



# Uptown District **Revitalization** **Strategy** 2021



— CITY OF —  
PORT ALBERNI

# Contributors

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# Table of Contents

Contributors ...	1
Table of Contents ...	2
Acknowledgements ...	3
Introduction ...	4
Goals & Timeline ...	5
Partnerships & Funding ...	6
Uptown History & Context ...	6
Demographic Snapshot ...	9
Revitalization Strategy ...	10
Economic Development ...	11–14
Poverty Reduction ...	15–17
Crime Prevention ...	18–20
Community Engagement and Priorities ...	21–30
Appendices ...	31
Timeline ...	31–32
Business & Service Provider Focus Group ...	41–43
Resident Survey ...	44–46
Appendix B Guiding Documents ...	47–49

# Acknowledgements

The City of Port Alberni lies within the unceded traditional territories of the Hupacasath and Tseshah First Nations, two of the 14 Nations in the Nuuča̱a̱nuł (Nuu-chah-nulth Nations) on western Vancouver Island. Wolf Village and Tiipiis are culturally significant traditional locations for Tseshah First Nation located within the Uptown District. We thank the Nuu-chah-nulth Nations for their ongoing stewardship of the lands and waters in the Uptown District and surrounding area, which are a precious resource that hosts and sustains our well-being. We would also like to formally acknowledge and thank the Tseshah Council for their valuable contributions and consultation with this project.

To the City of Port Alberni – Brian McLoughlin, who offered his expertise and support throughout the project. Thank you for your willingness to work with us and your enthusiasm for the Uptown District's potential. To Mayor and Council for your willingness to work with Vancouver Island University on this project. We hope this document provides success in the future for revitalization efforts and ensures the Uptown District can take full advantage of what exciting opportunities lie ahead.

Our gratitude to all survey responders, focus group participants, and community stakeholders who provided invaluable information, feedback, and support. Thank you for providing us with an opportunity to conduct applied research and explore an incredible community with each and everyone of you.

And finally, thank you to the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) for providing grant funds in support of this project under the Poverty Reduction Planning & Action Program.







# Introduction

In recent years, the Uptown District has been challenged by a general economic downturn, competition from other commercial nodes in the city and the COVID-19 pandemic. In 2019, City Council adopted the 2019 – 2023 Corporate Strategic Plan which outlines a number of goals and priorities, including:

- #1 Respond to Demographic Change / Improve Quality of Life
- #2 Enable the New Economy
- #5 Foster a Complete Community (safe, healthy, and inclusive)

One of the core themes of the Strategic Plan is for the City to respond to demographic change in the community and improve quality of life, specifically by revitalizing the Uptown District (Goal 1.2).

A strategy and action plan are needed to address the economic and social challenges faced by the Uptown District. An actionable strategy allows the City to implement measures that will positively impact the District. It is also likely that improvements in the Uptown District will have a positive impact on other areas of the community, and on the residents of Port Alberni in general.

The Uptown District Revitalization Strategy provides recommendations for partnerships and policies based on best practices and the results of community input. It will be used to inform future policy goals and objectives in the Official Community Plan, including Development Permit Areas. The plan will also inform updates to the Zoning Bylaw, future neighbourhood plans, and other relevant policies and regulations.



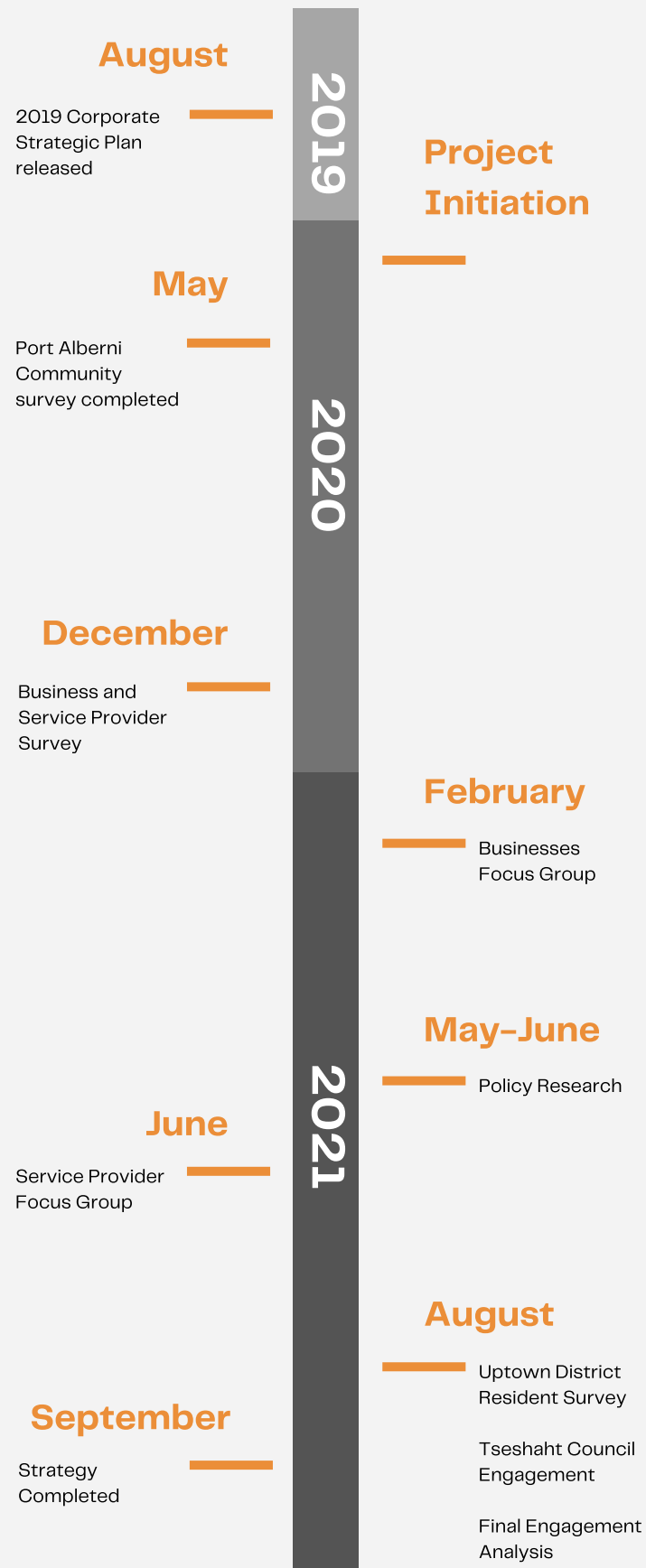
## Approach

The Uptown District Revitalization Strategy promotes a holistic social and economic revitalization strategy with the goal of creating a thriving Uptown District that supports residents, business owners, and visitors alike. It is also intended to mitigate gentrification and displacement by addressing systemic issues, and encouraging economic development through a lens that considers poverty reduction, equity, and inclusion.

## Goals

- Identify a high-level vision that will guide City Council and staff's efforts aimed at Uptown District Revitalization;
- Work with the public, businesses, stakeholders, and local neighbourhood residents to identify current issues, challenges, and possible solutions;
- Develop specific actions and partnerships to help implement the high-level vision; and
- Prepare information that can also be embedded within the City's Official Community Plan.

## Project Timeline



# Partnerships and Funding

In May 2020, the City of Port Alberni received a \$21,950 Poverty Reduction grant from the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) and the Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction to support this project. The grant provided resources to undertake engagement with key stakeholders and the community as a whole. The City's Planning department partnered with Vancouver Island University's Master of Community Planning (MCP) Program and the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI) to facilitate engagement and support the development of the strategy.

## Uptown History and Context

About 35 years ago, the commercial focus in Port Alberni began to shift north from 3rd Avenue (Uptown) to Johnston Road to accommodate the increasing number of travelers along Highway 4 and the residential growth on that side of the city. Losses to the commercial fishing fleet and employment reductions in the sawmills (both located in the Uptown area), along with the closure or relocation of a few key businesses contributed to the challenges faced by the Uptown area today.

In 2007 the redevelopment of the 3rd Avenue Uptown area was one of nine recommendations in the "Uptown and Waterfront Redevelopment study" funded by the City and the Port Alberni Port Authority. The goal for the project was to provide a visible change in the appearance of the street to stimulate economic growth in the area. Later that year the City of Port Alberni received financial support from the Island Coastal Economic Trust for the "3rd Avenue Uptown Redevelopment" project. This project resulted in infrastructure and aesthetic improvements along 3rd Avenue, including upgraded lighting, refurbished planters, and a partnership with the Port Alberni Rotary Club to develop Uptown as a designated Arts District. This work was completed in 2009. The City and the Rotary Club have since maintained an ongoing partnership.


The City's goal to provide a visible change in the area was also advanced in 2008 when the Port Alberni City Council approved a new Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw in an effort to entice new businesses to the district, and to encourage improvements to existing storefronts.



# Current Context

Poverty, mental health, and addictions are visible challenges faced by the Uptown District. While the issues foundational to these challenges are complex and individualistic, the combination of low rental vacancy rates, the drug epidemic, intergenerational trauma, and a localized economic downturn are all factors that are part of the social/economic equation. A community-wide public survey conducted during Phase 1 of the project in Spring 2020 highlighted these challenges as negatively influencing feelings of safety and well-being in the district. Community engagement participants emphasized the physical appearance of the area, suggesting that many storefronts and buildings are vacant or in a state of disrepair. Combined with various social issues in the area, participants expressed an overall dissatisfaction with the current state of the Uptown District.

Simultaneously, many dedicated and passionate community members in the Uptown District are committed to supporting the neighbourhood and the people who live and work in the area. Many individuals and groups are engaging in valuable efforts to achieve a vision of social, economic and environmental well-being in the Uptown District.



*“Uptown is a vital part of Port Alberni”*

*- Focus Group 2 Participant*

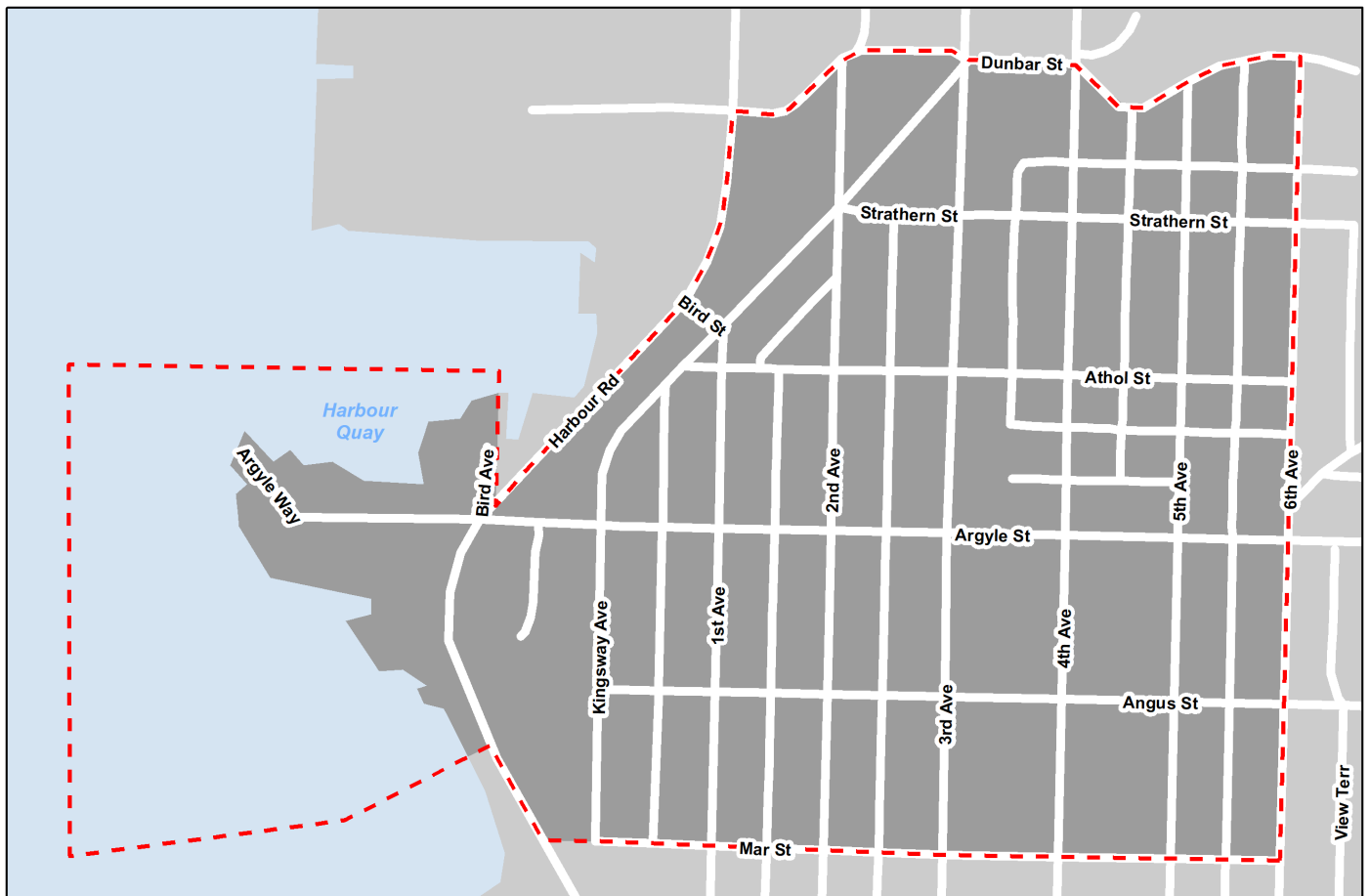
*“We care about where we are and the people that live in the neighbourhood”*

*- Focus Group 2 Participant*



# Location

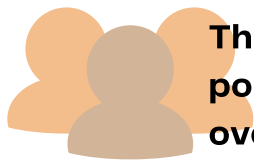
The Uptown District boundaries extend east to west from 6th Avenue to Harbor Quay, and north to south from Dunbar Street to Mar Street.



