

Anspayaxw (Kispiox) Band

SIXPLEXES



Community Background

Geography

The lands of the Gitksan Nation include approximately 33,000 square kilometres in northwest British Columbia. There are six villages within a radius of 75 kilometres in the Hazelton area. Anspayaxw is 87.6km North of Smithers, on the Ksan (Skeena River).

Land Governance

Reserve Land (Governed under the Indian Act)

Timeline *Summer 2021–Summer 2023*

Anspayaxw began a Rapid Housing Initiative in 2021 to provide safe and affordable housing to band members in need, including families and Elders. The community developed four sixplexes, with 24 new rental units on reserve on Soapberry Drive. The sixplexes include 12 standard upper floor units, eight ground floor units designed to accommodate accessibility needs for those with limited mobility and four ground floor units that are fully wheelchair accessible.

This is the first multi-plex project built on Reserve Land in a decade, and the first of this magnitude. The four sixplexes were built throughout 2022 to 2023, with the project welcoming the last set of residents to their new homes in July 2023.

Anspayaxw (Kispiox)

Translates to “People of the Hiding Place,” and is one of six ancient Gitksan communities.



Community champions

The project was led by Bryana Jack at the Anspayaxw Band Housing Department, with support from Chief and Council and Band Manager Blanka Jecminkova.

Funder

The project received \$9.2 million from the CMHC Rapid Housing Initiative, Round 2, \$1.5 million in own source revenue from Anspayaxw Band and \$1.7 million from BC Housing.

Other Partners

Urban Systems supported the development of the Housing Policy.

Boni Maddison Architects provided design/architecture services for the Sixplexes.

Progrus Constructors Inc. constructed the Sixplexes.

General Description and Policy Context

Gentle Density Type(s)

Sixplexes

Community Plans and Policies

Housing Policy (drafted in 2022)

Process

Anspayaxw (Kispiox) Band developed a Housing Policy in 2022 by and for the community based on community housing needs and preferences.

Anspayaxw consists of 1555 members, with 607 members living on reserve, and 948 members living off reserve. There are a growing number of members on the housing wait-list and a strong desire from many members to move home. With this housing shortage, the Anspayaxw Housing Team wanted to provide safe and affordable housing to as many members as possible. The team identified the sixplex model as the best option, given CMHC funding requirements, the ability to have up to six homes on a single lot, and reduced construction costs that come with sharing foundation and roof systems.

In 2021, Anspayaxw applied to the CMHC Rapid Housing Initiative to construct four sixplexes as a way of rapidly increasing housing supply and diversity. The CMHC Rapid Housing Initiative requires housing to be provided rapidly, with people able to move into their new homes within a short time frame. From planning to construction, the Housing Team developed all four sixplexes, with 24 units occupied by families, in less than two years.

Anspayaxw members were invited to apply for rental units, with tenancy applicants anonymously selected using a points system to ensure the units go to applicants with the greatest need.



Outcomes

4 Sixplexes

24 Rental Units (each with 3 bedrooms + 2 three-piece bathrooms)

STACKED HOUSING

3 units on upper floor and 3 units on ground floor of each sixplex

ACCESSIBLE

1 fully wheelchair accessible unit and 2 mobility aid-accessible units within each sixplex

SUPPORTIVE

5 units allocated to women with children fleeing domestic violence

Rental rate is **\$465/month** per unit



Strengths

Overall, Anspayaxw members have been happy with the sixplex project, and tenants living in sixplexes have responded with gratitude and cooperation.

The following are the top three practices that made the project successful:

- **Honour Social and Cultural Needs:** Units are equipped with a fridge wide enough to fit a whole salmon, a deep freezer for game meat and fish, a pantry, and storage areas to accommodate the gift-giving traditions of cultural feasts. Dishwashers and laundry are also provided in units to support tenants.
- **Enhance Safety, Quality and Sustainability:** The sixplexes are built with high quality materials and sustainability features that meet Step 5 of the BC Energy Step Code. Heat pumps keep utility bills low, and backup generators assist during frequent power outages in the area. Concrete between floors helps to sound- and fire-proof the units, and a full residential sprinkler system was installed, making these units extremely safe and high quality.
- **Build Community Trust:** The Housing Team built trust with community members by responding to concerns and feedback about fire safety in an older multiplex, creating a transparent tenant selection process that members feel is fair, and holding a community barbecue for members to tour the units and celebrate the high quality housing.

Surprises

Only a few small things would be done differently in the construction of sixplexes in the future, such as installing the front doors so that they can open to a full 180 degrees, and placing the electrical wiring for security systems within the building.

Some unintended consequences of this project include an increase in volume and speed of car traffic from the busy families newly living in the area, and excluding members with pets from living in the units due to the limited yard space and fencing.

Next steps

The next steps for the Sixplex Project include:

- ✓ Moving the final set of tenants into the remaining 6 units (Summer 2023)
- ✓ Planting grass in shared yards
- ✓ Installing a playhouse for each sixplex in the shared yard
- ✓ Considering installing speed bumps on roads to enhance road safety

The Anspayaxw Housing Team estimates 75 more units are needed to meet immediate community housing needs. The Housing Team is continuing to explore creative approaches to housing members who remain on the housing wait-list, including the following potential steps to meeting member housing needs:

- ✓ Building tiny homes for single men, especially those struggling with addictions and 'hidden homelessness' (couch-surfing, camping, etc).
- ✓ Building community storage spaces to support cultural feasting and meet needs for community members' gifts and food storage
- ✓ Upgrading the sewer system and provide more sewer and water serviced lots for future housing development

“We want to fill the need. We're really proud to house 24 families ... Denser housing provides more housing to those in need.”

- Bryana Jack, Real Properties Projects and Maintenance Coordinator and Gitanmaax Member



Resources

<https://www.kispioxband.ca/2022/12/22/rapid-housing-initiative-4-six-plexes-on-soapberry-drive-kispiox-24-brand-new-rental-units>

<https://www.kispioxband.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/12/Rapid-Housing-Initiative.jpg>

<https://www.progrus.ca/projects/rapid-housing-initiative>