed for qualitative data. There were four issues identified by the community in all three municipalities. They were:

- The “shadow population” continues to put pressure on housing availability for local residents
- There are limited affordable rental housing
- Homelessness is an invisible issue
- Employer projections for job growth in the region will increase pressure on housing supply

RECOMMENDATIONS

The EVEI Coordinator reviewed the three municipal housing needs reports to identify specific issues that are affecting all three communities and recommendations that coincided in these communities. These recommendations are outlined in the executive summary section of this report, titled “Housing Recommendations for Local Government and the Elk Valley Region” on page 9. A unified Elk Valley approach to address these issues would reduce duplicate efforts.



APPENDIX

KEY HOUSING PARTNERS QUALITATIVE DATA

Listed below are the specific questions and answers from the key housing partners.

Q3: What are your barriers to your current housing projects and to your organization overall?

- Building costs, no housing for workers
- Our rent pricing - it is subsidized and fixed. Lack of staff and money to hire staff.
- Increased costs & interest rates. Grant work. Not knowing what developer or builder you are working with
- DCC costs not waived (for Fernie - they were waived before). Land zoning. We need a developer to build "affordable housing". Price of land needs to be affordable, and property must be central
- No land, no money, no developers. We need more communication w/ developers
- Infrastructure barriers - we could build affordable housing but there are water issues
- Local approval processes are slow, but fault could lay on incomplete forms – A video or information package on how to complete the forms would be beneficial to speed up approval process time
- More clarity around development approvals process - what needs to be done (on the form)

Q5: How could the municipal governments (Fernie, Sparwood or Elkford) better support you?

- Focus incentive programs on people who are going to build housing. Lean on professional workers more
- Fernie: Important to have housing committee, it can push through bylaws for immediate solutions to housing
- Municipalities need to lean on certificated professionals in the field more
- The City of Fernie needs to provide clarity around land and be consistent
- Elkford has waived DCC's and been very supportive
- The District of Sparwood needs to support seniors more, and increase awareness of available land
- The City of Fernie needs to provide land for housing and engage both non-profits and developers



Q6: How can the Chambers better support you?

Most interviewees listed “not applicable” for this question. The remaining two answered:

- The chambers should be more involved in housing societies, they could take an active role in the board
 - The chambers need to identify how they can demonstrate value with housing
-

Q7: Is there a way for better communication and collaboration in the Elk Valley?

- Housing Societies are not working together
 - We need open dialogue
 - Streamline permit applications to be similar in all three communities
 - Communication is always important and not happening
 - Elkford has different issues but information sharing and working together is important
 - Having an umbrella organization or a designated worker residing over all the societies to increase communication and collaborative
 - Regional support would be beneficial
 - We need more communication & support. Organizations do not have the time to do it themselves
-

Q9: Can you talk about housing data? Do you need additional data? What about the housing need reports from the municipalities?

- Missed data around homelessness, need Elk Valley data
- We need more applicable data w/ housing needs assessments
- Invisible homelessness - lacking data, need to interview and include local non profits working in this space
- We need local data from local sources
- The housing need reports should be melded together for the Elk Valley
- We want Elk Valley wide data



Q10: Based on your experience, do you have ideas and suggestions for more housing?

- We need supportive housing. It could happen if municipalities providing land and there was buy-in from council
- Removing duplicate committees and societies.
- Municipalities need to demonstrate a tangible financial benefit for developers to build certain types of housing
- More land = more development
- Political pressure on FAR for staff housing. Condominiums for "aging" and downsizing. We need to density - and identify who will build it. We need rental housing - and incentives to have it build
- Dormitory housing with community kitchen and living room
- Need to create an area & incentive to bring in workers. Teck needs to step up
- More housing overall! Another seniors and family building

Q11: Do you have any ideas for working together as the Elk Valley – regional approaches?

- Do not vilify the development industry – we need them to if we are going to increase the housing supply in the Elk Valley
- The region needs to work together to attract builders for purpose build workforce and rental housing
- Need to review bylaws to support housing (multi unit housing) and use a regional approach
- More seniors support, more coordination with other groups
- Teck needs to be involved



QUALITATIVE HOUSING DATA FROM BRE SURVEY

Qualitative data listed below was obtained in the 2021 business retention and expansion (BRE) survey. This data was not released in the 2021 Elk Valley BRE Report. Housing specific qualitative data was obtained from a variety of questions in the survey. The survey questions are listed below, followed by corresponding housing answers.

Q9: Do you expect the number of employees to change over the next 3 years? If “Yes, decrease, why do you expect this?”

- Too many staffing issues in town, mostly due to lack of affordable housing
- Housing is too expensive
- Lack of housing initiatives for middle class families in the valley. There must be genuine efforts to build housing which is adequate and affordable for families who work and live in the valley. Focus needs to shift away from builds meant for wealthy second home ownership. Also, current Airbnb rules must be enforced.
- Real estate is expensive in Fernie
- ... Rental and residential properties being bought for recreation and Airbnb
- Too many staffing issues in town, mostly due to lack of affordable housing
- Complete lack of employees due to housing crisis.....

