What is Affordable Housing in Yellowknife?

A guide to options, barriers and alternatives
What can we afford?

**Joe**

...is a single man in his 50s. He is a labourer but doesn’t have his journeyman ticket. The jobs he accesses are lower paid than his skilled colleagues. He worked at a diamond mine with a 2 week in/out rotation. He was laid off when production began to wind down. Joe finds seasonal work in construction. He works long hours in the summer and makes decent money. In the off-season, it’s harder to get by. His annual income is high enough that he is not eligible for income assistance and can’t access public housing. Joe rents an apartment from the main rental company in town. It’s expensive and he worries every month about paying his rent.

**Paula**

...is a woman in her mid 20s who lives at the women’s shelter. She enjoys living there because she feels lonely when she is on her own. Her two children live in Yellowknife with her sister. She likes having a relationship with them, even though they do not live with her. Paula moved to Yellowknife several years ago in order to be able to access social and health supports that she needed in her life. She has stayed in the city ever since, despite her difficulties in finding housing. She feels that she gets the supports she needs in Yellowknife and does not want to go back home.

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**Low-Income Rentals**

Neither Paula nor Joe could access low-income rentals due to long waiting lists and few units available for single adults.

**Shelters And Transitional Housing**

Joe would have trouble finding space in a shelter and Paula would be on a waiting list to get a transitional housing unit for her entire family.

**Private Rentals**

Paula would not be able to access due to high rents and a high percentage of Joe’s wage would go to rent.

**Temporary Housing**

Neither Paula nor Joe could afford one of the few hotel or motel options in Yellowknife. They are too expensive and there are few vacancies.
What are the barriers to affordable housing?

**Inability To Pay Rent**
Rental arrears with the Housing Corporation make it impossible to access public housing across the NWT, and affects one’s references when trying to access private rental housing.

**High Costs**
Private rental market rates are very high and for many people, are quite inaccessible and often inaccessible to people on social assistance.

**Intergenerational Trauma**
 Experienced by many northerners, and needs to be taken into account when designing housing models. Wraparound services, culturally-relevant programming and co-living scenarios are ways in which housing can address the effects of trauma.

**Industry**
Non-renewable resource development impacts affordable housing. The intermittent demand for housing raises property values and the demand for rental housing. It has a lasting impact.

**Private Rental Monopoly**
Limited options in private rental and public housing impact single individuals most acutely, and Indigenous individuals the most.

**New Build Construction**
Building new housing is challenging in the NWT due to prohibitive cost of materials, high transportation costs, and low supply of local skilled labour.
Creating a Yellowknife Solution

Alternative Housing Models
Building tiny homes, co-operative housing and non-market communal housing are key to creating affordable and sustainable housing in Yellowknife.

New Transitional Housing Models
The few affordable housing options in YK leave many in transitional housing wondering where to move next. At the same time, wraparound supports could better reflect the strengths of northern communities and cultures.

Community-Focused Housing
Building housing is about building community and homes. Creating affordable housing that encourages neighbours to talk, share meals and social time is key to long-term solutions for temporary and permanent housing.

Permanent Supportive Housing
Many northerners want and need to live in supportive living environments long-term. Permanent supportive housing would allow for greater support and communal living for those who need it.

Rent Control
Setting limits on the amount of rent a property owner can charge for rental units (set by the territorial government) would create more secure and affordable housing for families and single individuals.

Vacant Lots
Converting empty commercial and rental lots into housing in collaboration with the municipal government and Indigenous governments would change the housing landscape.

What you can do:
1. **Contact your local leaders** (Mayor & Councillors, NWT Housing Corporation, MLAs, MP and Chief and Council)
2. **Educate yourself** on housing issues in your community
3. **Talk to your neighbours** and listen to the experiences of people living with housing insecurity.
4. **Get involved** with local advocacy groups and donate to existing programs.

If you need housing assistance in Yellowknife contact...

1. **The SideDoor** www.sidedooryk.com
2. **YWCA NWT** www.ywcanwt.ca
3. **Salvation Army Shelter** (867) 0920-HOPE (4673)
4. **Yellowknife Women’s Society** www.ykws.ca
For more information on housing and homelessness in Yellowknife

City of Yellowknife’s 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness
www.bit.ly/yk10yearplan

Government of Northwest Territories Housing Corporation
www.nwthc.gov.nt.ca

Alternatives North
alternativesnorth.ca

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