# Demographic Snapshot

## Population Identity

Port Alberni is home to a large Indigenous population and is most closely associated with the homelands of the Tseshah and Hupacasath First Nations.



**The Indigenous population** of the City is **over three times** the provincial average at **18.3%** compared to **5.9%** for the rest of BC.

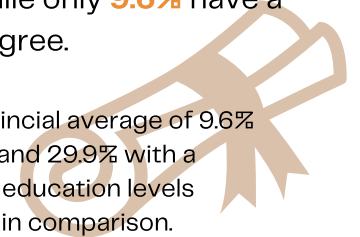
## Age

Port Alberni's median age is **47 years old**, which is 5 years older than the provincial median

## Education

**19.5%** of Port Alberni residents have no High School diploma, while only **9.6%** have a university diploma or degree.

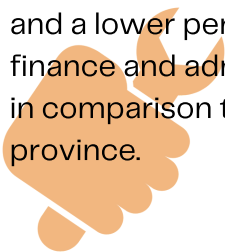
Comparing this with the provincial average of 9.6% with no High School diploma and 29.9% with a university diploma or degree, education levels statistically are relatively low in comparison.



## Labour Force

The City of Port Alberni has an **11%** lower labour force participation rate compared to the rest of BC (52.9% vs. 63.9%) and an unemployment rate of **10.4%** vs. 6.7% throughout BC as a whole.

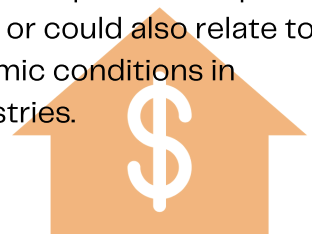
In addition, Port Alberni has a **higher percentage of trades occupations** and a lower percentage of business, finance and administrative occupations in comparison to the rest of the province.



## Household Income

With a population of **17,678** people, most residents of Port Alberni are above the low-income threshold, or the income a person must earn to be considered to be part of the low-income group.

Port Alberni's median 2015 household income of **\$52,123** is 74.5% of the British Columbian average of \$69,995. This may relate to the proportion of households made up of retired persons in Port Alberni, or could also relate to volatile economic conditions in resource industries.



# Revitalization Strategy

This section discusses the strategies and targets that should be considered and undertaken to revitalize the Uptown District. The three main themes identified in the Community Engagement section (Economic Development, Poverty Reduction, and Crime Prevention), are broken down into scalable strategies under each theme. Additionally, each theme is introduced with a long-term vision for the Uptown District related to that theme. Strategies that relate to more than one theme are indicated with the corresponding icon listed below.

Challenges and Opportunities for each theme have been identified through research and community engagement, and form the foundation of the strategies and targets. Each challenge listed in the tables below is also associated with one or more identified opportunities to directly support or alleviate that challenge. The strategies are written in a way that responds to each identified challenge and opportunity. Additional detail and action shall be determined by the City of Port Alberni staff and Council as required.

Strategy themes:



CRIME PREVENTION



POVERTY REDUCTION



ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT



## 1. Economic Development





The goal is for the Uptown District to be a vibrant waterfront neighbourhood that supports entrepreneurs and local businesses and establishes itself as an arts and culture hub in the community. It offers a range of services, experiences and amenities to serve the needs and wants of both residents and visitors.






“ [The] merchants are doing what they can but it's important that they are supported by the City. The community appreciates the merchants who are supporting [Uptown] with their time and resources ” – Focus Group Participant

Challenge	Opportunity
Vacant lots and empty buildings	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Space available for new businesses and investments</li><li>• Infill development of commercial spaces to diversify the local economy</li></ul>
Infrequent visitors to Uptown	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase number of visitors to Uptown</li><li>• Tourism planning</li><li>• Neighbourhood events</li><li>• Branding and marketing</li></ul>
Low street maintenance levels	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Review City maintenance operations</li></ul>
Lack of business diversity/options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Attract new industries to Uptown that meet local needs</li></ul>
Empty storefronts	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Space for new building uses</li><li>• Temporary uses for community organizations, small businesses or artists</li></ul>
Facades in disrepair	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Potential for City incentive program and incentives to provide financial support to property owners on 3rd Ave. and Argyle St.</li></ul>
Lack of Uptown District community identity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Arts and culture development</li><li>• Marketing</li><li>• Community building events</li></ul>

## Strategies













Economic Development Strategies	Objectives
 <p><b>1.1</b> Allow temporary uses on vacant lots to provide space for community gatherings.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with landowners to build temporary community gardens on vacant lots.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See vacant lots be repurposed to a use that will better serve the community.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>1.2</b> Provide incentives for businesses to (re)locate and thrive in the Uptown District through city-led marketing and programming.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See new growth in the number of businesses in the Uptown business District.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>1.3</b> Encourage and support the Uptown Merchants Association members and property owners to form a City-supported Business Improvement Association (BIA).</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Improved collaboration between businesses, the City, and other stakeholders to further economic and community development in Uptown.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>1.4</b> Leverage the Harbour Quay market to strengthen local food systems, tourism, and economic development.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Support improved advertising of the Farmers Market and the Harbour Quay.</li> <li>• Sponsor and promote special events or displays to bring people to the market.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased patronage and vibrancy at the Harbour Quay.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>1.5</b> Provide leadership to address the issue of empty commercial storefronts in Uptown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Work with property owners to determine the causes of empty storefronts and land-use non-compliance.</li> <li>• Enforce bylaws to ensure land use compliance (for example: commercial spaces should be used for business, not as storage).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• See a reduction in the number of empty storefronts in the Uptown District.</li> <li>• Commercial properties are used for commercial business.</li> </ul>

## Strategies Cont'd

Economic Development Strategies	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Develop a program to encourage activating unused storefronts. For example, work with local artists and merchants to create pop-up galleries or other programming. This would promote storefront continuity despite a business being closed or having limited hours.</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>1.6</b> Work with property owners to make improvements to buildings that are vacant or in disrepair.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create new Development Permit Area guidelines or a heritage conservation area for the Uptown District.</li> <li>• Promote property maintenance incentives to increase their uptake, including the Business Facade Improvement Program and the Revitalization Tax Incentive (see 1.7 &amp; 1.9)</li> <li>• Facilitate an adaptive reuse program to fill empty buildings (for example, turn vacant buildings into new businesses).</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City incentives are effectively supporting business and property owners to improve their buildings.</li> <li>• The buildings in the Uptown District are well maintained.</li> <li>• Older, smaller buildings in mixed-use and commercial districts are conserved, while also allowing flexible reuse and compatible new development.</li> <li>• Vacant/underused buildings are repurposed.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>1.7</b> Review and consider restructuring the Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw to ensure it is effective, understandable and feasible for property owners.</p> <p>Areas for internal review of the Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The exempt areas and lots (maps).</li> <li>• The percentage of tax exemption.</li> <li>• The number of years the exemption is applied.</li> <li>• Analyze previous applications and use this data when restructuring.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business and property owners are using incentives to improve their buildings.</li> <li>• Streetscape appearance is improved.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>1.8</b> Increase City street maintenance in the Uptown District to improve the cleanliness of the streetscape, and to help pedestrians feel more comfortable.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The streets and sidewalks in the Uptown District are clean and well maintained.</li> <li>• The streets feel welcoming and safe.</li> </ul>



## Strategies Cont'd

Economic Development Strategies	Objectives
 <p><b>1.9</b> Review the effectiveness of the Business Facade Improvement Program and consider updating the targeted incentives for the Uptown Neighbourhood.</p> <p>Areas for internal review of the Business Facade Improvement Program include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Eligibility requirements.</li> <li>• Frequency (currently it is a one-time grant).</li> <li>• Amount of funding granted.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Business and property owners are using incentives to improve their buildings.</li> <li>• Streetscape appearance is improved.</li> </ul>
  <p><b>1.10</b> Permit restaurants and cafes to utilize sidewalks and parking spaces for patio seating where traffic safety allows.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The “Temporary Use Sidewalk Program” is expanded.</li> </ul>
  <p><b>1.11</b> Support the existence and expansion of Arts and Culture in the Uptown District</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Explore building partnerships with local Indigenous artists to support public art, recognize local Indigenous culture and create opportunities that support reconciliation efforts.</li> <li>• Prioritize youth and elders involvement in arts programming and projects in the Uptown District.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Uptown is recognized as an Arts and Culture District.</li> <li>• Larger focus on Indigenous art, culture and history.</li> <li>• Arts and culture attract residents and tourists.</li> <li>• Community identity is developed.</li> <li>• Youth are empowered as leaders and stewards of the neighbourhood through arts and culture.</li> </ul>
   <p><b>1.12</b> Prioritize density in new housing developments to promote walkability and local shopping.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase the number of people living in proximity to the commercial areas in Uptown.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>1.13</b> Market the Uptown neighbourhood to potential property developers, while taking steps to reduce uncertainty in the development applications process.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased investment in the Uptown District.</li> </ul>
   <p><b>1.14</b> Encourage a future neighbourhood grocery store within the commercial area that provides locally sourced foods.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Stronger local food economy/food security in the neighbourhood.</li> <li>• Necessary amenities are within walking distance for residents.</li> </ul>

## 2. Poverty Reduction

The goal is that the Uptown District meets all the basic needs of residents in an inclusive and equitable manner. Residents are safe, supported, and healthy in their community.






