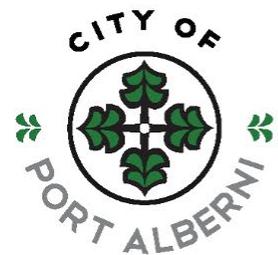


**February 2021**

# **Alberni Valley HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT**



**AT A GLANCE**



Providing access to a range of housing forms, including affordable and accessible housing, is becoming an ever-increasing priority for many communities across Canada, including the City of Port Alberni. To further advance the City's efforts to understand and address the housing needs of the community, the City of Port Alberni prepared a Housing Needs Report. The Housing Needs Report provides important information and data to help understand and prioritize future housing needs in the community.

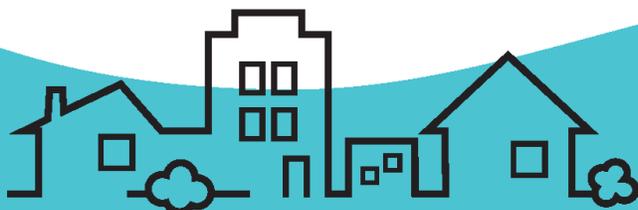
The report has revealed some recent economic, demographic, and housing trends in Port Alberni. In many ways Port Alberni continues to experience a unique set of housing challenges, specific to this community. For a long time, Port Alberni has been seen as an affordable place to live by those who look at the community from the outside, but the experience for local residents is quite different. Many are struggling to afford housing due to rising rent and house prices, low vacancy rates, a median household income that was almost \$20,000 lower than the provincial median in 2016, and an aging population.

Even though Port Alberni has seen nominal population growth since 2006 there has been a recent increase in housing prices and a shortage of available rental units. Population and housing projections for Port Alberni are fairly low, based on an annual growth rate of 0.3%. However, the population of Port Alberni is expected to grow by 10.1 % between 2016 and 2025. The median income in Port Alberni has started to rebound from the economic challenges the community experienced between 2006 and 2016.

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. While there is a high demand and preference for ownership and single-family homes in Port Alberni, diversifying the housing stock by increasing the variety of housing options would likely have a positive impact on affordability – and at the very least it would provide the community with more housing options.

The biggest unmet needs in Port Alberni are affordable options for renters. Even though the rental vacancy rate in Port Alberni has recently rebounded to a healthier rate of 3%, about 50% of renters were struggling with unaffordable shelter costs in 2016. In addition to the cost of rent, the availability of units that are suitable and in good condition is a major challenge for nearly 20% of renter households in the community. Home ownership will become increasingly unaffordable if the value of housing continues to increase at the current rate, which in turn could add additional pressure on the rental market.

One other common theme that emerged through the City's Housing Needs Assessment is a general sense of not having control over their housing situation, which many people noted. In many instances renters felt that they had no control as they were subject to a landlord's discretion. Lack of control also seemed to be mentioned when a person was living with an older family member, and remaining in a secure housing environment was dependent upon that family member's good health. Other people noted that they lacked control over relocating, often feeling stuck in their current living situation. In these instances, the inability to relocate was typically somehow related to affordability, suitability, or adequacy.



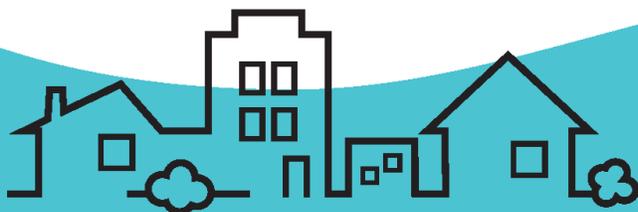
In 2018, it was estimated that there were at least 147 people experiencing homelessness in Port Alberni. Many of those people have said that rent was too high and that their income was too low to afford housing, but about 46% said that no suitable housing was available to them.

Public opinion in Port Alberni seems to recognize the complexity and significance of helping vulnerable populations with housing and related services. In response to the City's Housing Needs survey question "What do you think is the most serious housing issue in the Alberni Valley?" many respondents indicated that they were concerned about people living below the poverty line, or people experiencing homelessness – many going on to note that these individuals were not getting proper housing or support services to help enrich and better their lives. Another common theme was the lack of variety of housing options in the community, whether that was because there were too many old and poorly maintained homes or because there simply wasn't enough diversity in the form of housing stock.

Based on the Census data from 2016, more than 1,000 additional subsidized dwelling units are needed to provide affordable housing for residents of the City. At the time of writing this report there are nine different affordable housing projects (approximately 380 units in total) being planned (or are now in the construction phase) in Port Alberni. While some of these projects are still subject to various approvals or funding, the success of each of these projects over the long term will be necessary in order to critically address some of the affordability challenges that lower-income renters in this community are currently facing. As community demographics change, it will also be important to consider additional housing for seniors, given the projected increase of 608 persons (12% increase) over the age of 65 in the next 5 years.

Beyond issues to do with affordability, suitability, or adequacy there are many other types of housing needs that could be addressed to create a more livable community. Specifically, with regards obtaining secure and stable housing, community members identified the following concerns that require further consideration and study:

- lack of safety or fears related to community and neighbourhood
- experience of racism or other forms of discrimination
- health issues, physical limitations, or challenges with accessibility
- natural disaster or other accidental structural damages
- property taxes increasing too much
- unable to find pet friendly housing/housing with enough room for pets
- employment in another community/long commutes impacting quality of life and cost of living
- challenging neighbours/problems with people in the neighborhood.



# Housing Needs at a Glance

OCT 2020  
RENTAL VACANCY **3%**

**CONDITIONS**

**\$300K MEDIAN SALE PRICE**

2000 - 2020  
MEDIAN RENT  
INCREASE BY 93%

**2016 - 2020  
AVERAGES**

ASSESSED VALUE UP 53%  
PURCHASE PRICE UP 45%

**68% OWNER  
HOUSEHOLDS**

**32% RENTER  
HOUSEHOLDS**

2006 - 2016  
AVERAGE INCOME - UP 2%  
AVERAGE HOME PRICE - UP 35%

**\$50,595  
MEDIAN HOUSEHOLD INCOME**

**POPULATION**

**POPULATION IN 2016... ..PROJECTED FOR 2025**

**17,325**

**19,086**

**CHANGE 10.1%**

**2016 - 10.3% RATE OF  
UNEMPLOYMENT**

**2018**



**147 HOMELESS  
57% WITH NO SHELTER**



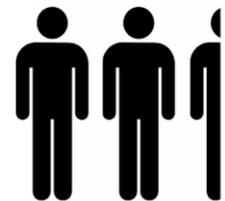
**MEDIAN  
AGE**

**48.2**

**OVER  
65**

**23.2%**

**2.1**



**AVERAGE SIZE  
OF HOUSEHOLD**

**HOUSING**

**BETWEEN 2010 AND 2020  
700 NEW RESIDENTIAL UNITS**

**45% BUILT  
BEFORE 1960**



**20% NEED  
MAJOR REPAIRS**

**8,120**

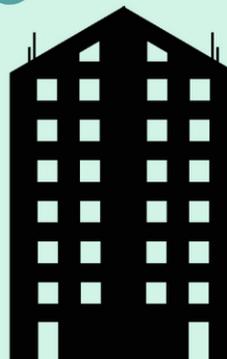
**# OF HOUSEHOLDS  
IN 2016**



**SINGLE FAMILY  
HOME  
69.3%**



**LOW-MEDIUM DENSITY  
APARTMENTS  
12.8%**



**HIGHER DENSITY  
APARTMENTS  
15.8%**



**OTHER HOUSING  
FORMS  
2.0%**