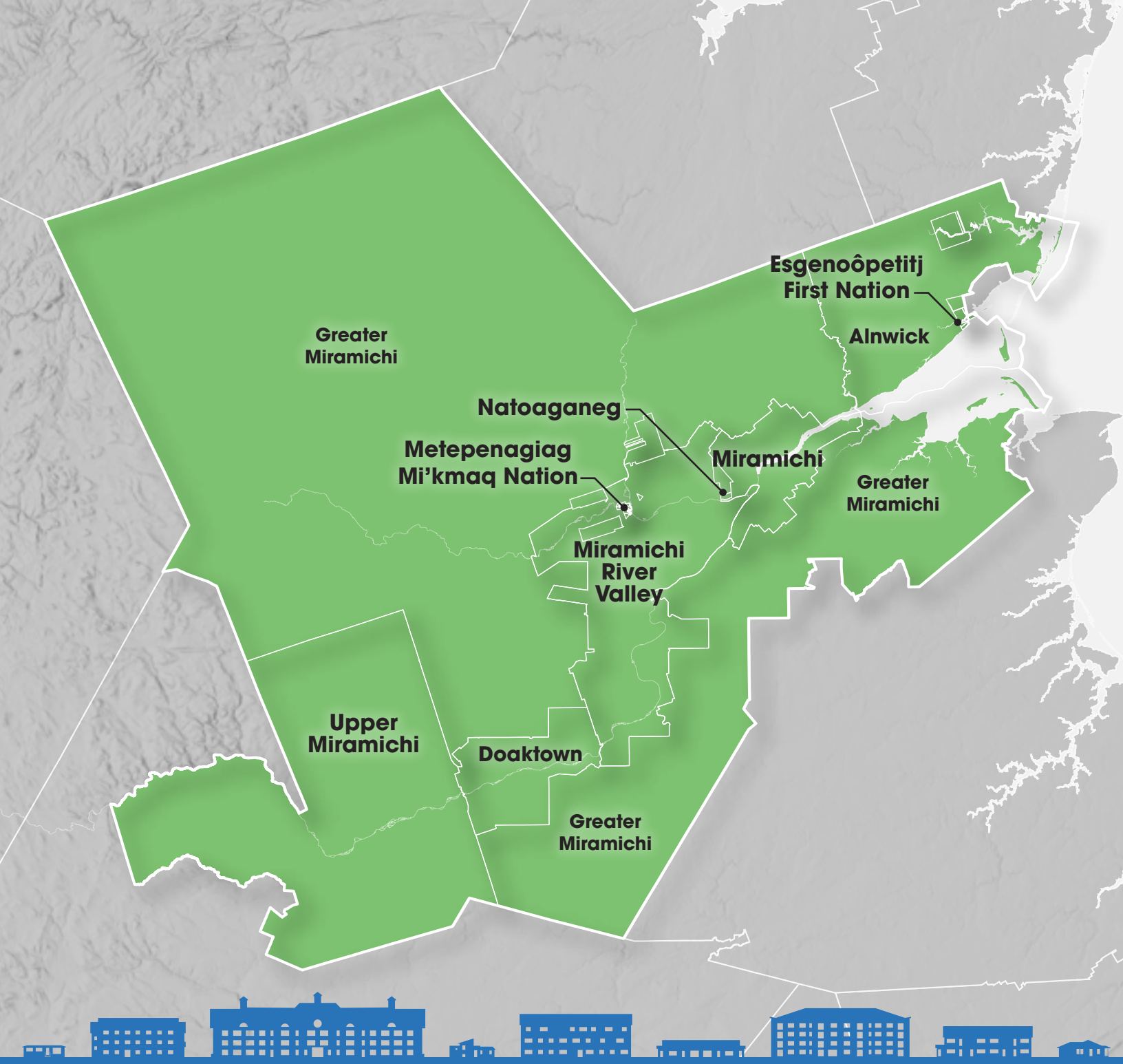

Housing Miramichi
2023-2025 Action Plan

Miramichi Region Housing Strategy Implementation Action Plan

DRAFT
May 2023

PREPARED FOR: GREATER MIRAMICHI REGIONAL SERVICE COMMISSION AND MEMBER COMMUNITIES

PREPARED BY: MIRAMICHI REGIONAL HOUSING AUTHORITY

This Action Plan, titled ***Housing Miramichi***, was initiated by the Miramichi Regional Housing Working Group, which includes the following members:

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Special thanks to Cathy Downton (PETL) for facilitating the Miramichi Regional Housing Working Group's action planning session in November 2022.

The Miramichi Region is in the traditional territory of the Mi'Kmaq / Mi'kmaw. The Mi'Kmaq / Mi'kmaw along with their Indigenous neighbours, the Wəlastəkewiyik / Maliseet and Passamaquoddy / Peskotomuhkati Tribes / Nations, signed Peace and Friendship Treaties with the British Crown in the 1700s that protected their rights to lands and resources.

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In August 2022, the Greater Miramichi Regional Service Commission (GMRSC) entered into a three-year agreement with the City of Miramichi and its funding partners (the Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency (ACOA) and the New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour (PETL)/ WorkingNB to serve as a Regional Housing Authority for the Miramichi Region.

With Local Governance Reform, the GMRSC's mandate is now providing regional leadership in the areas of economic and community development, to which housing is a known catalyst and driver. The GMRSC is also the Region's leading provider of land use planning and building inspection services and as such, the Authority is well-anchored to collaborate with division staff to facilitate the development of all forms of housing in the Region.

The Miramichi Regional Housing Authority (MRHA) is responsible for implementing the recommendations of the Miramichi Region Housing Needs Assessment (2020), objectives of the Miramichi Region Housing Strategy (2021), and the actions contained in this Action Plan, which we've named ***Housing Miramichi***.

THE NEED

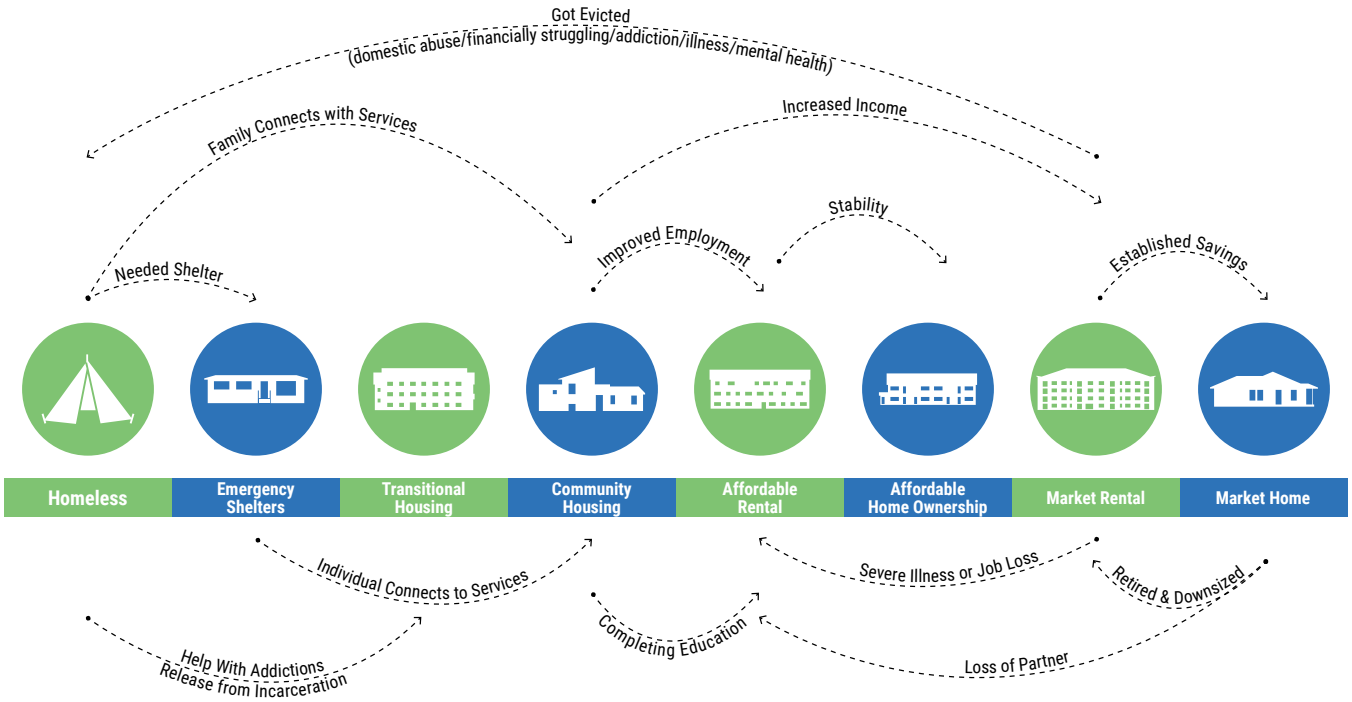
THE NEED

A Housing Continuum

We need a healthy housing stock made up of diverse forms and tenures of housing to meet the varied needs of our Region's population. The "housing continuum" is a useful and commonly referenced tool that provides a way to understand housing need. At its simplest, the housing continuum is the range of housing types available in a community – from homelessness and emergency shelters on one end, all the way to private home ownership on the other. The continuum includes a variety of housing options and types, each necessary for different people in different circumstances.