“In a community that is going through changes, it is crucial that no one gets left behind” – Focus Group Participant

Challenge	Opportunity
Income and employment opportunities are low	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Employment program or partnership</li> </ul>
High concentration of residents with mental health and addiction challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• City to partner with organizations to jointly tackle barriers and challenges facing residents with mental health and addictions</li> <li>• Create an advisory committee to consult on social planning issues</li> </ul>
Homelessness	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Affordable Housing Action Plan</li> <li>• Respond to the Housing Needs Assessment's recommendations</li> <li>• Development incentives for affordable multifamily housing</li> <li>• Increase in housing options</li> <li>• Increased urgency in exploring options to create additional emergency housing and services to those who are “hard to house” and/or are perpetually experiencing homelessness</li> </ul>
Unaffordable housing	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• More housing diversity</li> <li>• City pursues innovative affordable housing development and protects existing affordable housing stock</li> </ul>

Poverty Reduction Strategies	Objectives
<div data-bbox="52 808 113 972"> </div> <p><b>2.1</b> Collaborate with other levels of government including Nuu-chah-nulth Tribal Council, the private sector, and non-profit organizations to expand employment options in Uptown.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Leverage existing funding opportunities to provide low barrier employment, especially for marginalized communities and youth.</li> <li>• Partner with educational institutions to provide work experience placements for youth.               <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>◦ Access funding through programs including Work Integrated Learning Program.</li> </ul> </li> <li>• Promote employment programs and funding opportunities at a neighbourhood-level.</li> <li>• Consider the priorities and goals identified in the annual Labour Market Development Agreement Plan from the BC Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased employment opportunities in the Uptown District.</li> <li>• Increased opportunities for youth to gain experience in the labour force.</li> </ul>
<div data-bbox="52 1597 105 1704"> </div> <p><b>2.2</b> Update existing Zoning Bylaw with an equity-based approach to ensure affordable housing is both developed and maintained.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Create a new zone for affordable and special needs housing.</li> <li>• Provide density bonuses in the Zoning Bylaw for affordable housing, and special needs housing as per Local Government Acts.482(1).</li> <li>• Use Housing Agreements for affordable and special needs housing under Local Government Act s.483.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Foster the development of mixed use and mixed income level communities.</li> <li>• The City is committed to reaching affordable housing targets set by the Housing Needs Report.</li> </ul>
<div data-bbox="52 1966 113 2130"> </div> <p><b>2.3</b> Provide essential public amenities for all people, especially those who may be experiencing poverty or homelessness including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Public washrooms.</li> <li>• Public showers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All residents and visitors of the Uptown District have appropriate access to basic necessities.</li> </ul>

## Strategies Cont'd

Poverty Reduction Strategies	Objectives
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Warming and cooling centres for extreme weather.</li> <li>• Covered benches/areas.</li> <li>• Water fountains/water bottle refill stations.</li> <li>• Bike racks..</li> </ul>	
 <p><b>2.4</b> Work towards the recommendations within the Port Alberni Housing Needs Report.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increase urgency in exploring options to create additional emergency housing and services to those who are “hard to house.”</li> <li>• Update Official Community Plan with housing policies respecting affordable housing, rental housing, and special needs housing as required by LGA s.473(2).</li> <li>• Consider a temporary/tiny house pilot project in partnership with non-profits and service providers to provide fast relief from the lack of affordable housing in Uptown.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Increased affordable, below market, temporary and emergency housing options in Uptown District.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>2.5</b> Support the existing work of service providers, social workers and other frontline staff by prioritizing Social Planning in Port Alberni.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The City should adopt a Social Planning approach and framework to increase coordination among community services, networks and partnerships.</li> <li>• Council should consider forming a Social Planning Advisory Commission to increase opportunities for input from non-profit service providers and frontline social workers and improve community services.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• A social planning lens is applied and integrated into all plans and strategies.</li> <li>• Collaboration among service providers in the Uptown District.</li> <li>• Increased multi-sector collaboration and progress on social planning issues.</li> <li>• Increased support for those who experience poverty and other challenges including mental health and addictions.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>2.6</b> Sponsor the creation of a directory and a map of existing social services.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Partner with a service provider to complete the project and keep it up to date.</li> <li>• Provide funding for publishing and distribution.</li> <li>• Provide physical and digital copies of the directory on the City website and in City facilities.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social services are easy to locate and access 24/7 to anyone who needs them.</li> </ul>



### 3. Crime Prevention

The goal is for all public spaces in the Uptown District to be perceived as safe by residents and visitors at all times, and for crime to be prevented.



“Everyone deserves to feel safe in their own community”





– Focus Group Participant

Challenge	Opportunity
Illegal drug prevalence and open drug use	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Streetscape and public amenity upgrades</li><li>• Outreach &amp; Education</li></ul>
Vandalism and graffiti	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Increase street maintenance</li></ul>
Concentration of crime in the area	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Address the root causes of crime (poverty, addiction, mental health, housing/homelessness, colonization)</li></ul>
Human waste in public areas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Installation of a public washroom</li></ul>
Poor lighting	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Respond to requests from the community to improve lighting</li><li>• Design lighting to increase safety</li></ul>

“We need [a] vibrant, mixed economy that doesn’t shut down at 5pm and go dark”

– Focus Group Participant

## Strategies

Crime Prevention Strategies	Objectives
 <p><b>3.1</b> Promote and support social development programs that are culturally relevant and meet the needs of the community.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advocate for more pre and post rehabilitation services.</li> <li>• Support the expansion of youth education, training and activities to include more after-school and evening events.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Decreased instances of petty crime.</li> <li>• Improve social welfare of Uptown residents.</li> <li>• Increased social and cultural activities for youth.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>3.2</b> Increase street and public space maintenance</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The City prioritizes the maintenance and cleanliness of the Uptown District and works in partnership with community organizations to support ongoing stewardship of the area.</li> <li>• Safe needle drop boxes (reduces discarded needles).</li> <li>• Public washrooms that are safe and well maintained.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The Uptown District is well maintained, comfortable and welcoming for locals and visitors.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>3.3</b> Install or upgrade street lighting where required to improve safety for pedestrians and businesses.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Lighting is repaired or replaced to meet the needs of all users to feel safe in the area at all times of day.</li> </ul>
 <p><b>3.4</b> Conduct a detailed Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) analysis in the commercial, industrial and institutional areas of Uptown, including laneways, to identify any physical or environmental features that could be modified or retrofitted to deter instances of crime and increase safety.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Take a holistic approach by identifying community capacity and multi-disciplinary partnerships.</li> <li>• Include diverse participants from multiple sectors in conducting the analysis.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Reduce crime and victimization</li> <li>• Deter offender decisions that precede criminal acts.</li> <li>• Build a sense of community among inhabitants to gain territorial stewardship of the area.</li> <li>• Minimize fear of crime.</li> </ul>

Strategies Cont'd

Crime Prevention Strategies		Objectives
	<p><b>3.5</b> Work with staff at the Community Safety Building located in the Uptown District to build relationships with business owners and residents in the neighbourhood.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Encourage Bylaw Officers to address and enforce issues of non-compliance and nuisance in a compassionate manner.</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Crime is prevented.</li><li>• Crime response is improved.</li><li>• Feeling of safety is increased.</li></ul>
	<p><b>3.6</b> Promote existing programs available to businesses and residents through communication and marketing, including.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The Graffiti Removal Program.</li><li>• The Enhanced Security Initiative Program (ESIP).</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The community is utilizing existing city programs.</li><li>• Visible decrease of graffiti.</li><li>• Enhanced safety and security measures within the community.</li></ul>







# Community Engagement & Priorities

Community engagement was planned and undertaken to help understand the perceived challenges and opportunities in the Uptown District. The community was asked to provide feedback and ideas with a focus on balancing social and economic revitalization while carefully considering the diverse needs of the community, including the district's most vulnerable members.

The COVID-19 pandemic impacted the engagement timeline and strategy, as both were adapted to meet public health and safety protocols. This was achieved primarily by utilizing online platforms to gather information and input. The City of Port Alberni has undertaken this planning initiative through a lens of inclusion, equity, and poverty reduction, which involved both broad public engagement, as well as targeted conversations with business owners, service providers, and neighbourhood residents. The outcomes of the community engagement process identified a wide range of current challenges, goals, and recommendations for the Uptown District.

## Community Engagement Methods Overview

Community engagement was initiated in May 2020 and concluded in August 2021. One community-wide survey was conducted in the first phase of the project, followed by two targeted surveys and two focus groups involving stakeholders in the Uptown District.

## Focus Groups

The intention of the focus groups was to build upon the information gathered in both the Uptown District Revitalization surveys. The online focus groups allowed targeted stakeholders to share more detail on topics initially heard in surveys, and provided an opportunity for discussions regarding the challenges and opportunities in the Uptown neighbourhood.

# 1 Community-wide

## Overview: Uptown District Revitalization Strategy Survey

- Online survey with 15 questions about Uptown’s revitalization.
- Hosted on the City’s online “Let’s Connect” engagement platform.
- 599 unique responses during this period, with the majority of responses coming from people who live in the Uptown District.
- Respondents were asked about their experiences visiting Uptown and their vision for a revitalized Uptown, as well as their opinion about specific tasks and recommendations.

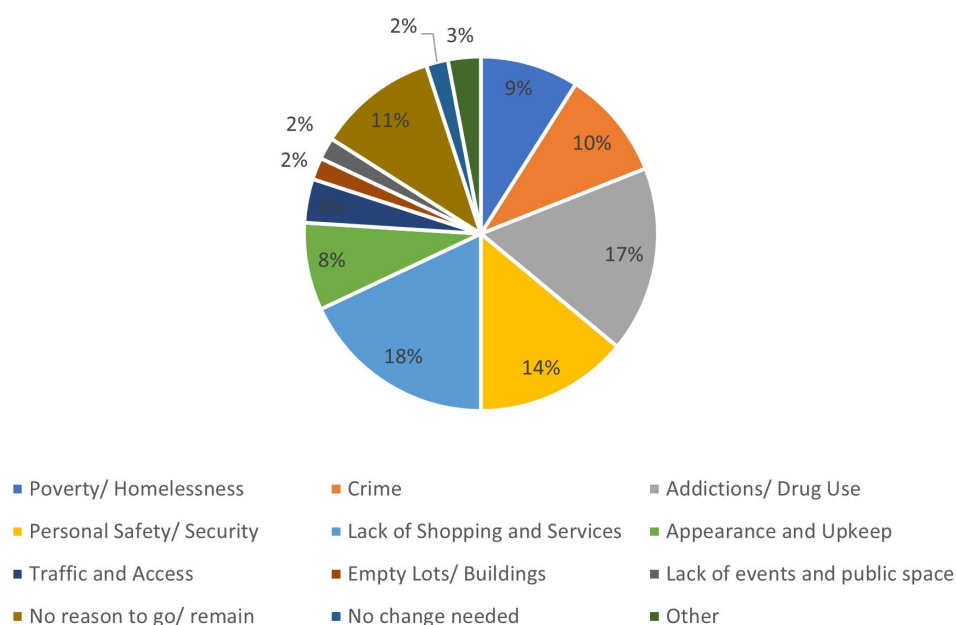
## Findings

Based on the findings it appears that most people believe that economic and social revitalization must be balanced in the overall approach.

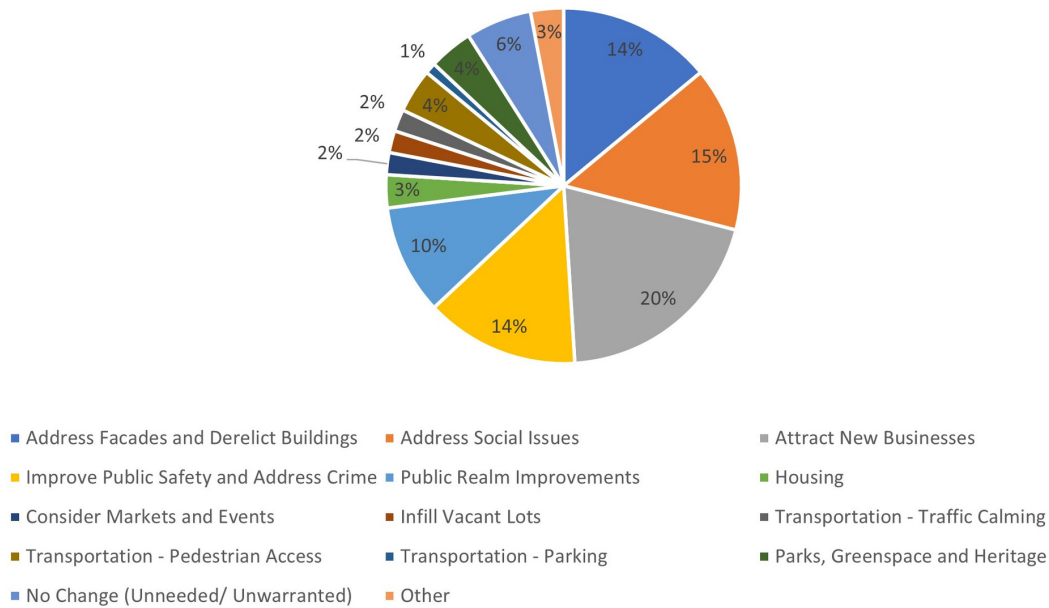
Respondents were asked to tell us what keeps them from visiting (or spending more time in) the Uptown District. Many people referred to social issues of homelessness, addictions, and mental health as causing feelings of a lack of safety.

Respondents were asked to help identify priorities they thought would contribute to revitalization. Both “crime prevention” and “poverty reduction” were ranked as the top two priorities, with “business and economic activity” in third place. These same three priorities were echoed in response to another open-ended question about how a revitalized Uptown District might look.

## What keeps you from visiting the Uptown Neighbourhood?



## What does a revitalized Uptown look like to you?



Respondents were also asked a series of questions about what issues should be addressed urgently.

### The top three urgent tasks identified were:

1. **Develop programs** to address criminal activity in the area (vandalism, shoplifting, etc.);
2. Work with property owners to **make improvements to buildings** and vacant lots; and
3. Identify **new projects and partnerships** that would address poverty reduction in the Uptown District.

