

# Development Summary for 2024

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For: Town of Cochrane Council

By: Planning Services, Town of Cochrane

# Executive Summary

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2024 was a growth year for Cochrane, and similar to last year, development activity remained elevated compared to the past ten years. A municipal census was completed in May and the population for Cochrane was 37, 011. This is an increase of 2,082 residents over the 2023 estimate or a 5.6% increase. The number of new homes built in Cochrane in 2024 was 770, an increase from the previous year's 510 and closer to numbers seen a decade ago. This year's summary report is a continuation of the previous year's methodology, using the estimated number of dwelling units based on Building Permit data and subdivision plans as well as up to date land use allocations. These numbers will get more refined the closer each neighbourhood comes to completion.

Land consumption continues to increase year over year and reduce the available land supply. This is consistent with previous trends and the Cochrane Growth Study. Cochrane's growth projection as compared to last year:

- 12.7 – 14.2 years of land use approved area (13.4 – 15.4 in 2023, 16.3 – 19.0 in 2022)
- 14.7 – 16.4 years of neighbourhood plan approved area (17.0 – 19.5 in 2023, 18.6 – 21.6 in 2022)

Out of 242 Development Permits applications in 2024, 40 were for non-residential development, including industrial, changing the uses of existing development, new commercial construction, commercial expansions and home occupations, which is consistent with 2023. In terms of housing, there were 95 applications for accessory suites and 20 applications for multi-unit dwellings, both of which doubled from 2023.

Another indicator of activity in Cochrane is the number of Certificates of Compliance issued by the Municipality. These certificates are generally a condition of a real estate sale and can be used to show trends across new and existing housing stock. Cochrane issued 727 certificates of compliances in 2024, a slight increase of 56 (8.3%) over the previous year.

This year's Development Summary Report includes non-residential land supply, which is included as a measure of the Municipality's ability to accommodate growth. The summary includes development ready lands by neighbourhood, which have land use districts applied and that are vacant and does not include lands identified for future non-residential or under-utilized/redevelopment potential lands.

This report reviews the year over year change that has occurred in Cochrane's 11 active growth neighbourhoods over 2024. Regardless of how much land use or how many plans are in place, new home purchases are generally market driven. The projections in this report do not account for environmental, social, political, or economic factors either imposed on the Municipality or occur within the Canadian and Albertan context.

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# Introduction

This report summarizes the amount of development in each of the Municipality’s new communities; how much has land use, how much has been built upon, and how much remains. This report compiles information for each community, using the information from Area Structure Plans (ASPs), Neighbourhood Plans (NPs), subdivision applications, and building permit activity for 2024.

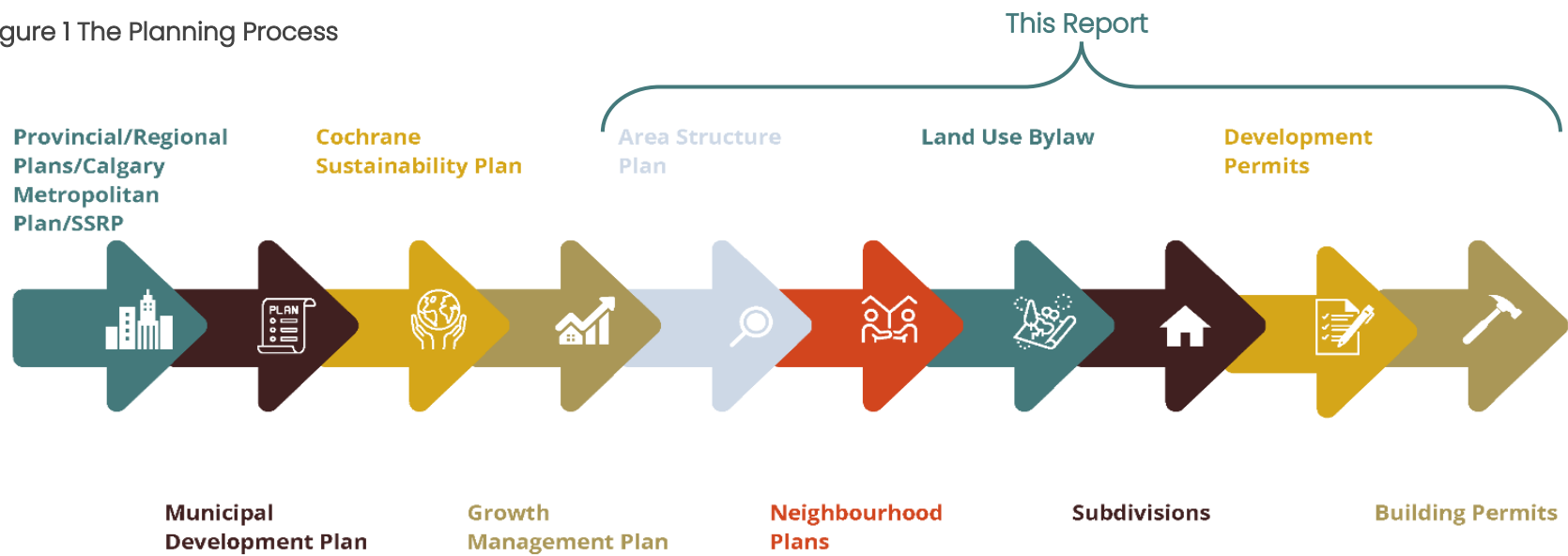
To manage the sustained development growth in Cochrane effectively, the Municipality has several planning documents that shape our communities. As directed by the Municipal Government Act (MGA) the Municipality must approve and adopt a Municipal Development Plan (MDP). This is the over-arching planning document and provides the strategic framework for development within Cochrane. Cochrane’s newest MDP, Envision Cochrane 2050 is scheduled for Third Reading in Q1 2025.