Let's Break it Down – Our Region's Housing Continuum

and examples of how people move within it



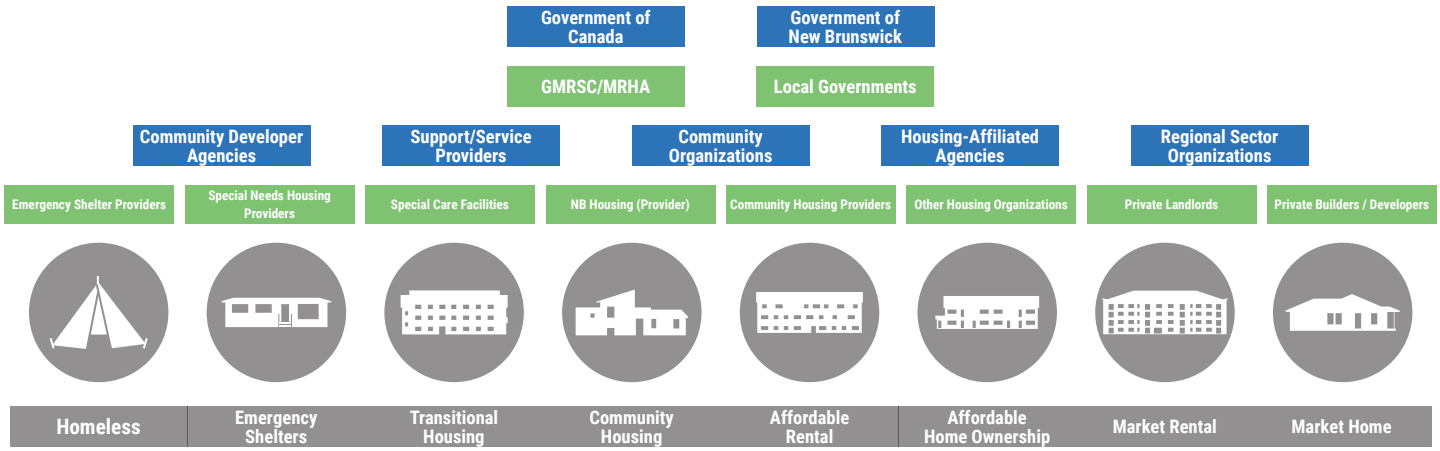
While the housing continuum shows housing types along a straight line, it is not meant to imply that progression along the line is necessary or that the ultimate goal for every person should be private home ownership. Due to a range of social, economic, and geographic factors, the private housing market simply cannot fulfill all of our region's housing needs – there is a need for non-market housing options provided by the public and non-profit sectors – and for most people, there will be a need to move back and forth along the continuum during various stages of life and personal circumstance, as illustrated in the figure above.

A Collaborative Housing System

In order to make ***Housing Miramichi*** both practical and realistic, it is necessary to understand the housing system that regulates and shapes housing activity in the region. Miramichi's regional housing system functions as formal and informal groupings of interconnected interests that collectively provide the various types of housing along the housing continuum. Constituent parts include:

- The GMRSC/MRHA and various levels of government (municipal, provincial, and federal) involved in policy, regulation, funding initiatives, and delivering programs.
- Affiliated agencies and organizations that provide supports, services, or some form of assistance to housing providers or directly to individuals in need.
- Housing providers (private, public, and non-profit), who are the major stakeholders involved in developing and/or owning and operating housing.

The Housing System



Each constituent has an important role to play within the broader system and as such, are necessary partners to address housing needs and help implement this Action Plan.

An Action Plan

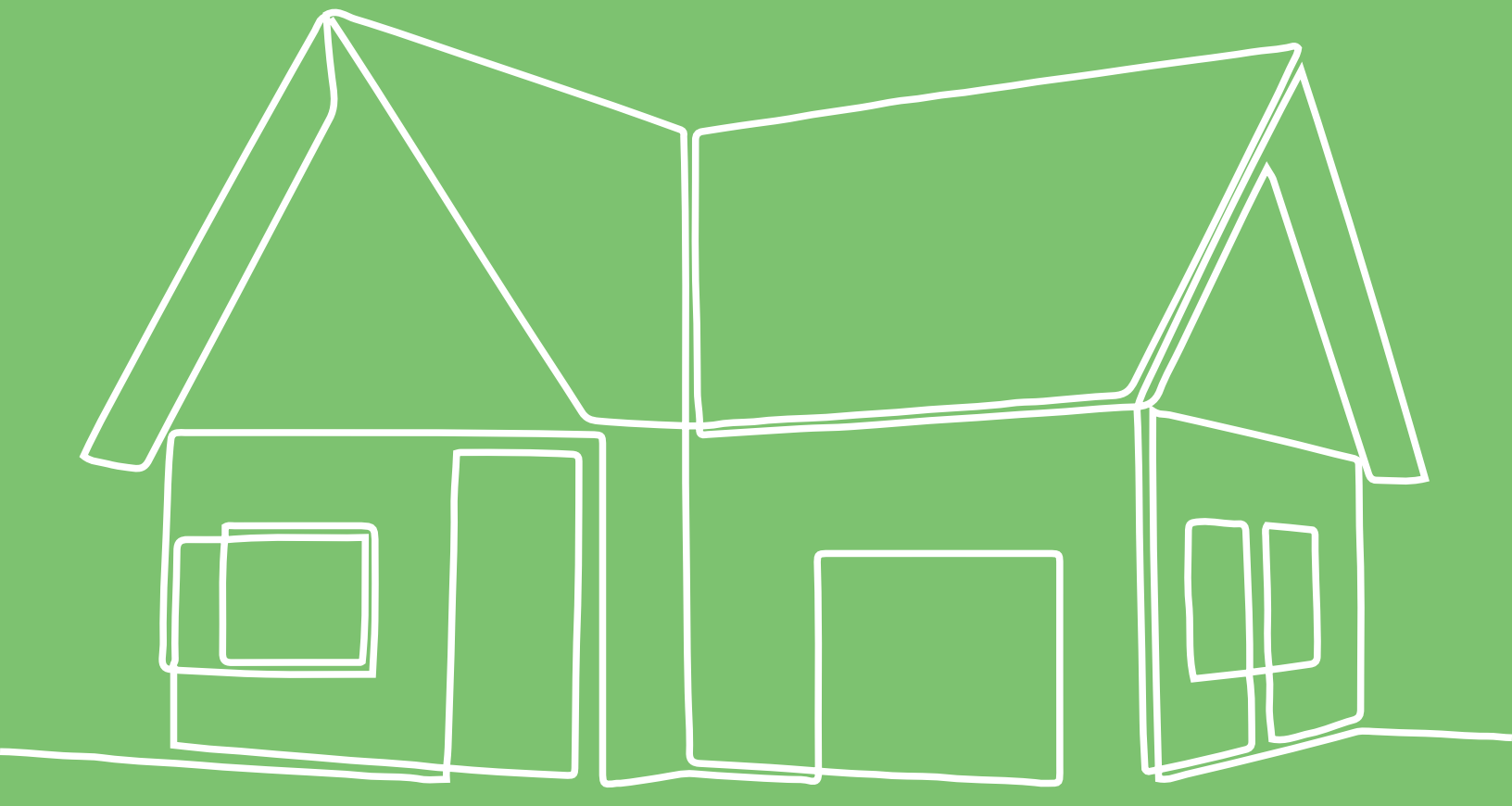
Housing has been identified as a bottleneck for the Region's growth potential and a big issue that threatens to undermine the quality of life for many of its residents. Housing is a complex, cross-jurisdictional issue that spills over the boundaries of our local governments and is best addressed regionally, in part due to individual communities not having all the tools and capacity they need to be successful in addressing needs on their own.

Our action planning cycle began with identifying housing needs, quantifying and confirming them through a needs assessment, defining housing objectives, and then preparing this Action Plan. Our Plan builds on the established foundation of identified housing needs in the Region by translating them into opportunities and solutions. ***Housing Miramichi*** is a comprehensive and targeted 3-year action plan designed to provide a coordinated approach to guide meaningful action in the short, medium, and longer term in response to a suite of priority housing issues. The Action Plan benefits the Miramichi Region by:

- Identifying housing challenges and proposing solutions.
- Establishing priorities for action.
- Providing a timeframe for action and a framework against which to measure results.
- Working together with housing stakeholders to achieve results and address housing needs.

Housing Miramichi was developed in the later months of 2022 by the Manager of the Housing Authority in collaboration with the Regional Housing Working Group (RHWG), a diverse range of representatives from government departments/agencies and other local stakeholders with experience in a variety of housing-related issues, who provided guidance and advice to the MRHA regarding development and content of the Plan and insights and direction regarding actions and implementation of the Plan.

THE CONTEXT



THE CONTEXT

Growing Miramichi

Between 1991 and 2016, our Region had experienced a steady decrease in population. Equally concerning was how much the regional population had aged over this period. But now, there is reason to celebrate. Over the past few years, the Region's historic trend of population loss has reversed to a trend of growth, with record numbers of newcomers arriving each year. The influx of newcomers to the Region is widely attributed to the opening of the Federal Payroll Centre in the City of Miramichi but also due to regional growth in retail, food and hospitality services, seafood processing, peat moss extraction, fertilizer manufacturing, agriculture development (berries and similar crops), back-office administration, and construction occupations. The following points highlight the positive influence that migration has had on our Region's population growth:

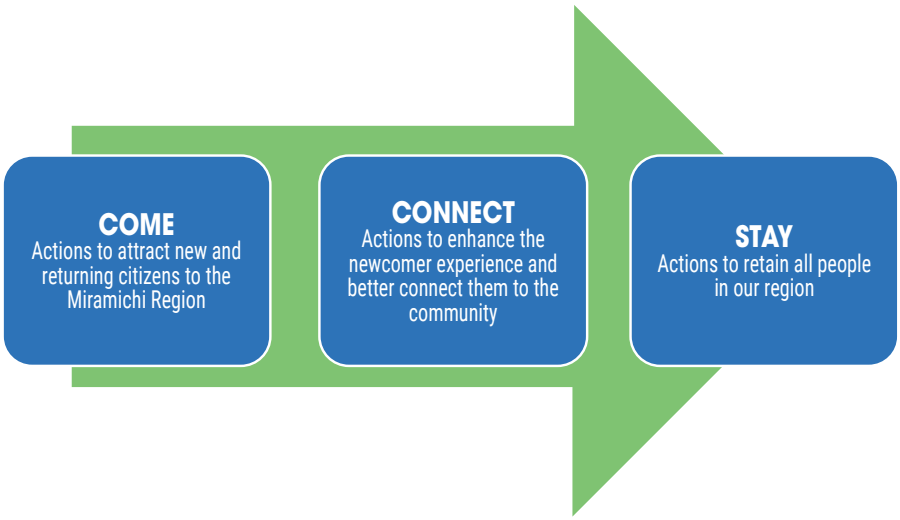
- Historically, the Region had large numbers of residents leaving the region to move to other places in New Brunswick (known as intraprovincial population). The Region still has people relocating, but those numbers are much lower now.
- There was also a historic trend of residents leaving the Region to move to other provinces (interprovincial migration), but we are now seeing the opposite, more non-New Brunswickers coming to live in our Region than those deciding to leave.
- The Region is seeing more immigrants (persons coming to Canada to take up permanent residence) and more non-permanent residents (people here on work or study permits and individuals seeking refugee status) remaining in the population.

