



TOWN OF FORT SMITH

Background Report

Community Plan

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Month 20xx – xx-xxxx

For Discussion

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1.0 Introduction

This background research and recommendations report assembles information and knowledge that was considered in preparing a Community Plan for the Town of Fort Smith. The results and analysis contained in the Background Report will provide the community with a record of the process used to create a Community Plan, including feedback from stakeholders and broader community consultation. The data collected and summarized in this report provides a baseline of data, and demonstrates the process undertaken in the preparation of the Community Plan.

Accurate information is not always available or may be out of date. Recommendations are included in this report, identifying where better information could assist the community in future land use planning.

Comments or questions about the report should be directed to:

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2.0 The Community: Setting and Character

This section of the report summarizes the natural and physical characteristics in the Town of Fort Smith. By analyzing natural features, land development constraints and opportunities can be identified and highlight areas of interest in the community. The features that will be reviewed include location, history, natural features, climate, vegetation, topography, and transportation.

2.1 Location and History

The Town of Fort Smith is in the South Slave Region of the Northwest Territories and it is located at 60°00' 19' N, 111°52' 58' W. It is on the banks of the Slave River, which connects Lake Athabasca to Great Slave Lake, and its southern boundary lies on the border between the Northwest Territories and Alberta.

The Town is located within Treaty 8 Territory and the traditional homelands of the Salt River First Nation, Smith's Landing First Nation, and the Metis people of Fort Smith (Town of Fort Smith, 2024a).

Historically, the Dene and Metis hunted and fished the land and tributaries flowing into the Slave River and used the waterways in the area for transportation throughout the region. After contact with explorers and fur traders, the Slave river was used as a gateway from the prairies when travelling north from Lake Athabasca (Town of Fort Smith, 2024b).

Commented [MD1]: Insert map of Fort Smith in this section.

In 1872, the Hudson's Bay Company built an outpost called Smith's Landing at "Cassette Rapids" and established a second outpost at the "Rapids of the Drowned" and named it Fort Smith after Donald Alexander Smith the resident governor of the Hudson Bay Company (Town of Fort Smith, 2024b).

All freight from southern Canada was transported on the Slave River on its way to the Arctic, until a highway to Hay River was built in 1949 (Town of Fort Smith, 2024b).

In the late 1800s and early 1900s several institutions established a presence in Fort Smith including (Town of Fort Smith, 2024b):

- The northern headquarters for the Royal Canadian Mounted Police;
- The Northern Diocese of the Roman Catholic Church;
- A federal government administration building which housed the NWT's branch and the first court of justice in the Mackenzie District;
- The Union Bank of Canada's first bank in the NWT; and
- The establishment of Wood Buffalo National Park with its operations and administration headquarters in Fort Smith.

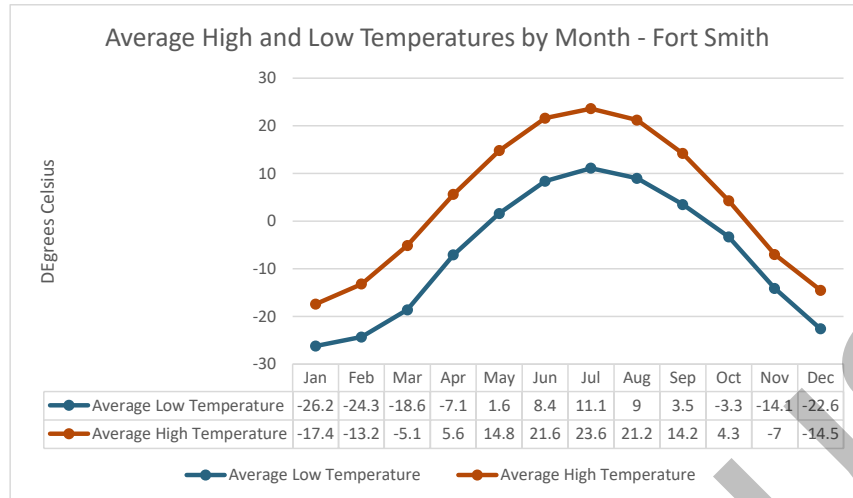
Although it was eventually decided that the territorial capital would be located in Yellowknife, Fort Smith remains a regional centre in the South Slave Region for transportation, goods, and services and is also home to Aurora College (Town of Fort Smith, 2024b).

2.2 Climate

Fort Smith has a dry continental subarctic climate with long winters and short but warm summers. There is about a 40C difference between average temperatures in January and average temperatures in July which presents significant challenges for construction and maintenance of infrastructure.

The coldest month is January with an average high temperature of -17.4C and average low of -26.2C. The warmest month is July with an average high temperature of 23.6C and average low of 11.1C. **Figure 1** below shows the average monthly high and low temperatures for the Town of Fort Smith from 1991 - 2020.

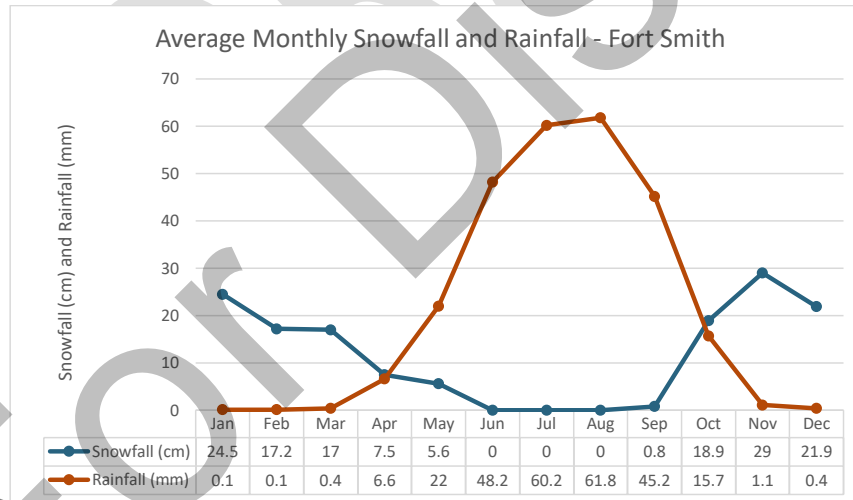
Figure 1 Average Monthly High and Low Temperatures



Source: (Government of Canada, 2024)

With respect to precipitation July and August are typically the wettest months and the month with the most snowfall is November. Figure 2 below shows the average amount of precipitation for each month of the year.

Figure 2 Average Monthly Snowfall and Rainfall



Source: (Government of Canada, 2024)

The variability in temperature and precipitation in Fort Smith is a major factor when considering land use due to impacts on drainage and ground movement because of temperature changes and freeze/thaw cycles.

2.2.1 Climate Change

Climate change impacts are being felt throughout the north and Fort Smith is no exception.

The Climate Atlas of Canada suggests that if current trends in GHG emissions continue to 2050, then Fort Smith would experience (Climate Atlas of Canada, 2019):

- A mean annual temperature increase from -3.3C to -0.9C;
- An increase in frost-free days from 108 to 125;
- An increase in annual precipitation from 339mm to 371mm; and
- An annual increase in very hot days (over +30C) from 1 to 4.

Climate change forecasts for Fort Smith suggest that the following changes can be expected as a result of the forecasted trends mentioned above (Canadian Centre for Climate Services, 2021):

- Shortened winter road seasons;
- Increased snow loading on buildings;
- Increased demand for snow removal;
- Increase in forest fire risk; and
- Changes to ecosystems and wildlife.