Other significant planning documents include the Cochrane Sustainability Plan and Cochrane Growth Study. These plans build on the MDP by increasing the detail of the policy.

Each community within Cochrane is broken into Area Structure Plans for area specific policies, followed by Neighbourhood Plans that support and inform each ASP. There are currently 10 Area Structure Plans, and 14 Neighbourhood Plans adopted as growth areas within the Municipality.

These plans establish the principles of development of an area by providing general land use themes. The plans that are currently approved by Council incorporate both residential and non-residential areas as a central tenet of best planning practice by building “complete communities.” This report focuses on the residential and commercial development through the planning process (*figure 1*) to provide a reflection of the development in Cochrane.

Figure 1 The Planning Process



This report also considers parcels that are currently under construction. The balance of the potential future development that is yet to start construction and does not yet have Building Permit (BP) approval can be assumed. By looking at this potential balance of development and considering the amount of annualized building activity, we can forecast future land supply.

The goal is to understand last year’s population increase (and total resulting population) and how that affects the availability of developable land.

## Residential Growth Areas

The 11 growing communities identified in the report are: Fireside, Heartland, Heritage Hills, Rivercrest, Riversong, Southbow Landing, Sunset Ridge, Willows, and Greystone. Figure 2 has a breakdown of new subdivisions and construction in each area. The numbers presented are based on the estimates in each neighbourhoods’ ASPs and NPs compared to the building permits issued each year.