Participants were asked about what types of physical enhancements could be made to the Uptown District, and were given the ability to select multiple options.

### The top five physical improvements identified were:

1. In-fill and develop vacant lots;
2. Restore and improve old buildings;
3. Public space maintenance, repair, and improvement;
4. Permitting restaurants/cafes to utilize parking spaces for patio seating; and
5. Public washroom facilities.

#### **Other Key Takeaways**

- Most respondents support commercial land uses for the Uptown District, particularly mixed-use commercial and residential, with small business preferred as compared to big box retailers.
- Grants and tax breaks are thought to be the most appropriate mechanism to encourage businesses to relocate or stay within the Uptown District.
- A majority of respondents think that the City should do more to support individuals experiencing challenges around poverty, mental health and addictions.



## 2 Business Owners

### Overview: Uptown District Revitalization Strategy Survey for Business Owners & Service Providers

- Online survey with 12 questions about Uptown's revitalization.
- Targeted business owners and service providers.
- 55 responses were collected, primarily from the retail and non-profit sectors.

### Findings

- Crime and safety, COVID-19, economic climate, and not enough people visiting the area were indicated as the top challenges facing businesses.

#### Crime Prevention

- Increased police and security, social support programs, and community infrastructure improvements were the most common themes related to crime prevention strategies.

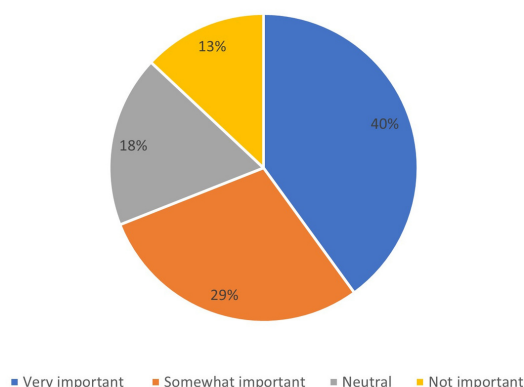
#### Poverty Reduction

- Respondents emphasized the importance of increasing the diversity and amount of housing options, including more affordable and supportive housing.
- Increased income and employment options, including programs for people living with mental health and addictions challenges, were important to respondents.

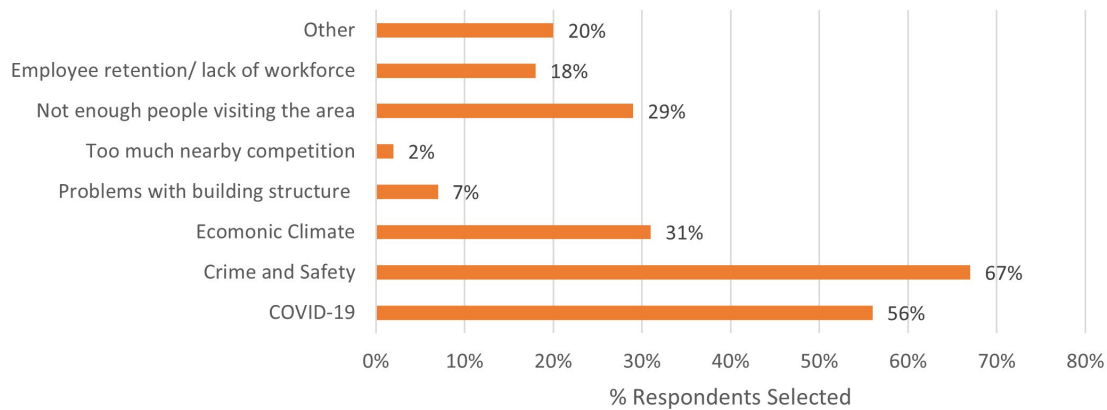
#### Economic Development

- The suggestions for improvement fell into the following themes: support for small and diverse businesses, tax incentives and rebates, beautification, and plans for development and marketing.
- According to the findings, cultivating a neighbourhood where arts and culture can thrive is an important aspect to economic development in the area. This might include more events, art installations and festivals to draw people to the area and celebrate local talent.

How important to your business/organization is it to increase the diversity and amount of housing options in Uptown District?



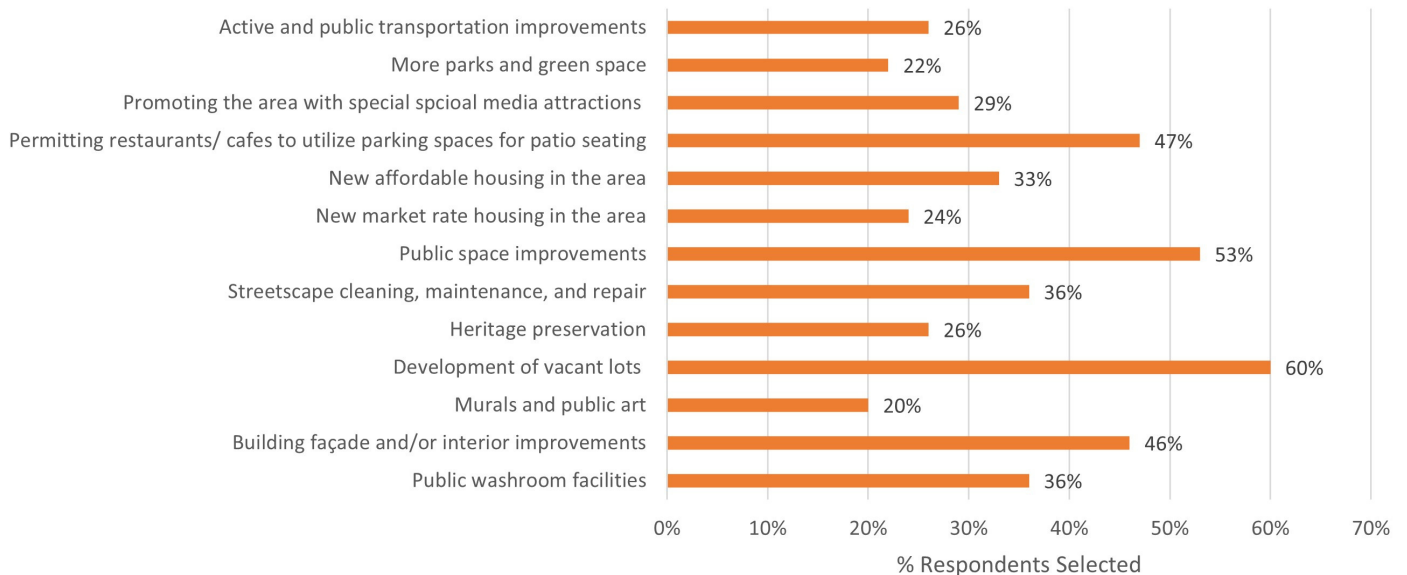
**What are the top three challenges your business/organization is dealing with at this time?**



The top five potential improvements indicated were similar to findings in the first community-wide survey. They are as follows:

1. Develop vacant lots;
2. Public space improvements;
3. Permitting restaurants/cafes to utilize parking spaces for patio seating;
4. Building facade and/or interior improvements; and
5. Install public washroom facilities.

**Please check your top FIVE potential Improvements**



## **Overview: Focus Group for Business Owners & Service Providers**

- 8 Uptown District business owners and service providers attended.
- Hosted via Zoom online platform.
- Discussion guided by six themes: housing and development, crime prevention, poverty reduction, business and economic activity, arts, culture and recreation, and transportation, parking and mobility.

## **Findings**

The findings from the focus group echoed many of the same themes and sentiments that were found in the surveys, though more detailed information was derived to better inform the strategy. A summary of the findings is organized according to the top three priorities identified by the Uptown District Revitalization Survey:

### **Crime Prevention**

- When asked about strategies for crime prevention, suggestions fell into three general categories: policing, taking a holistic and compassionate approach, and increased lighting.
- Art and community partnerships were recommended to make Uptown more “welcoming” and less prone to crime. For example, storefront improvements made through partnerships with local or First Nations artists might deter graffiti.

### **Poverty Reduction**

- Conversations related to poverty reduction were primarily focused on how to support community members experiencing poverty in dignified ways.
- Participants expressed a strong need for a public washroom in the area.
- Housing needs were discussed widely, including the changing needs of the community throughout the lifespan and the disrepair of many rental buildings in the area.

### **Economic Development**

- There was interest in working to expand upon the successes of the Arts District.
- Empty and underutilized storefronts were noted as an ongoing issue that could be addressed through arts partnerships, tax incentives, or bylaw enforcement.



## 3 Service Providers

### Overview: Focus Group for Service Providers

- 4 service providers in the Uptown District attended.
- 7 service providers who were unable to attend provided comments during a follow-up phone call where they were asked the same questions posed in the focus group.
- Intent was to build on what was learned in the surveys and first focus group.
- Questions and discussion focused on gaining further insight into the themes of Crime Prevention, Poverty Reduction, and Economic Development.

### Findings

- Participants in this focus group supported the findings of the focus group. The key takeaways from the discussion were:
- Need for the City to follow through on policy and plans.
- Planning for social issues and needs should be prioritized.
- Many of the suggestions from engagement support community identity and pride.
- More enforcement of bylaws and regulations is needed.
- Street maintenance should be improved, along with public infrastructure including washrooms and water fountains.
- Affordable housing is key, especially as the neighbourhood changes. More needs to be done at a government level to ensure residents are able to access safe and affordable housing.



## 4 Residents

### Overview: Uptown District Revitalization Strategy Survey for Residents

- Online survey with 8 questions. The survey was advertised via a mailout to homes in the Uptown District which included a link to the online survey.
- 40 responses from Uptown residents.
- The intention of the final survey was to gauge reactions to potential policies and impacts in the neighbourhood. Using photographs and a number of high-level improvement ideas, this survey helped inform the strategies in this report regarding economic development, poverty reduction and crime prevention.

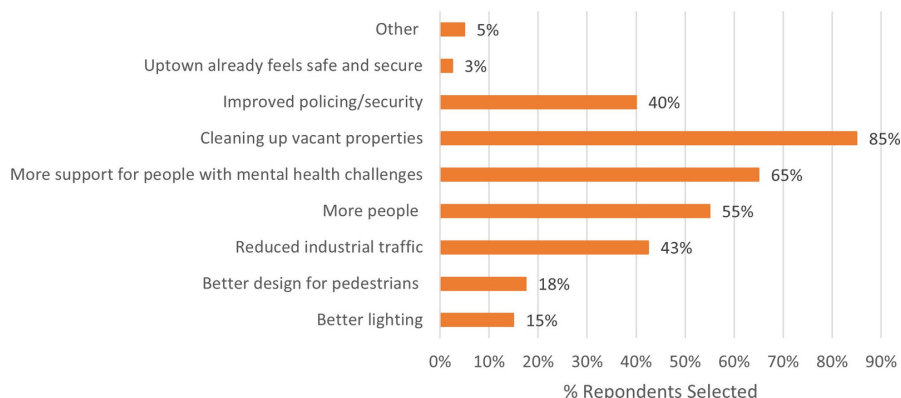
### Findings

- Respondents of the resident survey were composed of equal representation by residents of less than 1 years and more than 10 years.
- Residents overwhelmingly agreed that the main reasons for choosing to live in the Uptown District were due to the area's proximity to the waterfront and Harbour Quay, in addition to its small businesses, amenities, walkability, and affordability. Other reasons listed were the neighbourhood's charm and character, and that it was considered to be quiet compared to other parts of the city.
- In general, most respondents expressed concern over the visible poverty and criminal activity in the Uptown District, and many further explained that better support and housing options are needed for people facing mental health and addictions challenges.

### Crime Prevention

- 73% of respondents selected “partnerships between the City and social service providers” as a method of helping people in the Uptown District, followed by affordable housing and employment opportunities.
- 85% of respondents selected “Cleaning up vacant properties and filling empty storefronts” as the best way to make Uptown feel more safe, followed by “More support for people experiencing mental health and addictions challenges” and “More people living and walking in the neighbourhood”.

What would make the Uptown District feel safer and more secure?

