



Building Opportunity: Housing the Future of Olds

TOWN OF
OLDS

2025 Housing Strategy

Published: July 14, 2025

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Olds is growing and with growth comes the need to ensure a supply of affordable, diverse, and sustainable housing. This Housing Strategy offers a roadmap to address affordability challenges, demographic changes, and housing shortages, while preserving the town's character and supporting economic resilience.

Key Housing Challenges

- *Population Growth & Aging:* Olds is projected to grow 9.2% every five years until 2041. Seniors already represent 23.8% of residents, creating demand for accessible and downsized housing options.
- *Mismatch Between Supply & Demand:* 67% of households have 1–2 people, but 72% of homes are single-detached. The rental vacancy rate is critically low at 0.6%, pushing up costs and reducing choice.
- *Economic Pressures:* Nearly half (48.4%) of households spend more than 30% of income on housing. Housing shortages are making it harder to attract and retain workers, posing risks to the local economy.

Strategic Priorities

To address these challenges, the Town of Olds has developed a strategy focused on six priorities that will increase housing stock by 620 units by 2030:

1. *Core Area Housing* – Support infill and mixed-use development in Uptowne and East Olds. (Target: 100 new units)
2. *Missing Middle Housing* – Expand duplexes, triplexes, row housing, and townhomes. (Target: 200 new units)
3. *Rental & Smaller Units* – Develop more purpose-built rentals and smaller housing. (Target: 175 new units)
4. *Neighbourhood Character* – Align new development with existing community aesthetics. Target: Update both Area Redevelopment Plans

5. *Senior Housing* – Advance accessible and assisted living options. (Target: Conduct stakeholder collaboration)
6. *Pro-Housing Environment* – Attract private investment and reduce regulatory barriers. Target: More builder participation and diversity

Measuring Progress

- *Short-Term Indicators*: Housing approvals, developer participation, engagement levels
- *Long-Term Indicators*: Rental vacancy rates above 3%, 1.5% annual population growth, increased supply and diversity of housing.

A Vision for the Future

With responsible growth, Olds can:

- Offer walkable neighbourhoods and diverse housing for seniors, students, and families
- Support business attraction and workforce stability through affordable housing
- Maximize existing infrastructure to control municipal costs
- Maintain Olds' unique small-town identity while meeting future needs

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Executive Summary	1
Table of Contents	4
Introduction: Building a Stronger Olds Together.....	5
Our Community's Housing Challenge.....	5
Why Housing Matters to Our Community.....	5
Acting for Today and Tomorrow.....	6
Research, Data, and Public Input.....	6
The Cost of Inaction	10
Housing in Olds: Our Community's Changing Needs	11
Our Changing Community.....	11
Population Growth.....	11
Changing Household Patterns.....	12
Current Housing Challenges.....	13
Projected Need	16
Single Family Homes	17
In Summary.....	17
The Strategy: Building Opportunity.....	18
Overview.....	18
Strategic Priorities	18
Implementation Tools	21
Measuring Success.....	22
In Summary.....	23
Managing Change: Understanding Growth Impacts	24
Overview.....	24
Community Engagement and Transparency.....	27
Funding and Resources	28
Glossary	29

INTRODUCTION:

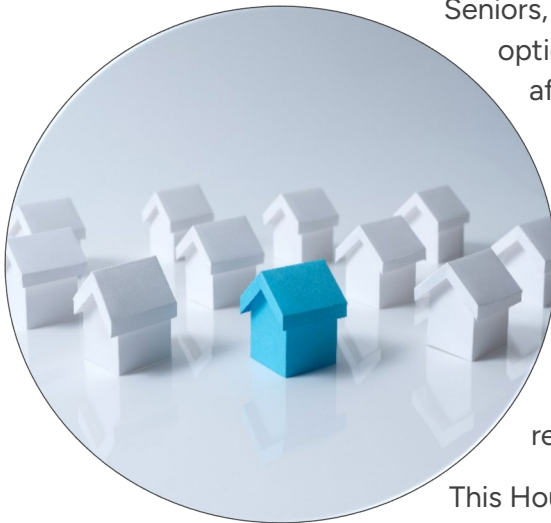
BUILDING A STRONGER OLDS TOGETHER

Our Community's Housing Challenge

Olds has always been a community where neighbours know each other, where local businesses thrive, and where families can build their futures. Our location along the Queen Elizabeth II Highway, our stunning views of the Rocky Mountains, and our rich agricultural heritage have made us an increasingly attractive place to call home. This growth reflects the strength of our community but also brings challenges we must address together.

Today, many of our residents face difficult housing choices. Community voices have made clear that Olds is experiencing a housing crisis marked by affordability gaps, limited availability, and a mismatch between what is needed and what exists. A growing number are paying more than they can afford, living in unsuitable homes, or commuting from other communities.

Seniors, students, families, and newcomers alike face limited options. This shortage is putting pressure on our workforce, affecting local businesses, and making it harder for people to stay in the community they call home.



While broader market forces like inflation and interest rates influence housing challenges across Canada, the Town of Olds is committed to local solutions. Through smart policy updates, infrastructure investment, and streamlined development processes, we are committed to taking action within our control to support our residents.

This Housing Strategy will be our map for creating a more diverse, attainable housing market for all members of our community.

Why Housing Matters to Our Community

Housing is more than just a roof over our heads; it shapes the strength and sustainability of our town. A well-planned housing strategy will:

- **Keep families together**, allowing multiple generations to live, work, and grow in Olds.
- **Support local businesses**, increasing the customer base for our shops and services.
- **Strengthen our economy**, ensuring businesses can attract and retain workers.
- **Reduce long-term costs**, by leveraging existing infrastructure, expanding the tax base, and minimizing costs.

- **Preserve our community character**, ensuring that growth enhances, rather than detracts from, Olds' charm and strengths.

✦
By implementing this Housing Strategy, Olds is proactively shaping its future, ensuring smart, sustainable growth that benefits all residents.

