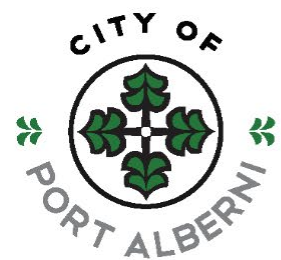


**February 2021**

# **Alberni Valley HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT**

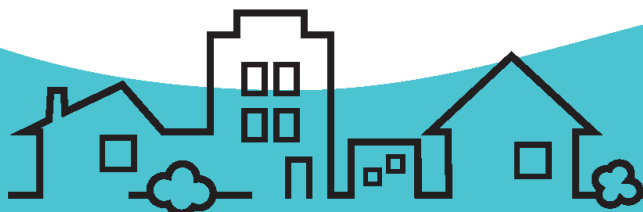


**Final Report**



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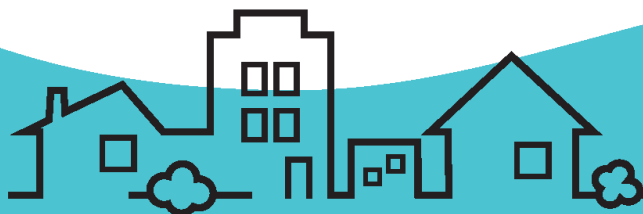
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## LAND ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

The City of Port Alberni is located within the traditional unceded territories of the *cišaaʔath* (sis sha ahtah – Tseshaht) and the *Hupač asath* First Nation. Both nations are members of the *Nuučaan̓ ul* (Nuu-chah-nulth Nations), which consists of 14 nations located on western Vancouver Island. Originally known by Europeans as the Nootka people, the Nuu-chah-nulth are all people of the land and sea. This land acknowledgement helps inform people of the colonial history of our region, and reminds us all that the land is a precious resource that hosts us and sustains our wellbeing.

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

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. The City's Official Community Plan has provided policy to help ensure that a range of housing choice is provided in order to meet the needs of current and future residents. The City's 2019-2023 Corporate Strategic Plan also reinforces this objective with the overarching goals of *"responding to demographic change/improve a quality of life"* and *"foster a complete community (safe, healthy, and inclusive)"*.

To further advance the City's efforts to understand and address the housing needs of the community, the City of Port Alberni has prepared a Housing Needs Report. This report identifies what gaps in the housing spectrum may currently exist and helps to identify future needs across the housing spectrum. The Housing Needs Assessment provides important information and data to be able to better address and prioritize future housing needs for all residents.

This project has involved completing a background review of existing City policies and strategies, collecting and reviewing data from Statistics Canada, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), BC Housing, BC Assessment and local City data, as well as listening to and gathering input from non-profit housing providers, housing and homelessness service providers, persons with lived experience of homelessness, and residents. The data and information gathered was then used to complete projections to identify anticipated housing needs across the housing spectrum.

Understanding the current supply of housing across the spectrum and barriers to safe, secure and affordable housing is critical to ensuring the City continues to be a welcoming, inclusive, and supportive community. This Housing Needs Report points to a number of key trends and issues facing the City of Port Alberni, which are highlighted below and summarized in detail in the report.





## HOUSING SPECTRUM



Source: <https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/en/housing-observer-online/2019-housing-observer/wheelhouse-new-way-looking-housing-needs>

## CONTRIBUTIONS

The development of the Housing Needs Report was led by the City of Port Alberni's Planning department, with the support of the project consultant Rebecca Taylor (RFT Planning & GIS Services). The City would like to thank the ACRD's Planning Department for their support and collaboration with this project. The City would also like to acknowledge the contributions of the following community stakeholders for their active participation in the community engagement process:

- Alberni Community & Women's Services Society
- Port Alberni Shelter Society
- Canadian Mental Health Association – Port Alberni
- Office of the Seniors' Advocate
- Island Health
- Alberni Clayoquot Health Network
- Port Alberni Friendship Center
- North Island College
- Alberni Valley Childcare Society





## 1: INTRODUCTION

### 1.1 Background Information

Legislative requirements took effect April 16, 2019 and require local governments to collect data, analyze trends and present reports that describe current and anticipated housing needs in their respective communities. It is also considered mandatory to complete these projects prior to the development of an Official Community Plan (OCP). Together, legislation and regulations specify requirements for local government related to housing needs reports. These requirements include:

- Collecting information to identify current and projected housing needs.
- Using that information to prepare and publish an online housing needs report which shows current and projected housing needs for at least the next five years.
- Considering the most recently collected information and housing needs report when amending official community plans and regional growth strategies.

The City was successful in a grant application through the Union of British Columbia Municipalities (UBCM) for project funding of \$30,000. The funds were used for project costs such as data collection, public and stakeholder engagement, as well report writing. The project was led by the City's Manager of Planning (Katelyn McDougall), the project consultant (Rebecca Taylor – RFT Planning & GIS Services), with collaboration from the ACRD Planning Department on various components of the project.

### 1.2 What is a Housing Needs Report?

A Housing Needs Report (HNR) is a tool for local governments to use to inform planning documents such as the Zoning Bylaw and Official Community Plan. The report is intended to describe the current housing situation, to help the City better understand current and future housing needs and identify existing and projected gaps in the housing supply. A HNR is developed through a Housing Needs Assessment, using the guidelines laid out by the provincial government and guiding legislation. Over 50 distinct kinds of data have been collected, including population (current and projected), housing stock details, household income, and economic sectors.

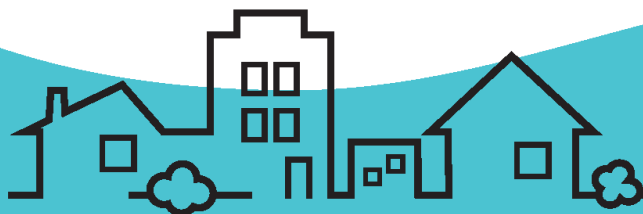
### 1.3 Study Process and Data Collection

The study process included three key components:

1. Review of background policies, plans, and other documents;
2. Analysis of data the City's demographics, economy, and housing; and
3. Engagement with residents and key stakeholders in the community.

#### Data Collection

The report draws on available statistical information regarding demographics, housing, and the local economy. The information summarized and used within this report was collected from several datasets and sources



including Statistics Canada (2016, 2011 and 2006 censuses and 2011 National Household Survey), Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), BC Housing, the Cooperative Housing Federation of BC, BC Assessment, BC Statistics, and the City of Port Alberni.

### **Public and Stakeholder Engagement**

Public and stakeholder engagement methods were limited due to the COVID-19 pandemic. The public engagement portion of the project included a comprehensive online survey (paper copies were also available upon request) which was made available from October 27 – November 29, 2020. The survey was hosted on the City's Lets Connect PA website and promoted through social media and online platforms. A total of 670 people from the City and the surrounding Alberni Valley completed the survey.

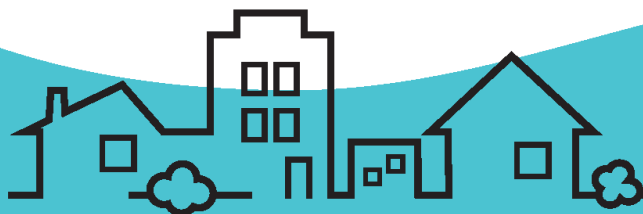
To complement the survey and data analysis, and to provide additional context of housing issues, key stakeholders were identified and invited to complete a separate survey and participate in an online focus group in early January 2021. The stakeholders invited to participate in this process came from the following fields:

- Local First Nations
- Vulnerable populations
- Health care and other service providers
- Non-market housing providers
- Seniors housing / support services
- Community / economic organizations

### **Data Limitations**

Data limitations include:

1. The data in the custom Statistics Canada spreadsheet varies slightly from the Community Profile for Port Alberni because the custom data counts persons in private households, which is usually less than the total population. This means that it excludes those living in commercial, institutional, or communal dwellings (e.g. nursing homes, rooming houses, hotels, etc.). The difference between the total population and the population in private households in Port Alberni in 2016 is 353 persons.
2. The projections contained in this report are developed using the population projection data from Statistics Canada, which is only provided for the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District (ACRD). Projections for the City of Port Alberni were extrapolated from this data using the best practices available. This should represent a plausible scenario should population changes follow the patterns observed over the years. In addition, the projections data is based on the total population data (and not the population in private households).





3. The data from 2011 is considered less reliable due to the voluntary nature of the 2011 National Household Survey.

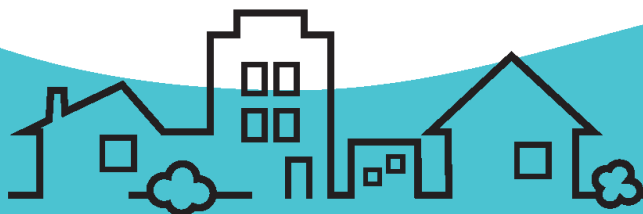
#### 1.4 About the City of Port Alberni

The City of Port Alberni is the largest city in the Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District, a large and diverse area of over 6,600 square kilometers centrally located on the west side of Vancouver Island. It is bordered by the Beaufort Mountain Range to the east and the Pacific Ocean to the west. Port Alberni is the commercial hub of the region, as well as the gateway to popular tourist destinations such as Tofino and Ucluelet. It was originally two towns, Alberni and Port Alberni, which amalgamated in 1967. Due to this history, the community is multi-nodal, with two separate “downtown” areas.

#### 1.5 COVID-19 Pandemic

In March 2020, the start of the COVID-19 pandemic shut down almost all of Canada, and Port Alberni was no exception. Almost one year later, the pandemic continues to impact residents and businesses alike, and the full impact of the pandemic on the community may not be known for some time. However, it is almost certain that it will have an impact on housing.

Port Alberni is still considered a more affordable place to live on Vancouver Island, but that is quickly changing as many people have continued to move to the area putting pressure of the current supply of housing. More people are now able to work from home and are turning to the outdoors for their recreational activities and leisure time. These factors have made it attractive to live in a more rural and affordable community such as Port Alberni. Proximity to major urban centres such as Nanaimo, Campbell River, and even Victoria, while also being close to renowned tourist destinations such as Tofino and the Pacific Rim National Park Reserve, is another major factor that will almost certainly have an impact on the affordability and availability of housing in the Alberni Valley.