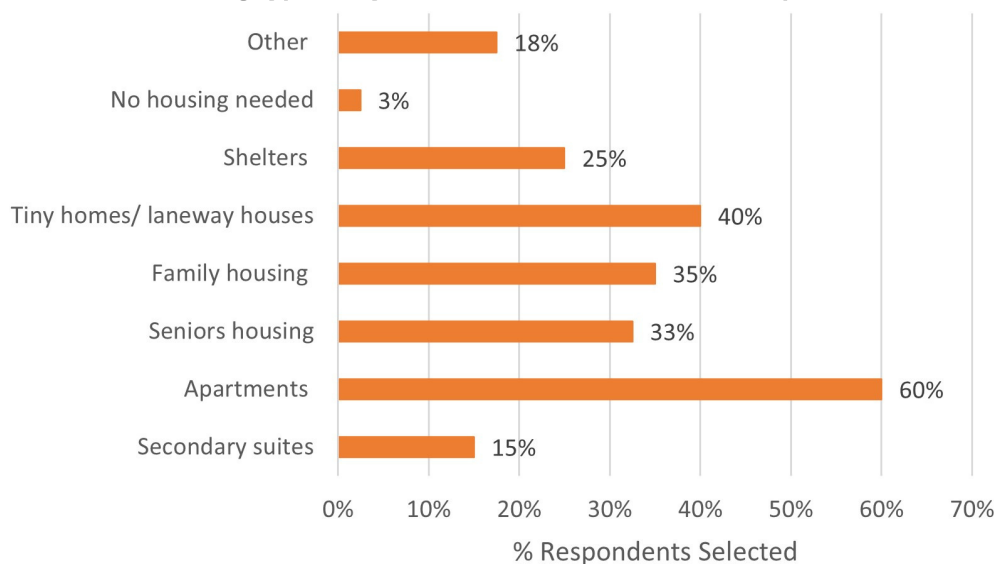




## Poverty Reduction

- Overwhelming majority of respondents felt that more dense housing options were needed in the Uptown District, and selected options that included higher density such as apartments, laneways homes, tiny homes, duplexes, triplexes, and townhomes.

More housing choices typically makes housing in cities more affordable. Which housing types do you feel are the most needed in Uptown?



## Economic Development

- 78% of respondents selected “fill empty storefronts” as a way to help support businesses in Uptown, followed by “safer feeling streets” and “support for the arts district.”

What images reflect a revitalized Uptown District? (top 4 answers shown below)



## 5 Tseshaht First Nation

### Overview:

- A meeting was held with a Tseshaht First Nations Councillor to obtain input on the Uptown District Revitalization Strategy.
- The Councillor was able to obtain further input through an internal Tseshaht Council meeting and provided back further input to support the Strategy.
- Wolf Village and Tiipiis are culturally significant traditional locations for Tseshaht First Nation located within the Uptown District.

### Findings

- From this consultation, a youth-focused and forward-looking approach was applied to the Strategy.
- Common goals between the Uptown District and Tseshaht First Nation were identified and applied where applicable.

### Crime Prevention

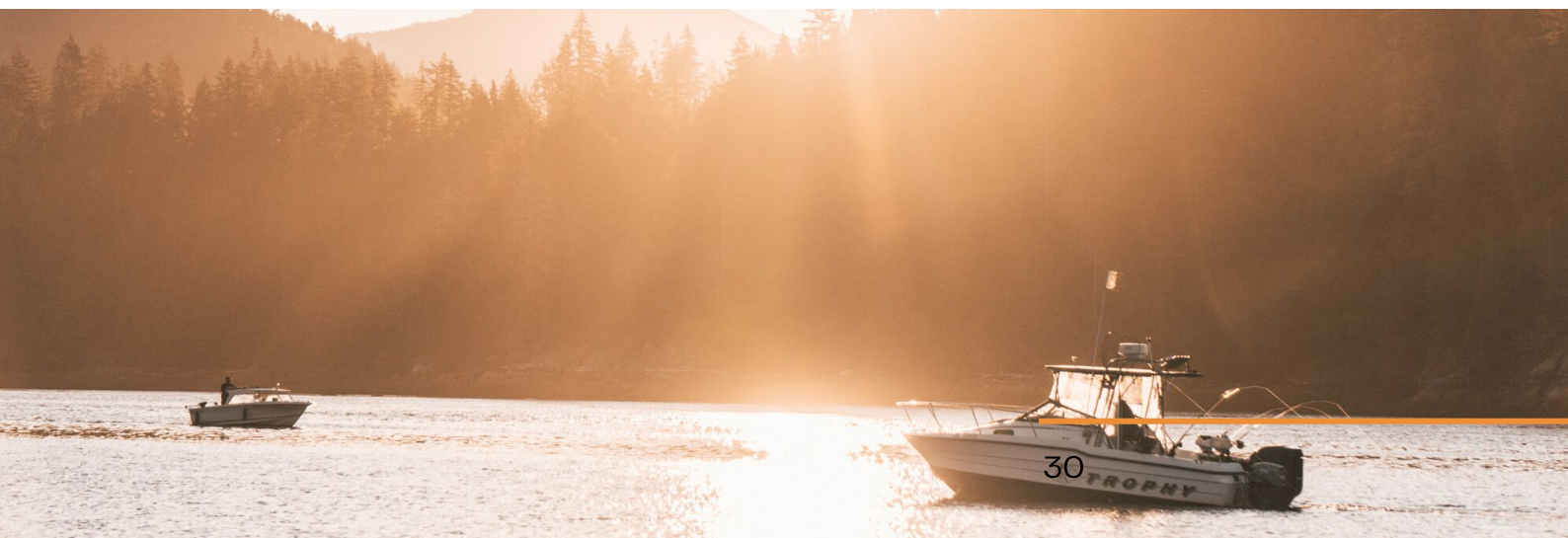
- Ensure that businesses and community members feel safe to operate in the Uptown District.
- Ensure programs and activities are abundant and engaging for youth in the community.

### Poverty Reduction

- Expand on the strategies for mental health and addictions support.
- Expand on ideas to be inclusive of people who face mental health and addiction in community building efforts.

### Economic Development

- Expand the art and culture sections to include work and volunteer opportunities.
- Ensure that youth and elders can be brought together by arts and culture projects and programs in the Uptown District.







# Appendices

## Appendix A Community Engagement Report

### Timeline

#### Phase 1:

1 Phase 1 of the project and community consultation program launched on April 30, 2020 with an online survey which helped identify high-level objectives and priorities for the neighbourhood. Nearly 600 responses were recorded and were used to inform Phase 2.

#### Phase 2:

2 COVID-19 resulted in some Phase 2 project delays as there was a need to redesign the engagement strategy to meet new health and safety protocols. With the support of Vancouver Island University, Phase 2 of the project began in October, 2020 with funding from a \$21,950 Poverty Reduction grant provided by UBCM.

The Phase 2 engagement strategy was adapted to promote public safety during COVID-19 by primarily utilizing online platforms to gather information and input. Phase 2 of the project involved targeted stakeholder engagement and focused public engagement designed to develop specific actions, timelines, and partnerships which informed the recommendations. In this phase we engaged with residents, businesses, social service providers, and those experiencing homelessness, poverty and other social challenges. This also produced insights into the neighbourhood through the experience of community groups in the area.

Online Engagement completed in Phase 2 included:

- Survey for business owners and service providers
- Focus group for business owners and service providers
- Focus group on poverty and crime prevention
- Survey for Uptown residents

## Community Engagement Methods Overview

Community engagement was initiated in May 2020 and concluded in August 2021. One community-wide survey was conducted in the first phase of the project, followed by two targeted surveys and two focus groups with stakeholders in the Uptown District.

### Survey

**Public:** A survey with 15 questions about Uptown's revitalization was "live" for three weeks in the Spring of 2020. The survey was hosted on the City's online "Let's Connect" engagement platform. The online survey garnered 599 unique responses during this period, with the majority of responses coming from people who live in the Uptown District followed by residents who live in North and South Port Alberni. Respondents were asked about their experiences visiting Uptown and their vision for a revitalized Uptown, as well as their opinion about specific tasks and recommendations.



**Business Owners and Service Providers:** A survey with 12 questions about Uptown's revitalization was distributed online to business owners and service providers following the initial community-wide survey. A total of 55 responses were collected, primarily from the retail and non-profit sectors.

**Residents:** The residents survey was the final engagement tool in this phase. The intention of the survey was to gauge reactions to potential policies and impacts in the neighbourhood. Using photographs and a number of high-level improvement ideas, this 8 question survey received 40 responses which helped inform the strategies in this report regarding economic development, poverty reduction and crime prevention.

## Focus Group



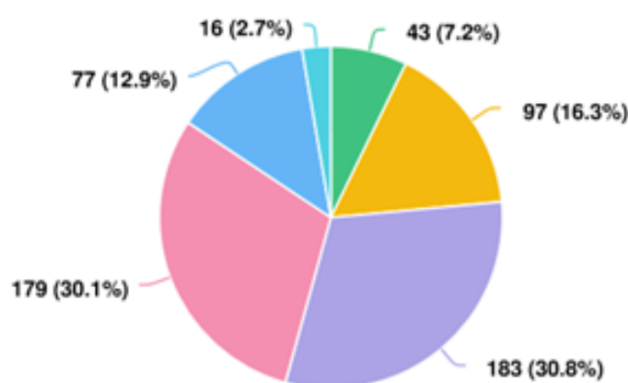
**Business Owners and Service Providers:** During Phase 2 of engagement, a focus group with eight business owners and service providers in Uptown was held on February 9th, 2021 using the Zoom online platform. The evening began with a short presentation on the background and progress of the UDRS project, which introduced the major themes discovered in the first community-wide survey. These six themes were: Housing and Development, Crime Prevention, Poverty Reduction, Business and Economic Activity, Arts, Culture and Recreation, and Transportation, Parking and Mobility. These themes were used to guide the discussion.

**Service Providers:** On June 24th a second focus group was attended by four service providers. The evening began with a summary of what was learned in the first focus group, followed by a discussion around the themes of Crime Prevention, Poverty Reduction, and Economic Development. Seven service providers who were unable to attend were contacted via phone to provide their comments.

## Summary of All Engagements

### Community Wide Survey Results

Q1 How often do you typically spend time in the Uptown District?

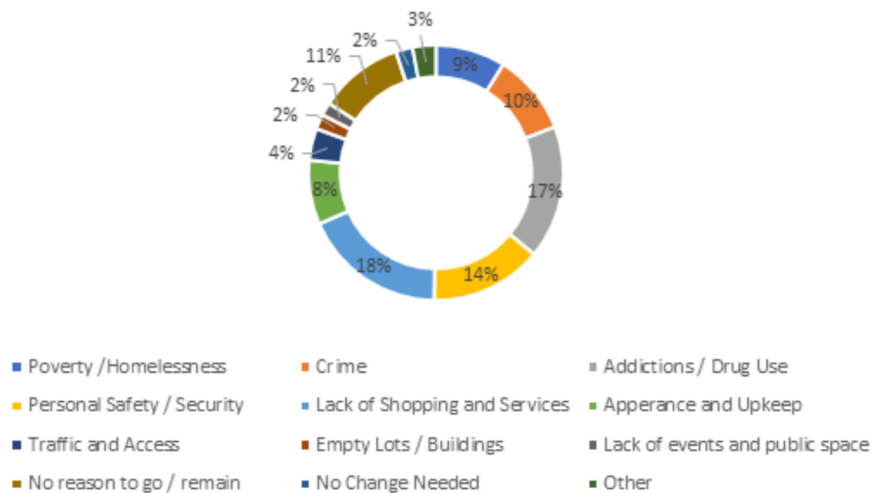


#### Question options

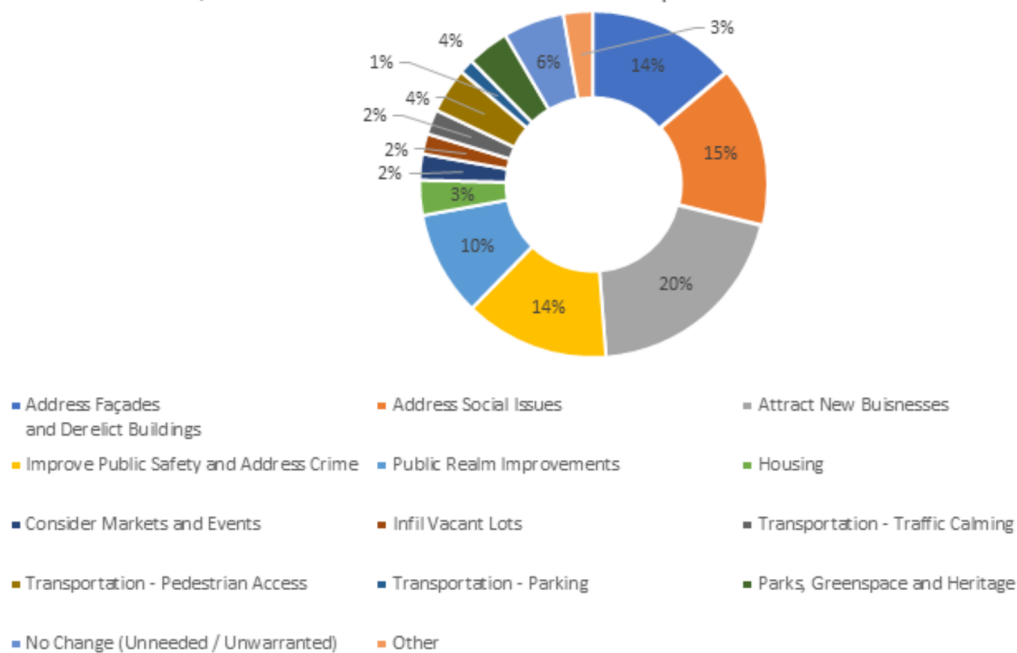
- Everyday of the week
- Most days of the week
- About once a week
- About once or twice a month
- About once or twice a year
- Never