Acting for Today and Tomorrow

This Housing Strategy provides a clear, actionable framework to meet Olds' evolving needs. It builds on extensive research, community input, and successful examples from similar municipalities. The key principles of this strategy are:

- Directing growth near existing infrastructure to reduce costs for everyone.
- Ensuring new housing fits with neighbourhood character through clear design standards.
- Supporting more housing choices for citizens.
- Strengthening Uptowne Olds by bringing more customers within walking distance of local businesses.
- Collaborating with the private sector to streamline regulations and incentivize smart development.
- Engaging with Olds College of Agriculture and Technology to share needs and challenges and to collaborate on housing solutions for staff and students.

It's important that the Town remains focused on its role in the housing system. The Town of Olds does not build homes or develop residential land; we are not a housing provider. Instead, our responsibility is to create the conditions that make housing development possible. This means ensuring land is appropriately zoned, streamlining the permitting process, maintaining infrastructure capacity, and offering policy tools and incentives that attract private investment.

By removing barriers, reducing risk, and coordinating long-term planning, the Town enables builders, developers, and non-profit partners to bring new housing to the market. Our goal is to be a proactive facilitator, not a competitor nor barrier, in helping meet the community's housing needs.

Research, Data, and Public Input

This housing strategy is grounded in extensive research, data analysis, and community input gathered over several years. It draws upon findings from public surveys and third-party studies to provide a well-rounded understanding of Olds' housing landscape.



❖ 2023 Housing Survey

The 2023 Housing Survey was conducted at the request of the Government of Alberta and then used to inform the 2023 Housing Needs Assessment.

KEY FINDINGS:

- Strong desire for more housing options
- Affordability concerns
- Barriers to finding suitable housing
- Seniors housing a key priority
- Interest in innovative housing solutions

❖ 2023 Housing Needs Assessment

This assessment was conducted by McElhanney Engineering to help the Town understand its local housing situation and provide objective data to prospective housing developers. The [2023 Housing Needs Assessment](https://www.olds.ca/housing) is available at www.olds.ca/housing

KEY FINDINGS:

- *Limited Housing Diversity:* housing stock in Olds is dominated by single-detached homes, which does not reflect the evolving needs of smaller households, seniors, and low- to moderate-income residents seeking more compact, affordable options.
- *Affordability Pressures:* Both renters and owners are experiencing affordability challenges. Around 33% of renter households and 13% of owner households in Olds are spending more than 30% of their income on housing, exceeding the standard threshold for affordability.
- *Seniors and Young Adults Most Affected:* Older adults face long waitlists for appropriate seniors housing, while young adults struggle to find affordable rental units or entry-level ownership opportunities, contributing to housing instability and out-migration.
- *Low Rental Vacancy and Limited Turnover:* The rental market is tight, with very low vacancy rates and few new purpose-built rental developments in recent years, making it difficult for newcomers or people seeking to downsize to find appropriate housing.
- *Growing Demand Requires Proactive Planning:* With population growth projected — particularly among seniors — Olds will need to prioritize infill, mixed-use, and

multi-unit developments, alongside supports for affordable housing and partnerships to diversify supply.

❖ 2024 Commercial Gap Analysis

The Commercial Gap Analysis touches on the housing market in Olds primarily in relation to retail development and Uptowne revitalization. The [2024 Retail Gap Analysis](http://www.olds.ca/ecdev) is available at www.olds.ca/ecdev

KEY FINDINGS:

- *Housing Diversity Is Essential for Retail Health:* A more diverse mix of housing—particularly in and around Uptowne Olds—is critical to sustaining local businesses by increasing foot traffic and creating a stable customer base.
- *“Retail Follows Rooftops”:* This proven principle means that retail growth is closely tied to residential development. Without adequate, nearby housing, especially in Uptowne Olds, retail viability and economic vibrancy are at risk.
- *Proximity of Housing to Uptowne Is a Priority:* The success of Uptowne revitalization efforts depends on increasing residential density and affordability in nearby areas. This will support small businesses, attract new retailers, and foster a walkable, community-oriented shopping and retail district.



❖ 2025 Budget Survey

The 2025 Budget Survey asked respondents on the Town’s role in the housing market. 65% of respondents believe the Town should play a role in attracting housing developments. The [2025 Budget Survey](http://www.olds.ca/news) is available at www.olds.ca/news.

KEY FINDINGS:

- 59% of respondents believe the Town should reduce red tape and other barriers to housing development.
- 55% believe the Town should incentivize housing builds through tax and permit fee incentives.
- 43% believe the Town should strategically acquire land for housing development.
- 35% believe the Town should have no role in attracting housing development.

❖ 2025 BREWD Survey

The 2025 BREWD Survey led by Invest Olds, gathered input from over 600 Central Alberta businesses to assess challenges and opportunities related to business retention, expansion, and workforce development. Housing was a recurring theme. The [2025 BREWD Strategy](#) is available at www.investolds.ca/brewd-strategy.

KEY FINDINGS:

- *Recruitment Barrier:* 1 in 10 employers identified a lack of housing as a key barrier to recruiting staff, particularly for low-wage and entry-level positions.
- *Reluctance to Relocate:* Nearly 20% of employers reported that potential workers are unwilling to relocate to the area, with housing availability and affordability likely contributing factors.
- *Rental Shortages:* Several respondents highlighted the limited availability and high cost of rental units as a constraint on hiring and business expansion.
- *Employer-Supplied Housing:* Some businesses, especially in agriculture, provide housing directly to employees to offset commute barriers and attract seasonal or temporary labour.
- *Workforce Growth at Risk:* Employers expressed concern that future workforce expansion could be constrained without improvements to local and regional housing supply.

❖ 2025 Housing Needs Assessment

This 2025 data set consists of a quantitative analysis, interviews with local housing stakeholders, and a public survey on housing needs in Olds. This data set is used throughout this Housing Strategy document as it is the most current and comprehensive, building on all work done to date. The [2025 Housing Needs Assessment](#) is available at www.olds.ca/housing.

KEY FINDINGS:

- *Affordability is a major concern:* Nearly half of survey respondents spend more than 30% of their income on housing, with some exceeding 50%. Very Low and Low Income households cannot afford most rental or ownership options in Olds.
- *Limited housing choice:* Most available homes are large, single-detached houses, while the majority of households are 1- or 2-person households. There is a growing mismatch between what people need and what is available, especially for seniors, young adults, and smaller households.