Climate change impacts are already being felt in Fort Smith and climate change adaptation will need to be carefully considered with respect to the Community Plan.

2.3 Natural Features

The natural features surrounding and influencing the Town of Fort Smith have shaped its current built form and will continue to impact future land use in the community. The natural environment presents both limitations and opportunities for land use in Fort Smith.

2.3.1 Water

The Slave River is the most significant water body in the Town of Fort Smith. It is the main source of drinking water for the Town and it is also a major recreational asset for the community. The Slave River has a mean annual flow of 3400 m³/s which means that on average 3.4 million litres of water pass by the community of Fort Smith each second (Government of Canada Department of Aboriginal Affairs and Northern Development Canada, 2012).

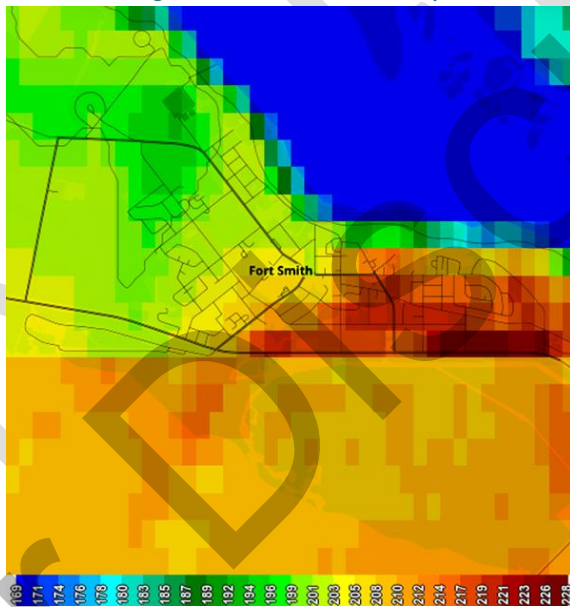
2.3.2 Geology and Permafrost

Soils in this area consist of sand and sandy silt to approximately 9m – 21m. Below this layer is a layer of silty clay till which is underlain by granitic deposits of silty sand and gravel (EcoDynamics Consulting, 2008). Landslides along the riverbank have occurred in the past, primarily due to erosion caused by river level fluctuation, groundwater fluctuations, and soil strength failure. Land is relatively easy to develop in Fort Smith, as many of the difficulties with permafrost found in other NWT locations are not experienced here, however development along the riverbank is restricted.

2.3.3 Topography

Fort Smith’s average elevation is 202 meters above sea level. Illustrated in **Figure 3** below, the minimum elevation is 164 meters on the western side and the maximum elevation is 224 meters mostly on the south-eastern edge of the Town (Elevation City, 2019). Fort Smith’s elevation is lower than Yellowknife (252 meters), and higher than Hay River (152 meters) (Elevation City, 2019).

Figure 3 Fort Smith Elevation Map



Source: <https://elevation.city/ca/3jnn6> (figure used with permission)

2.3.4 Vegetation

Fort Smith is in the Slave Lowland Mid-Boreal Ecoregion (Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Environment and Climate Change, 2009). Typical tree species in this area include white

and black spruce, balsam poplar, trembling aspen, jack pine, aspen, birch, and tamarack. Low-lying areas support willows and many varieties of grasses, mosses, lichens. Wildflowers and bushes such as low-bush cranberry and prickly rose also thrive in the undergrowth (Government of the Northwest Territories Department of Environment and Climate Change, 2009). Vegetation generally provides an indication of soil conditions and can be used to analyze the suitability of land for development.

The surrounding vegetation is also a significant factor with respect to forest fire risks and fire risk mitigation measures such as fire smarting and building of fire breaks. The Fort Smith Community Wildfire Protection Plan provides more detail about existing vegetation management and potential vegetation management options.

2.4 Community Character and Built Form

The urban form of Fort Smith is largely shaped by its location between the Slave River and the Alberta/NWT border. The future development of the Town of Fort Smith will also be determined by land ownership. Salt River First Nations has settled a land claim and has title to a substantial area of land within the municipal boundary. Many parcels of Commissioners Lands within the Town boundaries will be unavailable to the Town and any subsequent sales to private owners until all claims are settled sometime in the future.

Fort Smith has a small town character. The majority of buildings are single storey or low-rise buildings and it has an identifiable downtown. Major institutional buildings include the Town Hall, the Aurora College Campus, St. Joseph's Cathedral, the hospital, and the recreation centre.

Industrial development is primarily located on the southern edge of the town and accessed via Calder Ave. and the Fort Smith Highway.

The town's history is apparent through commemorative murals, historic monuments, and several restored buildings.

Although, there has been some effort made in reducing the number of abandoned buildings in the community, this is an ongoing challenge and there are a number of vacant and underutilized lots in the Town Centre that detract from its appearance and vibrancy.

There are three distinct areas of the town: 1) Town Site; 2) Airport; and 3) Bell Rock. Each of these areas serves a different purpose with respect to land use.

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2.4.1 Town Site

The earliest known Town Plan dates from 1957, a time when it was assumed Fort Smith would become the capital of the Northwest Territories. The area was estimated to be sufficient for a population of 5,000 people. All subsequent Town Plans have identified the Town Centre as the preferred area for higher density residential, commercial, and institutional uses.

An important physical constraint to the main town site is the unstable riverbank. A landslide in 1968 resulted in loss of property and one death. The area of weak soils parallel to the river has been identified and classified as an Environmental Reserve Zone under the Town of Ft. Smith Zoning By-Law #936.

Zoning of lands in the Townsite has evolved over time to reflect changes in use. Other major changes to zoning have occurred to recognize physical changes such as the unstable river bank, and a gradual shift of public lands controlled by the Commissioner to the Town.

The Alberta border to the south of the Town represents a jurisdictional constraint. However, it should be noted that Smith's Landing First Nation Lands and areas of Wood Buffalo National Park on the Alberta side of the border are informally considered part of the Town. Residents of Fort Smith make frequent use of these areas for recreation, and servicing agreements are in place for residents of Smith's Landing.

Established uses of land represent another development constraint in this area of town, where land zoned for low-demand uses sit undeveloped. In some cases, past uses may be restricting future land use potential. For example, lands used for industrial operations may be difficult to re-use for other purposes because of environmental contamination (and the high cost of remediation).

A final lands claims settlement agreement with the Salt River First Nations was signed in June 2002. Some of the lands are located in the main townsite, and the Town has established a municipal services agreement that will govern until such time as the SRFN develops their own land use plan. The Metis Nation has also commenced a land claims process, and until this is settled, any Federal or Commissioner's lands are unavailable for development or transfer to the Town or any other interested party. It is not known how long it will take to settle this claim.

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2.4.2 Airport

Located between the main townsite and Bell Rock, this land area is large, relatively flat, and stable, which contributed to its selection as the airport. The Airport restricts the development of the surrounding lands through regulations established by the NWT Department of Transportation, and the Federal Fort Smith Airport Zoning Regulations (SOR/81-567).

2.4.3 Bell Rock

The Town boundaries of Fort Smith were expanded in 1987 to encompass the area known as Bell Rock. Country residential development was allowed in the area. Services to the area are currently limited to trucked water delivery, firefighting, and some road maintenance.