## Community Wide Survey Results Cont'd

### Question 3: What keeps you from visiting the Uptown Neighbourhood?



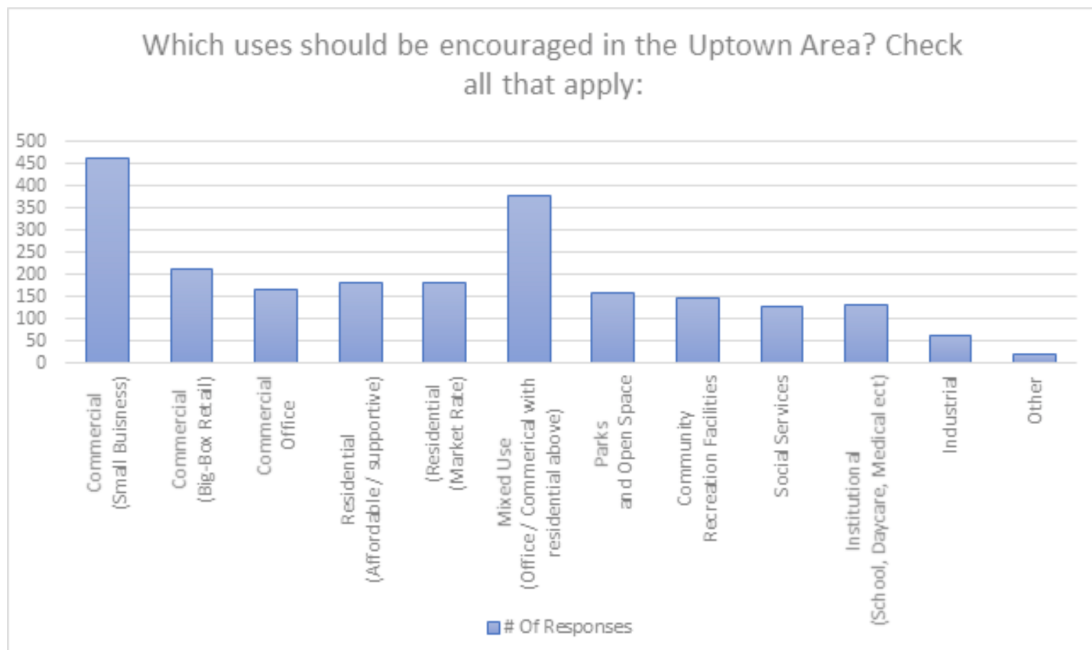
### Question 4: What Does a Revitalized Uptown Look to You?



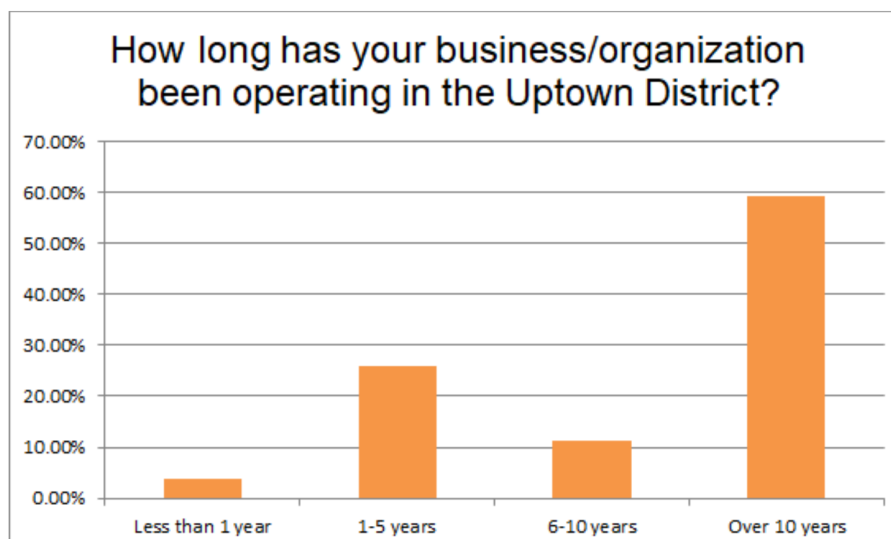
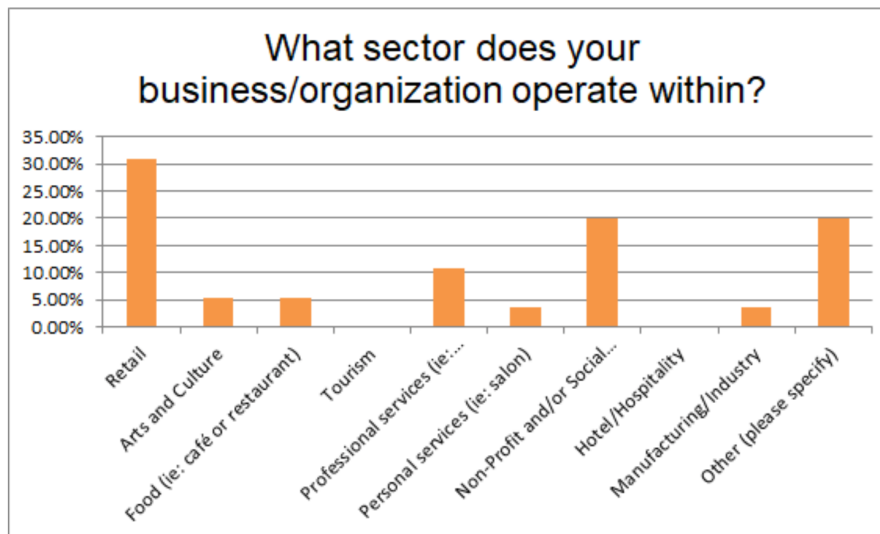
**Q5** In order to help identify what the top priorities are to encourage revitalization of the Uptown District, please rank the following categories (1 being the top priority, and so on):

OPTIONS	AVG. RANK
Crime Prevention	1.97
Poverty Reduction	2.74
Business and economic activity	2.98
Arts, Culture, and Recreation	4.09
Housing and development	4.26
Transportation, parking, and mobility	4.69

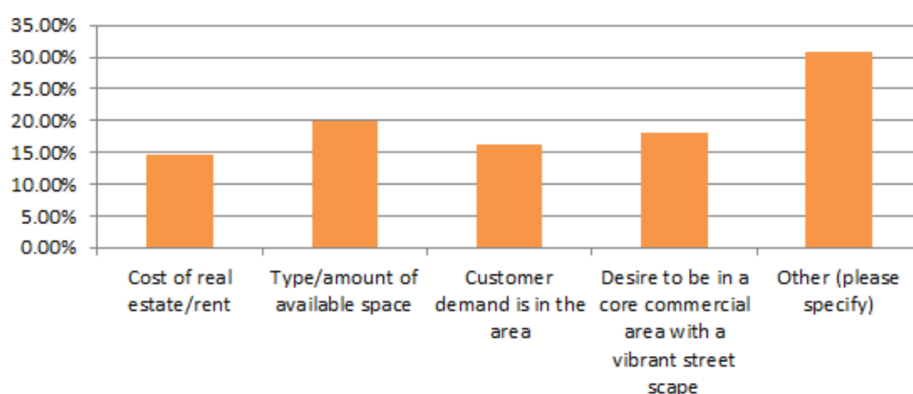




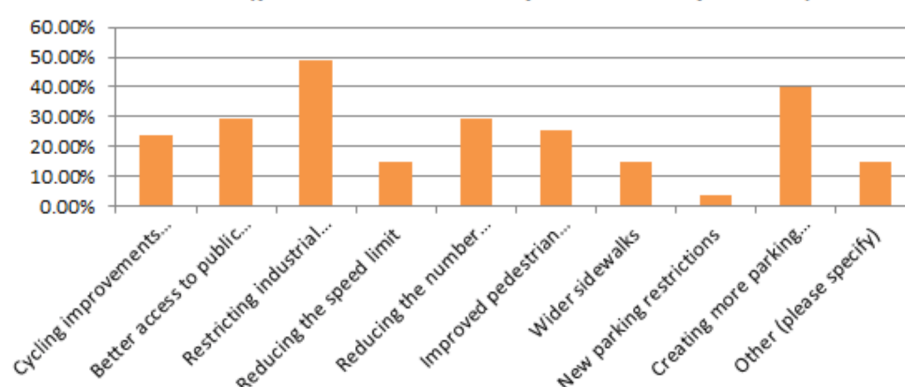
## Business & Service Provider Survey Results



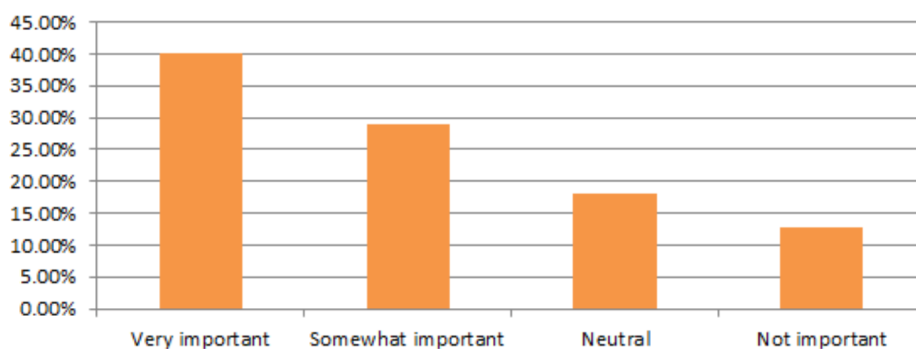
Why have you chosen to locate your business in this area? (please select all that apply)



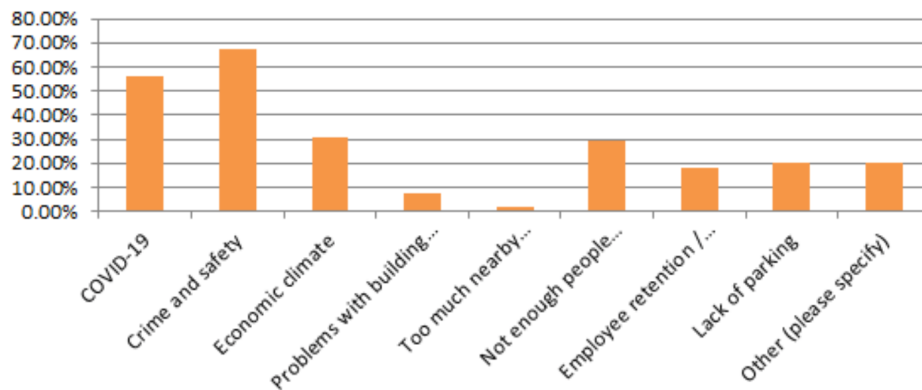
What kind of transportation solutions do you think would help benefit the Uptown District (please select up to five options):



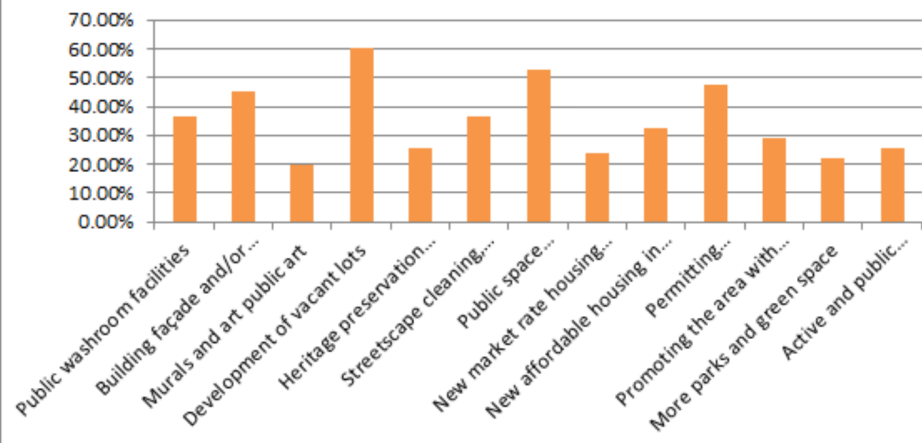
How important to your business/organization is it to increase the diversity and amount of housing options in Uptown District?