The Region is experiencing growing pains as more newcomers and returning residents contribute to our housing challenges. Generally a product of interprovincial migration, the housing market has been bid up, which has increased the cost of buying a home. It has also made it harder for people to leave rental units for home ownership. People moving to the region has also raised demand for apartments generally. The lack of housing and affordable housing in the Miramichi Region is affecting our ability to attract newcomers, grow our population, and to maintain and expand our local businesses and economy. Newcomers are discouraged from selecting the Miramichi Region as their home, and entrepreneurs and businesses are hesitant to invest and bring new workers into the region when attempts to find suitable housing are not successful.

Recognizing that population growth is necessary to sustain our labour market and continue driving the economic development of the region, and to capitalize on the positive population trends being experienced, a three-year action plan for regional population growth was developed in 2019 by the Miramichi Newcomers and Population Partnership (MNPP) and its active members. The purpose of Growing Miramichi was to help the city and region of Miramichi grow its population by putting into place specific actions designed to welcome and retain newcomers, and returning residents, to Miramichi. The action plan focused on three key segments: Come, Connect, and Stay. "Come" focused on key areas such as increasing attraction through available immigration streams and other

national recruitment efforts, working with local cultural communities to promote immigration, targeting and supporting newcomer business relocation to the region, and developing a newcomer housing plan to ensure adequate levels of suitable housing are available to newcomers upon their arrival.

Growing Miramichi - Three Key Segments of Regional Population Growth



Also in 2019, several key partners in the region formed a Labour Force Committee for supporting and growing the local labour force. This committee was comprised of representatives from the Regional Development Corporation (RDC), Opportunities New Brunswick (ONB), ACOA, the City of Miramichi, Social Development (SD), PETL/WorkingNB, the Miramichi Chamber of Commerce, and the Miramichi Regional Multicultural Association (MRMA).

One of the initial things identified as a barrier to growing the local labour force was the availability of housing in the region. To address the housing crisis, the Labour Force Committee formed a housing sub-group (now, the Regional Housing Working Group) to begin collecting data and information and research various policy options that could be used to develop a regional housing strategy, effectively kickstarting the planning cycle to develop this housing action plan for the Region.

The Regional Housing Needs Assessment

As an integral part of the RHWG's study, a Housing Needs Assessment report was developed in 2020 to determine current and future housing needs of the Miramichi Region. The assessment provided a summary of findings and observations based on a detailed review of Census of Canada and Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) time series data, surveys, stakeholder interviews, reports, and ancillary information. Collectively, this information helped to establish a comprehensive picture of housing market conditions in the Miramichi Region.

The assessment identified the top housing needs in the Region to include affordable housing, housing for newcomers, seniors housing, issues related to homelessness, youth and emergency housing, housing for indigenous people, student housing, accommodating individuals with disabilities, and seasonal housing. The

assessment found that there is a lack of private sector investment in the region related to a lack of confidence in the housing market (for reasons related to the cost of construction and concerns of oversupply, market viability, taxes, insurance, and permit costs) and that there is a shortage of certain types of housing like multiple unit dwellings and linked townhomes. The assessment recommended that a Regional Housing Agency be established to address housing needs that include:

- The lack of knowledge of (or resistance to) using government housing programs.
- The relatively large number of small non-profit housing groups, and questions of governance, such as the inability to attract volunteers to Boards of Directors.
- The role of municipal governments, which is to support but not assume full responsibility for housing.

Local governments, as municipal entities, are not legislatively responsible for housing or social services. That said, they do have a responsibility for local land use planning, development approvals, and property standards.

The assessment recommended that the City of Miramichi consider a pilot project and review policies associated with the use of surplus school sites, host a non-profit housing forum focusing on vulnerable populations and a private sector housing forum to address investment barriers, to become a "seniors' hub", and to continue monitoring trends and keep information updated.

The Miramichi Regional Needs Assessment Study contains the following six recommendations to increase the number of affordable and market rental units:

Recommendation 1: Explore Options to Establish a Miramichi Regional Housing Agency

Recommendation 2: City of Miramichi Pilot Project and Use of Surplus Property

Recommendation 3: Host a Housing Forum for Vulnerable Populations

Recommendation 4: Host a Private Sector Housing Forum

Recommendation 5: Continue to Promote Miramichi as a World-class Retirement Destination

Recommendation 6: Monitor Trends and Keep Information Updated

The Regional Housing Needs Assessment study area included Northumberland County, in addition to the entire Rural Community of Upper Miramichi. While the Villages of Blackville, Doaktown, Rogersville, and Neguac and their surrounding rural areas were part of the broader study area, a focus on the City of Miramichi itself and the areas within the Miramichi Census Agglomeration (CA) was emphasized. With the GMRSC serving as the Housing Authority, its service area does not include the following communities originally considered in the Needs Assessment: Rogersville (Village and LSD), Collete (LSD), Neguac (Village), Baie Ste.-Anne (LSD), Escuminac (LSD), and portions of Hardwicke (LSD) - all of which have now assumed new identities under Local Governance Reform.

The Housing Strategy

Following the Needs Assessment, in 2021, the RHWG prepared a Regional Housing Strategy. Through a foundation of partnerships, this objective-based strategy intends to enable the Miramichi Region to provide a good mix of affordable and appropriate housing options to meet the needs of its growing and diverse communities and to support the economic and population growth of the region. Five key principles and thirteen objectives guide the strategy's vision of affordable and suitable housing for all individuals and households in the Region:

Guiding Principles	Objectives
1. Having the right mix to meet local needs The needs of the Miramichi Region will be considered when finding the right mix of housing development and accessibility. The gaps in the housing continuum must be identified and addressed to align with the Miramichi Regional Housing Needs Assessment Study, Growing Miramichi: Regional Population Growth Action Plan, Miramichi Economic Development and Tourism Strategy, and the National Housing Strategy.	1. To ensure the Miramichi region has the right mix of housing to meet our needs. 2. To routinely share housing needs and demands with developers, stakeholders and community members. 3. To find the appropriate mechanisms to encourage the development of a variety of housing options across the housing continuum in our region.
2. Protecting and maintaining what already exists The importance of existing housing stocks within the region should not be overlooked. Policies can be established to ensure appropriate demolition and replacement of existing housing units. Private owners can be linked to programs to address challenges related to property maintenance. The long-term sustainability of existing and new housing inventory will rely on appropriate policies and support.	4. To ensure appropriate policies and programs are in place to protect and extend the useful life of existing housing stocks in the region. 5. To ensure property owners are aware of the policies and programs that are in place to protect and extend the useful life of existing properties. 6. To explore ways to enhance property maintenance and tenancy management practices within the region.

Guiding Principles	Objectives
3. Effectively leveraging all available government supports ● It is important to effectively leverage all available government supports (federal, provincial, municipal, and other regional stakeholders). This may include a mixture of development subsidies, legislative barrier reduction, and application/fees process improvement. The use of incentives and land grants will be encouraged. The Housing Authority will become familiar with available supports to become a knowledgeable support source for regional developers.	7. To collaborate with Municipal, Provincial and Federal departments and agencies to identifying financial resources, land and buildings in the region that could be used to support development projects. 8. To promote government programs, services and resources that are available to encourage housing development within the region.
4. Strong local regional leadership ● The Miramichi Region requires local involvement and leadership to address the housing shortage. It is important to promote the region and educate developers on the opportunities. The establishment of partnerships within the community will encourage teamwork and collaboration between government and community.	9. To establish a widely recognized and self-sustaining housing authority for the region, which has the necessary skills and resources to support housing development. 10. To collaborate with all levels of government, private and community partners to address housing issues, support partner efforts and work collectively to create solutions. 11. To provide access to timely data and information to ensure the right decisions are being made.

Guiding Principles	Objectives
5. Thinking beyond the housing structure ● It is important to remain flexible and adaptive to changes in the community. Housing zones require access to community facilities. Mixed income communities will present diversity of needs an determinants of success. The strategy must remain people and community focused. Affordable housing works best when it provides more than just a place to live. Purposely built communities work to overcome the negative aspects of poverty by providing all stakeholders with a model to integrate high quality mixed income communities that can address several social needs (access to education, recreation, workforce development, security, and other social services) at a neighbourhood level.	12. To promote the need to invest in planning at the neighbourhood level and to identify ways to improve human-made surroundings for better mobility, access to goods, services, open space, recreation, employment and increased housing diversity. 13. To promote sustainably built housing developments that provide benefits that can be passed on to the residents in the form of lower operating costs and higher resale values. To promote the design of healthier, more durable housing, that embraces technology and other building innovations to achieve a smaller environmental footprint.

Regional Housing Market Dynamics

The Miramichi Region is a split urban-rural community with diverse housing needs. In 2023, the population of the Region is around 37,000 with 50% of the population living within the City of Miramichi. From an age profile perspective, the Region (in 2021) had a growing number of empty nesters with 27% of the population at retirement age or older, up from 23% in 2016, and 60% of the population having no children at home. Despite aging and smaller household sizes, much of the existing housing stock in the Region tends to be single detached homes suitable for families (76% in 2021). The split between owner and tenant households in the region is 80/20 with 10% of combined households spending more than 30% of their income on housing (the traditional definition of "affordable").

The widely accepted benchmark in measuring housing affordability is 30% of household before-tax income. The median household income in the Miramichi Region (2021) was $64,000, which suggests 50% of the population is above and 50% is below affordable housing costing $1,600/month.

While housing issues appear regularly in the local and national media and are discussed in living rooms across the region, there is much confusion and oversimplification of what is happening. For some, housing availability and affordability is a sudden and distressing challenge while for others, it is a deepening or familiar struggle that is long-standing. In 2021, 7,345 people, or 16% of the region's population, were considered low income. Our

region had 920 households in core housing need in 2021 (265 within the City of Miramichi), a reduction from 1,435 households recorded in 2016.