Instability of the riverbank in this area is also recognized, and the Environmental Reserve zone extends along the riverbank to Bell Rock. Salt River First Nations lands are also located in this area and are not available for private development at this time.

The Town's solid waste facility (landfill) is also located in this area, and a regulatory setback of 450 m restricts the use of lands.

2.5 Transportation

The transportation network within the Town of Fort Smith largely consists of a grid of paved streets. The primary mode of transportation is private automobile. Some streets have sidewalks and there are also recreational trails along the Slave River for hiking, cycling, skiing, and snowshoeing.

Highway 5 is the only highway that connects Fort Smith to destinations outside of the region. It connects to the rest of the territorial highway network near Hay River and it extends south into Alberta along the Slave River where it becomes Highway 48.

The Fort Smith Airport connects the town by air to Yellowknife and Hay River in the NWT and Fort Chipewyan, High Level, and Edmonton in Alberta. The airport is also used for private aircraft, air cargo, and charter flights.

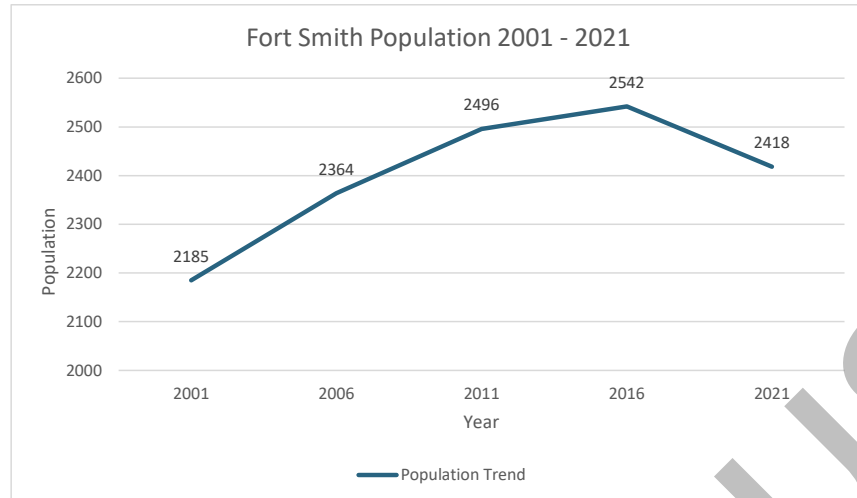
3.0 Population

This section of the report examines the influence of population trends on the development and form of Fort Smith. Future population projections will also be considered to understand anticipated changes within the community.

3.1 Current Trends

Based on the amended Canadian Census in 2021, Fort Smith had a population of 2,418 people (Statistics Canada, 2023). Over the last 20 years, the population of Fort Smith has remained relatively stable but there was a decrease in population in 2021 compared to the 2016 census population of 2,542 (Statistics Canada, 2023).

Figure 4 Fort Smith Historical Population 2001-2021



Source: Statistics Canada Census Data

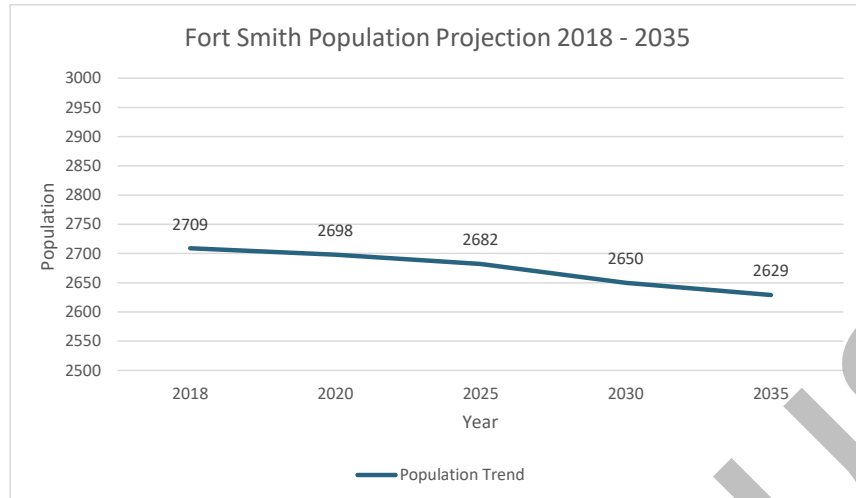
3.1.1 Shadow Population

It should be noted that students attending Aurora College and inmates of the Fort Smith Correctional Complex represent a 'shadow population' of approximately 300 to 500 at any given time. While not counted as permanent residents of Fort Smith, these temporary residents still use services including roads, water, sewer, and recreation facilities that the Town needs to consider in planning.

3.2 Future Trends

A 2018 – 2035 population projection for Fort Smith was prepared by the NWT Bureau of Statistics in 2018. The projection suggests that the population would remain relatively stable through 2035 with a slight decrease from 2,709 in 2018 to 2,629 in 2035 (NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2018). The projection is shown below in Figure 5.

Figure 5 Fort Smith Population Projection 2018 - 2035



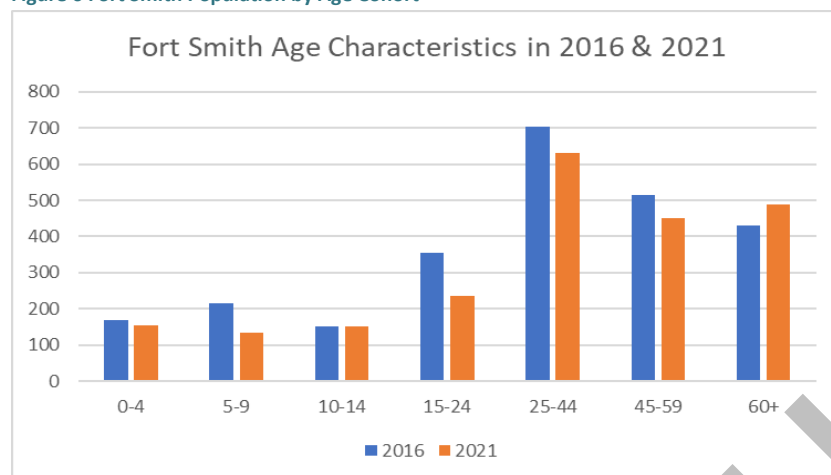
Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics

This projection is more than five years old, and several factors have changed since this projection was made. The population figures also differ significantly from the Statistics Canada data from the 2021 census which had a population figure over 400 lower than the estimates in this projection. Given this discrepancy, it is likely that a current population projection would likely start with a lower population figure since the Statistics Canada data is based on an actual census with a high response rate. However, the longer-term population trends would likely still show a relatively stable population with a slight decrease which would be in line with most other population projections for communities in the NWT.

3.3 Demographic Profile

The Statistics Canada 2021 census showed that the largest age cohort falls within the 25-44 year old age bracket. About 30% of the population is within this age bracket. Figure 6 below provides a comparison of age characteristics between the 2016 and 2021 census (Statistics Canada, 2023).

Figure 6 Fort Smith Population by Age Cohort



Source: Statistics Canada

The trend shows a decline in all age cohorts except for those aged 60+. This shows that the population is aging which is consistent with the aging of the population throughout the NWT and most jurisdictions throughout Canada.

