



# Building Better Homes and Communities

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## ACT Solutions

### *New Plan Reflects Northern City's Unique Character Iqaluit, Nunavut Territory*

#### **Issue**

As Canada's newest capital city (designated in 1999), Iqaluit attracts residents from all over the eastern Arctic, as well as from southern communities. This net migration, coupled with Nunavut's high birth rate, means rapid growth. At the 2001 census, Iqaluit's population was about 5,500, a 24 per cent increase over the 1996 figure. Municipal forecasts predict that by 2022, the town will have between 9,000 and 12,000 citizens.

Iqaluit has struggled to manage this rapid growth. Its land use review and control procedures were weak and unfocused, and the municipality lacked the capacity to enforce its own bylaws. Construction faces a unique challenge, given that all materials have to be shipped in by sea and the building season is quite short.

#### **Plan**

In 2001, Council hired staff and made organizational changes to ensure bylaw compliance. It also

hired a consultant to review its land use management procedures. The consultant recommended a general development review and updating of the General Plan and zoning bylaw before developing any new policies and procedures.

Council agreed with this assessment and voted to create a new General Plan to guide the overall development of Iqaluit and its related residential needs for the next 20 years.

#### **Project team**

FoTenn Consultants Inc.  
Northern Futures (industry)  
Iqaluit Director of Planning and  
Lands  
Nunavut Housing Corporation

#### **Results**

Iqaluit began its General Plan project in May 2002, and a little over a year later Council adopted a new General Plan and a Zoning By-law to implement the Plan.



**Hilltop view of Iqaluit, Nunavut Territory**

Source: FoTenn Consultants

Extensive public consultation through community workshops and focus groups, including a meeting with community Elders, was at the heart of the planning process. All relevant materials were prepared in both English and Inuktituk.

The Plan had to be culturally and socially appropriate. In the North, land is not seen as private domain. Access to the land and sea are very important to support traditional activities. Culturally significant areas, such as berry-

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picking areas and significant archaeological sites, had to be preserved.

With respect to housing, the Plan notes that housing supply problems are linked to the high cost of serviced land and of building and operating homes in the Arctic. All buildings in Iqaluit obtain water and sewer services either by truck (38%) or via a piped system (62%). Development beyond existing sewer and water limits, especially in Arctic conditions, requires major infrastructure investment. The City therefore gives high priority to making maximum use of existing infrastructure through infill, re-development and increased densities.

The Plan states that the city needs more housing of all types to address a growing population and to relieve crowded conditions. It also needs affordable housing for residents with special needs and to help local employers recruit new employees. The Plan supports group homes and ensures they are effectively integrated into the community by permitting them in all designated residential areas, except in a manufactured home community.

The Plan also strives to improve housing affordability by providing a range of housing types. Semi-detached homes, duplexes and manufactured homes are all permitted in the Low Density Residential Zone along with single-detached units. Many leaseholders are taking advantage of these new zone uses to creatively build two units on a lot instead of just one unit. In addition, secondary suites are permitted within any detached or semi-detached homes.

In the far North, the costs for supplying heat, and upgrading and operating power generation, water and sewage treatment plants, are high. To promote a sustainable community, the Plan instructs Council to encourage lot layout and building orientation to maximize solar exposure and to promote energy-efficient building designs. It also calls upon Council to encourage water

conservation methods because of the energy costs involved in the treatment and supply of potable water, and the disposal and treatment of sewage.

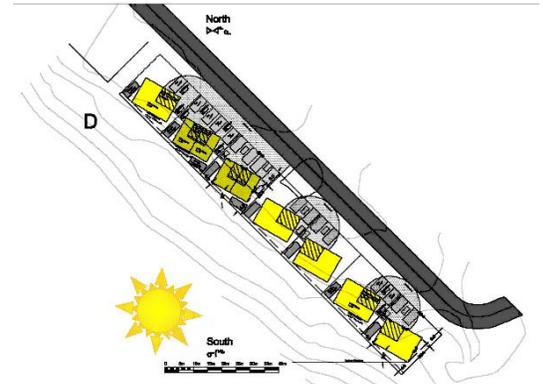
Safe, convenient access to snowmobile trails and paths for people to use when walking to and from work or shopping, which a significant number of residents do, are also important aspects of Iqaluit's Plan.

All these policies are being implemented in the new Plateau Subdivision through the use of a new Lot Development Standard. According to Clarissa Lo, Assistant Planner for Iqaluit, as of February 2006, nine housing units had been built there with another seven approved. Ten of the 16 units are low-density housing. In addition, she said, the municipality was processing a number of applications for multi-unit developments for construction in the summer of 2006.

### **Related reports**

*Development Permit Process Development* (Chrystal Fuller, Director of Planning and Lands, City of Iqaluit, Nunavut, 2003)

This report is available from ACT's website. See "ACT projects & solutions". Iqaluit's General Plan and Zoning By-law are also available on ACT's website and the City of Iqaluit website at [www.city.iqaluit.nu.ca](http://www.city.iqaluit.nu.ca).



**Houses in the Plateau subdivision are oriented to maximize solar gain.**

Source: FoTenn Consultants

### **Contact**

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