

Fraser Lake is a small municipality of ~1,700 residents in the rural and northern part of BC's Highway 16/[Bulkley Valley](#). [Fraser Lake](#) is one of BC's "instant towns", incorporated in 1966 with the opening of [Endako Mines](#), and later supported by the opening of West Fraser's [Fraser Lake Sawmill](#). Most three-bedroom bungalows in the community were built by the mine for their workers, and eventually purchased by the worker-occupants, many of whom have since retired but still live in their bungalow today.

The industry boom led to an in-migration of residents to Fraser Lake decades ago, who are starting to retire in large numbers. Most of Fraser Lake retirees are choosing to stay and age in their community. However, the Village is challenged to accommodate the growing number of seniors with its one, 23-unit dedicated independent seniors housing facility ('Silver Birch Lodge'). Originally built in the 1980s, Silver Birch was one of BC's first rural seniors housing projects, and will be one of the first rural seniors housing projects to have its' **operating agreement expire**.

Given the growth in senior demographics and the full occupancy rate at Silver Birch, the Village engaged CitySpaces to prepare a needs assessment to identify senior-specific housing issues and determine if there is a demonstrated demand to potentially expand Silver Birch into additional rural seniors housing units.

CitySpaces examined housing indicator data and engaged several stakeholders, including neighbouring First Nations communities, to identify rural seniors housing issues. Some specific challenges to rural seniors housing were uncovered:

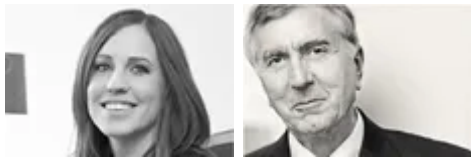
- Private market rental housing in Fraser Lake is inadequate to accommodate seniors because of poor condition and accessibility.
- Limited healthcare and social service infrastructure in Fraser Lake does not fully support seniors aging-in-place, including no assisted living programs.
- There is no public transportation, community bus, or taxi's in Fraser Lake, also making aging-in-place difficult for seniors.
- There is a low demand for purchasing homes in Fraser Lake and surrounding rural and remote areas, limiting housing options for seniors trying to downsize from their larger homes.
- The announcement of the mine operation suspension resulted in terminated and laid-off workers (50% of workforce), which could lead to community challenges, depending on when the mine resumes operations.

CitySpaces recommended a modest expansion of rural seniors housing on the adjacent site to Silver Birch. The development program of 15 units includes:

- 8 one-bedroom independent living units
- 5 two-bedroom independent living units (to accommodate senior couples)
- 1 respite unit (limited to non-medical care only)
- 1 visitor unit / flexible respite unit

The final recommendations emphasize a phased approach, utilizing **modular construction** for the rural seniors housing building, starting with two to four units. A factory-built approach provides the ability to increase rural seniors housing in Fraser Lake while monitoring absorption and adding units as demand warrants. Construction of modular units is also not as restricted by the shorter construction season in northern parts of BC compared to other construction methods.

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