

INFILL CHALLENGE

BEST PRACTICES GUIDE

Prepared by the City of Kelowna



Introduction

The Big Picture

Projections estimate that by 2030, Kelowna will be home to 160,000 residents, approximately 38,000 more people than call Kelowna home today. That means a mix of 38,000 more children, young adults, couples, families and seniors who will need a roof over their heads.

Kelowna's Official Community Plan (OCP) recognizes the pivotal role that neighbourhoods play in accommodating growth. Making sure that our existing neighbourhoods contain a variety of housing options to meet the needs of present and future Kelowna residents is key to a sustainable city.

Infill housing - that is, introducing new housing units into existing neighbourhoods - is critical to expanding housing choice. Demographic trends manifesting across Canada are suggesting a greater need for housing variety. Not only are our communities getting older, but the preferences of younger generations is leaning towards more urban living. Ultimately, the Infill Challenge is about creating options to meet the challenges of the future.

Zooming In

Our central neighbourhoods are positioned well to accept small-scale growth, playing a supporting role to our larger Urban Centres. These neighbourhoods have many of the building blocks necessary to become even more successful neighbourhoods in the future, including: rear lane access, central location, aging housing stock, and consistent and large lot sizes. Taking full advantage of these features will allow these neighbourhoods to reach their potential, becoming vital, safe, and diverse places.

Infill housing also comes with challenges. Area residents are often concerned about parking issues, increased traffic, and negative impacts to neighbourhood character. Indeed, many cities (Kelowna included) have had mixed results with infill housing, with examples both good and bad. Getting infill housing "right" is not an easy task. Learning from best practices, we can build a new approach to infill housing that maximizes its benefits, while respecting the contexts that make these neighbourhoods so valuable today.



Kelowna has already taken some steps to allow infill, such as carriage homes and secondary suites (photo: City of Kelowna)



Some of Kelowna's central neighbourhoods have large lots and established lane networks, making them well-suited for infill housing (photo: City of Kelowna)



Strategic Alignment

Providing infill housing as an option aligns with several OCP goals, including: **containing urban growth, addressing the housing needs of all residents** and building **distinctive and attractive neighbourhoods**. In addition, in the most recent Citizen Survey, residents ranked "encouraging a diverse supply of housing options at different price points" as a top priority.

How to use this guide

The Infill Challenge Best Practices Summary provides an analysis of leading edge policies, processes and projects in infill housing, and gives us the opportunity to learn from them. Areas of analysis include:

1. **Process:** how were projects and supporting policies and regulations brought into being
2. **Policy & regulation:** what policies and regulations have produced the best results
3. **Developments:** what development projects are leading the way

Studying best practices does not mean that we can take a "cookie cutter" approach. Rather, the task at hand involves a delicate balance of learning from the best while bringing to the project an honest representation of what makes Kelowna's central neighbourhoods unique. The result will be an approach to infill housing tailored to meet Kelowna's housing goals.

Example of four-plex housing (photo: Gexydaf, license CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)

Best Practices: Process

Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character & Housing (West Vancouver)

In 2007-2008, the District of West Vancouver engaged in a process lasting approximately 15 months in which District staff and a panel of experts undertook broad community consultation to determine key directions for housing. Prior to the dialogue, the District's Official Community Plan provided the only policy direction relating to housing. Unfortunately, the OCP's housing policy was not comprehensive and could not be applied effectively. The dialogue began where the OCP left off and sought to provide clearer policy direction on balancing the housing needs of the District with the established character of the community so valued by its residents.

As a precursor to this work, the District invested in demographic and housing research to inform the dialogue with up to date data. This information assisted residents and staff in determining housing needs for the future.

The project was undertaken in four distinct phases of work: Phase 1 - Beginning the Dialogue, Phase 2 -

Exploring Ideas and Options, Phase 3 - Making Choices, and Phase 4 - Recommendations. These four phases, taking place over the span of a year, gave the community and policy makers ample time to understand issues and to match potential solutions to identified community needs. The community dialogue continues to inform the District's work several years later.