## 2: Port Alberni Today

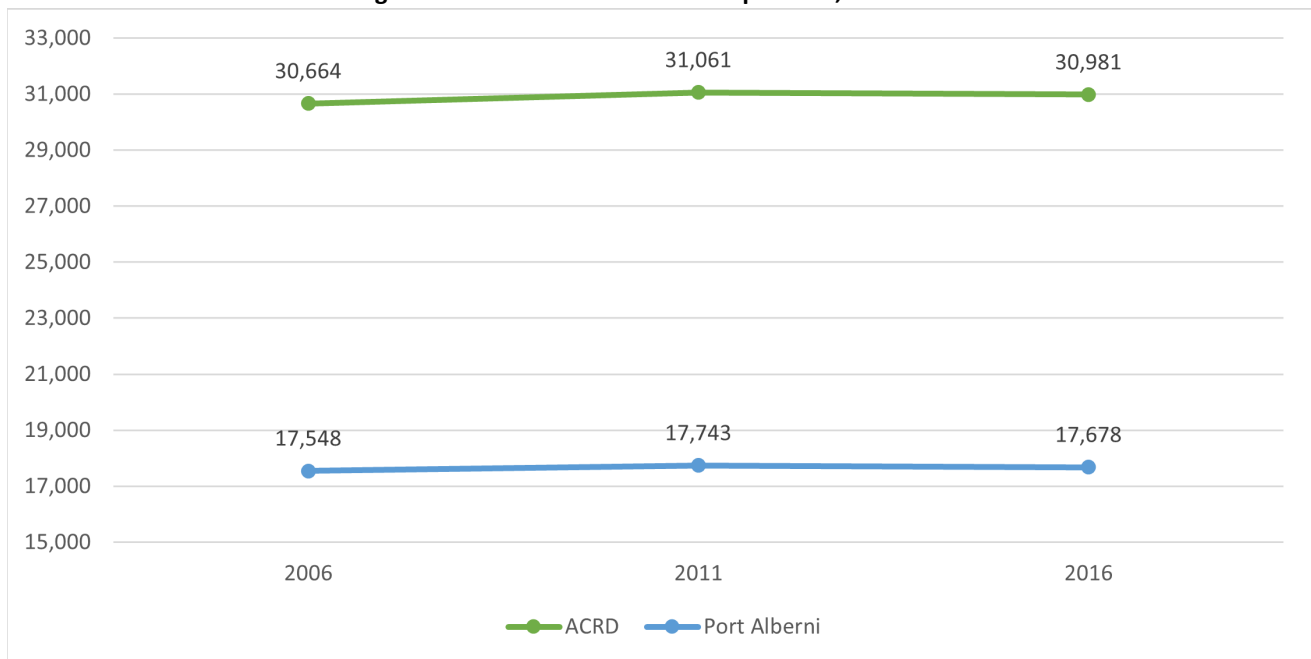
This section looks at the most recent demographic and economic profile of Port Alberni, based on the 2016 Census. It also analyzes the current housing stock as well as current needs.

### 2.1 Demographic Profile

#### Population

In 2016, Port Alberni had a population of approximately 17,600 out of the total regional population of over 31,000. This is a 0.8% increase from 2006, but as Figure 1 shows, the population in Port Alberni and the ACRD decreased slightly between 2011 and 2016. The population numbers for Port Alberni do not include the populations of the Hupacasath and Tseshaht reserves, even though the Hupacasath reserve is located within City boundaries. The population growth in Port Alberni has stagnated in recent years compared to other nearby jurisdictions on Vancouver Island.

**Figure 1: Port Alberni and ACRD Population, 2006-2016**



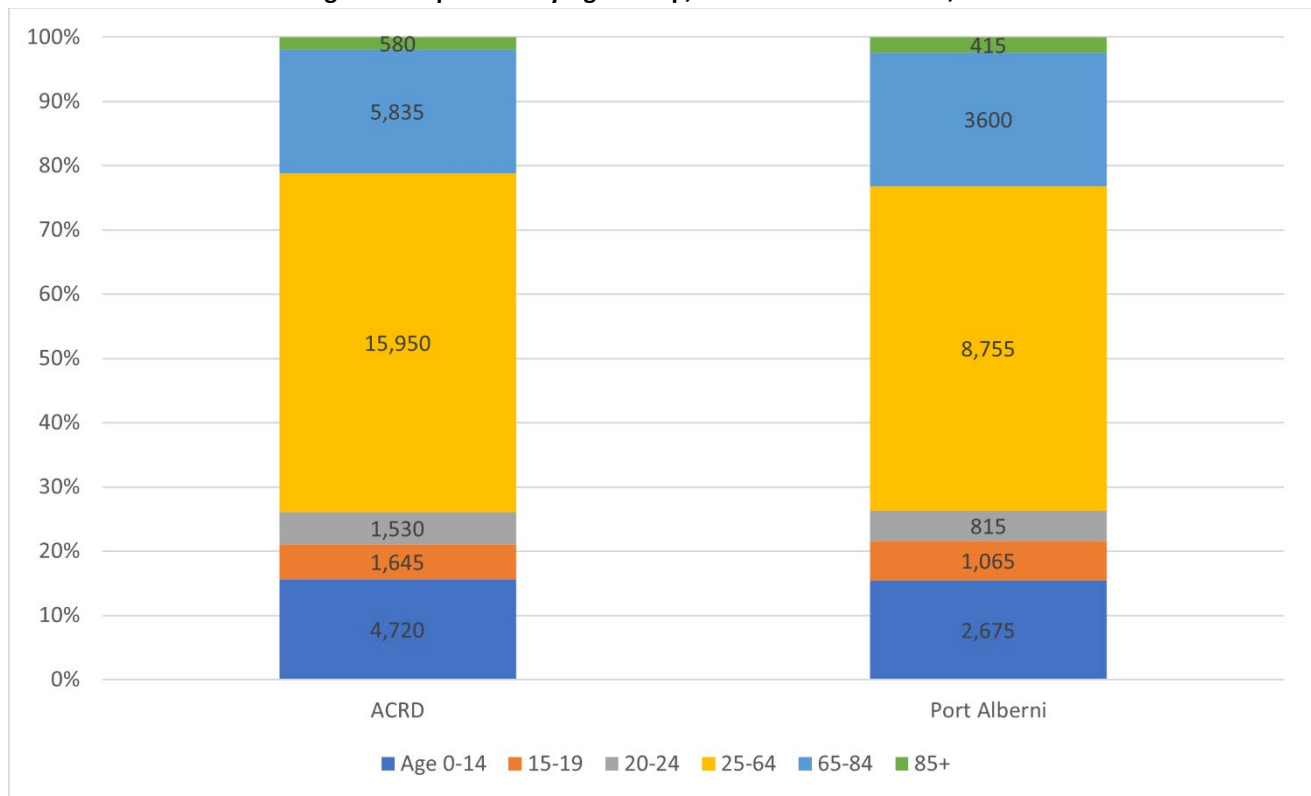
*Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles 2016, 2011, 2006*



## Age

Port Alberni has a higher percentage of seniors (23.2%) compared to the ACRD (21.2%) as shown in Figure 2 below. This may partially be due to the higher density of housing options geared towards seniors mostly being located within City limits. In Port Alberni, 61.4% of the population is of typical working age (15 to 64), compared to 38.6% of those would not be considered working age (those under 0-14 and 65+).

**Figure 2: Population by Age Group, Port Alberni and ACRD, 2016**

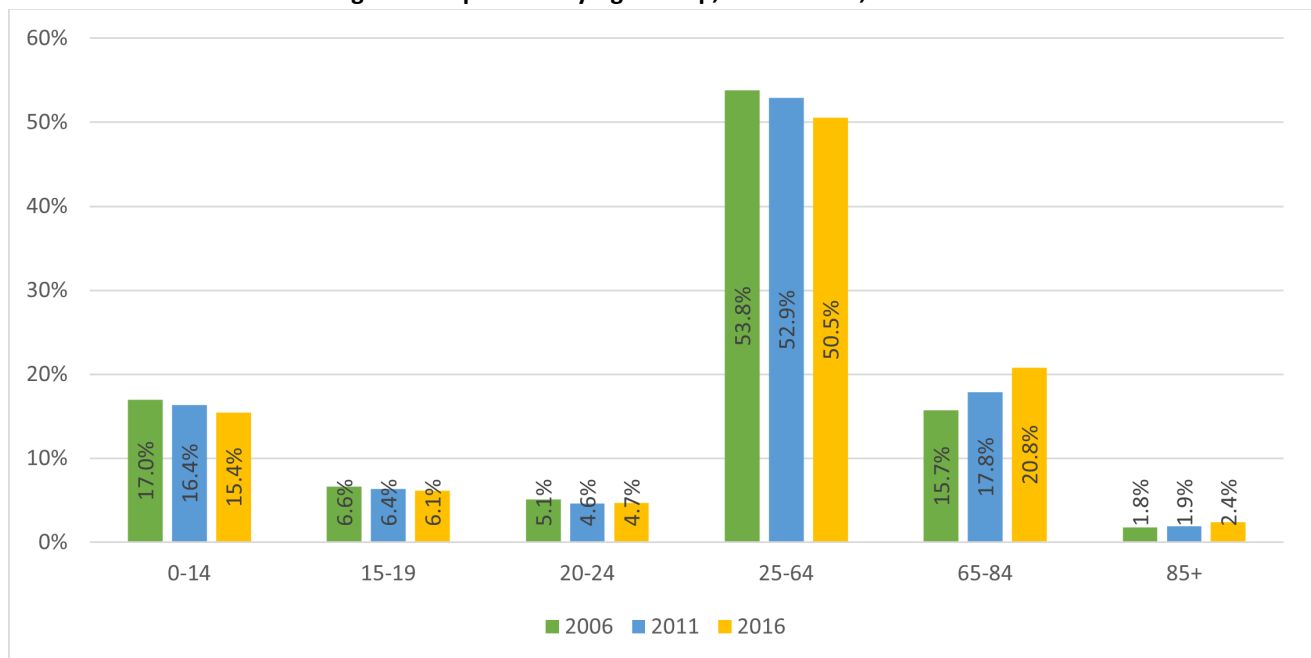


Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles 2016

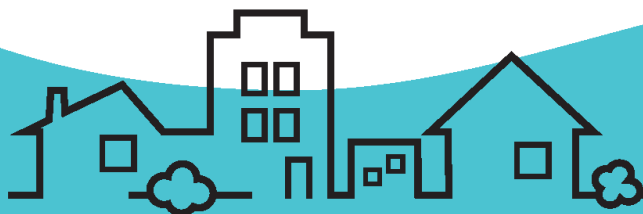


The age distribution of Port Alberni residents did not change significantly between 2006 and 2016. However, there was a general trend over this period that saw age groups under 65 decline slightly over this period, while age groups 65 and over grew modestly. Specifically, between 2011 and 2016 there was a 5% decrease in the number of adults aged 25-64, and a 5.1% increase in the number of adults aged 65-84. This is shown in Figure 3.

