Affordable Housing in Rural Areas

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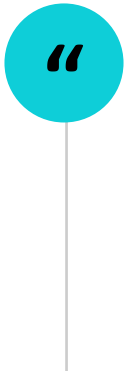
What are we going to cover today?

- Common housing issues in rural areas
- Strategies to address housing issues in rural areas
- A few stories from elsewhere

CONTEXT.

Common housing issues and strategies in rural areas.

Rural communities and electoral areas experience many of the **same housing issues** that we observe in urban communities. They typically have **less resources, capacity or tools** to address these challenges.



Context

- Demonstrating housing needs, gaps and issues can be done in rural communities including electoral areas even with limited data

- A common challenge is moving beyond a research study and towards a tangible, viable housing project due to many contextual factors: economy, capacity, costs, etc.

| Common Issues: Aging Population

- Stay, and age-in-place
  - Aging households remain within their homes as long as they can live independently
  - Adapt homes to meet lifestyle needs and health changes
  - Rural areas often have limited capacity and resources to support seniors aging in place
  - Distance to **healthcare infrastructure** is a factor

- Leave, sell and downsize
  - Few or no options for age-friendly, accessible housing options
  - Can **get "stuck"** / can't sell rural homes if no buyers

| Common Issues: Resource-based Communities

- BC's resource based communities are **subject to market fluctuations** and market commodity price changes

- **Booms:** major economic investment -> land speculation / assembly, absorption, lower vacancy, increasing prices, out-of-towners block book motels / temporary accommodation, capacity issues to manage change

- **Busts:** curtailments, closures, decline -> deferred housing maintenance, deteriorating housing stock, risk of underwater mortgages, no buyers for sellers (e.g. "stuck seniors"), capacity issues to manage change

Common Issues: Proximity

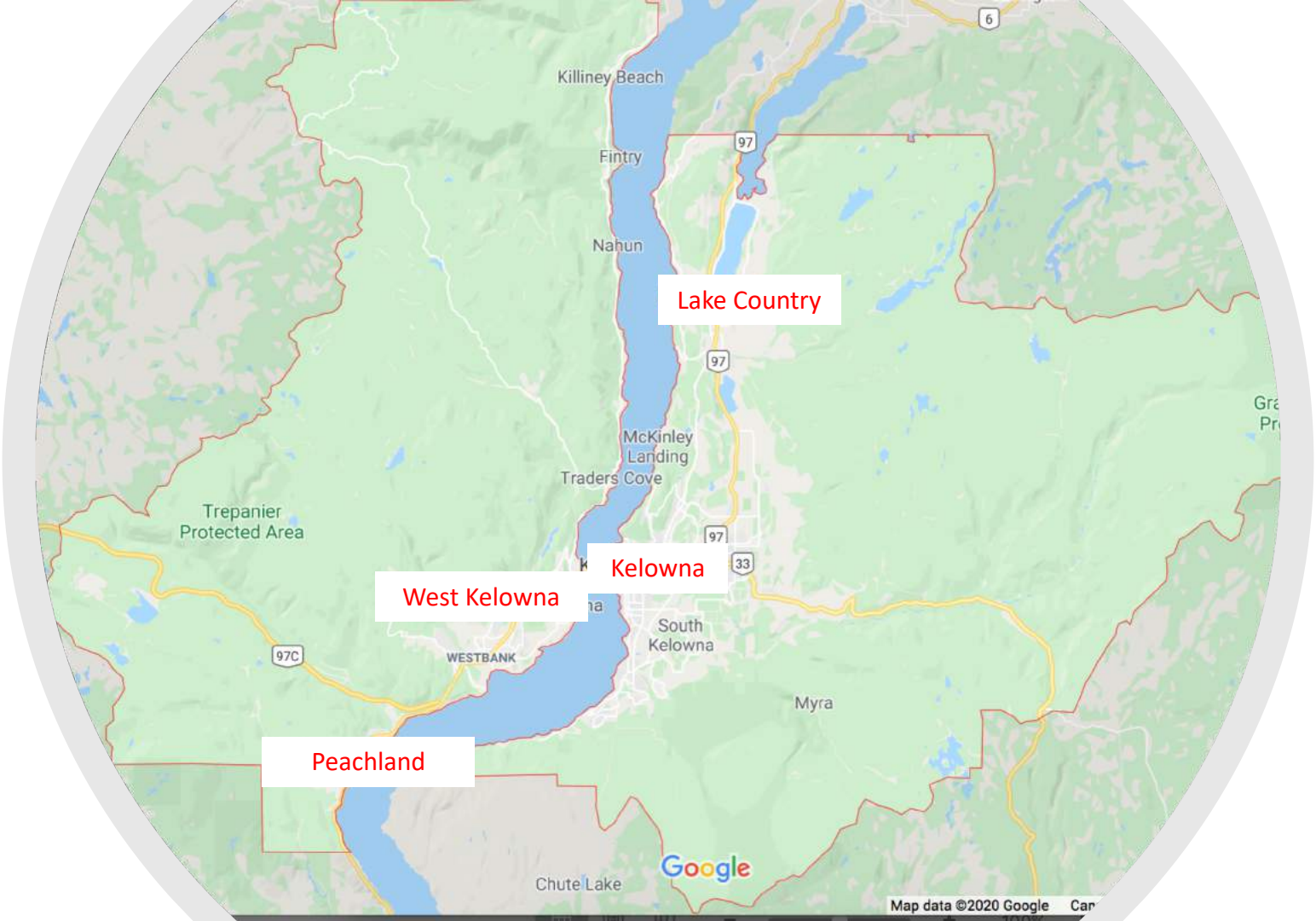
- Density, servicing, land use
- Transportation
- Support services
- Healthcare infrastructure
- Construction costs (e.g. getting trades and material to site)
- Willing and able partners, funders and operators
- The default is to concentrate affordable housing in more urbanized areas to be in close proximity of services