- *Rental supply is under pressure:* The rental vacancy rate is extremely low (0.6%), and rising rents are forcing residents to commute, or live in poor or unsuitable conditions. Secondary rental market prices often exceed affordability for all but high-income earners.
- *Housing stock is growing, but unevenly:* In 2024, a record 116 new units were added, mostly multi-family. However, supply still lags behind population growth and evolving needs. Demand is growing for both small-unit rentals and family-sized housing.
- *Student housing shortfalls:* Olds College students face long waitlists and a lack of clear, centralized housing support. Some commute from Calgary or live in hotels. There is no family or married student housing available.

❖ 2025 Open Houses

Two open houses on May 5, 2025 saw approximately 24 attendees and generated productive discussions on housing affordability, supply, and development policy. Most participants supported increased housing diversity, secondary suites, and purpose-built rentals. Seniors voiced interest in aging-in-place options, while some developers emphasized the importance of clear incentives and reliable data. Feedback reinforced the strategy's direction and highlighted the need for ongoing engagement during the Land Use Bylaw review. All engagement opportunities are listed at www.olds.ca/engagement



The Cost of Inaction

Doing nothing is an option. But there is a cost to inaction, which includes rising unaffordability of housing, a declining competitive environment for local businesses, and an erosion of the municipal tax base. We are choosing to take action.

HOUSING IN OLDS: OUR COMMUNITY'S CHANGING NEEDS

Our Changing Community

Olds has grown from a small agricultural town of 5,005 residents in 1986 to a vibrant community of 9,209 today. At the same time, migration to Olds has been slowing each census period since 2006, with a sharper decline between 2016 and 2021. However, with housing starts increasing since 2023 and 2024 being the busiest year on record, Olds is a sought-after destination with the potential to grow.

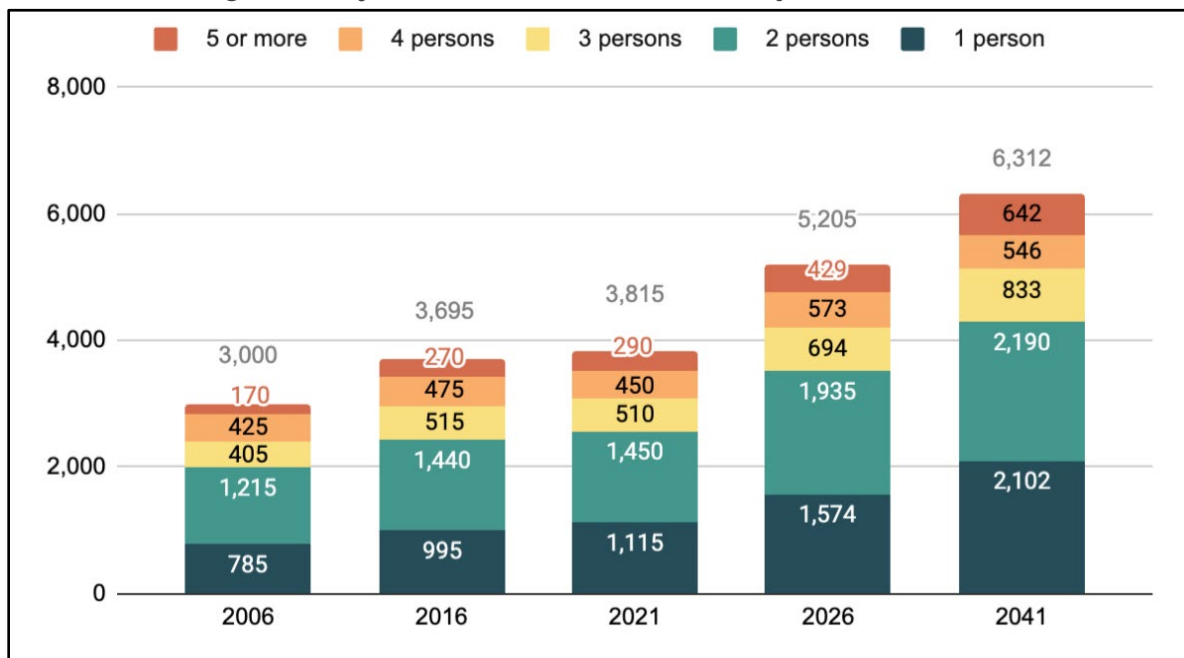
This reflects our town's increasing appeal as a place to live, work, study, and raise families. However, the lack of housing development in recent years has decreased housing availability and affordability. Providing a variety of attainable housing is becoming an urgent priority.

Growth brings both opportunities and challenges. Given the fast-evolving housing landscape, it's important that the right type of housing is built to help alleviate increasing affordability pressures on families, seniors, and individuals.

Population Growth

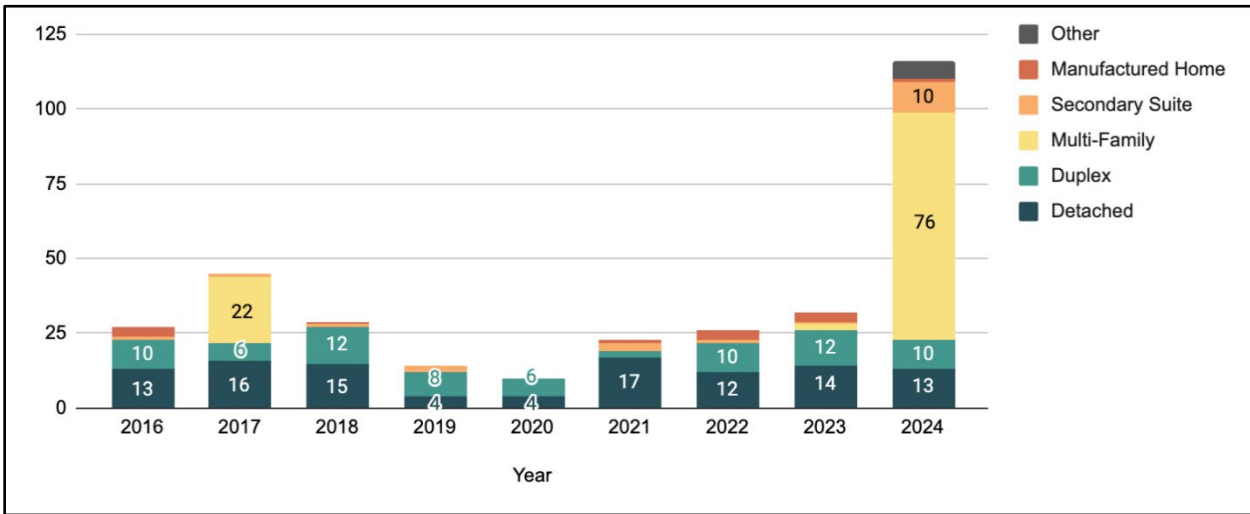
Based on the 2025 Housing Needs Assessment, the town's population can grow up to 9.2% every five years until 2041. To achieve this growth, we will need 2,483 new housing units by 2041 to meet market demand.