Aging of the population is an important consideration for land use planning. As the population grows older there will likely be more demand for accessible and supportive housing as well as greater consideration for community design which allows people to access services and destinations without needing a motor vehicle.

3.4

Households

There are 881 occupied households in the Town of Fort Smith (Statistics Canada, 2023). Approximately 62.5% of homes in Fort Smith are owned by the occupants with the remainder being renters (Statistics Canada, 2023). In contrast, the Northwest Territories, as a whole, has approximately a 53.5% homeownership rate (Statistics Canada, 2023). The median value of an owned home in Fort Smith is about \$262,000 which is below the territorial average of \$352,000 (Statistics Canada, 2023).

About 10.4% of households in the Town of Fort Smith were in core need according to the 2021 Statistics Canada census (Statistics Canada, 2023). This is slightly lower than the territorial average of 13.1% of households in core housing need. According to the Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation, a household is in core need if it falls below one or more of the following indicators:

- **Affordable** – Housing costs do not exceed 30% of the household before-tax income;

- **Adequate** – Housing does not require major repairs (running water, indoor plumbing); and
- **Suitable** – Housing has the required number of bedrooms as set out by the National Occupancy Standards (NOS)

Although the number of households in core need in Fort Smith is lower than the territorial average, this number can easily change based on a number of factors such as an increase or decrease in household income, loss of affordable housing supply due to units becoming uninhabitable or being taken off the market, and increases in demand for housing. It is likely that the number of households in core need would be different today since the Statistics Canada data is over three years old and the factors affecting housing need have likely changed.

A more detailed discussion of housing needs can be found in the recently completed *2023 Fort Smith Housing Needs Assessment*. However, some of the key findings from this report suggest that there are several housing needs in Fort Smith that are currently unmet. Specifically:

- 33 households are on a waiting for public housing;
- 40 additional market rental units are needed;
- 100 additional housing units are needed for the Aurora College Thebacha Campus for students and staff; and
- Overall, at least 225 housing units are required in Fort Smith to meet current housing needs.

With respect to land use planning, this means that policies and objectives related to residential land use in the Community Plan should allow for a variety of housing types that meet the needs of the Town as identified in the Housing Needs Assessment.

4.0 Economy

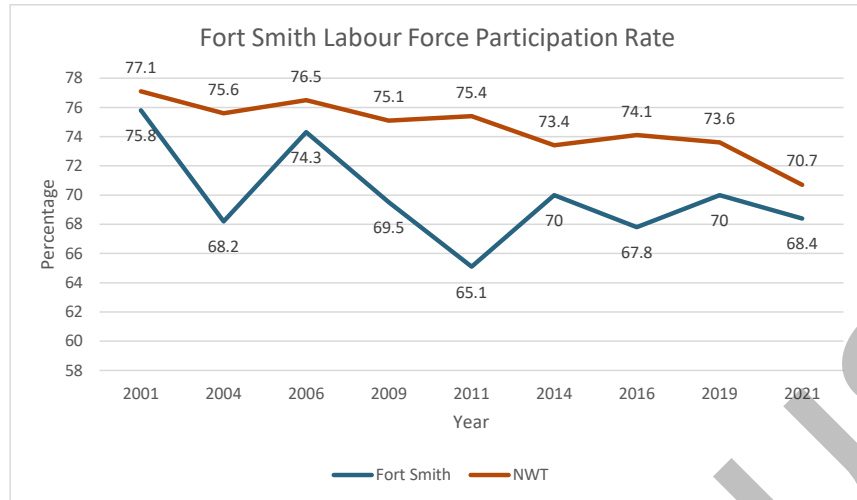
This section focuses on the economic landscape of Fort Smith. An overview of income and cost of living as well as employment status in Fort Smith is provided.

4.1 Employment

The most recent data from 2021 shows that Fort Smith had a labour force participation rate¹ of 68.4%, which is slightly lower than the territorial labour force participation rate of 70.7% (NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2023). Figure 7 below shows that the labour force participation rate has been slowly declining over the past 20 years which is consistent with the aging of the population in Fort Smith as people retire and leave the labour market at a faster rate than people are entering the labour market.

¹ Labour force participation rate refers to the percentage of people over the age of 15 who are employed in the labour force.

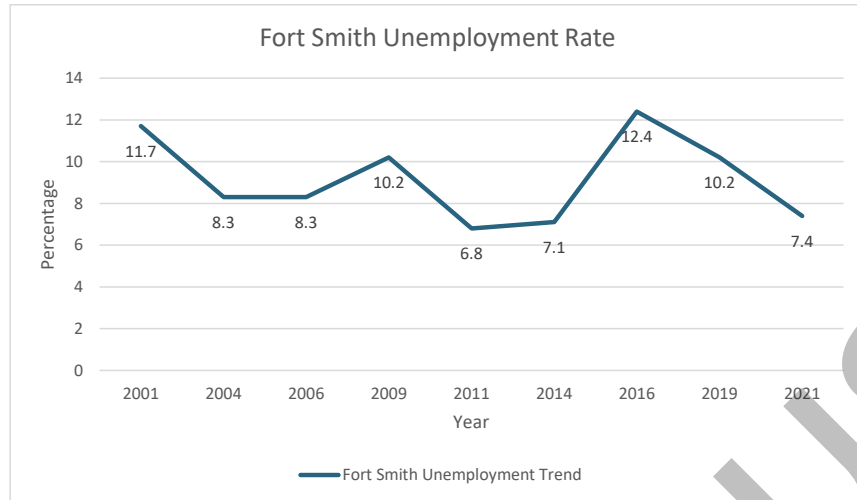
Figure 7 Fort Smith Labour Force Participation Rate



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics

In 2021 the unemployment rate in Fort Smith was 7.4% which was slightly lower than the territorial unemployment rate of 8.6% (NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2023). It is likely that the unemployment rate in Fort Smith has dropped further since 2021 since the territorial rate has dropped below 7%, however more recent data on Fort Smith’s unemployment rate was not available. Since 2001, the unemployment rate in Fort Smith has been trending down as shown in Figure 8 below.

Figure 8 Fort Smith Unemployment Rate



Source: NWT Bureau of Statistics

The top three industries for employment in Fort Smith are:

- Public Administration – 27.3%;
- Educational Services – 13.6%; and
- Health Care and Social Assistance – 10.3%.

The large proportion of the labour force working in public administration, education, and health relates to Fort Smith’s role as a regional centre for public services and the presence of Aurora College.

Table 1 below provides a more detailed breakdown of the labour force by industry type.

Table 1 Labour Force by Industry

Industry	Number of Jobs	Percentage of Jobs
Agriculture, Forestry, Fishing & Hunting	10	0.8
Mining, Quarrying, Oil and Gas Extraction	40	3.3
Utilities	10	0.8
Construction	75	6.2
Manufacturing	0	0
Wholesale Trade	15	1.2
Retail Trade	105	8.7
Transportation and Warehousing	60	5.0
Information and Cultural Industries	10	0.8

Finance and Insurance	0	0
Real Estate and Rental and Leasing	15	1.2
Professional, Scientific and Technical Services	25	2.1
Management of Companies and Enterprises	0	0
Administrative and Support, Waste Management and Remediation Services	30	2.5
Educational Services	165	13.6
Health Care and Social Assistance	125	10.3
Arts, Entertainment and Recreation	75	6.2
Accommodation and Food Services	50	4.1
Other Services (Except Public Administration)	35	2.9
Public Administration	330	27.3
Not Applicable	30	2.5
All Industries	1,180	100.0

Source: Statistics Canada, 2021

4.2 Household Income and Cost of Living

The average family income in Fort Smith in 2021 (the most recent year for which data is available) was \$139,746 (NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2023). This compares to the territorial average of \$152,292. Household incomes have been steadily rising over the past 10 years.

