

# Report to Council



**Date:** January 10, 2021  
**To:** Council  
**From:** City Manager  
**Subject:** 2021 Community Trends Report: Housing Unaffordability: crisis or crossroads  
**Department:** Policy and Planning

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## **Recommendation:**

THAT Council receives, for information, the report from the Policy & Planning Department dated January 10, 2021, with respect to the 2021 Community Trends Report.

## **Purpose:**

To introduce the 2021 Community Trends Report titled "Housing Unaffordability: crisis or crossroads".

## **Background:**

The annual Community Trends Report (CTR) is in its seventh year of publication. This report is one of several research reports produced annually by the Policy and Planning Department. While other reports focus on the same topic each year, such as development statistics, the CTR topic will change with major trends occurring provincially, nationally, and beyond.

The CTR is not meant to establish formal recommendations but instead to explore local impacts of trends and set the stage for the City's possible path towards new planning projects or other initiatives that may be needed in response. Ultimately, the aim of the CTR is to understand the nature of these larger trends, how they might impact the local community in the years ahead, and what could be done in response. This allows for early consideration of where policy attention and action may be directed in the future.

## **Discussion:**

This edition of the CTR is titled "Housing unaffordability: crisis or crossroads." It focuses on the steep rise in real estate prices in Kelowna, particularly over the past year, and the impact this price rise has on the affordability of housing for Kelowna residents. The report explores possible approaches to policy responses which could be considered. These possibilities reflect research across media, academia, secondary research sources, and other jurisdictions' work.

The 'housing unaffordability' topic was chosen for two reasons: Firstly, housing policy in general has been an expanding area of focus for the City in the recent decade. The completion of the Journey Home and Healthy Housing Strategies resulted in a significant body of work, with some actions and an update to the strategy still to be completed. Additionally, the legislated need for Housing Needs Assessments every five years, the City's involvement in regional housing efforts, and the implementation work that is expected to emerge from the forthcoming adoption of the 2040 Official Community Plan will generate additional work in these areas. Increasing unaffordability will amplify the need for comprehensive and clear policy responses in these areas.

The second reason for choosing housing unaffordability as the topic for the CTR was due to the inconsistency and variation within national and local conversations about housing. As written in the CTR itself, "conversations about housing have become muddled". This can lead to negative or unproductive exchanges of information based on incomplete information. The CTR takes steps to reconcile contrasting views of housing through lenses of 'changing the conversation', 're-examining roles in housing' and 're-thinking the housing system'. The intention is to make room for productive and well-informed conversations as well as new and alternative possibilities.

By putting forward the idea of housing unaffordability as "crisis or crossroads" the CTR suggests that the current state of unaffordability has the potential to push ahead positive change. The report acknowledges and demonstrates that affordability has deteriorated significantly. The CTR makes the point that regardless of how housing affordability is labelled, crisis or not, it is important to keep sight of the specific impacts of it on the community and to consider the systemic changes that may be necessary to see this condition improve.

**Conclusion:**

Looking ahead, there is no one solution to housing affordability. A key point of this years' CTR is that solutions to affordability, like many that have been put into action by the City, will need to be collaborative. They will likely require changes to how housing is delivered - by all actors and governments in the system - to ensure that the right supply of housing is provided at the right cost for the community.

**Internal Circulation:**

- Communications
- Community Planning
- Partnerships Office
- Real Estate
- Social Development

Submitted by:

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**Approved for inclusion:**



J. Moore, Long Range Planning Policy Manager

Attachment: *2021 Community Trends Report: crisis or crossroads?*