

PLAN HIGHLIGHTS

The Town of Smithers Child Care Plan provides a **snapshot of current + future child care needs** and identifies **actions** that the community can take to support child care space-creation. The plan was shaped by community engagement, results of a child care inventory & projected child population trends.

SMITHERS CHILD CARE NEEDS



INFANT / TODDLER SPACES

While there is a need for more child care spaces and program types in Smithers, there is a notable shortage of infant & toddler spaces



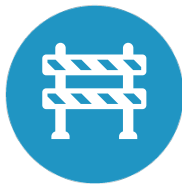
FLEXIBLE + EXTENDED HOUR OPTIONS

There are no licensed care options for those requiring care beyond traditional working hours, including before school care & drop-in



FAMILY HUB APPROACH

There is a lack of child care co-located with uses that serve families, such as schools, civic, recreation & family service organizations



SPACE CREATION BARRIERS

Suitability and availability of potential child care facilities, lack of affordable purchase / lease rates & staffing challenges are key barriers to space creation



AFFORDABILITY

There are affordability challenges both for child care fees and within the overall high cost of living in Smithers. Accessing affordability benefits and child care information is also a challenge



CARE + SUPPORTS FOR VULNERABLE FAMILIES

Care for vulnerable families are limited, notably indigenous-led care, no Young Parent Program, and care offered in conjunction with wrap-around services in safe & trusted environments

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Child care spaces are needed to close the current gap



- Based on projected child **population** + **assessment** results
- Priority for **infant / toddler** spaces + **flexible** care options
- Requires **monitoring**, community **dialogue** + **collaboration**

WAYS TO SUPPORT SPACE CREATION

While there are ways the Town of Smithers can influence child care, it is limited in its staff capacity, budget, and lack of a child care mandate or legislative role. Addressing local child care needs is a **shared responsibility** that requires community partners to **work together**. The strategy areas and actions are a **starting point** to address local space needs that will **evolve into the future**.

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CREATE A LOCAL FRAMEWORK

These are **direct steps** the Town can take to enable child care space creation both now and in the future. The framework includes changes to the Town's structures that recognizes child care as a core community need and broadens support for where child care facilities can be located in Smithers.

ACTION IDEAS

- Establish local policy
- Update zoning regulations
- Create tax incentives
- Periodic monitoring

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ACTIVELY PARTNER IN SPACE CREATION

These are steps the Town and community can take to broaden the conversation on potential spaces, share information and leverage funding opportunities. This strategy shifts thinking from the "child care problem" to looking at the "**child care opportunity**" in Smithers.

ACTION IDEAS

- Share plan findings
- Support co-location
- Support reduced lease rates
- Explore use of Town land

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ADVOCATE + COMMUNICATE

Advocating and communicating are **foundational actions** that the Town and community can take to support continued policy changes at higher levels of government, share information and continue the dialogue in the community.

ACTION IDEAS

- Advocate to Province
- Provide care information
- Participate in discussions

MOVING FORWARD

Looking to the future, there are a number of **opportunities** that the Town can take now to begin to proactively address child care space shortages. These include:



2021 Official Community Plan & Zoning Bylaw Update is an opportunity to incorporate new child care policies in the OCP and broadening land use regulations.



Future Town Planning Projects are opportunities to consider the potential for child care as a vibrant mixed-use element. Examples include the new Central Park Plan & BC Housing projects.



Town's Asset Management Plan for Town-owned buildings is an opportunity to consider leveraging available child care funding to upgrade and enhance aging facilities.