**Figure 3: Population by Age Group, Port Alberni, 2006-2016**

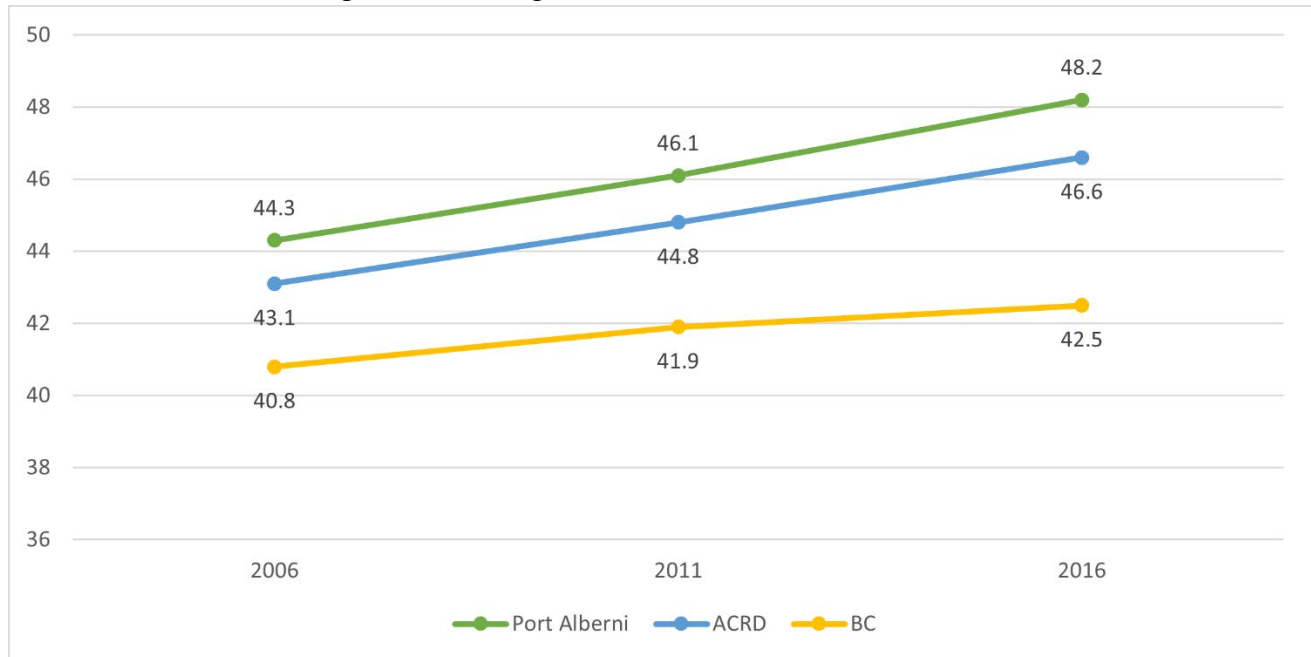


Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles 2016, 2011, 2006

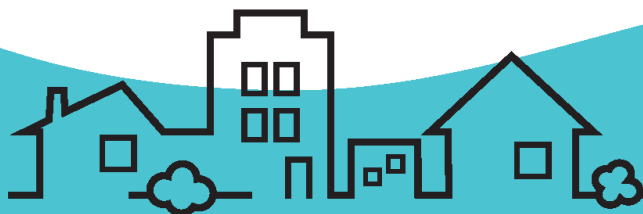


As of 2016, the median age of Port Alberni residents was 48.2, compared to 46.6 in the ACRD and 42.5 for BC as a whole. The median age in Port Alberni has grown since 2006 by almost 4 years, as shown in Figure 4. This increase in median age is emblematic of the aging population in the community.

**Figure 4: Median Age, Port Alberni, ACRD, and BC, 2006-2016**



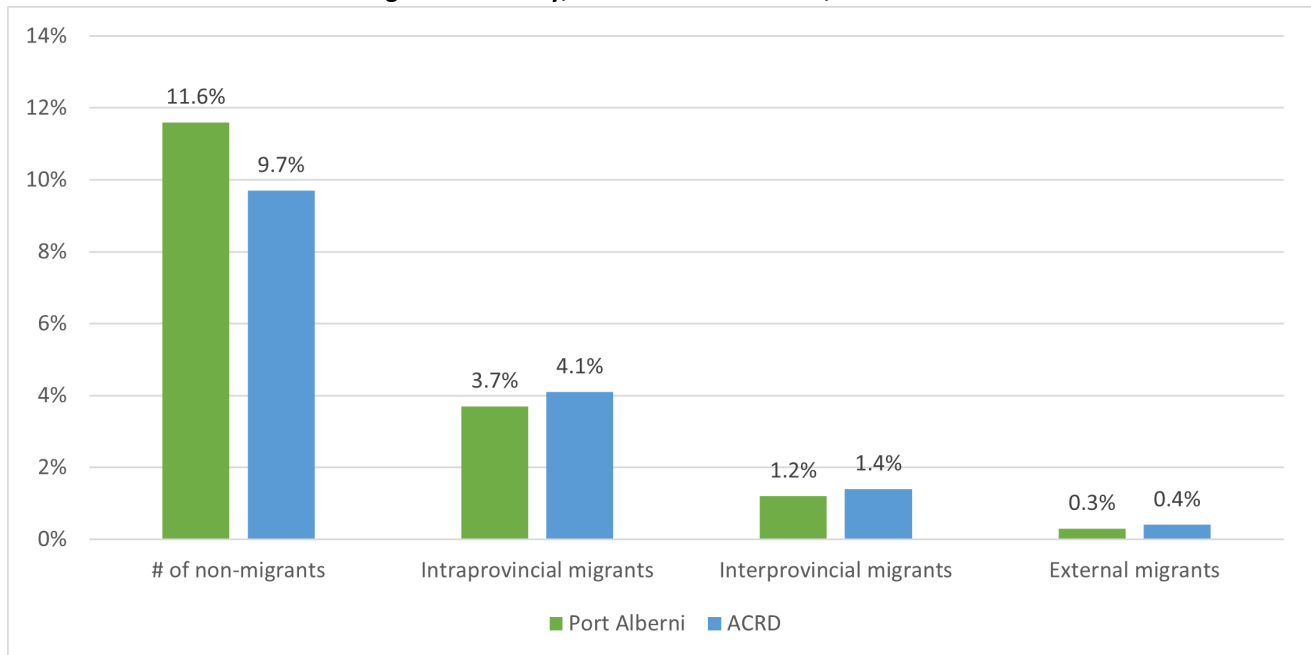
*Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles 2016, 2011, 2006*



## Mobility

Port Alberni as a community has continued to change as people move in and out of the city. Statistics Canada tracks the movement of people in or within a community as “mobility” which is measured as part of the Census. Figure 5 below shows the mobility patterns of Port Alberni residents between in the year prior to the 2016 Census. During that timeframe 83.2% of residents did not move at all, and of those who did move, 70% moved from one location to another within the City (non-migrants). A similar pattern can be observed in the ACRD. In total, 890 people moved into Port Alberni between 2015 and 2016. Despite this, the population of the City shrank between 2011 and 2016, which indicates that overall, more people moved out of the community during that timeframe.

**Figure 5: Mobility, Port Alberni and ACRD, 2015-2016**



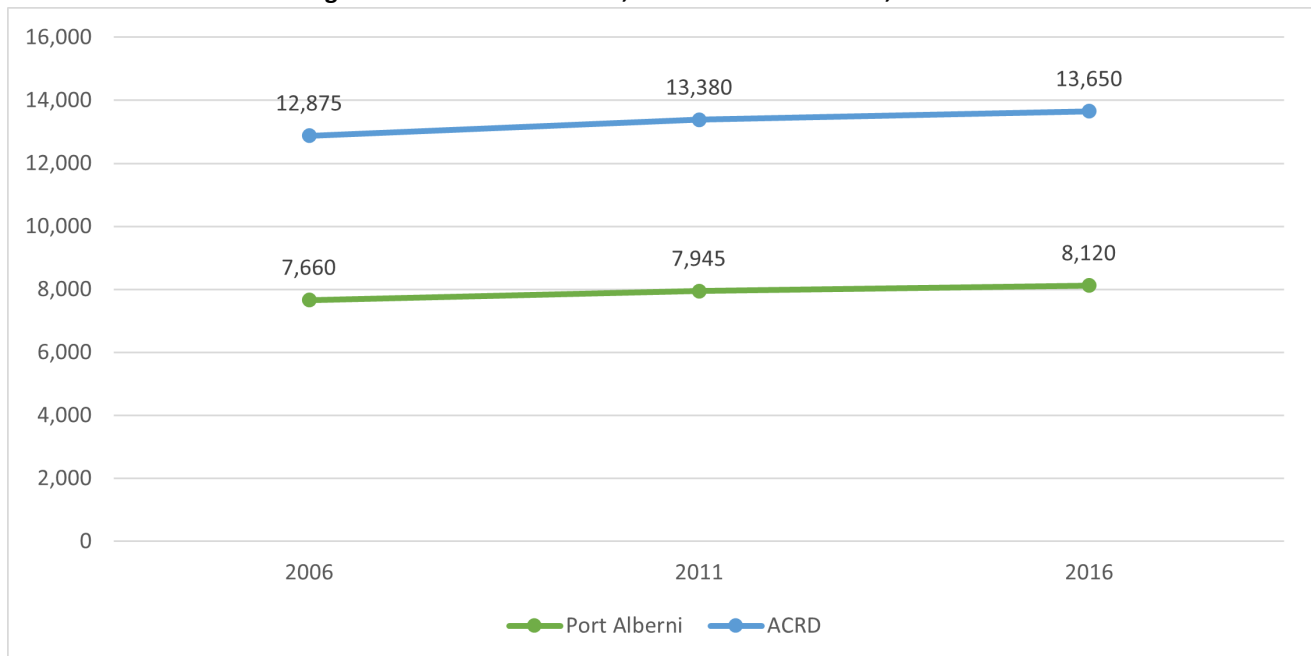
*Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles 2016*



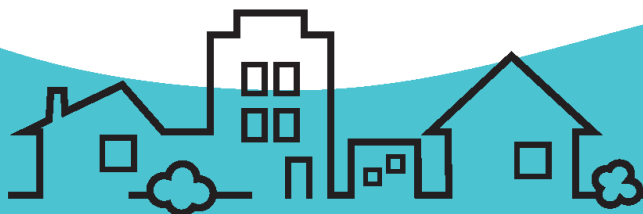
## Households

In 2016 the total number of private households in Port Alberni was 8,120. This increased by 460 private households from 2006. Figure 6 shows the comparison between the City and the ACRD with regards to the growth in the total number of private households from 2006-2016. In the City household growth slowed from 3.7% between 2006 and 2011, to 2.2% between 2011 and 2016 in Port Alberni. A similar growth trend is seen in the ACRD data.