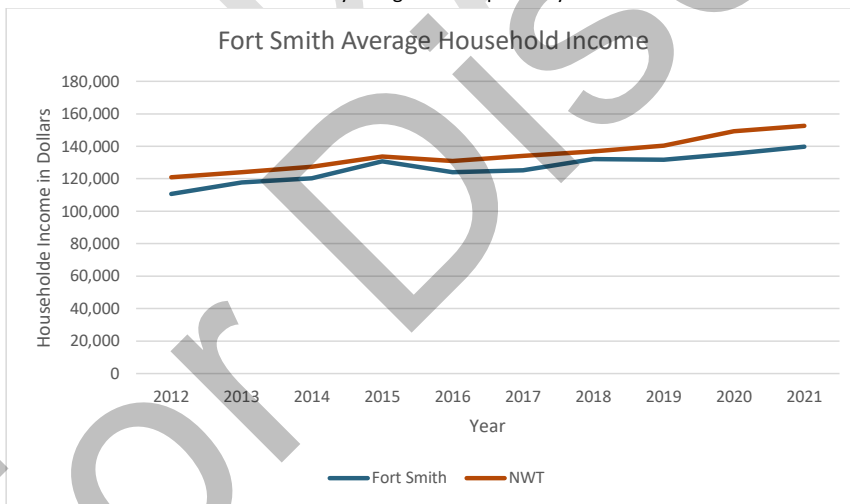


Figure 9 Fort Smith Average Household Income

The cost of living in Fort Smith is high compared to most places in Canada although somewhat cheaper than more remote communities in the NWT that are not connected to the territorial highway network. In 2018, the cost of living in Fort Smith was about 33% higher than the cost of living in Edmonton and according to the 2019 food price index, food in Fort Smith was about 19% higher than Yellowknife (NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2023). More recent data for these indicators was not available, however food costs and general inflation have risen substantially in the last few years in Fort Smith and throughout Canada.

5.0 Municipal and Government Services

Several municipal and government services are provided in Fort Smith by various governments.

The Municipal Services Department of the Town of Fort Smith provides several municipal services for the residents of the community. This includes services and infrastructure related to drinking water, sewer, solid waste, roads, drainage, sidewalks, fire and emergency services and recreational facilities.

The Government of the NWT also provides public services and owns and maintains infrastructure in Fort Smith related to health, education, and a correctional facility.

The Government of Canada provides services in the Government of Canada building and operates an office and Visitor Centre for Wood Buffalo National Park.

Indigenous governments also own and operate various buildings and other infrastructure in and around Fort Smith to serve their members.

This section will detail existing municipal services and its implications for land use in the Community Plan.

5.1 Roads, Sidewalks, and Drainage

Most roads in the Town Centre area are paved two-way streets with no on-street parking provided for. Concrete sidewalks are separated from the travelled portion of the roads by open ditches. Roads in the Bell Rock area are 2-way gravel roads, with no on-street parking provided for, and no sidewalks. Drainage and stormwater management currently uses a system of shallow, open ditches. The Town does not currently have Engineering Standards for roads or stormwater drainage. The roads in the town are generally in good condition.

The 2023-2027 Capital Investment Plan allocated funding for sidewalk repairs and improvements as well as the completion of a drainage plan. Some work has also been completed on an Integrated Transportation Master Plan and more work is planned for this initiative in the Capital Plan.

Commented [MD4]: Need to verify with town. Also are there any plans for new roads, major road upgrades, engineering standards, drainage upgrades, or sidewalk upgrades. Are roads still considered to be in good condition?

5.2 Solid Waste and Recycling

The Town manages solid waste at a modified landfill site. The site is located 9 km west of the Town off Highway 5, west of the Airport. The location of the solid waste site restricts development on adjacent properties because of the regulatory 450 m setback.

The Town also operates a recycling depot. The depot is open for recycling drop-offs on Wednesdays and Saturdays and accepts...

A private contractor currently operates a beverage container recycling depot, regulated through the Government of the NWT Beverage Recycling program.

At this time, it is not anticipated there will be a need to identify lands for relocation of the solid waste site. It is expected that, if needed, additional capacity can be increased through a combination of waste reduction and modifying operations to use the existing area more efficiently. According to the 2017 Town of Fort Smith Waste Management Plan, the existing landfill site should be able to accommodate waste at the present generation rates for 30 to 50 years.

Commented [MD5]: Need to know what it can accept. This information was not available on the website. Also is there consideration for expanded hours, new and expanded facilities or curbside recycling?

Commented [MD6]: The capital plan has allocated significant funding for landfill reclamation and expansion. I am not sure what this entails.

5.3 Water and Wastewater

The Water Treatment Plant is located on the at the corner of Primrose Lane and Pelican Street in the Town of Fort Smith.

The Town treats and distributes water throughout the municipality. The population being serviced is slightly higher than the census population of the Town of Fort Smith. Currently, about 75% of the town is on piped service with the remaining population on trucked service.

The water distribution system is not designed for distribution beyond the main town site, and the cost to provide piped services to new developments on SRFN lands or Bell Rock would be significant.

The Town provides maintains an underground piped wastewater system throughout the central Town Site, and trucked services to Bell Rock and other industrial lands. Currently, about 75% of the town is on piped wastewater service with the remaining population on trucked service.

Unless there is a large increase in water consumption, or population growth exceeds current projections, existing facilities are expected to have enough capacity for the next 25 years.

The Town is currently upgrading much of its water and wastewater infrastructure such as the water treatment plant, the intake pumphouse, hydrants, pump stations, the lagoon liner. However, the facilities will remain in their existing locations.

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5.4 Administrative Services

Town Administration is centrally located in the Town Hall on McDougal Avenue close to the Fire Hall and Town Library. The building was constructed more than 50 years ago and a major building retrofit is currently planned in the 2023-2027 Capital Plan as the building is currently at capacity as detailed in the 2019 Municipal Services Space Use Analysis Report. This will include a retrofit of the Town Hall. Other town services such as road, waste management, water, and sewer require buildings and equipment that in turn require land in suitable locations. The current locations of municipal service facilities are expected to remain adequate for the foreseeable future.

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5.5 Fire Services

A volunteer Fire Department provides fire protection and motor vehicle accident response services to all areas of Fort Smith. The Fire Department is also available to provide support in the event of structure fires, motor vehicle accidents, and urban/wildland interface wildfires, and provide high-quality pre-hospital health care and ambulance transportation as well as other emergencies.

Commented [MD9]: Need to verify this section with Town.

The Town fire hall is currently located in the town centre. The 2019 Municipal Services Space Use Analysis Report indicated that the fire hall needed significant upgrades related to ventilation, fuel storage, and circulation issues. The report recommended that the fire hall should be relocated elsewhere in the town to accommodate new drive through garage bays and avoid congestion in the town centre. Relocation of a fire hall should be considered in the Community Plan keeping in mind how relocation may impact response times while accommodating the needs of the Fire Department.

Commented [MD10]: Check this with town. Are there any sites identified for fire hall relocation?