Figure 1. Projected number of households, by household size



To meet this forecasted need, the Town of Olds would need to add an average of 124 new units per year, consistently surpassing its average of 36 new units per year. While the record construction of 116 units in 2024 indicates that the Town is moving in the right direction, more action is needed to match population growth predictions.

Figure 2. New housing stock added by year and type



Changing Household Patterns

AN AGING POPULATION

The median age in Olds has increased from 41.6 to 43.6 years between 2016 and 2021, with residents over 65 now making up 23.8% of our population. Olds’ median age is consistently four years above the provincial median. This demographic shift highlights the need for:

- Accessible, single-level homes
- Maintenance-free options for downsizing
- Housing with access to medical facilities and services
- Multi-generational housing opportunities

SMALLER HOUSEHOLDS

Our community consists of smaller households, with the average household size declining from 2.4 to 2.3 persons between 2016 and 2021. Most households in Olds currently consist of one or two people, a trend that is expected to continue through 2041. This reflects:

- Young professionals drawn by work and study opportunities, but struggling to find suitable starter homes or rental properties close to work and amenities
- Families needing practical and affordable options
- Empty nesters staying in larger homes because suitable downsizing options aren't available
- Seniors wanting to age in place but struggling to find appropriate housing

Current Housing Challenges

RENTAL MARKET AFFORDABILITY

The rental vacancy rate in Olds has steadily declined, hitting a low of 0.6% in 2024. This indicates a strained rental market within the town.

- Median rents have risen to \$642 for a room in a shared house, and \$1,798 for an entire unit. Given that renter incomes are 40% lower than owner incomes, it is especially important to expand purpose-built rental housing.
- The average size of a household living in rental housing is growing. This reflects the need for more attainable rentals in Olds, including larger and purpose-built rentals.

Table 1. Purpose-built rental market affordability

		Studio avg rent	1-bedroom avg rent	2-bedroom avg rent	3-bedroom avg rent
AMH income category	Affordable monthly housing expenditure	\$633	\$1,006	\$1,002	\$1,269
Very Low Income	under \$410	no	no	no	no
Low Income	\$410 - \$1,025	yes	yes	yes	no
Moderate Income	\$1,025 - \$1,640	yes	yes	yes	yes
Median Income	\$1,640 - \$2,460	yes	yes	yes	yes
High Income	above \$2,460	yes	yes	yes	yes

An affordability analysis of the rental market shows that, while purpose-built rentals are generally accessible to most income levels, there is not enough supply of these units. This has led to increased demand in the secondary rental market, with higher prices that are not affordable for Low and Very Low-Income residents.

Table 2. Secondary rental market affordability

		room in shared unit avg rent	studio avg rent	1-bed avg rent	2-bed avg rent	3-bed avg rent	4+ bed avg rent
AMH income category	Affordable monthly housing expenditure	\$649	\$950	\$1,183	\$1,553	\$1,988	\$2,565
Very Low Income	under \$410	no	no	no	no	no	no
Low Income	\$410 - \$1,025	yes	yes	no	no	no	no
Moderate Income	\$1,025 - \$1,640	yes	yes	yes	yes	no	no
Median Income	\$1,640 - \$2,460	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	no
High Income	above \$2,460	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

HOME OWNERSHIP AFFORDABILITY

An analysis of home ownership affordability shows a large gap between income groups. While High Income households and households without mortgages will have some reprieve, the remainder of households will likely face housing costs that exceed 30% of their income, making it difficult to transition from renting to owning.

Table 3. Home ownership affordability

Dwelling unit size		1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4-bed	5-bed
Average Unit Sold Price		\$208,500	\$370,445	\$395,566	\$471,980	\$569,854
Downpayment (20%)		\$41,700	\$74,089	\$79,113	\$94,396	\$113,971
Monthly mortgage payment (25-year)		\$932	\$1,655	\$1,767	\$2,109	\$2,546
Total monthly expenditure		\$1,284	\$2,125	\$2,256	\$2,652	\$3,161
Very Low Income	under \$410	no	no	no	no	no
Low Income	\$410 - \$1,025	no	no	no	no	no
Moderate Income	\$1,025 - \$1,640	yes	no	no	no	no
Median Income	\$1,640 - \$2,460	yes	yes	yes	no	no
High Income	above \$2,460	yes	yes	yes	yes	yes

HOUSING SUPPLY MISMATCH

Our Housing Needs Assessment identified several key gaps between current supply and community needs:

- 61% of households would be satisfied with a studio or one-bedroom, but only 7% of occupied homes are one-bedroom units, and none are studio units.
- 93% of households occupy units with 2+ bedrooms, even though only 40% of households said they have a need for such homes.
- The cost of one-bedroom units in the rental market, sometimes being more expensive than two-bedroom units, suggests a severe lack of one-bedroom availability.
- Rental vacancy rate of 0.6% indicates severe shortage, as compared to a healthy vacancy rate of 3%.
- Only 290 senior care units are available for a population of 2,190 seniors



MARKET PRESSURES

Housing development in Olds is influenced by several external forces beyond the Town's control. These pressures shape the pace, type, and affordability of new housing. Understanding and monitoring these challenges helps clarify why certain developments stall and where the Town can focus efforts to support and enable future housing growth.