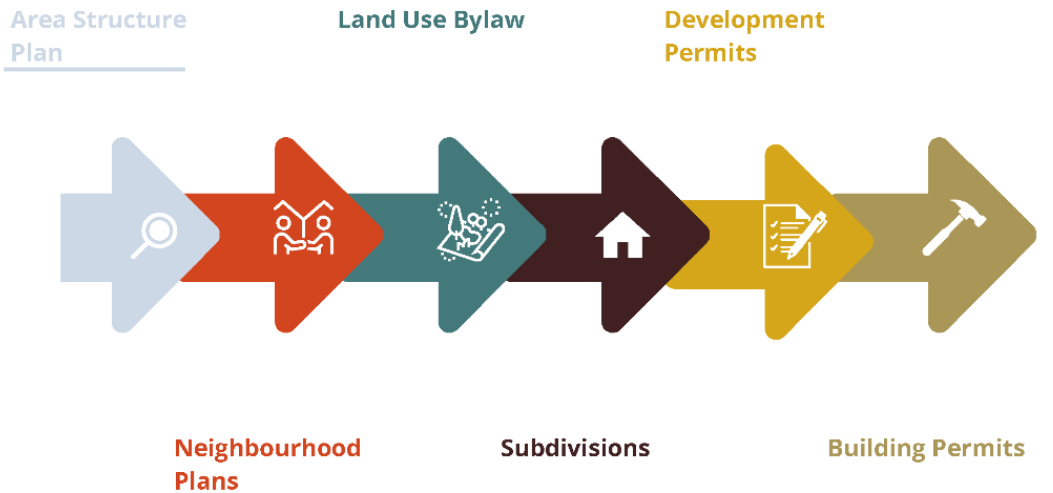
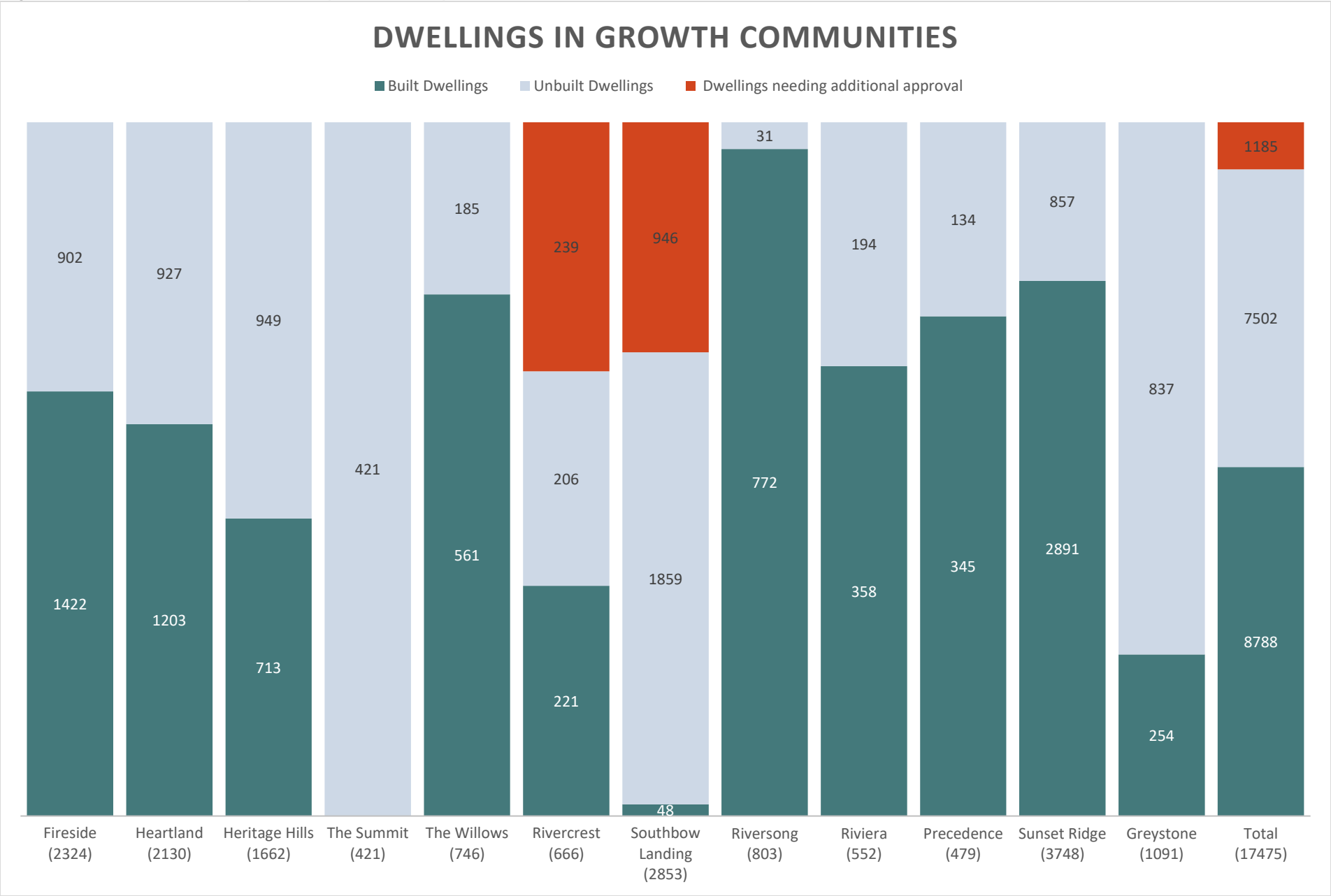


Figure 2 Residential Development by Community



# Development Activity

## Subdivision Applications

A total of 20 subdivision applications were received in 2024 to create a total of 959 new lots, 907 of which were residential. Subdivision activity was spread among six communities: Fireside, Heartland, Heritage Hills, Greystone, and Southbow Landing. Since 2015, 20 applications have been received each year on average. 2020 was significant decrease in subdivision activity, followed by a dramatic increase in new lots. This includes all applications that create new lots for both residential and non-residential land uses, but also condominiums, road closures, utility lots, and boundary adjustments.

