

# NEWS

## Toolkit outlines innovative solutions to affordable housing challenges

by **AARON ORLANDO**  
Arrow Lakes News

SmartGrowth B.C., an independent non-profit organization that assists B.C. municipalities plan land use and development principles to enhance quality of life and preserve the natural environment, last month released a tool kit to aid municipalities plan for the creation of affordable housing.

Titled **Creating Market and Non-Market Affordable Housing**, the toolkit emphasizes eight key tools which can be used to help communities create sustainable affordable housing.

Time Wake is a co-author of the guide. He's an affordable housing consultant, and also a municipal councillor in Whistler.

He says communities in the Kootenays are just beginning to feel the impact of housing prices out of reach of some segments of society, and offers some

recommendations on how to go about creating affordable housing in our context, and how to use the guide effectively. Wake says it's about selecting the combination of the right tools for the job tailored to your community.

Wake says the conversation about creating solutions to affordable housing crisis should avoid being held back by pre-conceived notions about what won't work, such as by those who feel that non-market housing means creating marginalized projects. "Let's not talk about what won't work. Let's talk about what will work," he says.

"It's really about getting your community together, especially what I'd call the housing stakeholders together in your community, your development community, your planners, any non-profits ... and you need to really sit down in a facilitated conversation around

this toolkit and identify the first steps, and basically put together an affordable housing strategy."

Creating and sustaining momentum for the initiative is key. "It's pretty challenging. You need a community champion. You need somebody on the community council or better yet, the mayor," he says. "One of the first resistances you'll get is [budgetary]."

A next step is gathering seed money and figuring out how to get funding other than from the tax base, and partnering with other organizations. The goals are to collect all resources available.

Wake says the community plan needs to be tailored to the community. He says the toolkit is not an answer, but a tool that needs to be tailored case by case.

For communities with development pressure, he recommends hitching onto their momentum and tailoring tools to har-

ness their energy. In those cases, tools such as requiring developers to provide a certain amount of affordable housing with new developments would be appropriate.

For areas that aren't experiencing development pressure, he recommends actions such as identifying potential land sites you can acquire at little or no cost and implementing tools such as resale price restrictions and deed restrictions or rent restrictions. "You create the housing at an affordable cost and you keep it affordable over time. It's very different from what's being delivered in the market."

There are eight key tools outlined in the toolkit, each explained in its own chapter. They include: 1. Inclusionary Zoning 2. Secondary Suites 3. Density Bonus 4. Resale Price Restrictions 5. Housing Fund 6. Land Banking 7. Housing Organization 8. Partnerships for

Affordable Housing.

"This notion that we'll just get some money from the province or from somewhere and we'll create some cheaper but really good market housing and we'll get these people into it, that's not a sustainable solution," says Wake.

He says communities under 5,000 are challenged in getting the momentum necessary to create a viable plan and recommends creating a regional strategy. "The first big step is convening that regional conversation and that community conversation. That's not one meeting, that's a series of meetings and basically creating your own action plan."

One first step that could be appropriate as Nakusp is creating a municipally owned housing authority as a wholly owned subsidiary of the municipality, as outlined in point seven of the toolkit.

He says most of the newer ideas in the toolkit, such as restrictive resale prices, arose from resort communities, especially in the U.S. that experienced exponential growth.

He says every community in the Kootenay region is facing the same issues, as are many communities in B.C.


His experience was

in Whistler, where the pressure were first experienced in the mid 1980s and were driven by increased housing costs. "It's when the housing begins to be too expensive for at least part of the target market for the housing," he says. "In the last three to five years, we've only just begun to see this in an area like the Kootenays. Interestingly, Revelstoke is an anomaly, it's a train wreck. It's got the double whammy of being a resort community whose time has just arrived, and also being a victim of this larger thing that's happening in all communities in B.C.," he says, "These are not new ideas, but they're new ideas to these areas."

The toolkit is available for download for free by following the links at their website at [www.smartgrowth.bc.ca](http://www.smartgrowth.bc.ca).

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Many of the tools and ideas expressed in the **Creating Market and Non-Market Affordable Housing** toolkit are incorporated in the new Nakusp OCP. Next week we'll look at some of those provisions, and introduce some of the options available to Nakusp homeowners to help with the situation, and also help themselves.



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