- Rising construction costs for builders and investors.
- Skilled trade labour shortages.
- Uncertain political environment and economic volatility.
- Significant population growth.
- CMHC policies that disadvantage multi-family developments in rural communities.

HOMELESSNESS

The Town of Olds recognizes that homelessness is a complex issue often tied to broader challenges such as mental health, addiction, and poverty. While Olds is not equipped with the full range of services required to address these complex needs, we are committed to supporting individuals in crisis through the following approaches:

- Promoting housing stability by encouraging the development of diverse, affordable, and attainable housing options that can help prevent homelessness before it starts.
- Collaborating with local partners such as Family and Community Support Services (FCSS), the Mountain View Food Bank, the Community Lending Shelf, and other non-profit agencies that address urgent and transitional needs within the community.
- Assisting individuals in accessing appropriate care by facilitating safe and voluntary travel to larger urban centres that are better equipped to provide specialized mental health, addiction, and emergency housing supports.

Olds will continue to work closely with the RCMP and social service agencies to monitor trends in homelessness, coordinate referrals, and evaluate the Town's role in supporting both individuals and community safety. Our approach prioritizes dignity, safety, and long-term solutions, recognizing that regional collaboration is essential for addressing the root causes of homelessness.

Projected Need

A growing population and changing demographics have led to affordability issues for lower income households as well as a shortage of rental options, and smaller housing options. The data suggests this will continue going forward into 2041.

Table 4. Housing units needed by 2041

Units needed by 2041	0-1 bed	2-bed	3+ bed	Total*
Deeply Affordable	35	0	0	35
Affordable/below-market	1,256	71	9	1,336
Market	368	1,027	3,520	4,922
Units existing in 2021	285	795	2,725	3,805

New units needed by 2041	1,374	303	805	2,482
--------------------------	-------	-----	-----	-------

- Long-term housing need projections indicate a lack of one-bedroom units. As 50% of households are either Low or Very Low income, this suggests there is a role for the non-market sector in developing one-bedroom options.
- The private sector will remain the most important driver of residential construction across all housing classes. To enable the market to meet the substantial demand anticipated, it is important for the Town to provide incentives and remove barriers to support industry development.

Single Family Homes

While single family homes do not play a central role in addressing the most urgent housing gaps identified in this strategy, they remain an important part of Olds’ housing landscape. They offer long-term stability for families, contribute to neighbourhood character, and continue to be a desired option for many residents. The Town remains committed to encouraging these low-density developments to ensure our housing market has choices for everyone.

In Summary

The data clearly demonstrates that Olds is entering a critical period of housing transition. Population growth, changing household sizes, an aging demographic, and rising costs are converging to create significant pressure on both the rental and ownership markets. While many of the market challenges are outside the Town’s direct control, there are important roles for the municipality to play, through enabling a greater variety of housing, aligning policies with demand, and working with community and industry partners. Meeting our future needs will require bold action, clear direction, and a commitment to fostering the right conditions for diverse and attainable housing development.

THE STRATEGY: BUILDING OPPORTUNITY

Overview

The Town of Olds Housing Strategy is a comprehensive, community-informed framework designed to address identified housing gaps. Grounded in extensive research and public engagement, this strategy sets out clear actions to boost housing availability, affordability, and quality through enabling the creation of 620 new housing units by 2030.

Strategic Priorities

1. Increasing Housing Options in Core Neighbourhoods

What This Means:

- Enhancing housing in established neighbourhoods by encouraging infill development and increased density in selected areas.

✦

Why This Matters:

- Makes efficient use of existing infrastructure
- Supports local businesses by providing a built-in customer base to drive retail growth
- Reduces maintenance and capital replacement costs to the taxpayer
- Creates vibrant, walkable neighbourhoods
- Delivers more affordable housing options for families, seniors, and professionals

Key Actions:

- Promote mixed-use and infill opportunities in designated areas
- Relax regulations (e.g., height limits and parking requirements) in targeted areas
- Streamline the approval process for developments that increase housing options in core neighbourhoods

Target: 100 new housing units in and near Uptowne Olds.

2. Enabling 'Missing Middle' Housing

What This Means:

- Expanding Medium Density Housing Stock, including duplexes, triplexes, townhomes, manufactured homes and other similar affordable, well-scaled options

Why This Matters:

- Creates affordable options for first-time buyers
- Allows seniors to downsize while staying in their neighbourhoods
- Maintains neighbourhood scale and character
- Uses existing infrastructure efficiently

Key Actions:

- Revise zoning to permit duplex housing everywhere infrastructure allows
- Reduce minimum lot sizes and enable lot splitting where appropriate
- Develop reasonable design guidelines to ensure compatibility with existing neighbourhoods.
- Introduce incentives for medium density development, including reduced fees and faster permitting

Target: 200 new missing middle-housing units.

3. Supporting Rental and Smaller-Scale Development

What This Means:

- Increasing the stock of affordable rental units; especially studio, 1-bedroom, and 2-bedroom units by promoting new construction and secondary suites.

Why This Matters:

- Addresses income-related barriers, ensuring all residents have a place in Olds' housing market by matching unit types to needs
- Supports seniors, students, and young professionals who need compact, accessible, and attainable housing
- Frees up larger homes for families and growing households
- Supports business and economic growth with workforce housing

Key Actions:

- Implement fast-tracked approvals for purpose-built rental projects
- Offer financial incentives for affordable rental development
- Streamline processes for legalizing and constructing secondary suites
- Strengthen partnerships with Olds College to address student housing needs

Target: 175 new rental units.

4. Preserving Existing Neighbourhoods

What This Means:

- Safeguarding and enhancing neighbourhood character by ensuring new development integrates with existing community features and historical elements.