Common Strategies

- Needs Assessments, Policies, Strategies, Action Plans (especially land use planning such as Regional Growth Strategies, allocating future residential growth and development)
  - Need to demonstrate evidence and business case (site-specific feasibility studies, business plan, proforma -> affordability of units)
- Partnerships
- Linking into other programs (like healthcare)
- Repurposing buildings and structures
- Cluster development

RDCO

Regional Housing Needs Assessment.


Killiney Beach
Fintry
Nahun
Lake Country
McKinley Landing
Traders Cove
Trepanier Protected Area
Kelowna
West Kelowna
South Kelowna
WESTBANK
Myra
Peachland
Chute Lake
Google
Map data ©2020 Google
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| RDCO: Example Planning Process

- Regional Housing Needs Assessment (2019)

- Strong focus on integrating regional transportation planning and regional housing planning

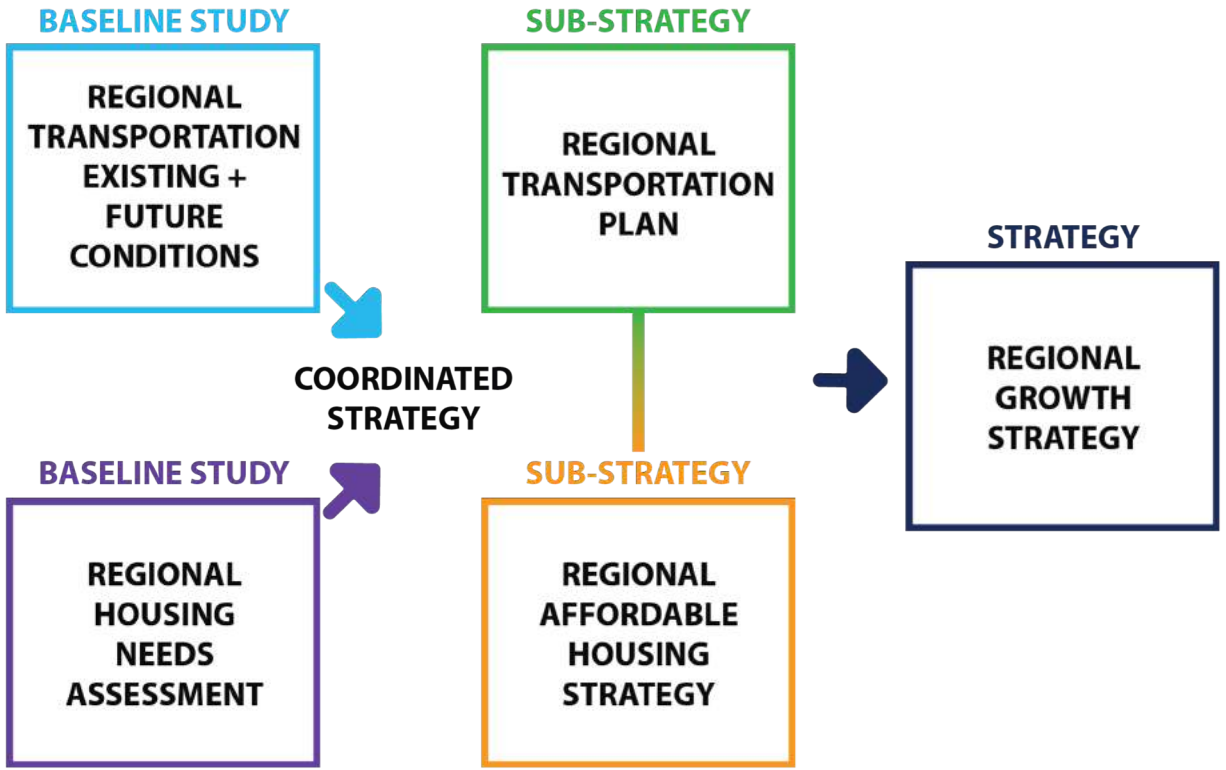
| RDCO: Example Planning Process

- RDCO is one of the fastest growing regions in the province, expecting ~ 60,000 more people by the year 2036
- Unintended consequences of growth – lack of suitable, affordable housing for workforce, family, seniors, and low-income households