Core housing need is a 2-stage indicator. It helps to identify households living in dwellings considered unsuitable, inadequate or unaffordable. It also considers if income levels are such that they could not afford alternative suitable and adequate housing in their community.

When the Housing Needs Assessment was being conducted in 2019, the primary rental vacancy rate for the Miramichi CA was 1.6%. Since 2019, the vacancy rate for rentals in the Miramichi CA had declined to 0.3% in 2021, which was the lowest rate among other all other New Brunswick CAs and the lowest in the Miramichi CA's recorded history, according to figures from CMHC. In 2022, the vacancy rate raised to 2.2%. According to CMHC, a healthy vacancy rate is between 3% and 4%. Our low vacancy rate indicates that demand for rental housing is outpacing supply.

A 0.3% vacancy rate means that in a rental universe of 1000 units, only three are available. A 2.2% rate means that in a rental universe of 1000 units, 22 are available.

In 2022, major media outlets reported, based on CMHC data, that in the City of Miramichi, only three of 1,026 apartments were unoccupied and available to rent in 2021, which was down 41 available in 2020. Housing demand has increased as more people moved to the Region during the pandemic, a trend that data suggests began pre-COVID, with the influx of people raising demand for apartments generally. It also increased the cost of buying a house, making it harder for people to leave rental units for home ownership. Lower vacancy rates translate into higher average rent increases and more demand for apartments. According to CMHC, average rent increases for cities in New Brunswick for an apartment in 2022 were the largest in the Miramichi CA, at over 20% with average rent increasing from $689 to $836.

From rental markets surveys taken in October 2022, the average cost of a two-bedroom apartment in the Miramichi CA has risen to $888 per month, which is 25% higher than the average two years ago. As to be expected, vacancy rates and rent growth go in opposite directions. Escalating rents for existing units occur when supply can't keep up with demand. The rental market in the Miramichi CA is tight compared to other cities, yet housing supply is mostly flat. In the Region, home sales have increased by an average of $100k in ten years, and close to $80k since the needs assessment was undertaken.

Our Region is experiencing less housing availability, at higher costs, with new housing developments being quickly occupied or rented.

Housing is dominated by two sectors in our Region. The largest is the private sector, a for-profit model of housing which owns and manages the majority of existing housing stock and is responsible for most of the housing being developed in the region. The second largest is government-provided social housing. A third option, the community housing sector (i.e., non-profit housing), fills the gap between market and social housing and while there is a

relatively large number of non-profit housing groups in the Region, they are small and generally limited in their capacity to produce new housing.

The private sector has an important role to play, especially as a resource of expertise and experience in housing development, but the reality is that the Miramichi Region's most severe and long-standing housing challenges require non-market solutions.

Despite the somewhat bleak picture painted by the statistics and figures described above, housing development in the Region, across the continuum, has been very active for the last several years. In 2017 and 2018, there were large numbers of new seniors/special care housing units/beds developed (though they were replacing existing beds so had a limited effect on net beds/units) and in recent years, we have seen more housing unit diversity being created with large proportions of mini/mobile homes in 2020, new rowhouse dwellings in 2021, and the substantial number of multi-units under construction in 2022 into 2023. 2023 is anticipated to be a busy building and development season with an estimated 350+ units planned for construction throughout the Region. Gaps in the housing continuum can be filled by hooking onto this engine of development and producing affordable housing as part of broader development activity (for example, by adding affordable rental units to market housing).

Construction takes time and costs money too. It can take years for planning, permitting, site preparation, and design before a housing project may reach fruition. Interestingly, the substantial housing development activity the Region has experienced in recent years has inflated issues related to developer confidence in the local housing market, raising questions about supply and demand dynamics and absorption of units under construction and pending completion, with some developers holding off on their own proposals until seeing the rate of tenant occupancy in new builds.

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THE ACTION PLAN

THE ACTION PLAN

Our Framework

The intent of this Action Plan is set out a roadmap to lead the Region to more inclusive and affordable housing over the long-term, while initiating a set of strategic actions in the short and medium term to improve housing availability and affordability to address ongoing challenges and realize stated housing objectives in the Housing Strategy.

The MRHA's role in this Action Plan does not replace the role of the provincial or federal governments – it is intended to compliment their efforts. Though there is much that the MRHA can do to improve housing outcomes for the Region, it ultimately cannot fully solve these issues given its expertise, fiscal capacity, and jurisdictional constraints. Therefore, an important strategic benefit of this Plan is also to help member local governments take greater advantage of opportunities and supports from higher levels of government as they change their own responses to housing needs.

> "Housing disadvantage is not distributed evenly across the population. Tenants experience a much higher rate of affordability problems and overcrowding than homeowners. Women, persons with disabilities, Indigenous people, racialized communities, immigrants and refugees, youth and older adults face a disproportionate risk of housing insecurity and homelessness. Systemic solutions to poverty depend on ensuring that people can access affordable housing and the appropriate supports to meet their needs."
>
> - National Housing Strategy Discussion Paper: A Human Rights-Based Approach to Housing

Items presented on the following pages propose the actions that will implement the Housing Strategy objectives to improve housing availability and affordability in the Region. Each action item identifies the guiding principle(s) and objectives of the Housing Strategy that it addresses or supports. Specific action items include the services outlined in the MRHA Service Agreement but also additional measures aimed at effectively implementing the Miramichi Regional Housing Strategy.

Action Plan Framework Legend

Housing Strategy Guiding Principles

- Having the right mix to meet local needs.
- Protecting and maintaining what already exists.
- Effectively leveraging all available government supports.
- Strong local regional leadership.
- Thinking beyond the housing structure.

Implementation Timeline

- Laying the Foundation (must do to enable the rest)
- Quick Start Actions
- Short-Term Action (2022/2023)
- Mid-Term Action (2023/2024)
- Long-Term Action (2024/2025)

Action 1

Strengthen and formalize the MRHA by implementing the following measures:

1. Establish a dedicated MRHA Microsoft Teams channel: Create a collaborative online platform where the Working Groups and relevant stakeholders can connect, share information, and collaborate on housing-related initiatives. This channel will serve as a central hub for communication and knowledge sharing.

2. Develop a distinctive brand identity for the MRHA: Create a unique brand for the MRHA to help establish the Authority's presence and build recognition among stakeholders and the community.

3. Build and maintain a MRHA website: Develop an official website for the MRHA that provides comprehensive and up-to-date information about its services, initiatives, and resources. The website should be user-friendly, accessible, and visually appealing, offering a source of information for stakeholders and the public.

4. Evaluate the need for a social media presence: Assess the potential benefits of establishing a social media presence for the MRHA. Consider target audiences, communication objectives, and resources available to determine if social media platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, or LinkedIn can effectively support the Authority's goals in reaching and engaging with stakeholders and the wider community.

5. Regularly communicate with the media: Actively engage with the media to raise awareness about housing issues, highlight opportunities, and advocate for the MRHA's initiatives. Regular media communications, such as press releases, interviews, and feature stories, will help amplify the Authority's voice, promote its work, and increase public recognition and understanding of housing-related matters.

Housing Strategy Guiding Principles

Objectives: 9, 10 & 11

Rationale

- Collaboration plays a crucial role in addressing housing challenges and implementing effective solutions. The creation of a dedicated Microsoft Teams channel will serve as a centralized platform, bringing together the Authority, Working Groups, and other stakeholders. It will facilitate communication, enable the sharing of resources, and foster teamwork and collaboration, ultimately enhancing the efficiency and effectiveness of housing-related initiatives.
- The website will provide a centralized hub for individuals seeking housing support, developers looking for opportunities, and the general public interested in staying informed about the Region's housing landscape.
- The MRHA website, along with social and traditional media channels, presents an opportunity to showcase and recognize successful housing projects, developments, and initiatives in the Region. By highlighting these success stories, the Authority can inspire and demonstrate the positive impact of housing initiatives. This promotion will help raise awareness, generate interest, and encourage further innovation and collaboration in addressing housing challenges in the Miramichi Region.

Required Inputs

Financial resources: To be determined.

Human resources:

Data resources: As needed.

Timeline and Action Milestones

Create a Microsoft Teams channel for MRHA collaboration:
- Set up the MS Teams channel dedicated to housing-related discussions and collaboration.
- Invite relevant stakeholders, including the GMRSC Staff, Working Groups, and other key individuals or organizations involved in housing initiatives.

Consider branding for the MRHA:
- Conduct a branding exercise to develop a distinctive and recognizable brand identity for the MRHA.
- Explore options for a logo, color scheme, and visual elements that align with the Commission's.

Develop and maintain a professional MRHA website:
- Design and develop a user-friendly and Region-specific page for the MRHA on the GMRSC website.
- Ensure the website includes comprehensive information about the Authority, its services, resources, and housing-related initiatives.
- Regularly update and maintain the website to ensure it remains current and relevant.

Assess the need for social media presence:
- Consider the potential benefits and effectiveness of establishing a social media presence for the MRHA.
- Consider the target audience, communication goals, and available resources in making a decision on whether to create and manage social media accounts.

Regular media communication for housing issues and opportunities:
- Consider the development of a media communication strategy to raise awareness about housing issues and opportunities in the Region.
- Establish regular channels of communication with the local media outlet to share relevant news, updates, success stories, and initiatives related to the MRHA and housing in the Miramichi Region.

Who's Involved

Lead: MRHA

Support: GMRSC (Communication Coordinator), GMRSC – Planning Services

Partnerships: City of Miramichi

Desired Outcomes

- Improved access to information: The development and maintenance of a MRHA web page will provide a centralized and Region-specific online portal for housing information. This will ensure that stakeholders and the public have easy access to accurate and up-to-date information about housing programs, resources, and upcoming development projects.
- Enhanced collaboration: The creation of a Microsoft Teams channel and other communication platforms will foster greater collaboration among the MRHA, Working Groups, and stakeholders. This will lead to increased coordination, idea sharing, and collective problem-solving and solutions identification.
- Building trust: Effective communication and transparent dissemination of information will help build trust among stakeholders and the community. By sharing success stories, highlighting available programs and services, and leveraging government supports and resources, the MRHA can demonstrate its commitment to addressing housing needs and facilitating solutions.
- Brand recognition: Through branding efforts, the MRHA can establish a distinct and recognizable identity. This will contribute to increased awareness and recognition of the Authority's role in addressing housing challenges and promoting affordable housing options in the Miramichi Region.
- Establishing communication channels: The establishment of communication channels, such as a newsletter or online platform, will facilitate the dissemination of information about housing needs and upcoming development projects. This will ensure that stakeholders, including the public, are informed and engaged in the MRHA's efforts to address housing challenges.
- Collaborating with local and regional media outlets: By partnering with media outlets, the MRHA can effectively showcase success stories, raise awareness about available programs and services, and leverage government supports and resources. This collaboration will help amplify the message and reach a wider audience, creating greater visibility for the Authority's initiatives and achievements.
- Efficient pooling of resources: By utilizing MS Teams and other tools, the MRHA can effectively pool resources and expertise from various stakeholders. This will enable efficient use of available resources, avoiding duplication of efforts, and maximizing the impact of housing initiatives.