“Residents...see redevelopment as an opportunity to facilitate the growth of a more socially, environmentally, and economically sustainable community.”
- Community Dialogue Working Group Report



Early involvement of residents and stakeholders is critical to overcoming challenges successfully (photo: District of West Vancouver)

Key Lessons

- ▶ Introducing infill housing can result in considerable conflict and division
- ▶ Involving stakeholders early on can help avoid conflict down the road; but, the process must be thorough and transparent
- ▶ Having a third party or expert-driven panel can lend credibility and objectivity to a process, if needed
- ▶ Supporting direction and decisions with specific research and data is important early in the process

Best Practices: Process

District of West Vancouver: Housing Pilot Program

Emerging from the 2007-2008 Community Dialogue on Neighbourhood Character and Housing, support was provided for a program that would introduce key forms of sensitive infill housing as pilot projects.

To lead this project, Council established a Citizens' Working Group to set up the project's objectives and select pilot projects. Supported by staff, the working group called for proposals and received 17 submissions for varied forms of infill housing. From these 17, the working group selected four winning submissions and recommended that the District facilitate their development. Of those four, the District opted to pursue two projects.

Ultimately, the construction of the projects is driven by the landowners and unfortunately both projects failed to materialize. In one case, the owners moved and abandoned the project. In the second case, engineering challenges within the District and changes to the circumstances of the landowners resulted in the project failing.

Key Lessons

- ▶ A working group of all stakeholders can help to resolve issues and to build trust
- ▶ Internal Coordination: make sure that there is internal support for the project(s) before proceeding
- ▶ Consideration should be given to broadening the implementation, or to maintaining District control over projects through direct development involvement
- ▶ Pilot projects can be used to stimulate discussion and to refine regulations prior to broad application

City of Edmonton: Edmonton's Infill Roadmap

In 2014, the City of Edmonton published Edmonton's Infill Roadmap. The Roadmap identifies a list of 23 actions needed to support the development of more and better infill housing to meet the needs of present and future Edmonton residents.

The development of the Roadmap followed a community conversation about infill housing that was hosted by the City. Over the course of eight months, more than 1,000 residents provided input. The input was refined by the Infill Action Collaborative, a team of approximately 30 stakeholders from throughout the community, and helped to inform many of the actions in the Roadmap.

Actions in the Roadmap are organized into the following groups: Communication, Collaboration, Knowledge, Rules, and Process. Within each group, actions are listed and top priorities identified for immediate action. It is expected that working through the actions will take approximately two to three years.

Key Lessons

- ▶ Engage early: participants appreciated the ability to discuss and to provide input on issues early in the process
- ▶ Use diverse panels: developers, community groups and municipal representation needs to be balanced
- ▶ A Good Neighbour Guide has helped residents and builders in existing areas get along through the lengthy construction process
- ▶ Build support: work on ensuring that there is broad support internally before going external
- ▶ Heritage areas and mature trees can be hot button issues

Best Practices: Development

Hollyburne Mews (West Vancouver)

Hollyburne Mews is a unique development consisting of nine units on three lots situated mid-block in an established single detached residential neighbourhood of the District of West Vancouver. Until recently, considering anything beyond new single detached development would have been met with major opposition. Indeed, Hollyburne Mews was met with considerable opposition from area residents who feared that introducing new forms of housing would be detrimental to the neighbourhood they cherished.

Now that it is complete, the critics have gone silent. With three duplex dwellings fronting the street and three strata coach houses fronting the laneway, Hollyburne Mews achieves a balance between increasing density and maintaining neighbourhood character. Architecture is inspired by the design of original cottages built in the area, found by searching through the archives. The height, massing and site layout have all been accomplished in a manner that ensures a high quality living environment for purchasers and a sensitive interface for neighbours.



View of strata coach house units from laneway (photo: Michael Geller)



View of amenity space between units (photo: Michael Geller)

Key Lessons

- ▶ Design should be place-based and reflect the character of the neighbourhood
- ▶ Recognize that residents may naturally be skeptical about change
- ▶ Duplex front doors face the street and should maintain the appearance of a single detached dwelling (not symmetrical)
- ▶ High quality landscaping fronting the street and in private amenity space is critical
- ▶ Coach houses can be stratified and sold as separate units



View of Hollyburne Mews duplex units from the street (photo: Michael Geller)

“ Look closely at the exterior and interior details of Hollyburn Mews and you will recognize many features found in traditional West Vancouver cottages and homes. ”

- Hollyburne Mews (hollyburnemewshomes.com)



In size and character, duplex units look like single detached homes (photo: Michael Geller)

Best Practices: Development

Port Royal (Queensborough)

Queensborough in New Westminster is the equivalent of a living laboratory for infill housing. What was previously a patchwork of low density single detached residential, industrial and agricultural development, is steadily moving towards becoming a complete community. Mixed densities and housing forms are supporting an evolving commercial core in alignment with the recently completed Queensborough Community Plan.