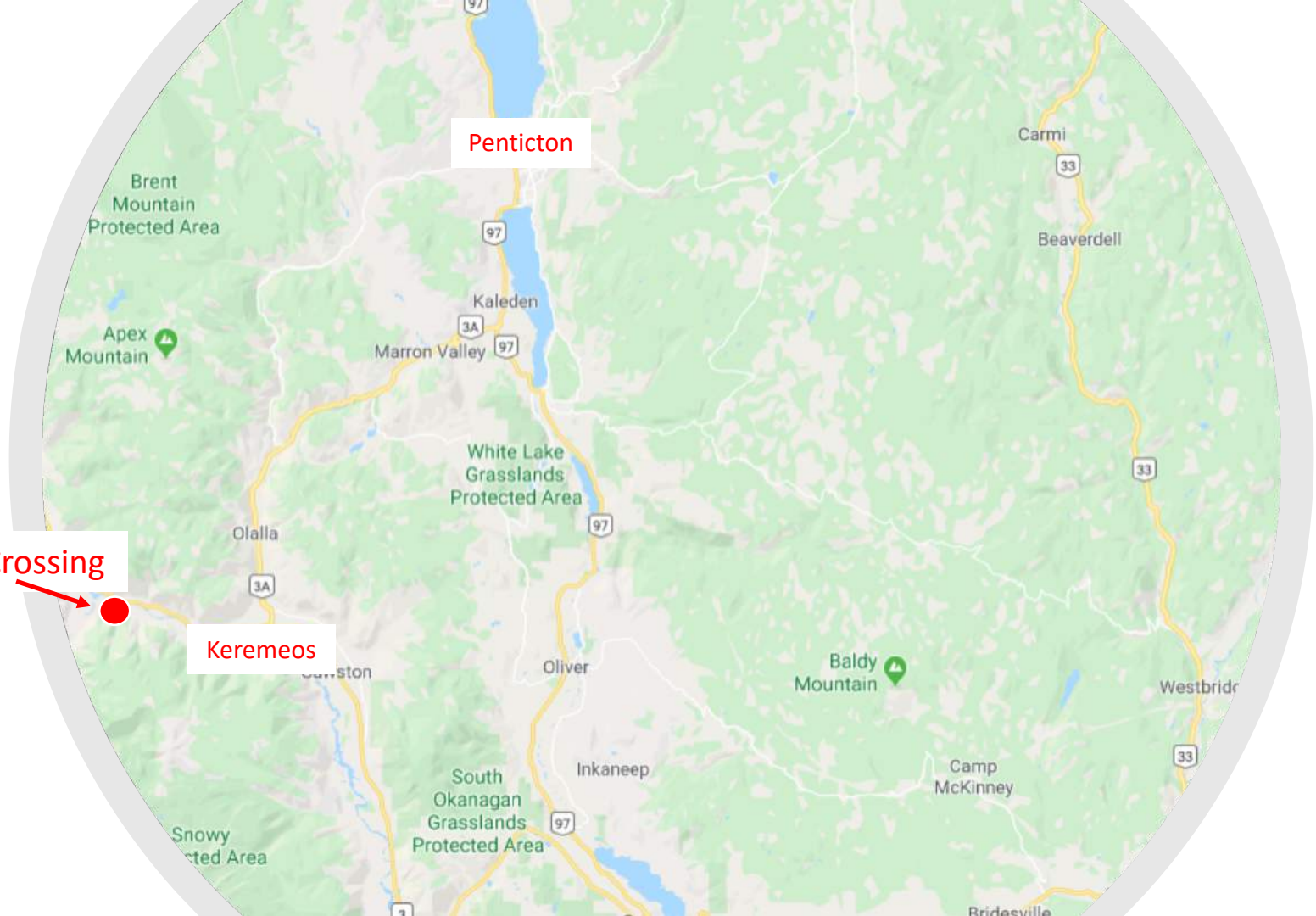
| RDCO: Example Planning Process

- The conundrum for the region is the approach to managing growth.
- Concentrating housing in the core employment area (City of Kelowna) can support a regional centre, leveraging land economics to create mixed-use, walkable streets and neighbourhoods, concentrate growth with existing infrastructure.
- However, market rental and homeownership prices are often more affordable outside the core, and are more aligned with the median income level of the local population.

| RDCO: Example Planning Process



The Crossing At
Keremeos.


Penticton
Carmi
Brent Mountain Protected Area
Beaverdell
Kaleden
Apex Mountain
Marron Valley
White Lake Grasslands Protected Area
The Crossing
Olalla
Keremeos
Oliver
Baldy Mountain
Inkaneep
Camp McKinney
South Okanagan Grasslands Protected Area
Snowy
97
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| The Crossing (the original)

- Opened in 2009, BC's first long-term residential treatment facility to support youth (ages 17 to 24) challenged by addictions
- Conversion and addition of new buildings to create a 42-bed facility at a former adventure ranch - located on a 58-acre site the Similkameen Valley
- Capital cost: $6.5 million
- Construction included new classrooms, renovation and conversion of bedrooms, activity rooms, kitchen/dining and garden. Installation of fully independent water supply, sewage treatment and a reservoir and sprinkler system for fire fighting

The Cross
at Keremeos

The Crossing

- Central City Foundation (capital cost/fundraising)
- 3 Health Authorities signed an agreement:
  - Interior Health
  - Fraser Health
  - Vancouver Coastal Health
- CitySpaces (project managers)

| The Crossing reopened as Ashnola

- Closed in 2015, reopened as Ashnola at the Crossing in 2017 with new non-profit operator
- Operates through partnerships (Central City Foundation, BC Mental Health and Substance Use Services, Pacific Community Resource Society)

| The Crossing – Key Takeaways

- Repurposing existing structures in rural areas
- Partnerships that extend beyond jurisdictional boundaries
- Housing project was grounded in need and fits the context of the site and rural nature of area

Recap.

Recap

- Rural areas experience many of the same housing issues observed in urban communities, but they have less resources/capacity/tools to address them
- Default is to concentrate affordable housing in more urbanized areas to be in close proximity of services
- Attracting interest and investment to rural housing development can be supported by regional planning efforts, feasibility studies, and making strategic decisions / strategic partnerships to ensure a housing proposal will meet the need while maintaining long-term sustainability (e.g. sustainable operations, financial sustainability)

THANK YOU.

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