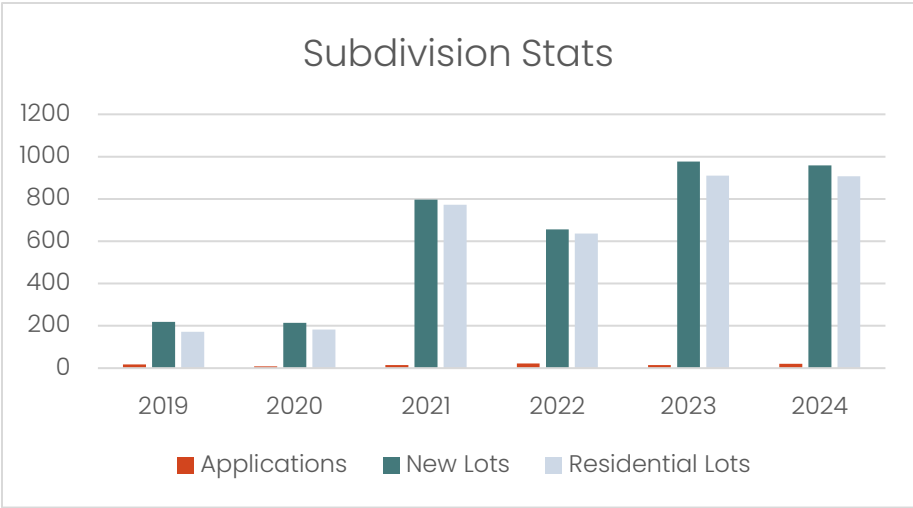
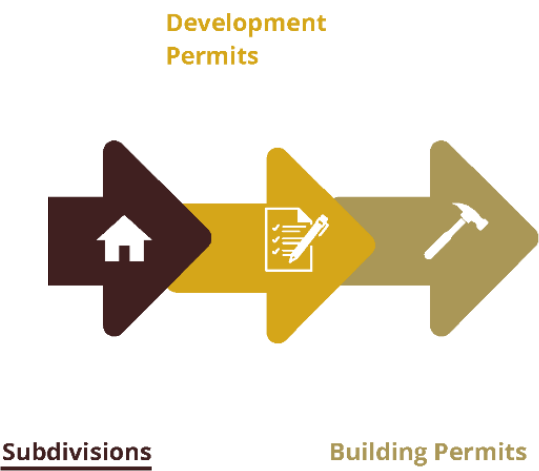


Figure 3 Subdivision Statistics

Year	Applications	New Lots	Residential Lots
2019	18	219	172
2020	9	215	182
2021	14	797	773
2022	22	656	637
2023	14	977	910
2024	20	959	907



## Development Permits

Supporting the growth projections, monitoring development permit activity within the Municipality can provide additional insight into these trends. 242 development permits were received by the Municipality in 2024. This is an 6.9% increase over the number of permits received last year. The 10-year average for development permits is 195 applications a year.

Of the applications received, 23 applications (or 9.5% overall) were for non-residential development, including industrial, changing the uses of existing development, new commercial construction, commercial expansions, and additions to or new institutional uses. Home-Occupations accounted for 27 applications (or 11.2% overall).

Residential development saw significant increases in 2024. Secondary Suites increased by 232% to 95 applications this year (or 39.3% overall), while multi-unit dwelling applications doubled to 21 (or 8.7% overall) from last year. Residential-other includes other low density residential uses, additions, driveways, and garages. A full breakdown is shown in figure 4.

Service levels show that, on average, decisions were made on development permits within 56 days from the submission date. The median timeline was 54 days. 59% of permits had decisions within the statutory time limits of 60 days. The longest time to render a decision was 199 days which is a significant decrease from last year, while the shortest time was the same day as the application was made. This indicates that there is a range of complexity among permits received.