The level of firefighting in a community can have important development implications. In the NWT the authority having jurisdiction for the National Building Code is the Office of the Fire Marshal. When reviewing development plans, acceptable fire suppression measures may vary depending on the abilities of the local fire department, flow rates and pressures of water supply services, and setbacks from property lines.

A community wildfire Protection Plan (CWPP Plan) was updated for the Town of Fort Smith in 2018. by using the most recent information, science, and expertise available. This included using standardized FireSmart assessment protocols and mitigative measures were developed.

A significant wildfire threatened the Town in 2023 and residents were forced to evacuate twice. Although the Town was largely spared from damage, significant work was completed on fire smarting and building of fire breaks. This work is planned to continue to reduce the risk of wildfires in the community. Considerations for appropriate land uses in fire break areas will need to be addressed in the Community Plan and Zoning Bylaw review. Regulations with respect to combustible roofing and siding materials may also need to be reconsidered.

5.6 Public Works

The public works garage is located at...

Commented [MD11]: Need more information. Any plan to expand or relocate public works garage or related infrastructure (storage etc.)?

5.7 Community Recreation Services

The Town delivers recreation programs and maintains facilities, as well as supporting several non-profit agencies and organizations that deliver recreation programming. Fort Smith has a wealth of recreational and community facilities, for a town of its size. The Town operates the following recreation facilities:

- **Community and Recreation Centre** – The facility includes a squash court, gymnasium, fitness and weight room, swimming pool, curling rink, youth centre, seniors' centre, senior's room, curling lounge, and a multi-purpose room.
- **William Schaefer Memorial Pool** – The pool includes four 25 meter lanes for lane swimming as well as a slide and shallow beach area.
- **Centennial Arena** – Ice rink used for ice hockey and skating. In the summer it used for concerts, playgroups, and indoor sporting events.
- **Mary Kaeser Library** – Public library with books, magazines, electronic media, and sitting and study areas.

The Town also maintains a number of outdoor recreational facilities such as playgrounds, skatepark, parks, baseball diamonds, and a tennis court.

Other recreational facilities in the Town include a golf club, cross-country ski club, snowboarding hill, and recreational trails used for hiking, skiing, snowshoeing, and snowmobiling.

No major new recreational facilities are currently planned in Fort Smith. However, the Capital Plan identifies the following recreational facilities for expansion, upgrade, or retrofit:

- Snowboard park and lookout development;
- Skatepark upgrade;
- Bike track development;
- Conibear park development; and
- Pool retrofit

It is not anticipated that new land will need to be identified for these projects.

Commented [MD12]: Verify with Town. Information is based on Town website, Capital Plan, and previous Background Report.

5.8 Education

The Thebacha Campus and Headquarters of Aurora College are located in Fort Smith. The campus offers university degree programs, as well technical training and apprenticeship programs. Student housing is located on several nearby sites. Much of the student housing needs replacement. The *Polytechnic University Facilities Master Plan* states that 100 new housing units are required to replace aging student

housing and provide more housing options for families. Three potential development sites are listed for new facilities:

- Site 1: The former Mount Aven housing site;
- Site 2: Town-owned site between the running track and Breynat Hall, north of the tennis courts; and
- Site 3: The parking lot in front of Breynat Hall.

Commented [MD13]: Not sure if there is something else to add here based on meeting with Aurora College.

There are two schools located within Fort Smith. Joseph Burr Tyrrell Elementary School offers classes to students in kindergarten to grade 6, and Paul William Kaeser High School is open to students from grades 7 through 12. The South Slave Divisional Education Council also has offices in Fort Smith. There are no expansion plans for either of the schools, although at some time in the foreseeable future the buildings, dating from the 1950's and 60's, will need to be replaced.

Commented [MD14]: Any plans to expand, retrofit, or replace schools?

All educational facilities are located on lands reserved for educational uses by the Government of the NWT.

Commented [MD15]: To confirm with Town

5.9 **Health and Social Services**

The Northwest Territories Health and Social Services Authority of the Fort Smith Region operates two facilities in the Town:

- **The Fort Smith Health Centre** – A health facility with acute care beds, birthing rooms, x-ray and laboratory testing, offices, and clinical examination rooms; and
- **The Northern Lights Special Care Home** - 28 bed assisted living facility.

No major expansion or relocation of either facility is currently planned.

Commented [MD16]: Info added. Still waiting for clarification on Town Center development permits.

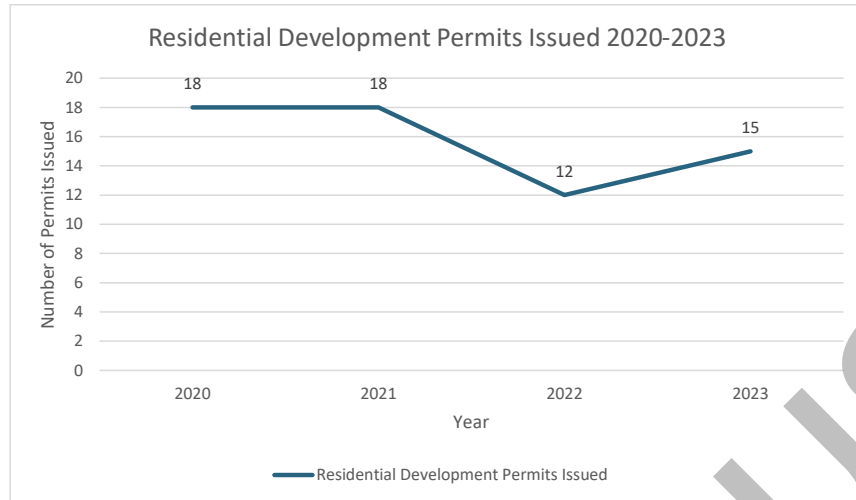
6.0 **Development Activity**

This section provides a summary of development activity in Fort Smith from 2020 to 2023 based on development permits issued by the Town of Fort Smith.

6.1 **Residential Development and Home Occupations**

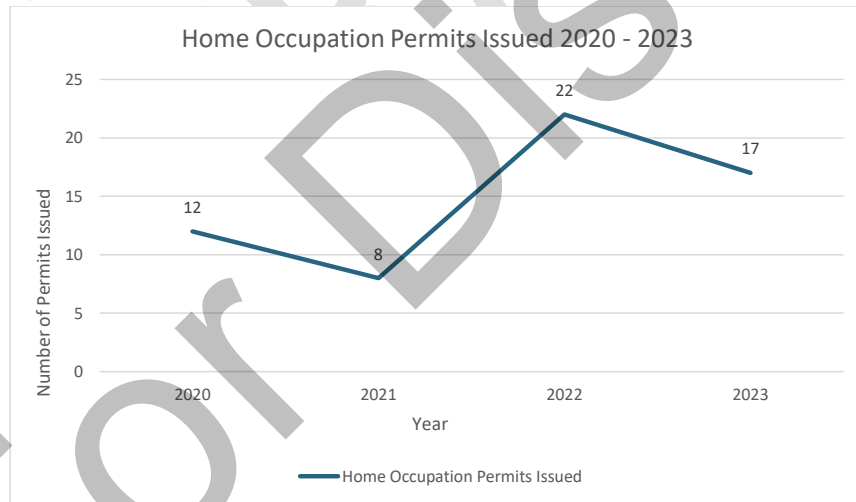
Based on development permits issued, about 15 residential permits are issued per year in Fort Smith. **Figure 10** details the number of residential development permits issued from 2020 to 2023.