**Figure 6: Private Households, Port Alberni and ACRD, 2006-2016**



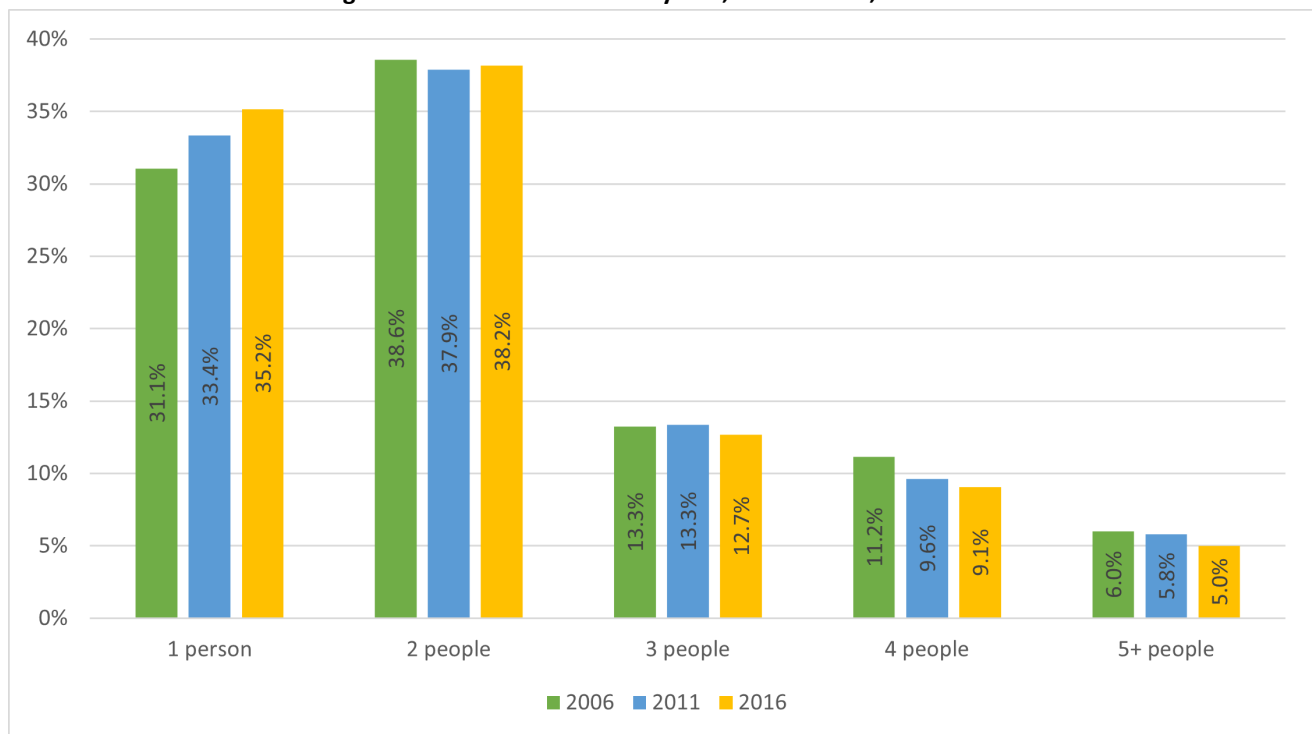
Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016, 2011, 2006 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing





Between 2006 and 2016 the average size of households decreased slightly from 2.2 persons to 2.1 persons, which likely reflects an aging population and children leaving the home. Figure 7 shows that the number of one-person households grew by about 4% between 2006 and 2016, while the percentage of households with 4 or more people decreased. During this timeframe, the percentage of two and three-person households fluctuated slightly. By 2016, more than 73% of households were comprised of households with one or two people.

**Figure 7: Private Households by Size, Port Alberni, 2006-2016**

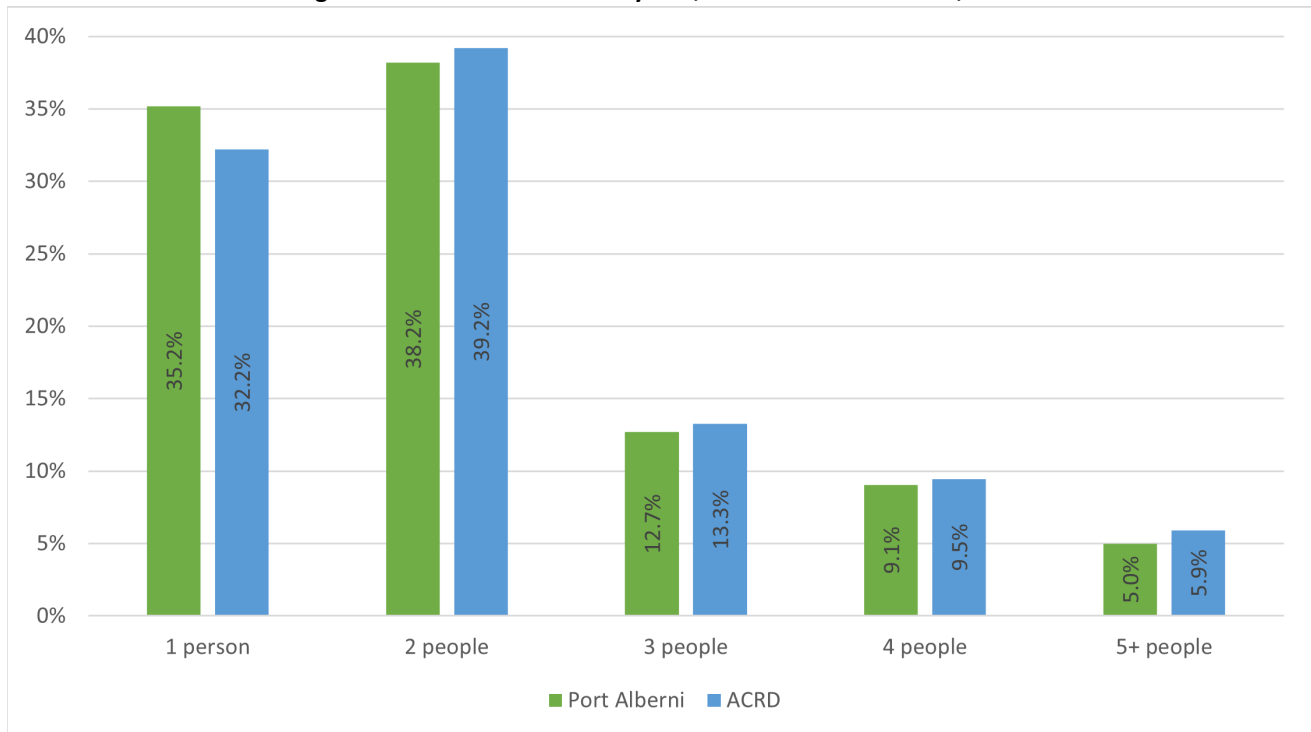


Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016, 2011, 2006 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing



Figure 8 below shows a comparison of household sizes between Port Alberni and the ACRD. There is a higher percentage of one-person households in Port Alberni when compared to the ACRD. This likely because the City accommodates a denser housing form, which is largely due to municipal infrastructure and services offered within the City's boundaries.

**Figure 8: Private Households by Size, Port Alberni and ACRD, 2016**



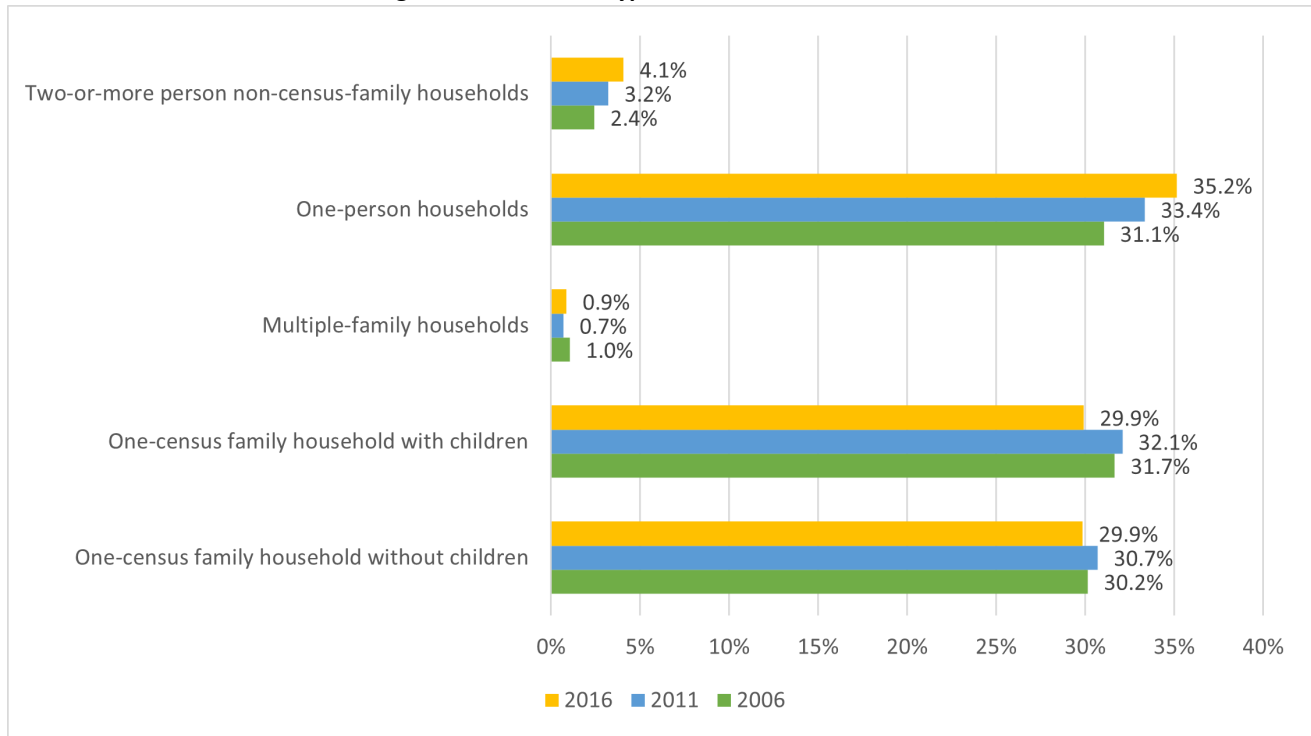
*Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing*

Private households in Port Alberni are mostly comprised of people who live alone, or couples either with or without children in the home. There are very few multi-family households.