Within this setting, the Port Royal development has distinguished itself as a top quality project. Set in a traditional grid network with continuous sidewalks and lane access, the development is comprised of narrow lot single detached housing (~8m x 30m), fee simple row housing, strata row housing, and low-rise apartments.

The attention to detail, high quality pedestrian environment, and mix of housing options in low density forms makes Port Royal a successful example of a complete neighbourhood.



Public spaces in Port Royal (photo: Dennis S. Hurd, CC BY-NC-ND 2.0)



Narrow detached housing in Port Royal (photo: Dennis S. Hurd, CC BY-NC-SA 2.0)

Key Lessons

- ▶ A grid network with vehicle access coming from laneways creates a safe and inviting pedestrian space
- ▶ Narrow single detached housing can challenge existing neighbourhood context, particularly if height is maximized – 2 storeys recommended with no full basement
- ▶ Larger parcels mid-block and at block ends can allow for denser housing forms
- ▶ High quality streetscaping is critical
- ▶ Building design and architectural detail become more important as development gets denser



Mix of housing in development in Queensborough (photo: Dennis S. Hurd) CC BY-NC-ND 2.0

Best Practices: Development

Lake Avenue (Kelowna)

Located in the heart of Kelowna's Abbott Street Heritage Conservation Area, the project at 250-260 Lake Avenue is a strong example of how low density infill can integrate effectively into even the most sensitive contexts.

Prior to development, the two lots contained one house with some heritage value. In order to preserve the house, the City agreed to allow subdivision and infill housing. Now, the lots contain four dwellings: two detached homes (one with a suite), and a carriage house.

Getting through the approval process required an ongoing dialogue between neighbours, the City, and the landowner. After several iterations of design, the infill housing was finally approved. The result is a top quality project that protected the character of the neighbourhood (including mature trees) while adding three new housing units. All this was accomplished in what remains one of the most sensitive neighbourhoods in the city.



New detached home under construction (photo: City of Kelowna)



West face of new detached home with suite and carriage home in the background (photo: City of Kelowna)

Key Lessons

- ▶ Lane access for vehicles allows denser development to interface more effectively with the street and existing housing
- ▶ All parties involved need to understand and to agree on objectives clearly
- ▶ Key elements of neighbourhood character need to be articulated
- ▶ All parties need to be willing to work together and to compromise



View of the Lake Ave/Maple Street neighbourhood (photo: City of Kelowna)

Best Practices: Policy & Regulation

A Guide to Contextual Dwellings (Calgary)

Over the past several decades, the Calgary has grown in leaps and bounds. Much of this growth has been in the form of suburban development, pushing the city outwards. More recently, however, Calgary has been taking major steps to change course.

The City of Calgary's Land Use Plan permits several forms of low density infill housing in established neighbourhoods. Calgary has been dealing with how to regulate such housing forms since the late 1980's. However, until more recently, infill housing forms were always a discretionary use, meaning that they were not permitted outright.

With more recent changes to the Land Use Plan, certain forms of infill in established neighbourhoods have been identified as permitted uses, called 'Contextual Dwellings'. Using previous work in the *Low Density Residential Housing Guidelines* (1993), the Guide to Contextual Dwellings provides a clear set of rules to which development must adhere in order to be approved

outright. These guidelines ensure that new development in established neighbourhoods complements key elements of surrounding development.