Action 2 is seen as a foundational step in enabling the remainder of the actions – the MRHA needs to quantify current and projected housing needs in order to appropriately respond to them and measure our progress. The action will help us establish target numbers so that each milestone and subsequent action completion can be acknowledged, and celebrated, along the way.

Action 2

Conduct an extensive study on housing supply and forecast to analyze the demand for housing in light of population trends and migration patterns. The primary objective is to gain a precise assessment of the deficit or surplus of housing across different types. This comprehensive study will consider existing housing developments as well as proposed and approved projects within the Region, ensuring a comprehensive understanding of the current and future housing landscape.

Housing Strategy Guiding Principles

Objectives: 1, 2, 9 & 11

Rationale

- This information is currently absent from the Housing Needs Assessment (2020), and it is essential to include it in order to accurately quantify gaps in the housing continuum. By conducting a housing supply and forecast study, we can establish reliable benchmarks for affordability and obtain population projections not only for the Census Agglomeration but also for individual communities and the entire Region. This comprehensive data will enable us to make informed decisions regarding housing planning, resource allocation, and policy development, ensuring that our housing action plan addresses the specific needs and demands of each locality within the Region.

Required Inputs

Financial resources: $35k from DELG, $5k from PETL, and $5-10k from the RSC/MRHA/ACOA

Human resources: Consulting support will be engaged to assist in the implementation of this action. Their expertise and guidance will enhance the effectiveness of the study.

Data resources: The study will draw upon a comprehensive range of data sources, including the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), Statistics Canada, the Canadian Real Estate Association, and GMRSC-Planning Services permit data. These diverse and reliable data sources will provide a robust foundation for conducting the housing supply and forecast study, ensuring accurate and informed analysis.

Timeline and Action Milestones

- Define scope of work.
- Issue RFP, review proposals, and select a provider.
- Collect and analyze data.
- Conduct stakeholder consultations, where necessary.
- Prepare and finalize the report.
- Present findings and recommendations.
- Monitor implementation and evaluate impact.

Who's Involved

Lead: MRHA

Support: RHWG, NB Housing Hub

Partnerships: City of Miramichi

Desired Outcomes

- Benchmark housing supply by type and affordability metrics.
- Forecast housing needs in terms of quantity and specific types.
- Generate data to inform decision-making and strengthen private sector investor confidence.
- Identify gaps in the existing housing supply and develop strategies to address them.
- Identify areas in need of renovation, repair, or preservation, prioritizing maintenance and protection.
- Develop reports and publications to communicate key findings and insights, guiding housing development strategies based on data.

Action 3

Collaborate with housing developers to support and advance diverse housing development proposals in the Region, aligning with the goals and priorities of the Housing Authority. Liaise with proponents to understand their needs and provide necessary support, resources, and assistance to facilitate the successful implementation of their projects. Encourage the construction of affordable housing, rental properties, and single-family homes, considering the identified housing needs. Foster ongoing communication, monitor project progress, and make necessary adjustments to ensure the effective and timely development of housing developments.

Housing Strategy Guiding Principles

Objectives: 1, 2, 3, 5, 7, 8, 11, 12 & 13

Rationale

- There is a significant backlog of proposed housing units in various stages of planning and development, indicating a strong interest and demand for increased housing stock and diversity in the Region.
- Streamlining and facilitating the review and approval processes for housing projects can help overcome challenges, reduce regulatory barriers, and expedite the implementation of proposed projects.
- The action fills a crucial service delivery gap by providing assistance and support to housing project proponents, guiding them through the process of finding suitable properties, understanding available resources, and connecting them with funding opportunities.
- Supporting and encouraging a variety of groups to pursue community housing projects contributes to a more diverse range of housing options, catering to the specific needs and preferences of different segments of the population and housing continuum.
- There is a need to strengthen the capacity of the sector by increasing the number of active groups involved in housing development and supporting the growth and expansion of existing groups.
- By actively engaging with project proponents and providing assistance, the Housing Authority can play a vital role in stimulating housing construction, addressing the shortage of affordable and diverse housing options, and meeting the housing needs of the community.

Required Inputs

Financial resources:

Human resources: .

Data resources: Project inventory; contractor/service provider database; property assessment information; zoning and land use information.

Timeline and Action Milestones

- This action has been prioritized and is ongoing.

Who's Involved

Lead: MRHA

Support: GMRSC – Planning Services

Partnerships: CMHC, NB Social Development, NB Non-Profit Housing Association, NB Housing Hub, Miramichi Housing Solutions Inc., other local non-profit entities, private developers, City of Miramichi, and others.

Desired Outcomes

- Facilitate an efficient development process and accelerate the creation of housing units in the Region, addressing the pressing need for increased housing supply.
- Promote the integration of affordable housing within proposed developments, ensuring that a range of housing options is available to different income levels.
- Identify and address obstacles that hinder housing development and investor confidence, providing valuable input for planning initiatives such as private sector housing forums.
- Advocate for the inclusion of affordable housing units in new developments through strategies like downtown intensification, fostering sustainable development and meeting the long-term housing needs of the Region.
- Assist housing providers in saving time and resources by facilitating the identification and assessment of potential locations for housing developments, streamlining the site selection process.
- Support community housing organizations by offering resources, guidance documents, and practical steps tailored to the Miramichi context, enabling them to establish and operate various types of community housing, such as cooperatives and non-profits.
- Expand the non-profit housing sector's presence and impact in the housing inventory, increasing the availability and diversity of housing options in the Region.
- Revitalize non-profit groups and explore the feasibility of a regional model for holding and managing non-profit housing assets, enhancing the sustainability and effectiveness of non-profit housing initiatives.

Action 4

Manage and promote regional/provincial/national housing incentives and referral services.

Housing Strategy Guiding Principles

Objectives: 1, 2, 7, 8 & 10

Rationale

- Many individuals and housing developers may not be aware of the various housing incentives and referral services offered by regional, provincial, and federal entities. This lack of knowledge can hinder their ability to access and utilize these programs effectively. By managing and promoting these incentives and referral services, the MRHA can bridge this information gap and educate stakeholders about the available options.
- Housing application programs often involve complex processes and requirements, which can be challenging for individuals and developers to navigate. The MRHA recognizes the need to support housing developers in matching them with suitable programs on an ad hoc basis. By managing and promoting these programs, the MRHA can act as a resource and facilitate the connection between developers and the appropriate housing incentives and referral services.
- While housing forums provide a valuable platform for sharing information with a wide audience, there is a need for ongoing support and assistance in connecting housing developers with relevant programs. The MRHA has already been undertaking this activity and will continue to facilitate these connections and ensure that developers have access to the necessary resources and support.
- By managing and promoting housing incentives and referral services, the MRHA aims to maximize the utilization of these resources. This includes encouraging housing developers to take advantage of the financial assistance, grants, and programs offered at different levels of government. By promoting awareness and facilitating the application process, the MRHA can help ensure that these resources are effectively utilized to address housing needs and promote housing development in the Region.
- This action encourages coordination among different levels of government, housing developers, and the MRHA to streamline the process and create a more cohesive and supportive environment. By fostering collaboration, the MRHA can enhance the effectiveness and impact of these incentives and referral services, benefiting both developers and the communities where they build.

Required Inputs

Financial resources:

Human resources: .

Data resources: Inventory of housing programs; MRHA website page to host program inventory and information.

Timeline and Action Milestones

- Ongoing referrals and fund "matchmaking": Establish a systematic and ongoing process to refer housing developers and individuals to suitable housing incentives and funding opportunities. Continuously stay updated on available programs and resources to ensure accurate and timely referrals.
- Publication of program inventory online: Create a comprehensive and user-friendly inventory of regional, provincial, and federal housing programs and incentives. Publish this inventory on the MRHA's website or potentially utilize the City of Miramichi's housing incentives page as a platform for dissemination. The online inventory will serve as a resource for housing developers and individuals seeking information on available programs, making it easily accessible and providing transparency.
- Establish an efficient process to gather and update information on housing incentives and referral services. This includes maintaining relationships with relevant government entities, monitoring program changes, and promptly disseminating updated information to developers and individuals. The goal is to ensure accurate and up-to-date information is readily available, enabling the MRHA to provide the most suitable options to meet the specific needs and requirements of housing developers.
- Implement a feedback mechanism to gather input from housing developers and individuals who have utilized the referral services. This feedback loop will enable the MRHA to assess the effectiveness and impact of the referrals, identify areas for improvement, and make necessary adjustments to enhance the matchmaking process. By actively seeking feedback, the MRHA can continuously improve its services and ensure that the referral process is meeting the needs of the stakeholders it serves.

Who's Involved

Lead: MRHA

Support:

Partnerships: NB Social Development, CMHC, Community Housing Transformation Centre (CHTC), City of Miramichi, and others as determined.

Desired Outcomes

- Enhance the accessibility and availability of information regarding regional, provincial, and federal housing programs and incentives. This outcome aims to provide a user-friendly platform or resource that consolidates relevant information, making it easier for housing developers and individuals to find and access the programs that align with their needs and goals.
- Quicker identification of applicable programs. This outcome seeks to minimize the time and effort required for housing developers and individuals to determine which programs are applicable to their specific projects or housing needs. By improving efficiency in program identification, stakeholders can expedite their access to available supports.
- Facilitate a higher rate of successful matches between housing developers and applicable housing programs. This outcome aims to improve the accuracy and effectiveness of referral services, ensuring that developers are connected with the most suitable programs that meet their requirements. By increasing the rate of successful matches, more developers can access the financial resources and incentives needed to advance their housing projects.
- Advocate for an increased allocation of program funding and resources for the Miramichi Region. This outcome aims to secure a larger share of available funding and resources to address the unique housing needs and priorities of the Region. By obtaining a higher funding allocation, the MRHA can better support local housing initiatives and facilitate the overall growth and development of the housing sector in the Miramichi Region.