Q24: What are the community's weaknesses as a place to do business? If you would like to expand on the community weakness's you identified above, please enter your comments below.

- We need a building boom of apartment buildings, ... if we do not allow building, there will always be a difficulty with finding staff and doing business to the fullest.
- We have a lot of seasonal work; this means that most of our employees are looking for rental housing and it is just non-existent or it's astronomically expensive and unattainable.
- Need action on building out adequate housing for working families. Without regulation, housing stock will go to the highest bidder which leaves out middle class families. More enforcement of Airbnb rentals which has removed rental stock. Prohibitive building costs and red tape prevent employers from having their own housing for staff.
- Stop allowing non residence to buy and then operate an Airbnb!
- Out of towners purchasing vacation homes... resulting in unaffordable real estate prices and nowhere to live for the lower wage earners.
- ...Housing market needs to adapt to the local non mine shift wage and be more adaptable to the minimum wage workers
- Just to reiterate the challenges of recruitment with no available housing.



- Housing cost in Fernie is astronomical. I moved towns to accommodate my business.
- Lack of affordable rentals/housing for employees
- The biggest challenge of recruiting new people to the area is lack of housing and cost of living due to expensive housing.
- Housing is too expensive for your average person.
- It's so expensive to live here and there is limited rental housing. You will not have a healthy, well-rounded community when the only housing we have is \$750k+ homes.
- Provide more housing
- The lack of inventory of homes for sale because of high home prices, which makes it difficult for some buyers to get into the Market
- When we hire someone from outside the Elk Valley, we always have a rental property problem
- Housing for the workers who run our town.
- It's damn near impossible to bring staff to town when the cost of housing is so inflated. Even though we pay \$70,000 to \$100,000 starting salary we have not been able to bring anyone from outside the community.
- Stubbornness by local government to remove bureaucratic blockages to business and development opportunities housing in particular. The short supply is responsible for high prices combined with overregulation.
- The largest problem in our area by far is that people can not afford to live in Fernie, rent is too high as a direct result from Airbnb's and similar short term rentals leaving very little long term rental space.
- Foster high density developments rather than single family

Q26: Do you plan to expand your business in the next 3 years? If no, Q28: Why do you not plan on expanding?

- There are no employees available because they can not find housing
- No housing for staff
- It's become too difficult to do business due to... local housing issues

Q38: Is there something you would like to add, that we did not ask?

- Lack of housing is the biggest problem in the valley. It is so highly unbalanced.
- Restrict foreign ownership. Restrict short term rentals... to address housing
- There is a clear problem with Airbnb type rentals in Fernie. Because of all the short-term rentals there is not a lot of affordable places for people to live in a longer term.
- Please take housing in the Elk Valley seriously. This is going to be the major problem coming out of the pandemic. When people start complaining that local prices for



retail/food and beverage etc are too high, it is because the businesses will need to pay their staff MUCH more money to be able to afford to live here. On top of that, businesses and amenities will close services because there will be no one to run them.

- Low-cost housing is a huge barrier to economic growth
- In addition to affordable housing efforts, there has to be a way for municipalities to release land directly to local owners to build a reasonably sized and priced home instead of to developers interested in maximizing profit.
- We all know that housing is a critical issue, yet nothing is being done about it. It was bad 15 years ago, it's only worse now. Waiting on FAR to take initiative on housing its staff is ridiculous. They might come to the table with cash, but they'll never lead, that is obvious. It will never happen until it truly threatens their operations. We have all the resources to improve the housing situation: Build operational and financial capacity in our local Non-Profit Housing Organizations, including through mergers if necessary. We have significant undeveloped lands already zoned for multi-family housing. We need carrots and sticks to activate those lands. The City of Fernie is sitting on land that could be used for housing.



SOURCES

- 1) BC Government: Housing Need Reports:
<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/housing-tenancy/local-governments-and-housing/policy-and-planning-tools-for-housing/housing-needs-reports>
- 2) Fernie Housing Needs Report:
<https://fernie.civicweb.net/document/122420/>
- 3) Sparwood Housing Needs Report:
<https://sparwood.civicweb.net/document/117337/>
- 4) Elkford Housing Needs Report:
<https://elkford.civicweb.net/document/68670/>
- 5) Elk Valley Business Retention and Expansion Report:
<https://theelkvalley.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Elk-Valley-BRE-Report-2021.pdf>
- 6) Fernie Business Retention and Expansion Report:
<https://theelkvalley.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Fernie-BRE-Report-2022.pdf>
- 7) Sparwood Business Retention and Expansion Report:
<https://theelkvalley.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Sparwood-BRE-Report-2022.pdf>
- 8) Elkford Business Retention and Expansion Report:
<https://theelkvalley.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/05/Elkford-BRE-Report-2021.pdf>
- 9) RDEK Elk Valley Rural Subregion Electoral Areas Housing Needs Report:
https://www.rdek.bc.ca/web/planningfiles/Housing_Needs/Elk_Valley_Rural_Subregional_Housing_Needs_Report.pdf