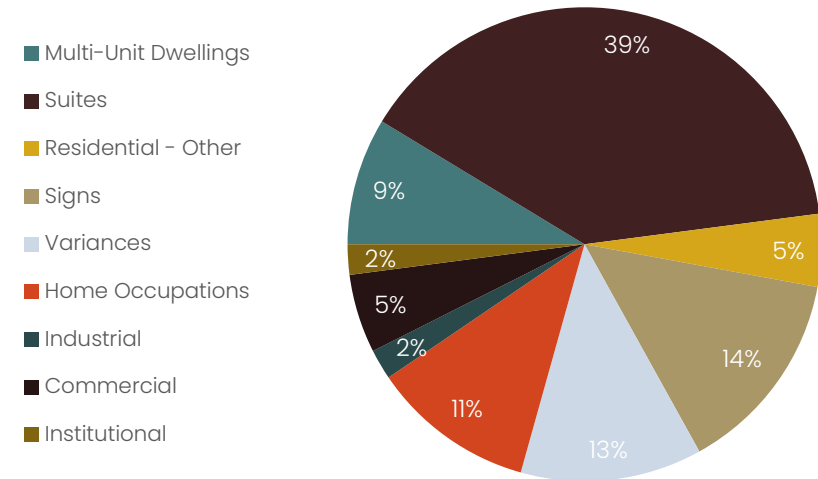


Figure 4 Development Permits by Type

**Development  
Permits**



**Building Permits**



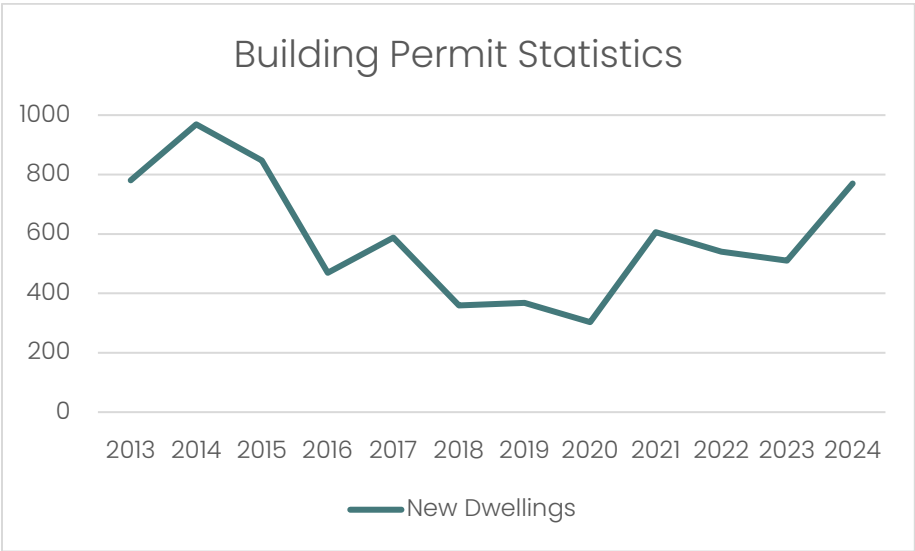
# RESIDENTIAL ANALYSIS

## Building Permits

The Safety Codes Department has supplied historical building rates for residential development for the past ten years. This amount of development activity is provided in the figure below.

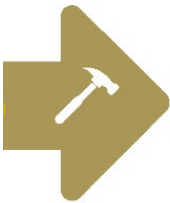
The average number of BPs is 593 dwellings per year. 2014 and 2015 BP figures are irregular outliers to the historic general trend. To provide an upper and lower annual building rate, these two years have been removed. With the outliers taken out, a lower annual build rate of 529 dwellings is produced. The average of the upper and lower build rate is 561.

Figure 5 Building Permit Statistics



## New Units

Looking at the combination of subdivision and development permit applications in 2024, we can project how many are construction ready. While these units may not have received occupancy, it is still a short-term supply for builders and developers. Looking at subdivision files, 907 residential lots were applied for last year. Single and Semi-detached dwellings do not require a development permit, a building permit can be applied for once the subdivision has been endorsed. However, multi-unit dwellings, like apartments and townhomes, require a development permit which allows the Municipality to gauge the density of these parcels and adherence to the Land Use Bylaw. In 2024, there were 20 multi-unit dwellings applications to create 648 units. Additionally, 95 accessory suites were applied for to further intensify existing neighbours, which is a 232% increase from last year. Together with subdivisions, a total of 1650 dwelling units were applied for, this is up by 133 units (9%) from 1517 units applied for in 2023.



Building Permits

# Certificates of Compliance

Another measure of activity within the Municipality is the issuance of Certificate of Compliances. These are letters issued by Municipal staff confirming if existing development is in line with the Land Use Bylaw. They are generally a condition of a real estate sale and can estimate the levels of sales activity across new and existing housing stock. The Municipality issued 727 certificates, 13 of which were for commercial/industrial site in 2024, an increase of (8.3%) over the previous year. Since 2015, the Cochrane has issued an average of 662 certificates per year.

Service levels show that, on average, letters were sent on compliance within 1.8 days from the submission date. The median length was 1 day. 97.7% of letters of compliance were completed within the target time limits of 10 days. The longest compliance to complete was 42 days, while the shortest was completed the same day that it was submitted.

Development  
Permits



Building Permits

# Non-Residential Land Supply

This year, non-residential land supply is included as a measure of the Municipality’s ability to accommodate growth. Cochrane currently has 9 neighbourhoods that have non-residential available for development totalling 35.98 ha of development ready lands by neighbourhood. This includes land which has commercial or industrial land use districts applied and that are undeveloped, and does not include lands identified for future non-residential in policy documents or under-utilized/redevelopment potential lands. As this is the first year, change in land available can be measured over time moving forward.