Action 5

Support GMRSC Member Communities in facilitating housing and affordable housing development through the establishment of municipal housing working groups. The working groups will undertake the following work to explore options and make recommendations on actions and measures to facilitate housing and affordable housing development:

1. Conduct scans of jurisdictions with successful housing and affordable housing development models. This research will provide insights into innovative approaches, best practices, and successful strategies employed by other communities, which can inform and inspire the development of similar initiatives within the local government.

2. Evaluate existing land use planning tools, zoning options, and fee structures within the local government. This review will assess their effectiveness in promoting housing development and identify opportunities for improvement or adjustment. It will also include developing clear and concise communication strategies to promote these opportunities to relevant stakeholders, such as developers, community organizations, and the general public.

3. Investigate and assess options for additional incentives or adjustments to existing housing programs. This exploration aims to identify potential enhancements that can further incentivize and support housing and affordable housing development. The focus will be on identifying strategies that align with local needs and maximize the impact of available resources.

4. Evaluate the existing land disposal and acquisition policies to determine their effectiveness in facilitating affordable housing development. This review will include identifying potential policy adjustments that can streamline the process, increase the availability of land for affordable housing projects, and promote partnerships between public and private sectors.

5. Actively engage with private housing developers and housing non-profit organizations to understand their perspectives, gather insights, and consider housing proposals. This engagement will foster collaboration, encourage the sharing of ideas and experiences, and ensure that the recommendations and actions proposed by the working groups align with the needs and priorities of key stakeholders.

By undertaking these actions, the working groups will provide guidance, recommendations, and support to the respective councils in their efforts to facilitate housing and affordable housing development. The comprehensive review, research, and engagement activities will enable the identification of effective strategies, best practices, and innovative approaches to address housing challenges and promote sustainable housing solutions within communities.

Housing Strategy Guiding Principles

Objectives: 1, 3, 4, 5, 7 & 10

Rationale

- The shortage of available and affordable housing units in the Region has reached a point where it is negatively impacting various population groups, including students, seniors, newcomers, temporary foreign workers, and single parent families. This housing crisis not only affects the well-being and stability of individuals and families but also hinders the local economy and overall community development.
- The action items aligns with the traditional role of municipal government in addressing housing issues. These actions involve leveraging land use planning, zoning regulations, and the administration of building permits to create an environment conducive to housing development and affordability.
- Despite recent changes to land use rules to accommodate a broader range of housing options in some communities, there has been limited promotion of these opportunities. It is necessary to raise awareness and actively communicate these changes to developers, community organizations, and the general public. Effective promotion of these opportunities can encourage increased housing development and support the goal of expanding affordable housing options.
- The support and engagement of member communities are essential to demonstrate the value and effectiveness of the MRHA services. Building strong support among member communities is needed to secure long-term funding for the MRHA, as these communities will be the contributors based on population and tax base. Demonstrating the positive impact of MRHA services and highlighting the importance of regional collaboration will foster a sense of shared responsibility and ensure the long-term sustainability of the MRHA.

Required Inputs

Financial resources: Explore opportunities to secure contributions from member communities that are not currently contributing to the MRHA service. Engage in discussions and negotiations to encourage their participation and financial support. By broadening the base of financial contributors, the MRHA will have increased resources to address the housing challenges in the Region effectively.

Human resources: Consider the need for a dedicated housing coordinator role within the MRHA.

Data resources: Best practice reviews/jurisdictional scans.

Timeline and Action Milestones

- Form dedicated working groups consisting of representatives from the GMRSC and member communities responsible for facilitating housing and affordable housing development. Define the roles and responsibilities of the working group members and establish clear communication channels. Execute the mandate and monitor and evaluate progress.

Who's Involved

Lead: GMRSC Member Communities

Support: MRHA, GMRSC – Planning Services

Partnerships:

Desired Outcomes

- Advocate for zoning and land use policies that support the development of different types of housing, aligned with the local needs.
- Remove regulatory barriers to housing development.
- Streamline development approval processes.
- Offset development costs/reduce uncertainty, where identified.
- Identify surplus municipal land or buildings that could be repurposed for affordable housing or other housing initiatives, while considering the local need.
- Dispose of surplus land for affordable housing development through expressions of interest and request for development proposals.

Action 6

Annually host a forum targeting private sector housing developers.

Housing Strategy Guiding Principles

Objectives: 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12 & 12

Rationale

- The forum provides a platform to address key concerns faced by private sector housing developers, such as investor confidence, access to financing, and navigating housing programs. By addressing these issues, the forum aims to create a supportive environment that encourages further housing developments.
- Some developers have expressed a willingness to collaborate with support organizations in the community. The forum can facilitate the connection between developers and these organizations, fostering partnerships and leveraging collective expertise to overcome challenges in the housing sector.
- The private sector session within the forum will focus on providing interested developers with essential information. This includes housing vacancy data, funding opportunities, available provincial and federal support programs, and any other relevant information identified by MRHA. By equipping developers with this knowledge, the forum aims to empower them to make informed decisions and take advantage of available resources.
- The Regional Resiliency Committee has identified a need to educate landlords about the rights of tenants, including addressing discriminatory practices. The forum can serve as a platform to disseminate information and raise awareness among private sector housing developers, promoting fair and inclusive practices in the rental market.

Required Inputs

Financial resources: Event planning expenses (TBD).

Human resources: Forum Planning Sub-Committee

Data resources: Private sector housing developer stakeholder inventory (under development); employer survey (from WorkingNB).

Timeline and Action Milestones

- Before the main forum, organize a preliminary event to engage with stakeholders, including private sector housing developers, and gather their input on key topics, challenges, and expectations for the forum. This feedback will inform the planning and content of the November forum.
- Propose to hold a three-day forum during National Housing Week (November 20-24, 2023) for Actions 6 – 8: Choose National Housing Week as the optimal timeframe for the forum to maximize visibility and participation. However, ensure to consider potential competing or conflicting housing-related events at the provincial and national levels to avoid overlapping schedules.

- Establish a Forum Planning Sub-Committee to support implementation: Form a dedicated sub-committee composed of representatives from MRHA, GMRSC, City of Miramichi, and other relevant stakeholders. This sub-committee will be responsible for overseeing the planning, coordination, and execution of the forum. Assign specific roles and responsibilities to sub-committee members and establish regular communication channels to ensure effective collaboration.
- Develop a comprehensive event plan: The sub-committee will work together to develop a detailed event plan, including setting objectives, determining session formats, securing speakers and panelists, and identifying relevant topics to be addressed during the forum. The plan should outline the logistics, budget, marketing strategies, and any additional activities or initiatives that will enhance the overall experience and outcomes of the forum.
- Promote and invite participation: Implement a targeted marketing and outreach campaign to raise awareness about the forum and encourage participation from private sector housing developers. Utilize various channels, such as social media, email newsletters, industry associations, and partnerships, to reach the target audience. Develop a registration process to manage attendee registrations, track participation, and gather necessary information for effective event management.
- Execute the forum: Host the three-day forum as planned, ensuring a well-structured agenda with a mix of panel discussions, presentations, interactive sessions, and networking opportunities. Facilitate engaging and productive conversations between public and private sector stakeholders, encouraging knowledge sharing, collaboration, and the exploration of partnership opportunities. Provide necessary resources, technology, and support services to ensure smooth execution of the forum.
- Following the forum, conduct an evaluation to assess the effectiveness of the event and gather feedback from participants. Utilize surveys, feedback forms, and qualitative assessments to gather insights on the relevance, quality, and impact of the forum. Analyze the feedback received to identify strengths, areas for improvement, and recommendations for future iterations of the forum.

Who's Involved

Lead: GMRSC Member Communities

Support: RHWG, Municipal Housing Working Groups, Forum Planning Sub-Committee, GMRSC-PS

Partnerships: HHNB, CMHC, WorkingNB, NB Social Development, developers, Miramichi Multicultural Association, NB Coalition for Tenants Rights, City of Miramichi, RDC, ONB, Canadian Home Builders' Association New Brunswick, and others to be determined.

Desired Outcomes

- Address the role of the Developers Assistance Committee (per Needs Assessment recommendation).
- Gather input from developers, stakeholders, and community members regarding housing needs and demands: Create an inclusive environment within the forum that encourages open dialogue and information sharing. This outcome aims to capture diverse perspectives and gather valuable insights into the housing needs and demands of the community.
- Create opportunities for private sector housing developers to connect and explore potential partnerships with community-based support organizations. This outcome aims to encourage collaboration between developers and organizations such as non-profits, development corporations, or social enterprises. By forging partnerships, developers can tap into existing resources, expertise, and networks to enhance the social impact and sustainability of their housing projects.
- Gather input from developers on their requirements and challenges: Facilitate interactive sessions and discussions during the forum to actively engage private sector housing developers. This outcome aims to gather valuable input directly from developers, to better understand their requirements, challenges, and perspectives. The insights gained will inform future initiatives and policies to better support developers in meeting housing demands.
- Address available financing and navigation of housing programs: Devote specific sessions or panels to address financing opportunities and the navigation of housing programs. By focusing on this outcome, the forum aims to provide developers with a comprehensive understanding of available financial resources, grant programs, tax incentives, and other mechanisms to support their housing projects. It also aims to provide guidance on the application process and compliance requirements associated with these programs.