### What are the top three challenges your business/organization is dealing with at this time?



### Please check your top FIVE potential improvements:



### What kind of policy, programs, or partnerships could be developed (or improved) related to each of the following themes:

Poverty Reduction	66.67%
Crime Prevention	78.57%
Arts, Culture and Recreation	66.67%
Business and Economic Activity	64.29%
Transportation, Parking, and Mobility	47.62%
Housing and Development	64.29%

Please describe what your idea of a vibrant and revitalized Uptown District would be like. Please use details: 47 unique answers received.

Ideas of what a vibrant and revitalized Uptown District would look like were categorized into six themes:

- Diverse Local Businesses and Outdoor Venues;
- Trail Networks to Increase Accessibility;
- Vibrant, Attractive, and Cultural;
- Busy and Social Atmosphere with Entertainment;
- Clean and Safe; and
- Increase Density with Diverse, Equitable Housing.

The most common theme was **Vibrant, Attractive, and Cultural** with **20 participants (43%)** providing responses that fit under this theme. Some of these responses included having a well-decorated downtown, perhaps with a West Coast style, or a colored theme used for buildings, signs, and other infrastructure.

The second most common theme was **Diverse Local Businesses and Outdoor Venues** with **17 responses (36%)**. Many responses under this theme mentioned how they would like to see businesses with outdoor patios on the sidewalks. Some respondents also mentioned that they would like to see the area be less industrial with more diverse options of local businesses such as coffee shops, art galleries, and restaurants.

The theme **Busy and Social Atmosphere with Entertainment** had a total of **12 responses (26%)**. Participants mentioned how they would like the area to be lively and welcoming where people could gather on a regular basis and have opportunities for entertainment. Similarly, the next theme was **Clean and Safe**, with **11 participants (23%)** indicating that they would like the area to be cleaned up and have a safe feeling. Finally, the last two themes of **Trail Networks to Increase Accessibility** and **Increase Density with Diverse, Equitable Housing** had **7 responses each (14%)**. Responses under Trail Networks to Increase Accessibility mentioned increasing walkability and accessibility, particularly around downtown and connecting pedestrians and other modes of active transportation to the waterfront. For the theme Increase Density with Diverse, Equitable Housing, participants mentioned how they would like to see affordable housing in the area and to have apartment buildings or apartments above stores.



### What might help attract more people (locals and tourists) to the Uptown District?

Suggestions for attracting more people to the Uptown District were categorized into four themes:

- Local and Specialty Business Development;
- Beautification and Accessibility;
- Community Events and Social Activities;
- and Crime Prevention and Poverty Reduction.

A total of 45 responses to this question were collected, however, many contained multiple suggestions that were categorized into more than one theme.

The most common responses to Question 10 related to providing support for an increase in specialty businesses and storefronts in the Uptown District to attract more people to the area. This theme, **Local and Specialty Business Development**, received **24 responses (53%)**. To attract more people to the area, responses suggested: encouraging business owners to relocate to the Uptown District through reductions in rental and tax fees for businesses; implementing shared spaces for businesses; and placing a greater focus on business diversity. Many of these responses also indicated that vacant lots and buildings reflect poorly on the area, and that development and renovation of these locations would provide a more desirable location for business development.

In addition to suggesting that an increase in business development would help attract people to the Uptown District, **16 (36%)** responses mentioned that **aesthetic upgrades are important for attraction to the area**. Within the theme of Beautification and Accessibility, respondents indicated that the continuation of façade improvement, streetscaping, and overall beautification could significantly increase attraction to the Uptown District. Additionally, 8 of the 16 responses in this theme spoke to the need for improved transportation, such as accessible walkways, as well as signage to promote the District.

The theme **Crime Prevention and Poverty Reduction** was identified repeatedly throughout the responses to Question 10, as **13 (29%)** responses indicated that the **perception of an unsafe area in the Uptown District** is prevalent among Port Alberni locals. It appears well-known that the Uptown District is populated with people experiencing homelessness, therefore poverty reduction initiatives would provide a variety of socioeconomic benefits for Port Alberni. It was also indicated that crime in the Uptown District is often associated with people experiencing homelessness, further indicating the need for poverty reduction efforts. Respondents also suggested that security efforts to limit crime may help to make tourists and locals feel safer while in the area.

Finally, **social events and opportunities for business owners** and vendors was suggested in **10 (22%)** responses. These suggestions include developing markets for street sales and promotion of local arts, food, and activities. Developing a space to host public events such as concerts and other social gatherings was also mentioned as a way to promote the cultural diversity and importance of the area.

**What City initiatives are currently in place that support your vision?**

Respondents indicated being aware of City initiatives grouped under the following themes:

- Connect the Quays Pathway Project;
- Façade Improvement and Beautification;
- Poverty Reduction; and Community Planning.

In addition to responses coded to these themes, 12 respondents indicated either being unaware of any initiatives that support their vision, or that none exist. Some replies to this question did not provide a clear or decipherable response, and therefore were not included in this analysis.

The initiative that respondents felt most supported in their vision was the **Connect the Quays Pathway Project, comprising 11 (27%)** of the responses to Question 11. The second most common theme for positive City initiatives, **Façade Improvement and Beautification**, which included responses relating to general clean-up, beautification, streetscaping, and façade improvement efforts in the Uptown District. Responses in this theme comprised **10 of out 41 (24%)** responses. Third most commonly was the theme of **Community Planning**, with answers from **8 (20%)** respondents. Responses under this theme referred to initiatives such as joint committees and discussions, the community policing office, the Uptown Tax Revitalization program, and work conducted by city planners. Finally, **Poverty Reduction** received **4 (10%)** responses for Question 11. Respondents highlighted their appreciation of Port Alberni's continued efforts for solutions to homelessness by providing no-barrier shelters.

## **Business and Service Provider Focus Group**

During Phase 2 of engagement, a focus group with business owners and service providers in Uptown was held on February 9th, 2021 from 7–8pm on zoom. It was hosted by staff and students from the Mount Arrowsmith Biosphere Region Research Institute (MABRRI) and joined by two City of Port Alberni planners. The evening began with a short presentation on the background and progress of the UDRS project, which introduced the major themes discovered in the first community-wide survey. These six themes were: Housing and Development, Crime Prevention, Poverty Reduction, Business and Economic Activity, Arts, Culture and Recreation, and Transportation, Parking and Mobility. These themes were used to guide the discussion, which was facilitated using "break out rooms" for small group discussions. Below is a summary of the conversations, which have been coded and summarized according to themes.

### Crime Prevention

When asked about strategies for crime prevention, suggestions fell into three general categories:

- Policing
- Holistic Approaches
- Lighting/Safety

The relocation of the Community Policing office to Uptown was mentioned as a “step in the right direction.” Increasing police patrols and security, especially at night, was also suggested.

A holistic approach to addressing crime and vandalism that includes art and community partnerships was recommended to make Uptown more “welcoming.” Facade improvement through partnerships with artists was mentioned, since participants observed less vandalism on buildings with art than on empty buildings. Participants agreed that a holistic approach was necessary to encourage more people to visit the area, which in turn would discourage crime.

Participants noted that they would like increased lighting in the area to feel more safe. The area from Third Avenue down to the Quay was mentioned as particularly important.

### Poverty Reduction

The conversations related to poverty reduction were primarily focused on how to support community members experiencing poverty in dignified ways. A lack of publicly available washrooms was noted as a key issue in the Uptown District. This issue was discussed as a matter of equity, accessibility, and dignity. While some store owners are able to provide washrooms to non-customers, all participants agreed that having City-run public washroom facilities in Uptown would be helpful for shoppers and for those who access services in the Uptown area. Possible locations for the washroom were discussed but no clear preference emerged.

Social housing was also discussed under the theme of Poverty Reduction, with participants suggesting that social housing be dispersed throughout the community, rather than being concentrated in a single location.

### Business and Economic Development & Arts and Culture

Community members shared many ideas that combined arts and culture with business/economic development and revitalization, making these categories hard to separate. Because of this, the ideas and emerging themes are presented together. Three themes emerged:

- Build upon the existing success of the arts district
- Attention to storefronts
- Partnerships

Art has been part of the Uptown District in many successful ways in the past, and participants say this needs to be built upon and celebrated. For example, the Rotary Club has stewarded arts projects and interventions in Uptown for many years. Suggestions for integrating more artistic influence into the Uptown District include: incentive programs for artists, connecting businesses through art, and an art treasure hunt.

Empty and underutilized storefronts were noted as an ongoing issue. Suggestions for storefront improvement often included art. For example, empty storefronts could be used as display areas for a rotation of local artists or retailers and facade improvement could include hiring artists to paint murals. Subsidized rent was also suggested as a way to entice more businesses to the area in an effort to create a more consistent shopping experience.

A variety of partnership opportunities were identified by participants. Some of these include: creating a training or mentorship program between successful businesses and struggling businesses, public art competitions, and murals with youth and other marginalized community members. The Vancouver Indigenous Arts Project was mentioned as a precedent.



## Housing

Three key themes emerged from conversations about housing:

- Housing demand, growth and population change
- Suggested areas for re/development
- Improving existing residences

Participants acknowledged that growth is happening in the wider community and as a result housing is in demand in most areas of Port Alberni, including the Uptown neighbourhood. Retirees, “downsizers” (seniors), and people relocating from other provinces were mentioned as anecdotes for those increasingly looking for housing in the Uptown District. It was suggested that Uptown could support both the existing and incoming population of residents by providing more compact, one and two bedroom housing options. Participants shared a vision for future housing development that includes a range of housing costs, green infrastructure, charging stations for Electric Vehicles, and mixed commercial-residential buildings.

When asked about potential areas for development or re-development, participants expressed that there was a lack of residential along 3rd Avenue and suggested the lot next to Steampunk Coffee as a potential site to consider.

Participants suggested several ideas that might improve existing housing in the Uptown District. These included the City holding landlords accountable for the quality and appearance of their buildings (perhaps through a bylaw) and cleaning/maintaining the alleys behind properties.

## Transportation, Parking, Mobility

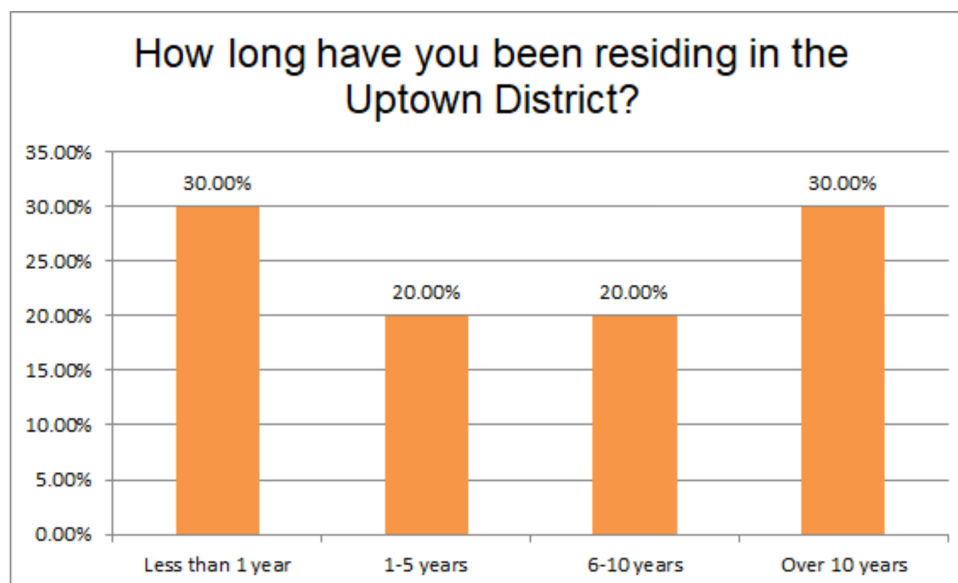
Three themes were identified in conversations about transportation, parking and mobility:

- Location
- Public transportation
- Pedestrian & bike infrastructure

Participants approached this question by considering why more people were not visiting Uptown, and what it might take to encourage people to do so. The disconnect between South Port and North Port was recognized as an issue for drivers, cyclists and transit users. Group members suggested an express bus route, or shuttle service, as a way to increase visitors to the Uptown District.