Figure 6 Non-Residential Land Supply Summary

Neighbourhood	Commercial	Industrial	Total (ha)
Downtown	2.23	-	2.23
East End	0.20	-	0.20
Fireside	0.76	-	0.76
Greystone	1.64	6.84	8.48
Heritage Hills	3.78	-	3.78
River Heights	0.53	-	0.53
Southbow Landing	9.61	9.88	19.49
Sunset Ridge	0.28	-	0.28
West Valley	0.23	-	0.23
TOTAL			35.98

# Analysis

## Population

Cochrane’s population was 32,199 residents in 2021 according to Statistics Canada. The next federal census will be conducted in 2026. As an interim measure, Cochrane’s annual growth has been based on new housing builds and an average household size of 2.6 people. The figure below shows the estimated growth since 2021–2023. Cochrane held a municipal census in 2024 which stated that Cochrane is estimated to have 37,011 residents. As such, estimations have been updated to reflect actual counts.

Figure 7 Estimated Population Growth

Year	Population	Increase	New Units
2021 census	32,199	–	
2022	33,603	1,404	540
2023	34,929	1,326	510
2024	37,011	2,082	770

## Land Supply

The past 10 years of development information have been used to project our future land supply. This is based on the amount of land available divided by our annual consumption. Using the two averages from the annual building permits issued, a range can be constructed for various scenarios.

First, if only the land with subdivision approval but without homes were to be completed, a potential 1,406 units, the current population would increase by 3,656 to 40,667. This amount of

land satisfies between 2.4 and 2.7 years at our current rate of growth.

Scenario 2 looks at all land with land use approved by council, but not yet developed. Using the estimated 7,502 dwellings, this scenario would equate to an additional 19,505 residents. This would bring the total population of Cochrane to 56,516. This land supply would last between 12.7 and 14.2 years at our current rate of construction.

Other factors need to be considered in estimating land supply, for example, the number of communities that have the benefit of ASP and NP approval but not land use approval. For proposed communities and land that have approved plans but not land use yet, there are a potential 8,687 dwellings. This equates to an additional between 2.0 and 2.2 years of land supply. Including this development would increase the potential population by a further 3,081. This means the population could rise to a total of 59,597 in the next 14.7 to 16.4 years.

Add in Res / Non res mix over time, are getting closer or farther away from the goal identified in EC2050.

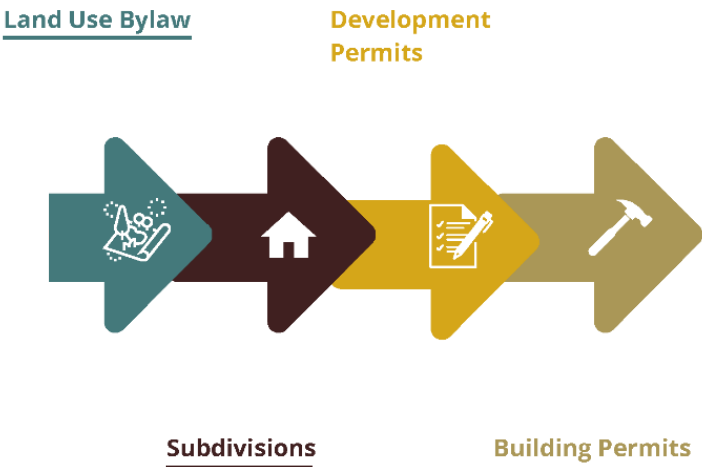


Figure 8 Population Growth Scenarios

	Scenario 1: Dwellings with Subdivision	Scenario 2: Dwellings with Land Use	Scenario 3: All potential dwellings
Dwellings Units	1,402	7,502	8,687
Land Supply (years)	2.4 – 2.7	12.7 – 14.2	14.7 – 16.4
Household Size (avg)	2.6	2.6	2.6
<i>Subtotal</i>	<i>3,656</i>	<i>19,505</i>	<i>22,586</i>
Current Population	37,011	37,011	37,011
Future Population	40,667	56,516	59,597

## River Heights Water Reservoir

Administration, with the help of a third-party consultant completed a capacity analysis for the River Heights Reservoir in 2024. With the significant development occurring in south Cochrane, Administration felt this necessary to understand current and future demands on the reservoir. It was determined that the existing reservoir was at capacity and is unable to accommodate future development. Administration discussed these concerns with developers and a plan was completed that a developer would front-end the initial construction costs of an expansion to the reservoir, with the Municipality contributing a proportionate share. Both the Cochrane and developer will recoup the construction costs from developers as future

development comes online. The project is anticipated to begin in spring/summer 2025 and complete Q1/Q2 2026.