Action 7

Annually host a forum targeting vulnerable population sector housing developers

Housing Strategy Guiding Principles

Objectives: 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12 & 12

Rationale

- The forum provides an opportunity to discuss and address the specific challenges faced by non-profit housing providers who cater to vulnerable populations. The forum can highlight the need for increased federal and provincial support to address issues such as funding, regulatory barriers, and capacity building for non-profit housing providers.
- Inclusive housing is a crucial aspect of promoting social equity and addressing the diverse needs of vulnerable populations. The forum can emphasize the importance of inclusive housing and facilitate discussions on how to improve accessibility, affordability, and suitable housing options for groups such as seniors, individuals with disabilities, low-income families, and marginalized communities.
- The forum can provide valuable insights and guidance on how to navigate existing federal and provincial programs that support vulnerable population sector housing development. It can also focus on capacity building measures, such as training programs, knowledge sharing, and best practices, to enhance the capabilities of housing developers in effectively serving vulnerable populations. This outcome aims to foster collaboration and improve the overall effectiveness of programs and initiatives targeting vulnerable population sector housing.

Required Inputs

Financial resources: Event planning expenses (TBD).

Human resources: Forum Planning Sub-Committee

Data resources:

Timeline and Action Milestones

- Propose to hold a three-day forum during National Housing Week (November 20-24, 2023) for Actions 6 – 8: Choose National Housing Week as the optimal timeframe for the forum to maximize visibility and participation. However, ensure to consider potential competing or conflicting housing-related events at the provincial and national levels to avoid overlapping schedules.
- Establish a Forum Planning Sub-Committee to support implementation

- Establish a Forum Planning Sub-Committee to support implementation, including identifying potential partners and participants, defining the forum's agenda and format, and developing materials and resources.
- Consider creating a standing meeting for regular discussions and sharing of information among housing providers and support organizations.
- Conduct engagement activities, such as surveys or focus groups, to gather input and feedback from non-profit housing providers and vulnerable populations before the forum. This could help ensure that the forum is tailored to their needs and concerns.

Who's Involved

Lead: MRHA

Support: RHWG, Forum Planning Sub-Committee, GMRSC-PS

Partnerships: NBNPHA, HHNB, CMHC, NB Social Development, Miramichi Housing Solutions, North Shore Mi'kmaq District Council, Miramichi Emergency Centre for Women, M.O.R.E, Services, L'Arche Canada, Horizon Health Network, GMRSC – Community Development, and others to be determined.

Desired Outcomes

- Provide guidance and support to non-profit organizations in understanding and accessing existing housing programs. This outcome aims to facilitate their participation in available programs, ensuring they have the necessary resources and knowledge to navigate the application process and meet the requirements for funding and support.
- Explore and identify opportunities for collaboration and leveraging existing non-profit organizations and housing programs. This outcome aims to maximize the impact and effectiveness of these initiatives by identifying synergies, sharing best practices, and promoting coordination among non-profit organizations and housing programs.
- Confirm which housing projects should be mobilized and discuss proposal approaches: Engage stakeholders in discussions to determine the feasibility and priority of housing projects targeting vulnerable populations. This outcome aims to identify specific housing projects that align with the needs of vulnerable populations, discuss potential approaches for implementation, and assess the required resources and support to move these projects forward.
- Collaborate with local organizations to facilitate community forums and discussions on housing-related topics. This outcome aims to engage community members, local leaders, and stakeholders in conversations about housing challenges, solutions, and opportunities specific to the Region.
- Encourage collaboration between housing organizations, non-profits, and stakeholders to explore innovative housing models that go beyond traditional structures. This outcome aims to foster creativity and new ideas in addressing housing needs, considering alternative models such as co-housing or cooperative housing. The forum can serve as a platform for sharing experiences, success stories, and lessons learned related to these innovative approaches.

Action 8

Annually host a forum targeting retirement housing sector developers.

Housing Strategy Guiding Principles

Objectives: 2, 3, 5, 8, 9, 10, 12 & 12

Rationale

- The forum aims to create a platform for open dialogue and information sharing among developers, seniors housing providers, and seniors care organizations. It provides an avenue to discuss pertinent topics such as housing design, affordability, accessibility, community support services, and innovative models of retirement housing. This outcome fosters collaboration and knowledge exchange to drive improvements and advancements in the retirement housing sector.
- The successful implementation of this action requires strong leadership from various stakeholders, including the MRHA and partner organizations.

Required Inputs

Financial resources: Event planning expenses (TBD).

Human resources: Forum Planning Sub-Committee

Data resources:

Timeline and Action Milestones

- Propose to hold a three-day forum during National Housing Week (November 20-24, 2023) for Actions 6 – 8. Take into consideration the potential for competing or conflicting housing-related events to ensure maximum participation and engagement. By scheduling the forum during National Housing Week, it can benefit from the increased visibility and focus on housing-related issues during this time.
- The sub-committee should consist of representatives from key stakeholders, including developers, seniors housing providers, seniors care organizations, local authorities, and relevant community organizations. The sub-committee will play a vital role in coordinating logistics, developing the forum agenda, securing speakers and participants, and ensuring the overall success of the event.

Who's Involved

Lead: MRHA

Support: RHWG, Forum Planning Sub-Committee, GMRSC-PS

Partnerships: Seniors housing providers, non-profit housing associations, private developers, health organizations, Alzheimer's Society, NBNPHA, Horizon Health Network, and others to be determined.

Desired Outcomes

- Promote initiatives and activities that enhance Miramichi's reputation as a vibrant and supportive community for seniors. This outcome aims to attract investment, improve senior-focused services and amenities, and position Miramichi as an attractive destination for retirees.
- Explore strategies and interventions to bridge the gap between independent living and long-term care options for seniors. This outcome aims to provide a continuum of care and support that meets the evolving needs of seniors in Miramichi.
- Foster collaborations with local organizations, community groups, and stakeholders to create a network of support for seniors. This outcome aims to leverage the expertise, resources, and knowledge of various community-based entities to enhance the well-being and quality of life for seniors in Miramichi.
- Raise awareness and disseminate information about existing support programs and services for seniors. This outcome aims to ensure that seniors and their families have access to comprehensive information regarding available resources, enabling them to make informed decisions and access the support they need.
- Consider designation as an age-friendly community under New Brunswick's Age-Friendly Recognition Program (per Needs Assessment recommendation). This outcome aims to align Miramichi's efforts with the age-friendly principles and access potential resources, recognition, and support available through the program.

Action 9

Maintain an inventory of available rental units (website or digital).

Housing Strategy Guiding Principles

Objective 2

Rationale

- The availability of a comprehensive rental unit inventory can bridge the gap between tenants searching for housing and landlords with available rental units. This rationale recognizes the importance of providing a centralized platform or resource that facilitates the connection between tenants and landlords, promoting a more efficient and streamlined rental process.
- Rental inventory is proposed to serve as a contact directory as opposed to a "live listing" of available rental units: The purpose of the rental unit inventory is to serve as a reliable contact directory that provides tenants with essential information to connect with landlords. While the inventory may not display real-time availability, it serves as a valuable resource by offering contact details and essential information about landlords and rental properties.
- Proposed that rental unit inventory be supplemented with non-market inventory, available government properties, vacant multi-unit zoned properties, amenities (transit, grocery, health, etc.), and other mapped housing assets; could also highlight examples of successful housing projects in the Region.
- Note: To make effective use of an inventory, available rental unit data should be "live" and not static: It is important to ensure that the rental unit inventory provides accurate and up-to-date information to tenants and landlords. By maintaining "live" data, the inventory can reflect the current availability and status of rental units, enabling tenants to access the most current information and landlords to showcase their available properties more effectively.

Required Inputs

Financial resources:

Human resources: Support needed to develop and maintain "live listing"; HR input may result in increased need for financial resources.

Data resources: ArcGIS Pro / Online, GeoNB data catalog, website page to host interactive online map.

Timeline and Action Milestones

- Conduct comprehensive data collection and validation: Establish a systematic process to collect and validate rental unit information, including market rental units, non-market inventory, available government properties, vacant multi-unit zoned properties, and other mapped housing assets. This step ensures the accuracy and reliability of the rental unit inventory.
- Develop a user-friendly web mapping application for publication of the inventory: Create an accessible and user-friendly portal to publish the rental unit inventory. The platform will provide easy search functionalities, relevant filters, and comprehensive information about each rental unit. This will enhance the usability of the inventory for tenants seeking rental opportunities.
- The RHWG recognizes that while the maintenance of an inventory is valuable, it is not an immediate priority and requires additional time and resources to implement effectively. Therefore, the timeframe of this action is long-term, allowing for thorough planning, resource allocation, and coordination with other housing initiatives.

Who's Involved

Lead: MRHA

Support: Regional and City Working Group; all levels of government (to identify properties and buildings suitable to develop or convert to housing stock).

Partnerships: NBNPHA (undertaking an asset mapping exercise of rural centres, which includes City of Miramichi); all levels of governments to consider opportunities to reposition owned land for housing development.

Desired Outcomes

- Improve the ability of households to find available rental units by promoting the existing rental inventory through various channels. This outcome aims to facilitate the housing search process and increase the likelihood of successful matches between tenants and rental units.
- Develop an interactive mapping portal that provides comprehensive housing information, including rental units, affordable housing options, non-market housing opportunities, and other relevant housing-related data. This outcome aims to create a user-friendly platform that enables users to explore and access housing information effectively.
- Expand the rental information platform to include non-market housing opportunities such as subsidized housing, social housing, and other affordable housing programs. By incorporating a range of housing options, this outcome aims to cater to the diverse needs of individuals and households seeking affordable housing.
- Identify and assess underutilized or vacant land within the region that has the potential for new housing development. This outcome aims to optimize land use by repurposing suitable areas for housing development, thereby increasing the supply of housing units and addressing housing demand.

Action 10

Provide the RSC Board, Member Communities, and funding partners with an annual regional housing report that encompasses the following key components:

1. Summary of Housing Sessions: a comprehensive summary of housing sessions conducted throughout the year, highlighting key discussions, initiatives, and outcomes. This summary will provide an overview of the progress made in addressing housing challenges, identifying emerging trends, and capturing valuable insights from stakeholders.

2. Updated Inventory of Available Housing Units: Maintain and regularly update an inventory of housing units available in the Region, including rental units, affordable housing options, and housing for vulnerable populations and retirement. This inventory will serve as a valuable resource for individuals and families seeking housing, as well as for policymakers, developers, and service providers involved in housing initiatives.

3. Details on New Housing Developments by Sector: Gather and present information on new housing developments in the Region, categorizing them into sectors such as private, affordable, vulnerable populations, and retirement housing.