From 2006 to 2016 the number of one-person households increased by about 4.1%, and there was also an increase in the percentage of two or more non-related (non-census-family) persons sharing a dwelling unit, as shown in Figure 9. The percentage of multiple-family households has fluctuated slightly during the same period but remained significantly lower than other types of households. A change in policy may be able to help stimulate the number of multiple-family households. 12.5% of the households in 2016 were lone-parent family households.



**Figure 9: Household Types, Port Alberni, 2006-2016**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016, 2011, 2006 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

### Indigenous Identity

In 2016, 17% of Port Alberni's population identified as Indigenous, which is defined by Statistics Canada as including "those who are First Nations (North American Indian), Métis or Inuk (Inuit) and/or those who are Registered or Treaty Indians (that is, registered under the Indian Act of Canada), and/or those who have membership in a First Nation or Indian band." The percentage of Indigenous people living in Port Alberni increased by about 5% between 2006 to 2016. In 2016, about 20% of ACRD residents identified as Indigenous. Both Port Alberni and the ACRD have a much higher percentage of Indigenous people living in the community compared to the provincial percentage of 6%.



## Post-Secondary Students

Port Alberni is home to one of North Island College's main campuses. 452 students were registered for the 2019-2020 school year however this number does not include online-only students. There is no designated student housing provided at the Port Alberni campus, and therefore students must find other accommodations (typically either with family or by renting a private dwelling unit). Student populations tend to have an impact on the availability of rental housing supply within a community.

## Disability & Health

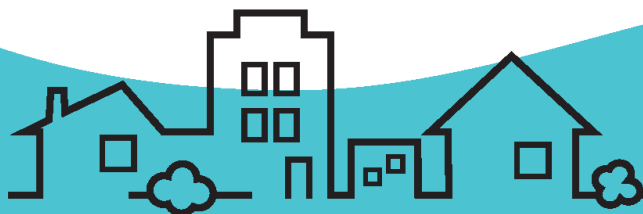
CMHC provides information about the number of households that have at least one person with “activity limitations” which is defined as difficulties “carrying out daily activities such as hearing, seeing, communicating, or walking. Typically, these difficulties could arise from physical or mental conditions or health problems.”. Activity limitations are more commonly referred to as disabilities. In Port Alberni, 14.3% of households in core housing need were identified as having one person experiencing activity limitations. While there is no data on the total number of Port Alberni residents who have at least one activity limitation, the 2017 Canadian Survey on Disability<sup>1</sup> found that 22.3% of Canadians aged 15 years and over had at least one disability that limited their daily activities. Findings in this survey included:

- People with disabilities were less likely to be employed, with only 59% of working age adults with disabilities employed compared to 80% of working age adults without disabilities.
- People with disabilities had lower incomes.
- Almost one-third of working age adults with more severe disabilities were living in poverty.

This information should be taken into consideration with regards to municipal policy and accessibility standards. It is likely that in Port Alberni people with disabilities may struggle to find suitable housing. When the rental vacancy rate is low and the housing market is very active, accessible dwellings can be extremely limited, pushing people with disabilities to live in unsafe conditions or homes with inadequate accessibility. About 10% of people who participated in the City's online Housing Needs survey said that they had been refused housing or been discriminated against because of ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability, gender, etc.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www03.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/hmip-pimh/en#TableMapChart/59/2/British%20Columbia> – Core Housing Need, Activity Limitations



## 2.2 Economy

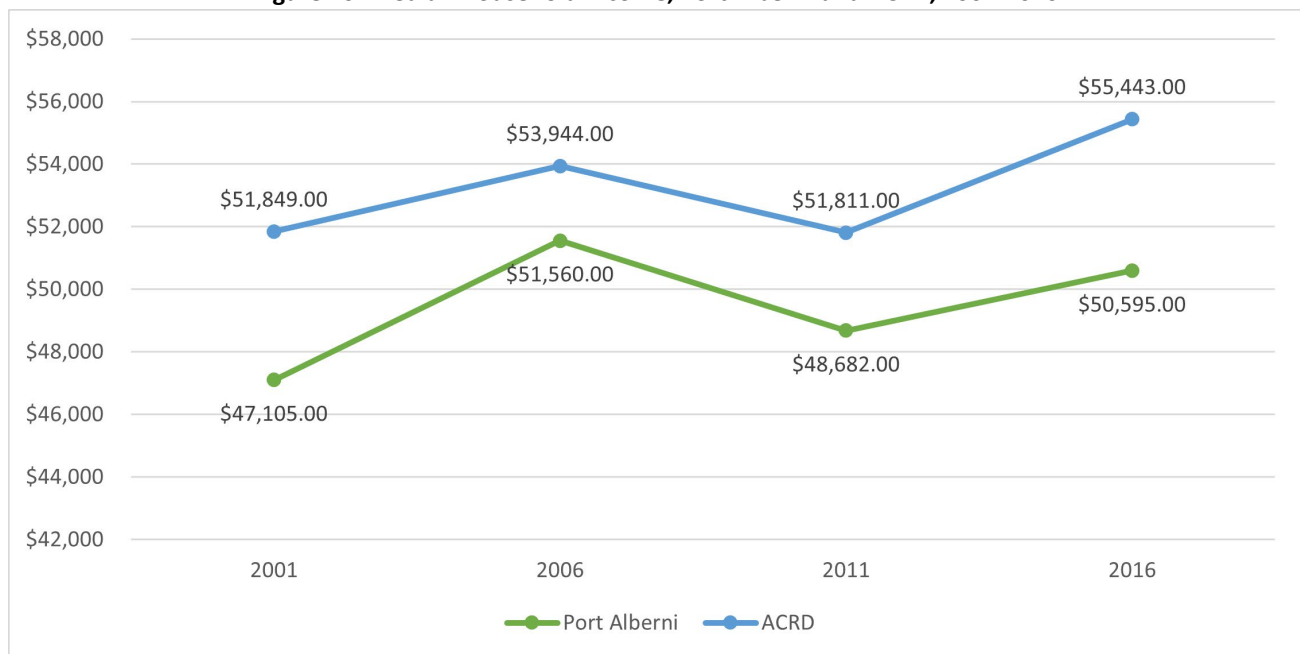
This subsection highlights Port Alberni's household incomes, employment, and other economic indicators. The data was gathered from the custom dataset provided by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs. The income data has been adjusted for 2015 constant dollars.

### Household Income

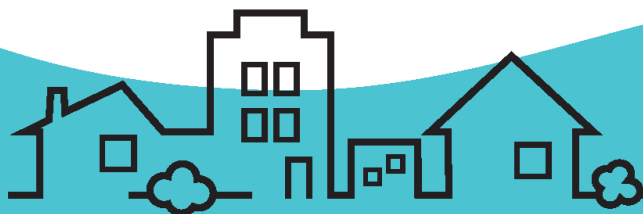
The median household income in Port Alberni and the ACRD has fluctuated significantly since 2001. While the median household income in the ACRD was at its highest in 2016, in Port Alberni the median household income has decreased from \$51,560 in 2006 to \$50,595 in 2016. Despite some major fluctuations over the last 20 years, Port Alberni has seen the median household income rise by 7.4%. This is shown in Figure 10.

Please note that the household income data is collected for the year before each Census year. The years shown in the charts below are Census years. The median household income identifies the mid-point of household income data for Port Alberni.

**Figure 10: Median Household Income, Port Alberni and ACRD, 2001-2016**

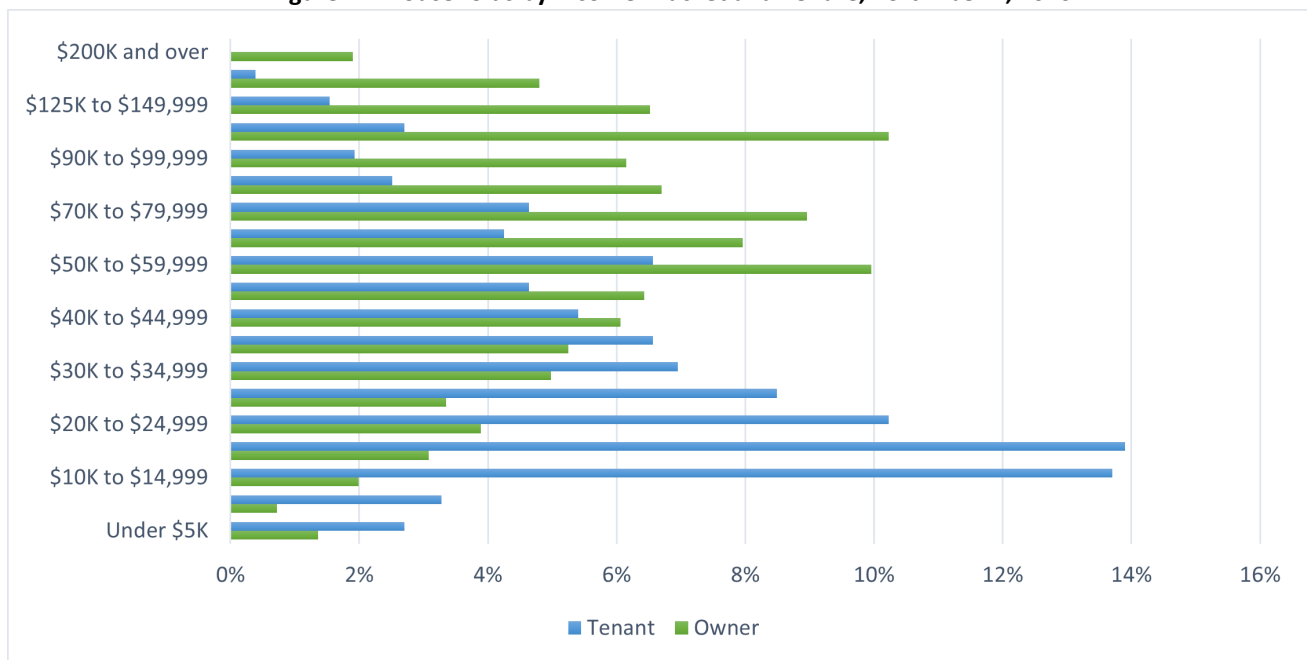


Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles 2016, 2011, 2006, 2001 and NHS 2011



In general, owner households have a significantly higher income than renter households, as illustrated by Figure 11 below. In 2016, more than 75% of renters earned less than \$50,000 per year before tax compared to 37% of owners. That same year, the median household income for owners was \$63,516, compared to \$28,385 for renters. The income gap between renters and owners continues to widen, as the median household income for renters has decreased by 0.9% since 2006 but increased by 1.8% for owners. This could lead to challenges for renters who wish to purchase a home.