## Conclusion

In review, 2024 was a growth year for Cochrane. While some metrics have decreased over the previous year, the estimated population growth was around 6.1%. Growth is still being spread among the 11 growth communities, however communities like Riversong and The Willows are now entering into their final construction phases. This is being offset by the commencement of subdivision activity in Greystone and Southbow Landing. Building permits are on the rise, increasing significantly over the last year. Subdivision applications for new lots have stayed elevated compared to the last ten years. With the influx of residential lots created this year, there should be no shortage of lots for builders in coming years. Our estimates put a 3-year supply of land in immediate queue for new homes. Looking more long term, Cochrane has land use for another 13 years at our current rates of growth, which is down from 16 years from last year. Development permits have seen an increase, with approximately 9.5% of the applications still being for institutional, commercial and industrial uses. Market trends dictate when and where development occurs, however the Municipality has an adequate supply of land to respond to future needs.

# Appendix 1: Community Profiles

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## Fireside

Fireside is located east of Highway 22 and adjacent to the Cochrane's south boundary. Originally adopted as the West Ridge Area Structure Plan (ASP) in 2009, Fireside's plan area holds a potential 2,100 dwelling units across 251 acres.

Fireside was split into Stage 1, starting in 2010, and Stage 2, in 2014. Stage 1 is now 98% complete and has the non-residential development to service the neighbourhood. Stage 2 is under construction and sees a mix of housing typologies and a park space completed in 2023.

Fireside has two elementary schools that service the south of Cochrane which generates significant traffic in the neighbourhood. The western park space is majority complete and adds a unique mix of park amenities to Fireside.

## Heartland

Located between Highway 1A and the railway, Heartland forms part of the West gateway into Cochrane. The ASP was adopted in two stages starting in 2015. Stage 1 included previously developed land, while Stage 2 would fill the balance of the area. The plan area holds 277 acres and could see a potential 2,130 dwelling units at build out.

Heartland has the new RCMP building completed in 2023 as well as commercial areas to service the neighbourhood and highway traffic. There is space for a future school site in Stage 1.

## Heritage Hills

Located on the north side of Highway 1A and west of Highway 22, Heritage Hills provides unique streetscapes and viewsheds thanks to its topography.

The Heritage Hills ASP was adopted in 2014 for the entire community. A Neighbourhood Plan (NP) was later adopted in 2016 to provide additional detail for later stages. The plan area holds 278 acres and would support at least 1,800 dwellings. Construction in this neighbourhood plan areas started over the last two years.

Land for the Horse Creek Sports Park was annexed into Cochrane in 2019. This land will support multiple facilities as well as supply land for a future school site.

## Greystone

Greystone is the redevelopment of a former gravel operation on the North side of the Bow River. The site is approximately 290 acres and is being developed as a new mixed-use community. The ASP adopted in 2018 shows sites for commercial, industrial business, recreational, as well as a diversity of housing options. A total of 1,100 units have been proposed for the community.

A NP was approved in 2018 and most recently updated in 2024. The plan provides more detail and highlights how the neighbourhood will leverage its connections to the surrounding infrastructure and its proximity to the downtown and industrial areas. All NP lands have now received land use approval. Two major commercial sites have started construction this year.

Greystone is unique in its placement within Cochrane. Being centrally located offers residents and new businesses opportunities and advantages that were only previously available in established neighbourhoods.

## Riversong

Originally identified as South Ridge in its 1994 ASP, the plan underwent significant revisions in 2011 to include a new design and the new name Riversong for half of the South Ridge area. Riversong covers land that directly interfaces with the Bow River west of Highway 22. The plan area comprises 737 acres and was subdivided into three stages: Riversong, Riviera, and Precedence. Around 1,900 dwelling units are estimated in the full build out of this community.

Riversong is stage 1 of the community and its NP covers the lands adjacent to River Heights Drive and the River Heights neighbourhood, acting as the gateway to development. Riversong contains the Bow Valley High School as well as sites for multi-family development. Otherwise, it is primarily single-family residential.

Riviera is stage 2 and covers the land directly adjacent to Bow River. The NP provides a mix of housing and parks while respecting the environmentally sensitive areas along the river. Development of Riviera included studies and implemented design measures to mitigate against the risks of potential future flooding of the Bow River.

Precedence is stage 3 and covers an escarpment overlooking the Bow River and lower portions of the plan area. Notably, Precedence connects to James Walker Trail and the Jack Tennant Memorial Bridge, acting as second gateway for residents of the neighbourhood.

The Bow River is a wonderful feature for Riversong, providing beautiful viewsheds and trails to its residents. However, the topography is also a constraint for the community with escarpments and environmental reserve cutting through the neighbourhood.