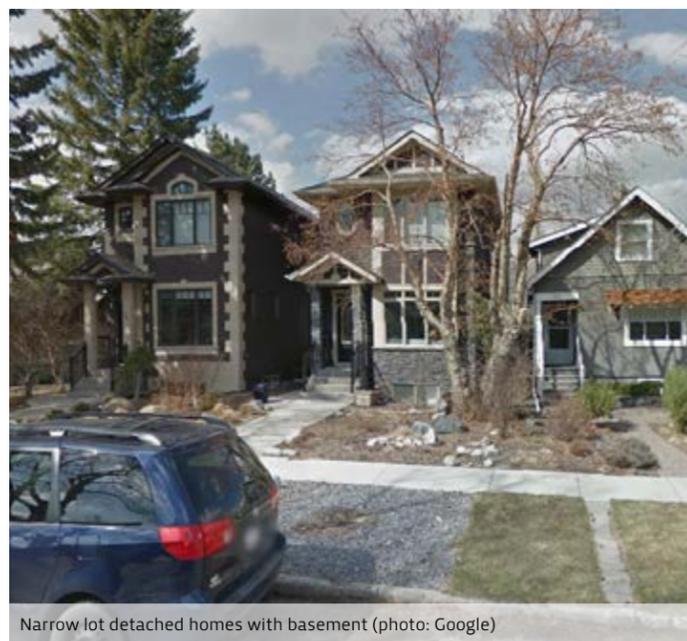
The guidelines focus on key areas, including: lot dimensions, building massing, building siting, and landscaping. In each of these areas, the guidelines provide consistent standards that balance development pressure and community values.



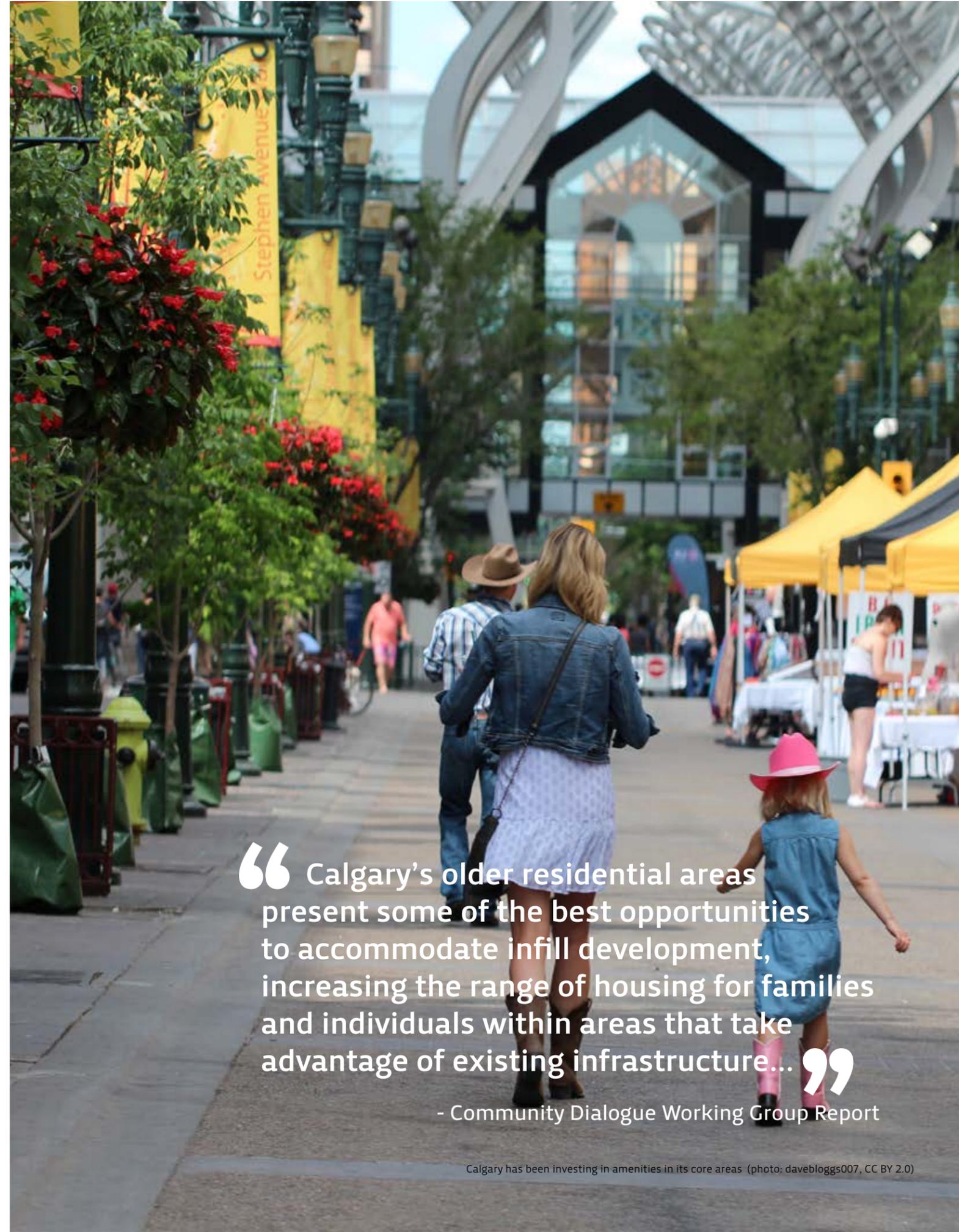
Calgary suburban sprawl (photo: Gavin Schaefer, CC BY 2.0)