4. Estimation of New Housing Developments for the Proceeding Year: Utilize building permits, housing inquiries, and other relevant data sources to estimate the number and types of new housing developments expected in the Region for the upcoming year. This estimation will help in forecasting housing supply, identifying potential gaps, and informing policy and resource allocation decisions.

Housing Strategy Guiding Principles

Objectives: 2 & 11

Rationale

- By incorporating data a the report, we can effectively track the progress made in addressing housing challenges and evaluating the effectiveness of housing initiatives. Data allows us to monitor key indicators, assess outcomes, and make data-driven decisions to improve housing outcomes in the Region.
- In addition to the outlined components, the report should include additional relevant variables to provide a comprehensive understanding of the housing landscape. Variables such as primary rental market conditions, population and migration patterns, household counts, housing stock, and core housing need should be considered. This information will provide a more holistic view of the housing situation, allowing for targeted interventions and tailored strategies to address specific housing issues.
- The annual regional housing report creates a feedback loop that supports continuous improvement in housing initiatives. By tracking progress and analyzing data, the MRHA and stakeholders can identify areas that require

attention, measure the impact of interventions, and refine strategies accordingly. This iterative process allows for ongoing refinement and optimization of housing actions better serve the community's housing needs.

Required Inputs

Financial resources: To be determined.

Human resources:

Data resources: Statistics Canada, Statistical Information Service; requires changes to GMRSC Permit Database to improve data collection and reporting (initiated).

Timeline and Action Milestones

- Report will be due annually starting October 2023 (per Service Delivery Agreement).

Who's Involved

Lead: MRHA

Support: RHWG

Partnerships:

Desired Outcomes

- The annual regional housing report serves as a crucial tool for informing future action planning and implementation. It provides valuable insights and data that can guide decision-making processes, identify areas for improvement, and inform the development of strategic initiatives to address ongoing housing needs in the Region.
- The report will aim to deliver precise and accurate housing profiles for both local governments and the broader Region. These profiles will provide a comprehensive overview of the housing landscape, including key information on housing supply, demand, affordability, and specific housing challenges faced by different sectors of the population. Such profiles enable stakeholders to gain a deeper understanding of the housing dynamics and make well-informed decisions to support targeted interventions.
- The annual regional housing report aims to provide a comprehensive report to funding partners (City, ACOA, PETL/WorkingNB). This report outlines the progress, achievements, and challenges related to housing initiatives, ensuring transparency and accountability in the use of funding resources. It helps foster strong relationships with funding partners, providing them with the necessary information to assess the impact of their investments and make informed decisions about future funding opportunities.
- The desired outcome includes establishing a systems for collecting and analyzing data related to housing needs, demands, and trends. The system must ensure that timely and accurate information is available to support evidence-based decision-making. By collecting and analyzing data, we can better understand housing dynamics, identify emerging trends, and proactively respond to changing needs and demands in the housing market.
- The annual regional housing report aims to document and highlight successful housing initiatives and achievements. By showcasing these successes, we can recognize and celebrate the progress made in addressing housing challenges, fostering a sense of accomplishment and motivation for further action.

Action 11

Enhance partnerships with community groups to promote holistic approaches to housing (Guiding Principle 5).

Housing Strategy Guiding Principles

Objectives: 12 & 13

Rationale

- Flexibility and adaptability are necessary to address the housing needs of the Region. Housing initiatives should go beyond mere buildings and prioritize access to community facilities and amenities.
- "Purposefully built" communities play a pivotal role in mitigating the negative impacts of poverty by creating integrated, high-quality mixed-income neighborhoods. These communities provide a model that addresses various social needs at a neighborhood level, including access to education, recreation, workforce development, security, and other essential social services. By emphasizing a comprehensive approach, the MRHA can ensure that housing solutions are embedded within a broader framework that promotes social well-being, empowerment, and community cohesion.

Required Inputs

Financial resources:

Human resources:

Data resources: Feedback from community groups regarding challenges.

Timeline and Action Milestones

- Identify and establish partnerships with community groups, non-profits, and service providers that align with the goal of thinking beyond the housing structure. Assess their expertise, resources, and areas of focus to determine the most effective collaborations for achieving holistic community development.
- Engage in joint planning and design processes with community partners to develop housing initiatives that go beyond the physical structures of housing. This involves considering the integration of community facilities, amenities, and services within the housing development, ensuring they meet the diverse needs of residents and promote social well-being.

Who's Involved

Lead: MRHA

Support: RHWG

Partnerships:

Desired Outcomes

- Housing housing projects that integrate community facilities, amenities, and services, addressing multiple social needs and promoting the overall well-being of residents.
- Create mixed-income communities that promote social diversity and inclusion, providing opportunities for individuals from different backgrounds to live, interact, and thrive together.
- Enhance the living conditions and quality of life for residents by providing access to education, recreation, workforce development, security, and other essential social services within housing developments.
- Encourage the development of innovative approaches and models that go beyond traditional housing structures, leading to creative solutions and improved outcomes in community development.
- Communicate success stories and achievements to raise awareness and garner support from the public, demonstrating the MRHA's commitment to holistic community development.

Action 12

Develop and implement a comprehensive monitoring framework to track key housing indicators and assess the impacts of the Action Plan.

Housing Strategy Guiding Principles

All objectives impacted.

Rationale

- The establishment of a monitoring framework is crucial to ensure accountability and demonstrate the positive impact of the MRHA on housing in the Region.
- By tracking key housing indicators and measuring the impacts of the Action Plan, the MRHA can provide evidence of its effectiveness and demonstrate value to funding partners, member local governments, and stakeholders.
- The monitoring framework will enable the MRHA to transparently report on the progress made in addressing housing challenges and achieving the desired outcomes outlined in the Action Plan.
- Through regular monitoring and reporting, the MRHA can showcase successful initiatives, identify areas for improvement, and make data-driven decisions to maximize the effectiveness of housing programs and policies.
- The framework will also foster trust and confidence among stakeholders, as it provides a clear and measurable way to assess the MRHA's performance and ensure that resources are being utilized effectively.
- Ultimately, the monitoring framework will strengthen the MRHA's position, while a new entity, as a reliable and accountable organization dedicated to improving housing conditions in the Region, thereby enhancing its credibility and fostering continued support from funding partners and stakeholders.

Required Inputs

Financial resources:

Human resources:

Data resources:

Timeline and Action Milestones

Who's Involved

Lead: MRHA

Support: RHWG

Partnerships:

Desired Outcomes

- The monitoring framework will promote transparency by providing clear and accessible information on the MRHA's progress in achieving housing goals and objectives. This transparency will build trust among funding partners, member local governments, and stakeholders, demonstrating the responsible and accountable use of resources.
- By tracking key housing indicators and measuring impacts, the MRHA can make informed choices about strategies, programs, and interventions to address housing challenges effectively.
- Improved performance and effectiveness: Through regular monitoring, the MRHA can identify areas for improvement and adjust its approach accordingly. This will lead to continuous learning and enhancement of housing initiatives, ensuring that resources are allocated in the most efficient and effective manner to achieve desired outcomes.
- The monitoring framework will enable the MRHA to measure and communicate the positive impact of its actions and programs on housing in the Region. This evidence of success will not only attract continued support from stakeholders but also inspire confidence in the MRHA's ability to address housing needs and make a meaningful difference in the community.
- The data and insights generated through the monitoring framework will provide valuable information for policy development and strategic planning. It will help the MRHA and its partners to identify emerging trends, assess housing needs, and develop targeted interventions that align with the evolving demands of the Region.
- By monitoring key housing indicators and evaluating impacts, the MRHA can identify successful practices and replicate them while also identifying challenges and finding innovative solutions. This process of continuous improvement and learning will contribute to the refinement and optimization of housing strategies, ensuring ongoing progress in addressing housing issues in the Region.

Implementation

While our important work has already begun, our critical next step is continued implementation of this Plan, taking action to meet the goal of enabling the Miramichi Region to provide a good mix of affordable and appropriate housing options to meet the needs of our growing and diverse communities.

The Action Plan represents a starting point that can be regularly updated to reflect the Housing Authority's progress in implementing actions and to accommodate any changes in the Region's housing needs. Actions will be tested and refined through ongoing work and public and stakeholder engagement including the housing forums scheduled for November 2023 with key community stakeholders, direct interviews with housing developers and operators in both the for-profit and non-profit sectors, and should also be tested through a survey to the general public. Action Plan implementation will be subject to regular status updates to the Regional Housing Working Group. A formal review of the Action Plan should be completed three years from launch (2025/end of current MRHA Service Agreement), or as needed. Lessons learned from the action planning process should be gathered and used to improve the next round of action planning.

As a regional housing action plan, there is a shared responsibility in taking this necessary next step. Local governments, through the proposed municipal working groups, have an important role in supporting, coordinating, and facilitating the work of implementation. There are also community stakeholders who are best positioned to advance, support, or champion some of the actions that have been identified. Ultimately, the production of housing units and the number of people housed appropriately in those units will be the measure of ***Housing Miramichi***.

For similar reasons, communities in our Region are experiencing housing challenges. Housing is local but is heavily influenced by national and international factors that are beyond the ability of a regional service commission or a local government to control. Therefore, we cannot expect full and successful implementation of ***Housing Miramichi*** to solve the Miramichi Region's housing challenges completely or quickly.

LIST OF ABBREVIATIONS

Abbreviation	Definition
ACOA	Atlantic Canada Opportunities Agency
NBNPHA	New Brunswick Non-Profit Housing Association
NBHH	New Brunswick Housing Hub
CA	Census Agglomeration
CMHC	Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation
GMRSC	Greater Miramichi Regional Service Commission
GMRSC-PS	Greater Miramichi Regional Service Commission - Planning Services
LSD	Local Service District
MHS	Miramichi Housing Solutions
MNPP	Miramichi Newcomers and Population Partnership
MRHA	Miramichi Regional Housing Authority
MRMA	Miramichi Regional Multicultural Association
ONB	Opportunities New Brunswick
PETL	New Brunswick Department of Post-Secondary Education, Training and Labour
RDC	Regional Development Corporation
RHWG	Regional Housing Working Group
SD	Social Development

MRHA

MIRAMICHI REGIONAL
HOUSING AUTHORITY