Figure 10 Residential Permits Issued 2020-2023



Between 2020 and 2023 an average of about 15 home occupation permits were issued per year. However, significantly more home occupation permits were issued in 2022 and 2023 compared to 2020 and 2021 indicating that there is a trend towards more home-based occupations.

Figure 11 Home Occupation Permits Issued 2020-2023



6.2 Commercial Development

Only one commercial development permit was issued from 2020 to 2023. The development permit was issued in 2023.

6.3 Industrial Development

Three industrial development permits were issued from 2020 to 2023. There were no industrial development permits issued in 2020 and one each in 2021, 2022, and 2023.

6.4 Institutional Development

Four institutional development permits were issued from 2020 to 2023. One permit was issued in 2022 and three permits were issued in 2023.

7.0 Land Use Supply and Demand Analysis

This section provides an analysis of how residential, commercial, and industrial land is currently being used within the municipal boundaries of the Town of Fort Smith, and whether lots are occupied or vacant. The analysis also provides projections on how much residential, commercial, and industrial land may be required based on different population scenarios.

Methodology

A land inventory from MACA's Atlas system was used since it provides legal descriptions, authorities and areas for all parcels of land with the municipal boundary of Fort Smith. The Town's property tax assessment data was then used to determine whether lots are occupied or vacant. The information from these two sources was combined to analyze the current land supply and demand.

Limitations of Analysis

The analysis in this section has some limitations:

- MACA's Atlas data and property tax assessment may not reflect very recent changes for new development in the Town as these sources are only updated periodically;
- A variety of factors can impact demand for land development including economic growth, changes in population, changes in demographics, and changes in the types of industry locating in a community. The following analysis only considers changes in population as the main factor for forecasting land demand; and
- Although land may be vacant and zoned for a specific use, it may not be suitable for development for a variety of reasons that may include but are not limited to access to municipal services, proximity to amenities, constraints to road access, challenging soil conditions, and poor drainage.

The limitations listed above should be kept in mind when interpreting the data throughout this section.

7.1 Residential Supply and Demand

There is a total of 939 ha of residential land of which 166 ha are currently developed and 773 ha are vacant. However, it should be noted that not all vacant land is serviced. 890 residential lots are currently developed, and 433 residential lots remain undeveloped.

The table below shows that land area of between 3.9 ha and 13.8 ha would provide adequate residential land for a population of up to 3,200 people depending on the residential density mix.

Table 2 Projected Residential Land Area Requirements

Residential Density Mix	Population*		
	2,800	3,000	3,200
	Land Needs (ha) ²		
90% single detached dwellings, 10% multi-unit dwellings	5.9	9.9	13.8
80% single detached dwellings, 20% multi-unit dwellings	5.4	9	12.7
60% single detached dwellings, 40% multi-unit dwellings	4.4	7.4	10.3
50% single detached dwellings, 50% multi-unit dwellings	3.9	6.5	9.2

*Current population approximately 2,500

With the current supply of residential land, there is enough supply available for all population and residential density mixes shown in Table 2.

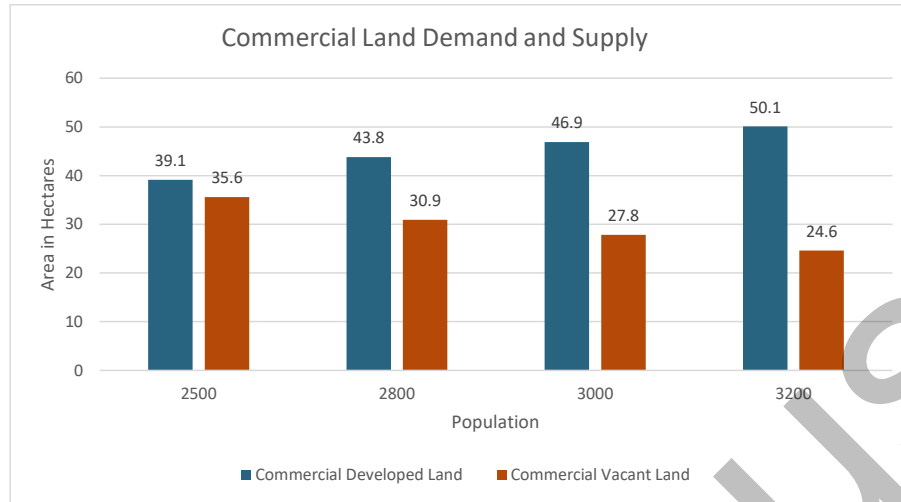
7.2 Commercial Supply and Demand

There is a total of nearly 75 ha of commercially zoned land in Fort Smith. 39.1 ha of land are currently developed, and 35.6 ha of land are vacant. 84 commercial lots are developed, and 94 commercial lots remain undeveloped.

Figure 10 below shows that based on the current ratio of commercial land per capita (0.016 ha/person), there would be more than enough commercial land supply to satisfy population growth to 3,200.

² Single detached dwelling calculated using 557 m²/lot, and multi-unit dwelling calculated using 125 m²/lot.

Figure 12 Commercial Land Demand and Supply

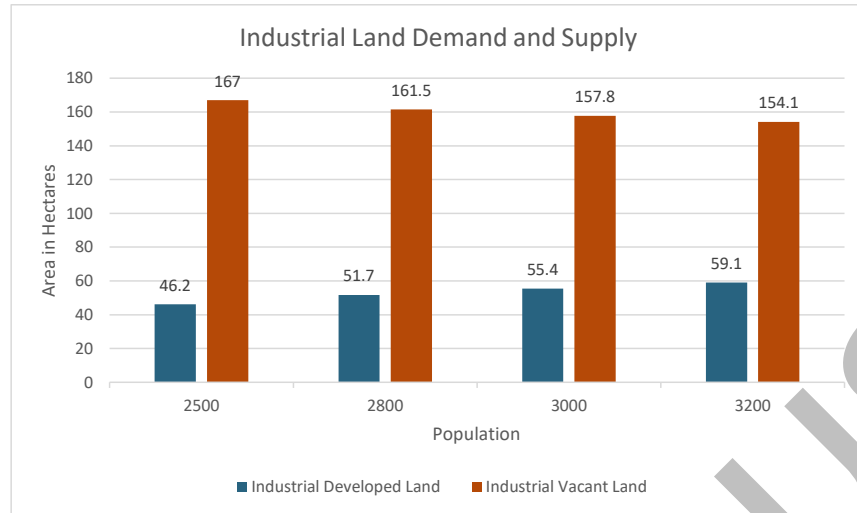


7.3 Industrial Supply and Demand

There is a total of 213 ha of industrially zoned land in Fort Smith. 46.2 ha of land are currently developed, and 167 ha of land are vacant. 33 industrial lots are developed, and 28 industrial lots remain undeveloped.

Figure 11 below shows that based on the current ratio of industrial land per capita (0.018 ha/person), there would be more than enough industrial land supply to satisfy population growth to 3,200.