**Figure 11: Households by Income Bracket and Tenure, Port Alberni, 2016**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles 2016

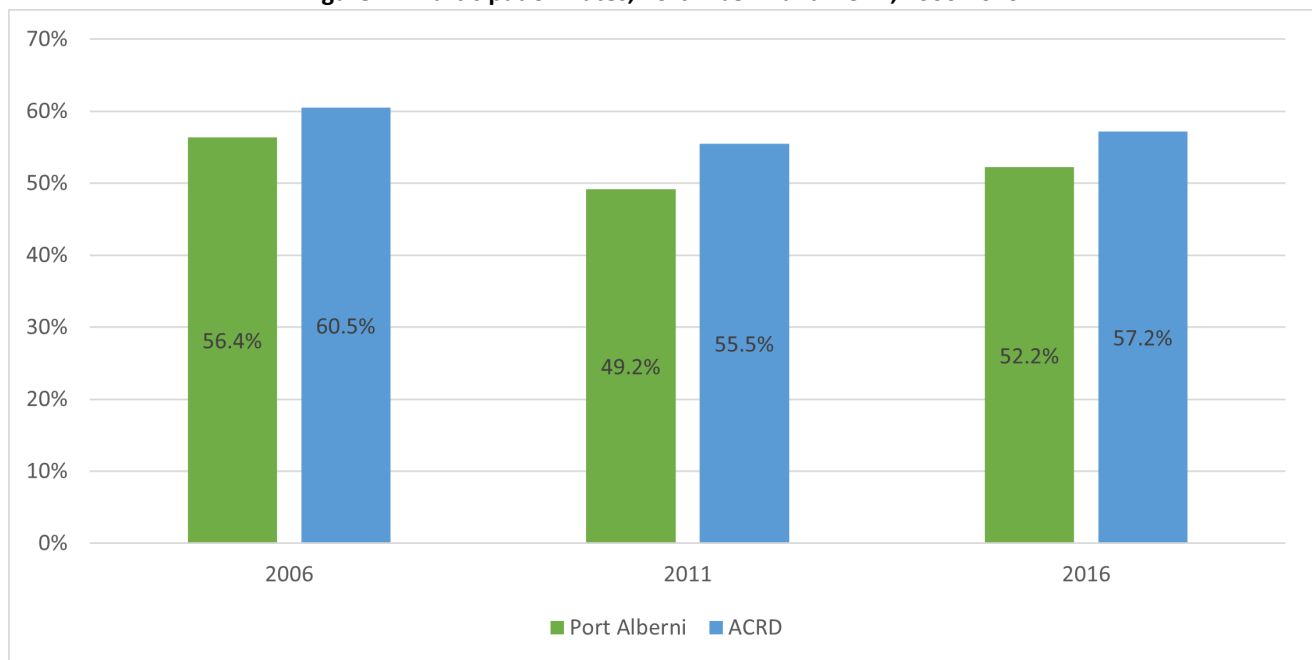


## Employment

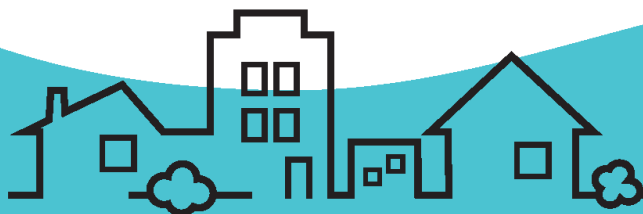
As of 2016, the three major industries in Port Alberni were healthcare, retail, and manufacturing. The total number of people employed in Port Alberni in 2016 was 6,865.

The labour force participation rate measures the proportion of adults (older than 14) who are actively working or seeking work. The participation rate in Port Alberni and the ACRD fell between 2006 and 2011, but increased between 2011 and 2016. This primarily reflects the impacts of the 2008 economic recession and is illustrated in Figure 12. However, the 2016 Port Alberni participation rate of 52.2% was more than 10% lower than that of overall participation rate in BC (63.9%) at the time.

**Figure 12: Participation Rates, Port Alberni and ACRD, 2006-2016**



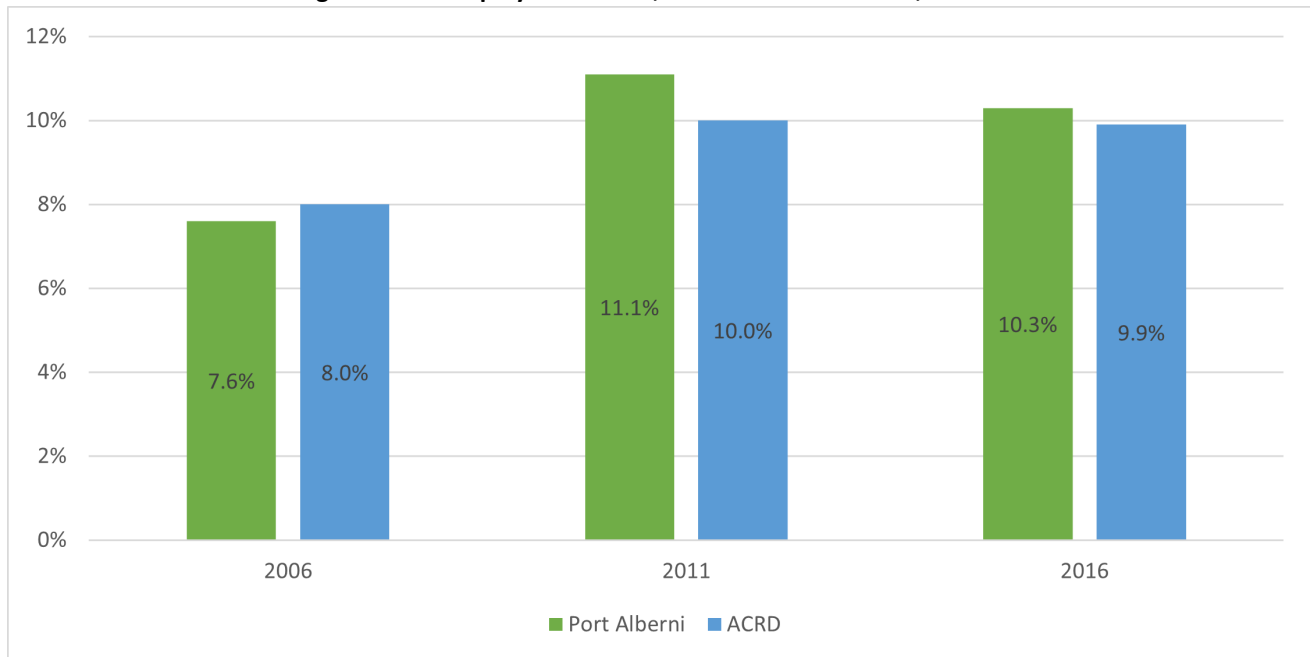
*Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles 2016, 2011, 2006, and NHS 2011*





The unemployment rates in Port Alberni and the ACRD followed a similar pattern, as demonstrated by Figure 13. In 2006 unemployment rates were at a low of 7.6%. Since then, the unemployment rate increased to 11.1% during the economic downturn between 2006 and 2011, and then fell slightly to 10.3% in 2016. This is high compared to the 6.7% provincial unemployment rate in 2016.

**Figure 13: Unemployment Rates, Port Alberni and ACRD, 2006-2016**



*Source: Statistics Canada, Census Profiles 2016, 2011, 2006, and NHS 2011*

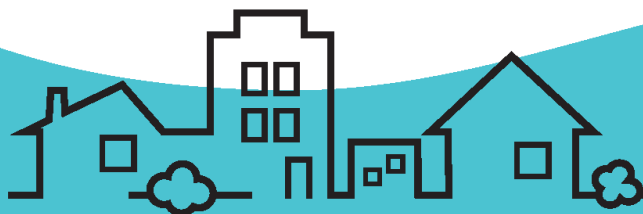
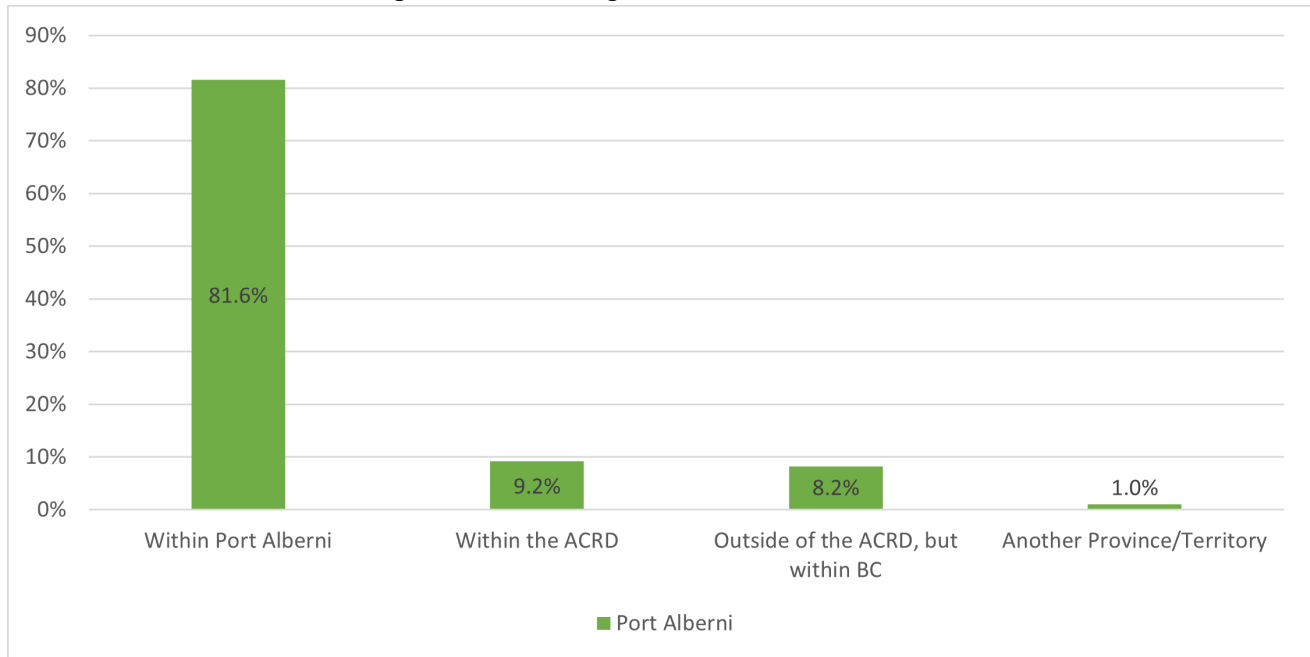


Figure 14 below shows the commuting destination for residents of Port Alberni and the ACRD in 2016. Due to the relatively remote location of the Alberni Valley, most City residents (81.6%) commute to another location within the City. Only 1% of City residents commute to a different province or territory.