Why This Matters:

- Maintains community and historical character
- Promotes housing stock quality
- Supports existing residents

Key Actions:

- Create design guidelines for infill development in existing communities

- Protect mature trees, landscaping, and heritage features during new development
- Establish consistent setback and heights controls

Target: Review current Area Redevelopment Plans by 2027.

5. Exploring Senior Housing Solutions

What This Means:

- Providing appropriate housing solutions for the largest demographic in Canadian history, including aging-in-place and assisted living options.

Why This Matters:

- Ensures that seniors have access to safe, comfortable, and affordable living environments
- Improves market inventory of larger homes
- Supports multi-generational living

Key Actions:

- Revise zoning to support options including assisted living, multi-generational, and accessible housing
- Promote accessible design standards across new developments
- Support aging-in-place renovations
- Create walkable connections to services
- Coordinate with seniors housing providers on solutions

Target:

- Bring together key stakeholders in 2025 and 2026 on the topic of seniors housing and supportive living to promote understanding and collaboration.

6. Creating a Pro-Housing Environment

What This Means:

- Fostering an environment that actively encourages private investment in housing, positions Olds as an attractive market for developers, and engages residents in shaping future growth

Why This Matters:

- Diversity of builders ensures variety in housing styles and price points
- Development creates local construction and trades jobs
- Private sector partnerships reduce the tax burden of meeting housing needs

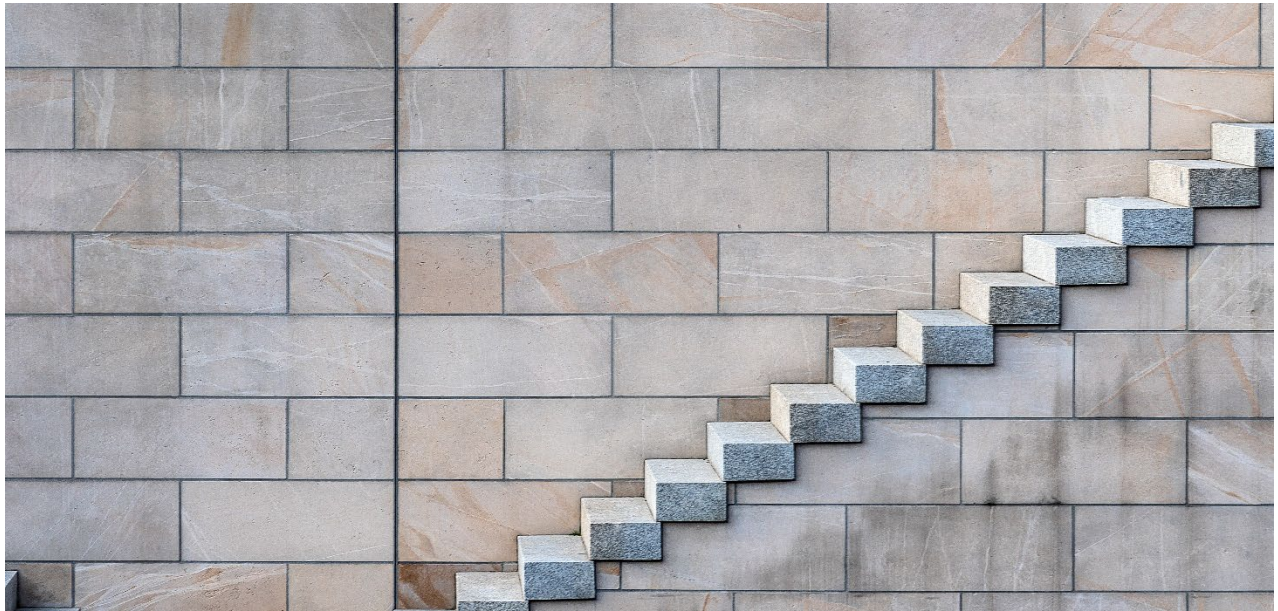
Key Actions:

- Conduct a comprehensive review of the Land Use Bylaw to remove barriers to development.
- Revise property tax incentive programs to encourage housing investments.
- Reduce security requirements for developments connecting to existing infrastructure.

- Launch a targeted marketing campaign to promote Olds as a premier destination for new housing and economic opportunities

Target:

- Create a positive working relationship with local and regional builders and developers to communicate information and hear their thoughts on how the Town can improve its development processes.
- Increase the number of builders and developers operating in Olds.
- Population growth averaging at least 1.5% per annum over the next decade.



Implementation Tools

The Town of Olds is undertaking several key initiatives that will work in conjunction with the Housing Strategy to ensure a well-rounded approach to sustainable growth and economic development. Through strong collaboration within the municipality and with the private sector, we aim to create a unified approach to growth.

❖ **Municipal Development Plan & Land Use Bylaw:**

- This housing strategy will be used to inform updates to the Municipal Development Plan (MDP), and the development of a new Land Use Bylaw (LUB). The MDP is the document that sets out high-level development priorities in Olds and the Land Use Bylaw is the tool through which housing development occurs.
- Updates to the MDP and LUB will streamline development approvals and encourage innovative, context-sensitive housing solutions.

❖ **Area Redevelopment Plans (ARPs) & Uptowne Revitalization:**

- Uptowne and East Olds ARPs will be revised to align with our housing goals.
- Initiatives from the 2024 Commercial Gap Analysis, like enhancing walkability, unlocking stagnant land, and incentivizing storefront improvements, will guide the revitalization of Uptowne, ensuring it remains a vibrant, economically robust town center.

❖ **Invest Olds**

- The Town's Economic Development Department, through the Next Generation Economic Initiative (NGEI), will focus on creating a strong business environment, workforce development, and furthering retail expansion opportunities; all of which will help facilitate housing development through increased demand and builder confidence.
- A Brownfield Management Strategy will be developed to help spur development of key brownfield properties in strategic areas of Olds.

❖ **Town-Owned Properties Review**

- Ongoing efforts to optimize the use of underutilized municipal properties will support housing development and other community priorities.
- Information and progress will be housed on the [Partnership page](#) of the Town's website, where strategies for property utilization are detailed.