Structural improvements for pedestrians and cyclists were recommended. Specifically, lights at crosswalks (perhaps solar panel powered lights) and bike parking were mentioned as areas for improvement. One participant shared her difficulty and frustration with trying to get a bike rack outside of her business.

## Resident Survey



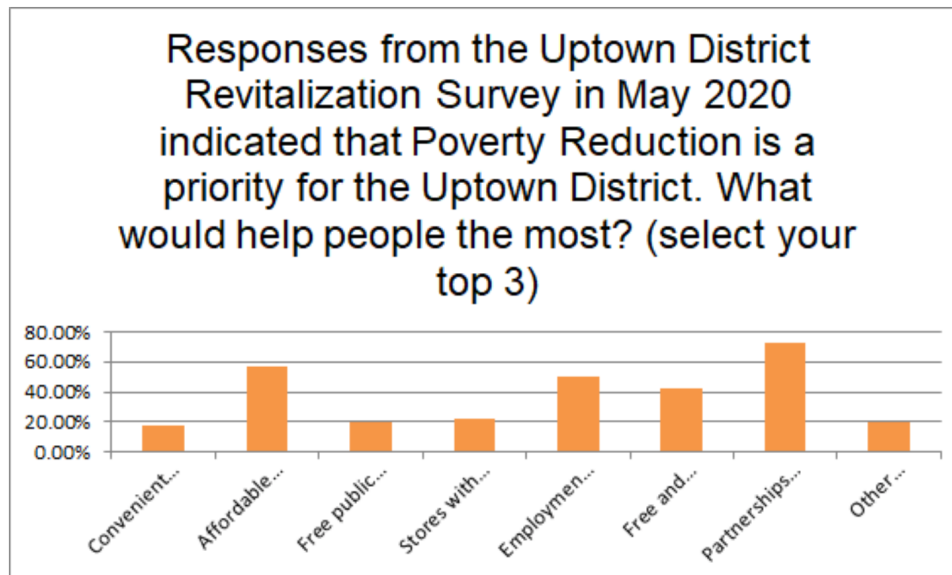
In a couple short sentences, please describe why you decided to live in the Uptown District?

Results were categorized and counted within each category. While there was a great variety of responses, most people indicated that the proximity to the waterfront or Harbour Quay was the primary reason why they chose to live in Uptown.

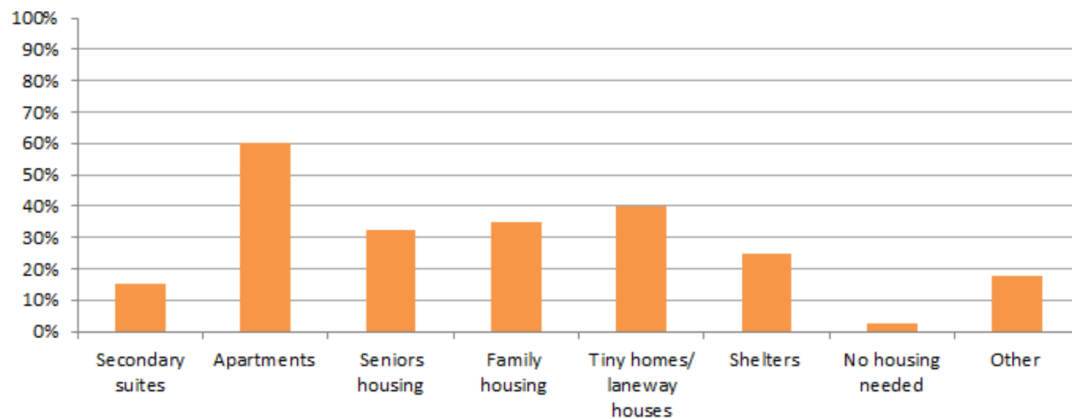
CATEGORY	# OF RESPONSES
Amenities	7
Small businesses/shops	8
Quiet	2
Charm/ character	5
Harbour Quay/ waterfront proximity	13
Friendly/ pleasant neighbourhood	3
Work close by	2
The house was right/ family owned	10
View	5
Future potential	6
Walkability	6
Affordability	6

Select the 3 images that best align with your idea of a "vibrant and revitalized Uptown District"

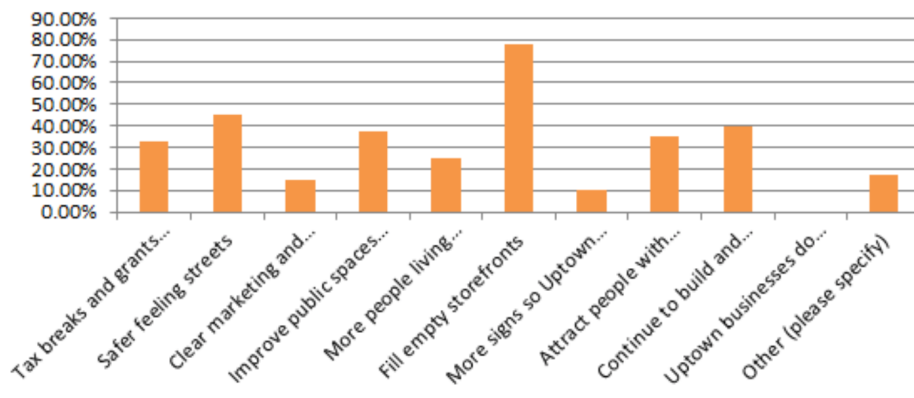
IMAGE CONTENTS	# OF VOTES
Outdoor patios	22
Public washrooms	6
Mural	18
Public square	15
Bench/ planter	0
Mixed use buildings	8
Walk up housing/ townhouses	4
Nice facade	12
Public market	15



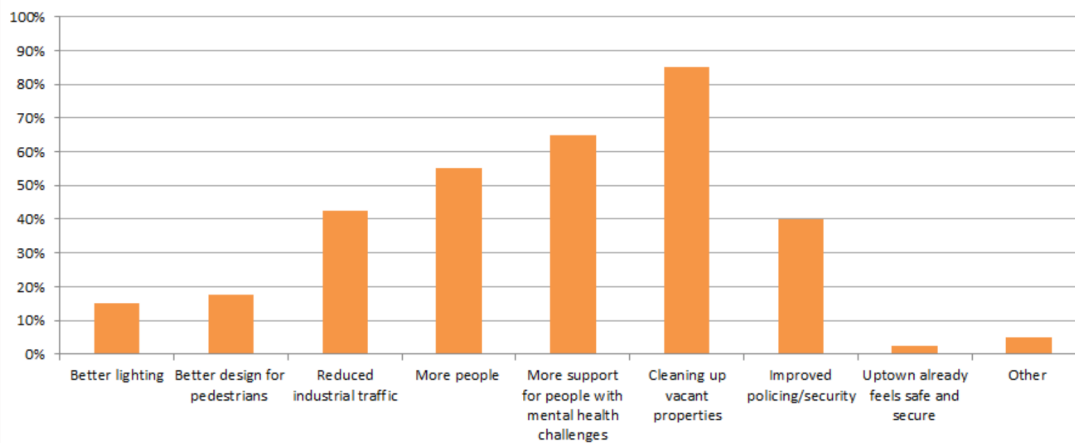
More housing choices typically makes housing in cities more affordable. Which housing types do you feel are the most needed in Uptown?



What do you think would help businesses in the Uptown District the most? (select your top 3)



What would make the Uptown District feel safer and more secure?





## Appendix B Guiding Documents

Document	Overview
City of Port Alberni Corporate Strategic Plan: 2019–2023	<p>The priorities of the Corporate Strategic Plan are:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"><li>1. Respond to demographic change/improve quality of life</li><li>2. Enable the new economy</li><li>3. Provide and maintain quality services</li><li>4. Champion environmental leadership</li><li>5. Foster a complete community (safe, healthy and inclusive)</li></ol> <p>Several specific goals and strategies speak directly about the Uptown District including Goal 1.2 “The Uptown District is revitalized and flourishing.”</p>
City of Port Alberni Official Community Plan (2007)	<p>The OCP is a key policy document that has been adopted by City Council. Through the review of many key studies and consultation with the community, the following key issues were identified:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Aging population</li><li>• Economic and social vitality in the Southport area</li><li>• There is no one main street shopping district in the City</li><li>• There is a need to diversify the local economy so that it is more vibrant and sustainable in the long term</li><li>• Two emerging housing stocks; senior care housing and multi family options</li><li>• Need to improve trail connectivity throughout the community.</li><li>• Develop the local tourism industry</li><li>• Transportation connectivity, industrial traffic through town, and improved access to the Island Highway</li><li>• Improved connection to the waterfront such as a waterfront walkway or waterfront oriented public spaces</li><li>• Increased moorage, day floats, and a fuelling dock to supplement the existing facility in the harbour</li><li>• The forest and fishing industries have been the traditional economic backbone of Port Alberni, but they are now slowing down in terms of economic viability.</li></ul>

## Appendix B Guiding Documents Cont'd

Document	Overview
Uptown Revitalization Plan (2010)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Funding for this project came from the Island Coastal Economic Trust fund</li> <li>• Aid Port Alberni's transition to becoming a more diverse and sustainable community by economically strengthening the City's Uptown Core and re-establishing a vibrant community centre in the Uptown area.</li> <li>• Goal to provide a visible change in the appearance of the street in order to stimulate economic growth in the area.</li> <li>• Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw approved in 2008 to encourage new business.</li> <li>• Actions: 3rd Avenue streetscape upgrades from Dunbar Street to Mar Street included attractive new energy-efficient street lighting and crosswalk upgrades. Walkability and traffic flow were improved and new design elements such as benches and street-side planters added.</li> <li>• Actions resulted in a visible impact on the vitality of the Uptown area including an increase in new businesses, pedestrian traffic and patronage by residents and visitors.</li> </ul>
Housing Needs Assessment (2021)	<p>The City of Port Alberni's Housing Needs Assessment Report was created in February 2021 in response to new provincial legislative requirements. This report uses a variety of sources including data from Statistics Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), BC Housing, BC Assessment and local City data, as well as the voices of community members gathered via community engagement initiatives to report on the City's current and anticipated housing needs. It includes an analysis of Port Alberni today, including demographics, economic indicators, and the housing profile. Expected community growth is calculated and analyzed using projections provided by the province to estimate the future housing needs. The report concludes by highlighting the fact that for a long time, Port Alberni has been seen as a more affordable place to live by those who look at the community from the outside, but the experience for local residents continues to become more unaffordable.</p>

## Appendix B Guiding Documents Cont'd

Document	Overview
	<p>Housing un-affordability is due to older local housing conditions, lack of growth and new development, stagnated economic recovery, and an aging population with a depleted workforce. Moving forward, the low rental vacancy rate and high costs of housing indicate that the need for affordability and diversity of housing options is not being met by the current housing stock in the community.</p>
Port Alberni Zoning Bylaw (2014)	<p>The City of Port Alberni's Zoning Bylaw provides the regulations for land use and helps the community develop according to its values and goals as described in the OCP.</p> <p>It includes the following sections:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Administration</li> <li>• Definitions</li> <li>• Regulations for each zone (including uses, densities, lot coverage, set backs, and anything else that might be appropriate).</li> <li>• General regulations – apply everywhere in the city, not just to particular zones.</li> <li>• Rules for parking and loading zones</li> <li>• Zoning map</li> </ul> <p>Zoning affects all community members as it is the most direct method for controlling land use.</p>
Active Transportation Master Plan (2014)	<p>Developed in 2014, this report aims to promote walking and cycling in the City of Port Alberni in order to promote economic development, quality of life, health, decrease costs, and support environmental quality. This report provides an analysis of the community context, policy context, and existing conditions for walking and cycling.</p> <p>The report then suggests 3 main action items:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Network development and connectivity</li> <li>• Safety and education</li> <li>• Accessibility and Design</li> </ul> <p>The report concludes with an implementation strategy of the 3 action items.</p>