## River Heights

River Heights is a sizable part of south Cochrane, covering over 1,000 acres bound between Highway 22 and the Bow River. The ASP estimates 4,600 dwelling units across the gross developable area and boasts a large employment area along the highway.

The River Heights ASP was adopted in 2011. Neighbourhood plans have since been adopted for portions of the land. This includes Rivercrest, The Willows, Southbow Landing, and the Summit of

River Heights. Each NP will be discussed further as they each have unique community identities.

An important feature in this plan area is James Walker Trail. This is a planned arterial road that will connect Highway 22 to the Jack Tennant Memorial Bridge, formally linking to the second access across the Bow River so that residents of River Heights, Riversong, and south Cochrane have a more direct access to the Downtown and important Municipal facilities.

## Rivercrest

Rivercrest is a neighbourhood within the River Heights ASP that overlooks the Bow River. The neighbourhood covers 93 acres and consists of residences, parks, and a future school site. The community will support around 660 residential units once fully developed.

The neighborhood plan was adopted in 2017 and proposes a mix of housing types from single and semidetached to townhomes. The plan details how the neighbourhood will be integrated into existing development in River Heights and the connections into both the road network and pathway system.

The site is generally sloped to north. This gives spectacular views of the Bow River and Downtown Cochrane but also requires additional engineering to ensure that the development along the north boundary does not compromise the more extreme slopes.

## Southbow Landing

The largest of the River Heights neighbourhoods, Southbow Landing covers the southeast of Cochrane corner of corner. The plan includes 545 acres east of Highway 22. The plan estimates for 2,850 residential units, a large employment area, a village centre, and two future school sites.

Adopted in 2015 and last amended in 2024, the plan proposes development over 17 phases and is the largest neighbourhood plan in Cochrane. Development will start on the west side and move east and ultimately connecting to the existing James Walker Trail in Riversong.

While the area is large and allows for well planned comprehensive grid layout, there are two major constraints. On the east side of the community, there is a significant escarpment leading to a lower bank along the Bow River. Additionally, there are multiple utility corridors along the land that will need to be navigated during construction.

## The Summit of River Heights

The Summit of River Heights is another neighbourhood in River Heights. It is nestled between Riversong and the future alignment of James Walker Trail. The plan area is roughly 40 acres and is almost entirely residential with an estimated 421 dwelling units.

The NP for the Summit was adopted in 2017 and last amended in 2024. The small area connects the south portion of Riversong to James Walker Trail and Southbow Landing to complete the



development of River Heights as well as a joint school site between The Willows, Southbow Landing and The Summit.

## The Willows

The Willows is a residential section of River Heights on the south side of River Heights Drive. The neighbourhood offers a mix of low-rise housing types, like single-detached and semi-detached dwellings and townhomes, to create a vibrant community with unique streetscapes. The plan area is 75 acres and plans to support around 750 dwelling units.

The NP was adopted in 2012 and was the first new community developed in River Heights. The community is nearing completion with only a couple phases remaining on the west side of the plan area.

## Rolling Trails

The most recent Area Redevelopment Plan in Cochrane and approved in 2024, Rolling Trails combines the neighbourhoods of Towers Trail and Rolling Range Estates. Nestled between Bow Meadows to the north, the west boundary with Rocky View County, Fireside to the south, west of Highway 22, the entire plan area is 356 acres. The plan area was divided into four neighbourhood areas and includes policies for incremental redevelopment as landowners become ready. The entire community is anticipated to allow for approximately 6,800 people and 650 jobs.

## Sunset Ridge

The most northern community of Cochrane, Sunset Ridge is the development of the lands east of Highway 22 and north of the Cochrane Historic Rancho site. The entire plan area is 675 acres. The plan area was divided into multiple stages to allow for multiple developers to complete the community. The entire community is estimated to hold a minimum 3,700 dwellings to a maximum of 4,700 dwellings.

The ASP for Stage 1 was adopted in 2005 for the first 310 acres. The Stage 1 ASP is now complete and holds a mix of dwelling types (including apartments), a high school, and a mixed-used commercial site at the entrance of the community.

Stage 2 was adopted in 2012 for the remaining 365 acres. Stage 2 was further divided into two neighbourhood plans for more detailed planning. Stage 2 is primarily residential with multi use school site acting as the hub of the neighbourhood. One school has already been built, and a third site has been identified.

A future plan area has also been identified at the very north portion of the plan area for land that was annexed into Cochrane. A commercial node has been proposed at the north boundary of the plan area along the highway in this future plan area.

Sunset Ridge is constrained by its access being dependent on Highway 22. A future second access has been proposed; however, it is dependent on progress of the neighbourhood and other highway upgrades.



# Appendix 2: Community Map