Measuring Success

Tracking progress ensures accountability and helps refine strategies over time. Key performance indicators include:

❖ **Short-term Metrics (1-2 years)**

- *Number of Approved Housing Development Permits*
 - What is it? – The number of permits submitted and approved by the Town's planning authority.
 - What does success look like? – Consistent growth in all types of housing permits over a 5-year period, reflecting streamlined processes and increased developer confidence.
- *Incentive Utilization by Developers*
 - What is it? – The frequency at which developers and builders access Town incentive programs when developing land or constructing housing.
 - What does success look like? – Steady annual utilization rates of incentive programs over a 5-year period, indicating incentives are effectively driving new housing projects.

- *Public and Stakeholder Engagement Participation*

- What is it? – The amount of people and organizations that participate in events and surveys related to this strategy and housing matters in general.
- What does success look like? – Robust and consistent engagement and interest in Statutory Plan updates, including the MDP, LUB, and ARP processes over the next 5 years.

- ❖ **Long-term Metrics (3-5 years)**

- *Housing Affordability Index*

- What is it? – The ratio of median household income to median housing costs
- What does success look like? – A decrease in the percentage of income spent on housing during the 5-year period of this strategy.

- *Rental Vacancy Rate*

- What is it? – An estimate of the current availability of market-built rentals in Olds.
- What does success look like? – Achieve a rental vacancy rate of 3% by 2030.

- *Population Growth*

- What is it? – A growth in the Town's population over the 2025 – 2030 census period.
- What does success look like? – An annual average growth of at least 1.5%.

- *Housing Diversity*

- What is it? – A broad increase in all types of housing; single-detached, duplex, rental units, multi-family, age friendly, etc.
- What does success look like? – Annual increases in all housing builds with an increasing percentage of multi-family and affordable units.



In Summary

The Town of Olds Housing Strategy lays the foundation for a more inclusive, resilient, and responsive housing system. By aligning land use policy, economic development, and infrastructure planning, the Strategy aims to meet current needs while preparing for future growth. Success will depend on sustained collaboration with community members, developers, and institutional partners. With a clear vision and measurable targets, Olds is well-positioned to create a housing landscape that reflects the values and aspirations of its residents.

MANAGING CHANGE: UNDERSTANDING GROWTH IMPACTS

Overview

Housing growth is essential for our community's future, but it also brings challenges that must be thoughtfully addressed. This section acknowledges these impacts and outlines specific solutions to protect infrastructure, maintain community character, and ensure development benefits all residents.

➤ Traffic and Parking

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Increased traffic on residential streets
- Parking pressure in established neighbourhoods
- Peak hour congestion
- Construction vehicle impacts

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

1. *Traffic Management*

- Cluster amenities, higher density housing, and services in strategic nodes to encourage walking, cycling, and transit use.
- Work with Alberta Transportation to improve Highway 27 and 2A infrastructure.
- Improve pedestrian and bicycle infrastructure, fostering active transportation options.
- Include parking management plans as a requirement for large construction projects in key areas.

2. *Parking Solutions*

- As redevelopment grows, investigate residential parking permit programs to protect existing neighbourhoods from overflow parking.
- Utilize vacant town-owned land for public parking.
- Enhance wayfinding systems to direct residents and visitors to available parking options, reducing confusion and congestion.
- Conduct a public transportation study.

➤ Infrastructure and Services

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Increased demand on water, sanitary, and stormwater systems
- Increased strain on roadways and sidewalks
- Greater usage of parks and recreational facilities
- Increase strain on development function
- Expanded waste management needs

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

1. *Infrastructure Renewal*

- Focusing growth near infrastructure where capacity and system integrity has been confirmed.
- Reducing water loss and inflow & infiltration in the utility system.
- Consistent review of the Off-Site Levy regime to ensure growth pays for its impacts.
- Implement a robust asset management plan for roadways and core infrastructure.
- Update all utility master plans by 2030.

2. *Recreation Planning*

- Begin a Recreation Master Plan exercise to understand the capacity and demand of our parks, playgrounds, and recreation facilities.
- Focus growth near existing recreation amenities to reduce the need for new facilities.
- Continue with reviewing service levels in the Parks and Recreation departments to ensure priorities are relevant.

3. *Planning and Development Modernization*

- Automate processes and provide more public self-serve options to streamline tasks and timelines.
- Monitor key performance indicators, including permit processing times and other capacity metrics to ensure the planning department is adequately staffed.
- Support rental unit quality through secondary suite incentives, public education, and increased inspection frequency for problematic properties.

4. *Corporate Services and Customer Focus*

- Automate processes and provide more public self-serve options to streamline tasks and timelines.
- Establish a Corporate Services Business Plan that outlines customer service expectations and identifies capacity and resource constraints.

➤ Emergency Services

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Increased demand for RCMP services.
- Strain on fire services response time.
- Pressures on municipal enforcement.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

1. *RCMP Joint Planning*
 - Establish a plan for RCMP detachment growth, tied to both population increases and crime severity index.
2. *Fire Services Metrics*
 - Establish key performance indicators, including call volume, chute times, and response levels, and track their growth against the Fire Services Master Plan.
3. *Municipal Enforcement Expansion*
 - Utilize recent staffing growth to create a more proactive bylaw monitoring and enforcement function.
 - Develop a closer working relationship with the RCMP.
 - Monitor and report on key metrics regarding bylaw compliance.

➤ Social Services

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- School capacity issues due to higher enrollment.
- Increased demand for social support services.
- Growing demand on health care system.

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

1. *Public School Engagement and Site Prep*
 - Hold annual meetings with each school division to understand enrollment and capacity pressures.
 - Have 2 new school sites ready for development by 2030.
2. *Invest in Community Development*
 - Create a Social Services Master Plan.
 - Align the non-profit sector with Town-led efforts to enhance impact.
 - Build resources to adapt to the evolving needs of a growing community.
3. *Health Care*
 - Continue building capacity with the Olds and Area Health Professionals Attraction and Retention Committee.
4. *Provincial Advocacy*
 - Advocate to the Province of Alberta to enhance existing social services in Olds, including Alberta Works and Mental Health & Addictions.
 - Continuing health care advocacy, primarily around expansion of the Olds Hospital and Care Centre and issues affecting physician recruitment to Olds.