**Figure 14: Commuting Destination, Port Alberni, 2016**



*Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing*

### 2.3 Housing Profile

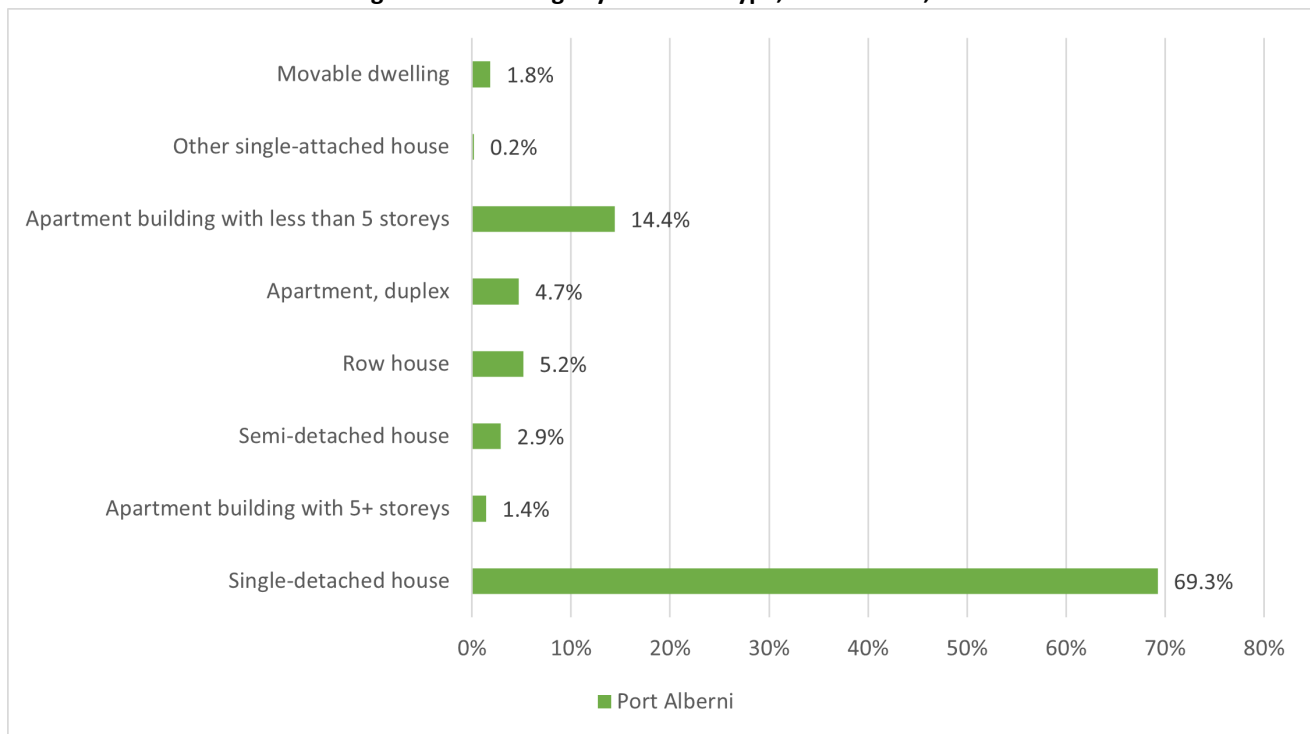
This section presents information about the housing stock, market and non-market rental information, tenure, construction data, and core housing need in Port Alberni. It also contains information about the housing stock by the private market, rental market, and non-market housing and the associated assessed values, sales prices, and rents. This information provides context and helps to reveal gaps in meeting community housing needs. This housing profile reveals the most recent history of housing development in Port Alberni. Like in most other communities in British Columbia, housing and related infrastructure are expensive investments. The housing profile does not always mirror the changes in community profile, and therefore can demonstrate how housing needs are intensifying challenges in the community as demographic and economic conditions change.



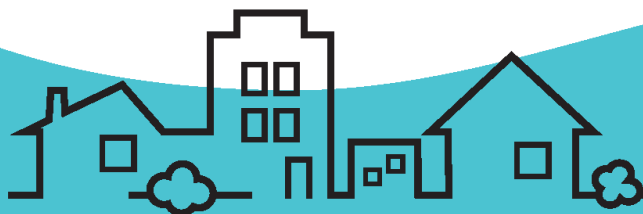
## Structural Type

The housing stock in Port Alberni is primarily comprised of single detached homes. To a larger degree this reflects what members of the community aspire to, as about 83% of survey respondents indicated that they would prefer to live in a single detached house. In 2016, 69.3% of dwellings in Port Alberni were single-detached homes, as noted in Figure 15 below. This is only slightly less than the ACRD (73.3%), but considerably higher than the province (44.1%). Port Alberni has very few apartment buildings that are 5 or more stories, though about 14% of dwellings are multi-family buildings that are less than 5 storeys. Overall, there is a large amount of suburban-style development in Port Alberni and infill and densification will be more effective at helping address affordability and core housing needs.

**Figure 15: Dwellings by Structure Type, Port Alberni, 2016**



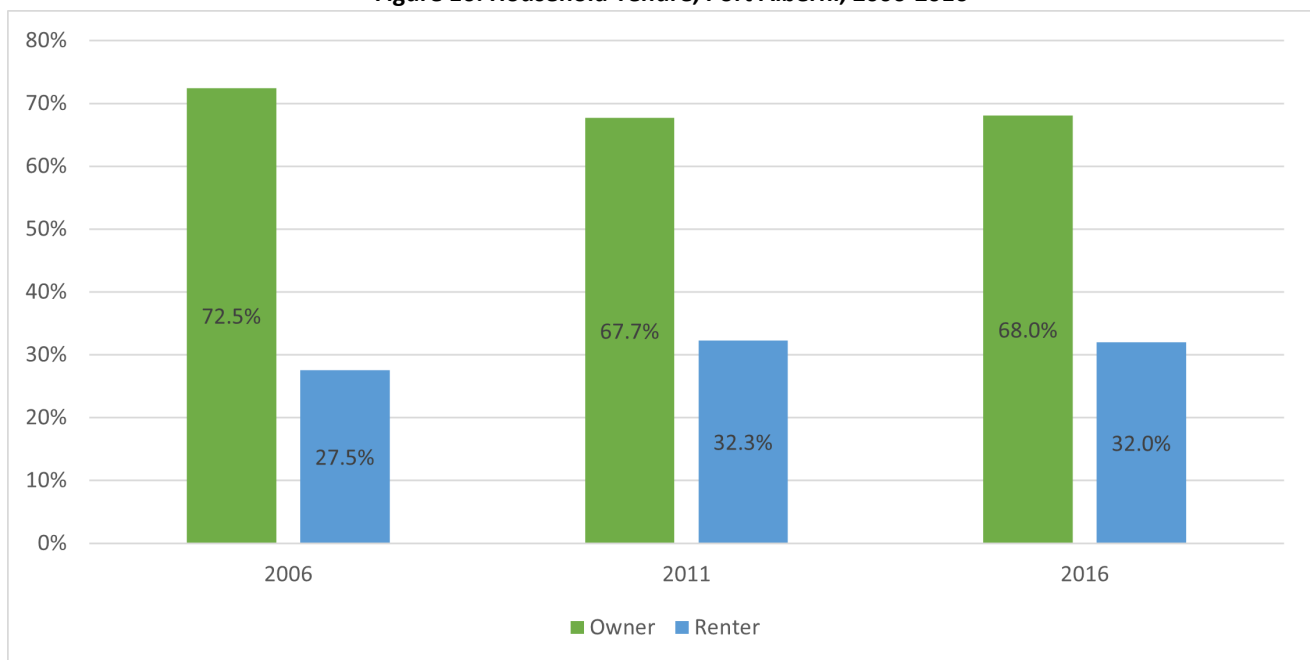
*Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing*



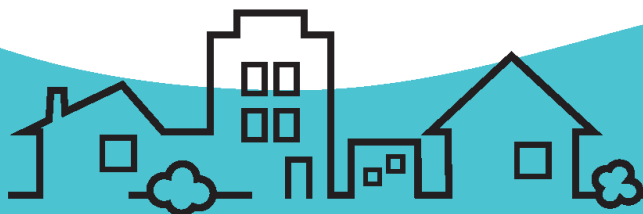
## Tenure

In 2016, the make up of housing tenure was approximately 68% owner households, and 32% renter households. The gap between owner and renter households has decreased slightly since 2006. The number of owner households decreased by 0.5% between 2006 and 2016, while renter households increased by 23%. The total number of dwelling units in Port Alberni has increased during this time, so this may point to an increase in the number of people (within or outside the City) purchasing homes as rental properties, or adding secondary suites within those dwelling units (either with or without permits) as rental units.