Key Lessons

- ▶ Language: Use language in regulations that is extremely concise and accessible for all types of user groups
- ▶ Visuals: Support regulations with clear visual illustrations
- ▶ Context: Regulations are based on what is around the subject property
- ▶ Incentive: Adhering to the guidelines is an incentive, as any variances will trigger a discretionary process, adding time, risk and expense.



Narrow lot detached homes with basement (photo: Google)



“ Calgary’s older residential areas present some of the best opportunities to accommodate infill development, increasing the range of housing for families and individuals within areas that take advantage of existing infrastructure...”

- Community Dialogue Working Group Report

Calgary has been investing in amenities in its core areas (photo: davebloggs007, CC BY 2.0)

Best Practices: Policy & Regulation

Neighbourhood Level Infill Development Guidelines (Saskatoon)

In response to new development pressures in established neighbourhoods and to the work of other municipalities, Saskatoon embarked on a major project to develop guidelines for infill housing. The objective of the two-year project was to recommend "...design qualities, guidelines and regulations to ensure new infill development complements the character of established neighbourhoods".

The project examined infill housing in the form of principal dwellings and secondary units, such as suites and carriage houses. Proposed guidelines and regulations are provided to support each of the new forms. The result has been the introduction (and re-introduction, in some cases) of new forms of housing into existing neighbourhoods, but supported by agreed-upon guidelines to ensure that neighbourhood character is preserved.

The project included background research from best practices across North America and utilized an advisory

committee, which included representatives of the development industry and community groups. Open houses and workshops were held for public feedback. Despite this, Council directed staff to conduct further engagement to ensure that the concerns of the development industry were adequately addressed. Ultimately, the project, and the bylaw and policy changes to implement it, were adopted unanimously by Council.



Key Lessons

- ▶ Engage Early: engage both development and community representatives as early in the process as possible.
- ▶ Include Council: ensure that Council is up-to-date on progress and issues as needed
- ▶ Strong Visuals: provide strong visual support for proposed guidelines and regulations
- ▶ Polarizing Issues: parking and traffic impacts of new development can be major concerns for existing residents.

“ Infill development...if undertaken appropriately can improve the quality and character of established neighbourhoods.”
- Neighbourhood Level Infill Development Guidelines



Summary

Best Practices Summary

The Best Practices Guide is intended to provide leading edge examples of infill housing from across Canada in the areas of **process, development, and policy and regulations**. The key lessons from each of these areas can be used to inform the Infill Challenge project as it unfolds in Kelowna. The summary of these lessons is provided in the table below (Table 1).

Next Steps

The Infill Challenge Best Practices Guide is intended to be part of the conversation during initial stages of public engagement. A Community Profile will also be provided to give participants a better understanding of the characteristics of the Infill Challenge study area. Together, these documents will provide a strong foundation for forthcoming infill housing discussions.

TABLE 1	The Infill Challenge Should...
Process	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ engage stakeholders early ▶ follow an objective, transparent process ▶ use data and research to clarify needs and objectives ▶ consider using working groups as a key engagement method ▶ ensure internal support from staff and Council ▶ provide broad representation through engagement ▶ ensure that Council is informed and involved appropriately
Developments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ encourage the use of place-based design ▶ ensure that lane access and a grid network are in place ▶ require that front doors face the street, where possible ▶ emphasize high quality building design and landscaping ▶ consider greater density on larger lots at block ends and mid-block ▶ consider creative forms of sensitive infill as pilot projects ▶ ensure that strong design guidelines inform decisions
Policy & Regulation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▶ use clear language (no jargon) ▶ support the process with strong visuals ▶ consider context-based zoning regulations and guidelines ▶ identify potential incentives for projects that meet desired objectives ▶ develop a Good Neighbour Guide ▶ consider hot-button issues carefully (parking, heritage, trees, traffic)



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