➤ Neighbourhood Character

POTENTIAL IMPACTS

- Changes to neighbourhood character
- Loss of trees and green spaces
- Privacy concerns
- Disruptions from construction activity

MITIGATION STRATEGIES

1. *Design Guidelines*

- Ensure new developments respect neighbourhood scale and aesthetics through context-sensitive design.
- Protect significant trees, landscaping, and heritage elements to maintain the community's natural charm.
- Implement height transitions near existing homes to preserve privacy and minimize visual impact.

2. *Community Integration*

- Create buffer zones between different land uses to manage transitions.
- Require community amenity contributions, such as parks, public art, or enhanced green spaces, to enrich the local environment.
- Maintain consistent streetscapes to preserve the town's character.
- Enhance public spaces to foster community connections and vibrancy.
- Regulate construction hours to reduce disruptions for residents.

Community Engagement and Transparency

A successful housing strategy depends on building trust and creating space for meaningful public input. Since 2023, the Town has undertaken several initiatives to engage the community and build a housing dataset, as outlined in the introduction to this housing strategy. And over the 5 years of this strategy, we will ensure that a practical and consistent approach to community engagement and transparency continues:

- **Targeted Communications**
Share timely, plain-language updates through local mediums to keep residents informed about housing projects and key decisions.
- **Dedicated Housing Webpage**
Maintain an easy-to-navigate website with current information on housing initiatives, timelines, reports, and contact information.
- **Engagement That Meets People Where They Are**
Host a mix of in-person and online engagement opportunities, including surveys,

information sessions, and open houses, with special efforts to reach seniors, youth, renters, and underrepresented groups.

- **Progress Reporting**

Report annually on the Housing Strategy's progress, tracking actions, identifying gaps, and outlining next steps.

- **Celebrating Success**

Town Council will publicly celebrate investments in our community by those individuals and companies that are doing the hard work to build housing in Olds. By becoming champions of this Housing Strategy and its milestones, Council can keep the issue in the public eye and provide more opportunities for citizen involvement.



Funding and Resources

This housing strategy does not require a significant amount of funding to accomplish its objectives, as policy changes, bylaw updates, and coordination of existing resources are largely funded through current operating budgets.

However, there are several areas that the Town will focus on to ensure our growth is fiscally prudent for current and future generations:

- **Offsite Levies** will be reviewed and updated on a 5-year cycle to ensure that growth contributes funding the impacts of growth and that Olds remains competitive with comparable communities.
- **Partnerships** on Town-owned land will be entertained where housing growth and other Town interests can be achieved.
- **Monitoring Program Funding** via CMHC, FCM, and future Federal and Provincial initiatives to help expedite infrastructure repairs that will enable housing growth in key areas.
- **Corporate Planning** will be a top priority in 2025 and beyond to ensure effort and public dollars are directed in the most efficient manner. Such a planning regime will allow us to prioritize those projects and programs that enable responsible housing growth.
- **Local Improvement and Special Taxation** options will be explored where there is economic rationale and high needs for infrastructure redevelopment.

GLOSSARY

Affordable Housing

Housing where the total monthly cost (including rent or mortgage and utilities) is less than 30% of a household's gross income. It may include market or non-market units and is often targeted at low- and moderate-income households.

Aging-in-Place

The ability for seniors to remain in their own home or community safely and independently as they age, supported by accessible housing design and nearby services.

Area Household Median Income (AHMI)

The median income of a region, used to calculate income brackets specific to a geographic area. For Olds, the AHMI brackets are as follows:

- Very Low Income (below 20% of AHMI): household income of \$0-\$16,400
- Low Income (21–50% of AHMI): \$16,401-\$41,000
- Moderate Income (51-80% of AHMI): \$41,001-\$65,600
- Median Income (81-120% of AHMI): \$65,601-\$98,400
- High Income (above 120% of AHMI): over \$98,401

Area Redevelopment Plan (ARP)

A statutory planning document that guides redevelopment and land use changes in a defined area, ensuring compatibility with community objectives and infrastructure capacity.

Attainable Housing

Housing that is affordable and suitable for a range of income levels, particularly moderate-income households. Unlike subsidized housing, attainable housing may not require government assistance but remains within reach of the average resident.

Brownfield

Vacant or underutilized properties with actual or perceived environmental contamination, often formerly used for industrial or commercial purposes.

Housing Affordability Index

A measure comparing median household income to median housing costs, used to assess the cost burden of housing on residents.

Infill Development

The process of developing vacant or underused parcels of land within existing urban areas, often with higher-density housing. It helps make efficient use of infrastructure and services.

Land Use Bylaw (LUB)

The principal regulatory document that governs how land in a municipality may be used and developed, including zoning, permitted uses, setbacks, and building heights.

Missing Middle Housing

A range of multi-unit housing types, such as duplexes, triplexes, townhouses, manufactured homes, and small apartment buildings, that fall between single-detached houses and large apartment buildings in scale and affordability.

Multi-Generational Housing

Housing designed or suitable for more than one generation living together under one roof, often with separate entrances or living spaces.

Municipal Development Plan (MDP)

A high-level, long-range policy document that sets out a municipality's vision, goals, and policies for future growth and development.

Non-Market Housing

Housing that is not provided through the private market, including government-subsidized, non-profit, or co-operative housing targeted at low-income households.

Off-Site Levy

A fee imposed on developers to help pay for new or expanded infrastructure required as a result of new development, such as roads, utilities, or community facilities.

Purpose-Built Rental

Housing units designed and constructed specifically for rental purposes, typically owned and operated by a property manager or investor, as opposed to units originally built for ownership but rented out later.

Rental Vacancy Rate

The percentage of all available rental units that are unoccupied at a given time. A low vacancy rate indicates strong demand and potential affordability issues.

Secondary Rental Market

Housing, originally built for ownership, that is later placed on the rental market by the owner.

Secondary Suite

A self-contained residential unit within a principal dwelling or accessory building. Often referred to as a basement suite, carriage house, or garden suite.