Figure 13 Industrial Land Demand and Supply

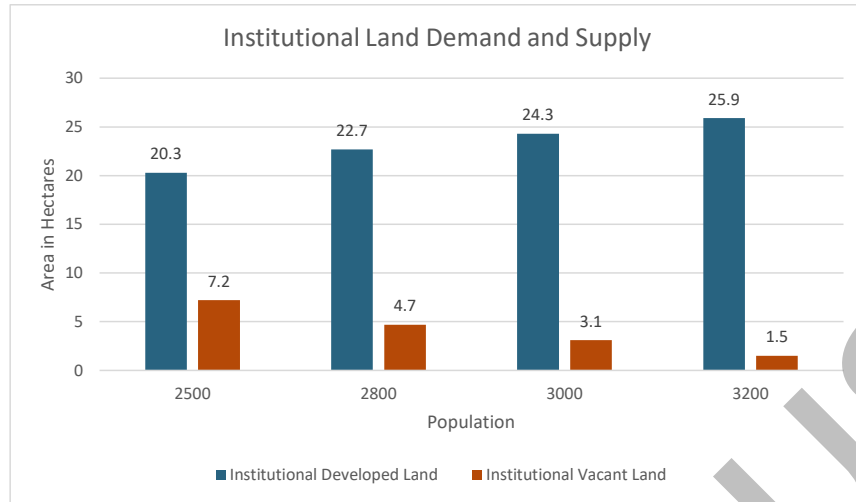


7.4 Institutional/Municipal Supply and Demand

There is a total of 27 ha of institutional zoned land in Fort Smith. 20.3 ha of land are currently developed, and 7.2 ha of land are vacant. 28 industrial lots are developed, and 21 industrial lots remain undeveloped.

Figure 12 below shows that based on the current ratio of institutional land per capita (0.008 ha/person), there would be enough institutional land supply to satisfy population growth to 3,200. However, the supply of vacant institutional land at a population of 3,200 would only be 1.5 ha. Although, this is not a lot of additional supply, it would likely be possible to rezone vacant residential or commercial land for institutional purposes if more land was required.

Figure 14 Institutional Land Demand and Supply



8.0 Land Administration

This section of the report reviews the systems and procedures that the Town uses to administer lands in the municipality.

8.1 Land Inventory

The Town of Fort Smith currently maintains information in their GIS mapping information system that provides all information needed to manage land in the municipality. Regular reviews of the Community Plan provide an opportunity to review the land inventory and identify any need for adjustments.

8.2 First Nations Lands Within the Municipal Boundary

Fort Smith is one of several municipalities in Canada where First Nations have settled land claims for tracts of land within the municipal boundary. The Town of Fort Smith has adopted a Municipal Services Agreement with Salt River First Nation. This agreement, which outlines the rights and responsibilities of the two parties in terms of services and taxation was renewed in XXXX and expires in XXXX. Any significant changes to the terms of this agreement upon renewal may have an impact on the Town’s land administration.

Commented [MD17]: Need to verify with Town. Previous agreement was set to be renewed in 2015 but I am not sure of exact date and renewal date.

Investment Climate

The demographic profile in this report showed that there has been no significant growth in the population of the Town of Fort Smith in the past several years and the community continues to age. Low demand for new commercial and residential building in the Town presents a challenge for new development in the Town Centre and makes it challenging to grow the tax base to fund municipal services. The Community Plan should consider policies to encourage development of vacant and underutilized land within the Town to support economic development objectives and revitalize the Town Centre.

Commented [MD18]: Not sure if you want a formal conclusion after this section or if you want the report to just end like this.

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For Discussion

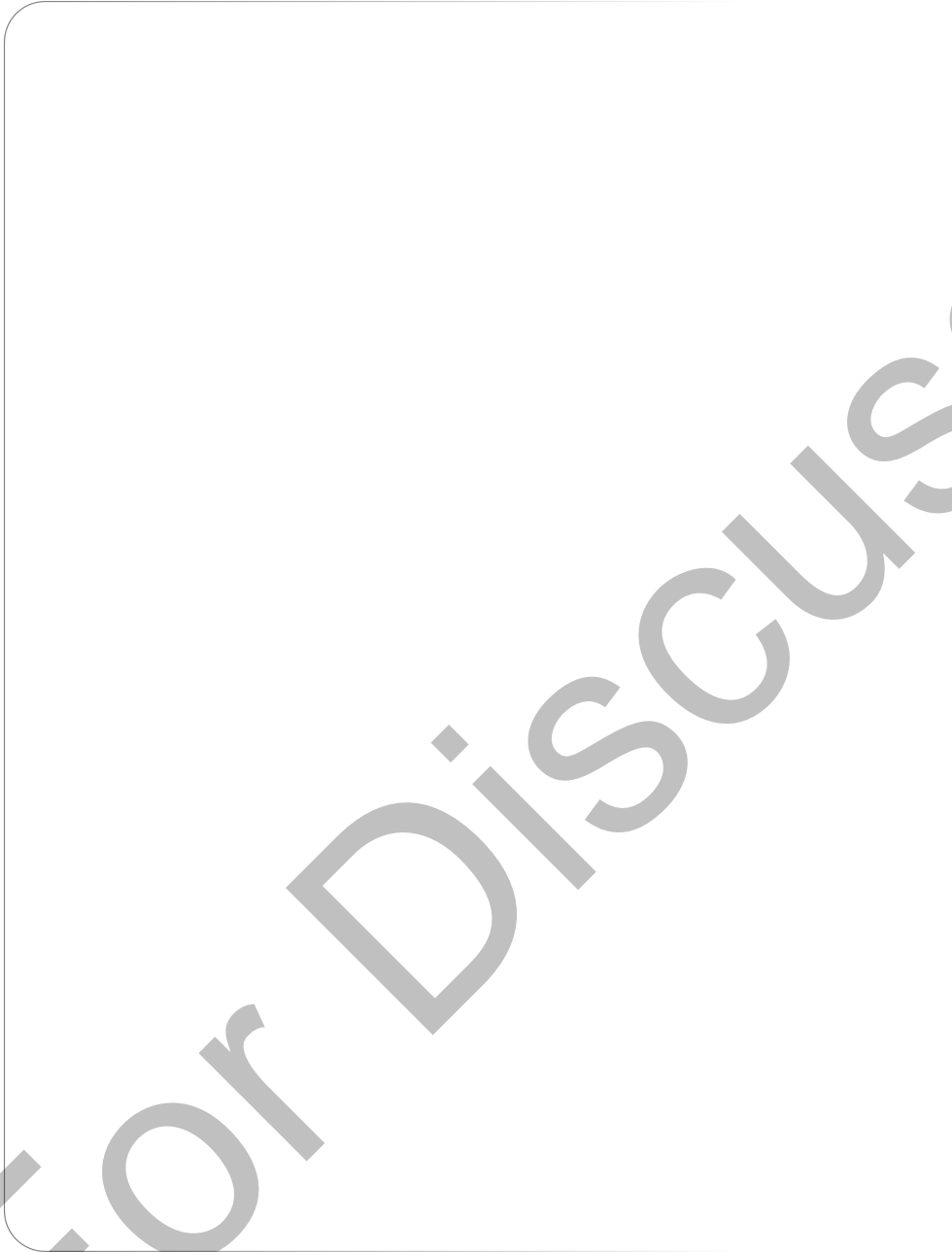
Figures – 1

Figures

Town of fort smith
Background Report
Month 20xx – xx-xxxx



Figures – 2



For Discussion

Tables

For Discussion

Appendix A

Engagement Record

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Appendix B

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Appendix C

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References

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