**Figure 16: Household Tenure, Port Alberni, 2006-2016**



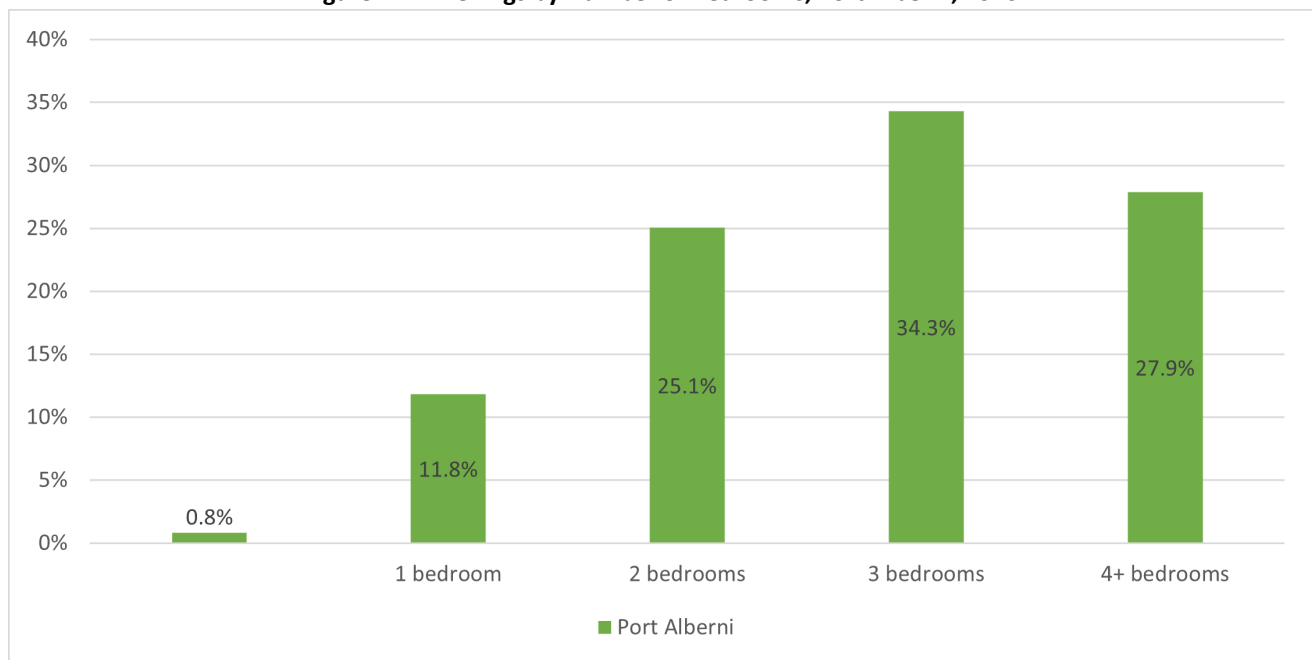
Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016, 2011, 2006 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing



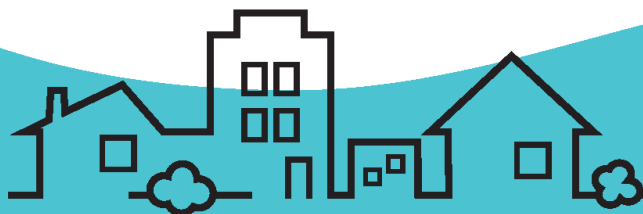
## Number of Bedrooms

Port Alberni is made up mostly of larger homes, that have traditionally provided housing for families. 62% of dwelling units in Port Alberni have 3 or more bedrooms, as shown in Figure 17 below. 25% of dwellings have 2 bedrooms, which would mostly like be older houses built before World War II, or part of newer multi-family buildings. Many post-war houses have been built to accommodate larger families, but this may no longer meet the modern needs of the community. The information in the demographics section shows us that the number of people living alone has been increasing over time, and most recently more than two thirds of households contained only 1 or 2 people. With an aging population in Port Alberni, it is likely that many older households are aging in place and living in homes that once served larger families but now only serve one or two people. Furthermore, the increasingly high cost of housing (which is addressed in following sections) may be pricing out younger households with children, who would have historically lived in larger homes. With a limited number of smaller single-family homes, it may be difficult for seniors to downsize from larger homes. If seniors are aging in place in larger homes (even if they would prefer to downsize) this could restrict the supply of housing for growing families.

**Figure 17: Dwellings by Number of Bedrooms, Port Alberni, 2016**



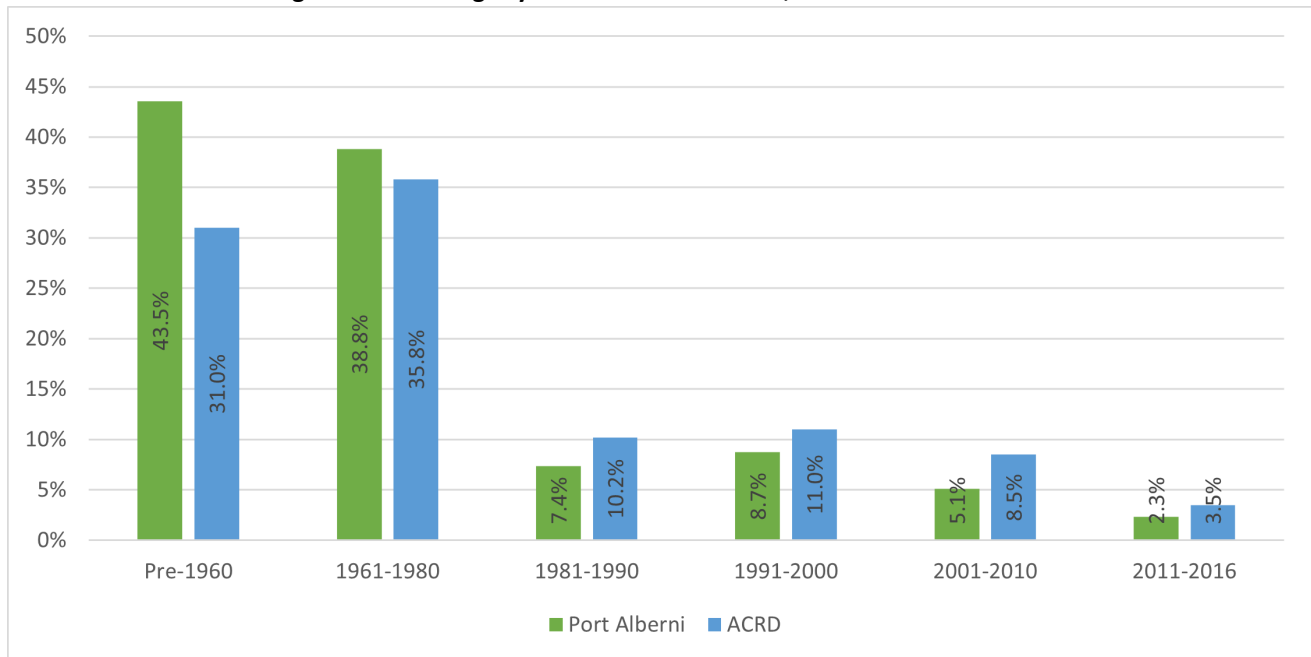
*Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing*



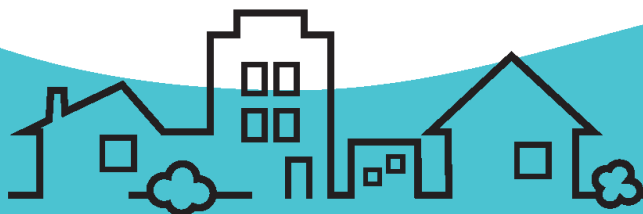
## Period of Construction

The housing stock in Port Alberni is older and mostly built before 1980 (82.4%), as shown in Figure 18 below. This likely reflects when the community was growing most at its peak of economic and industrial activity. Almost 45% of the houses in Port Alberni were built before 1960, which is significantly higher than the ACRD (31%) or BC (14.2%). The number of newer homes built between 2001-2016 is less than 10%. What is interesting is that these numbers indicate that new home construction does not reflect population growth which had stagnated during this same period. There is more new construction concentrated within the ACRD, but this could reflect growth in destinations such as Tofino which have only recently become more accessible and popular.

**Figure 18: Dwellings by Period of Construction, Port Alberni and ACRD**



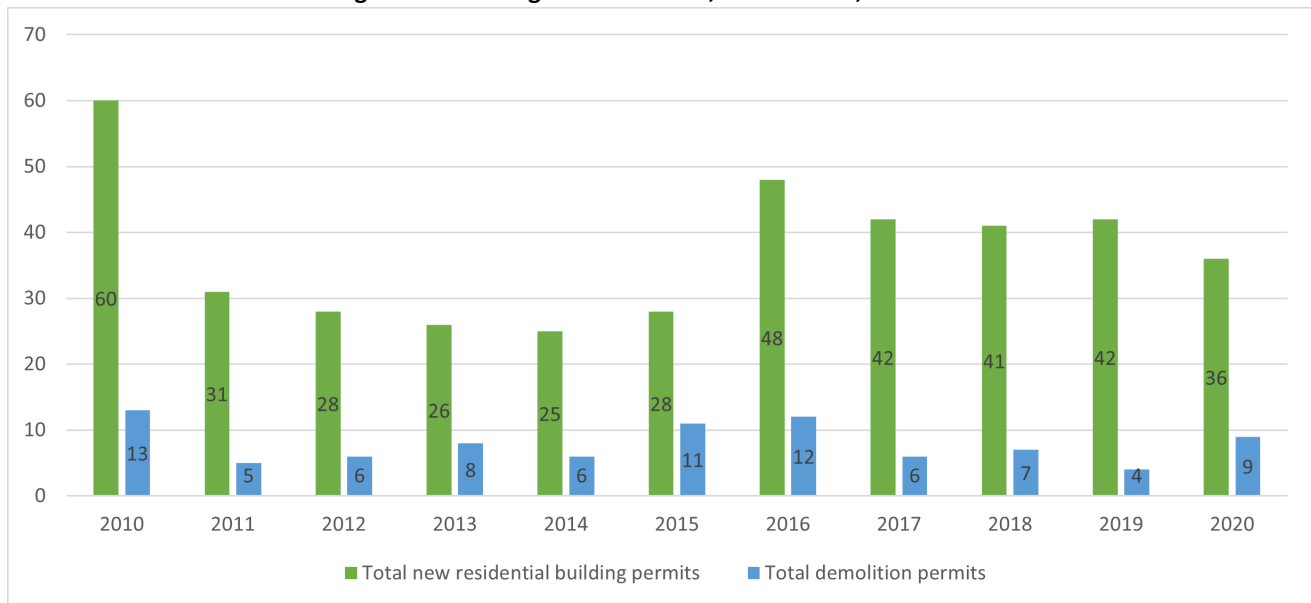
Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing



## New Construction

Figure 19 below shows the number of residential building permits, (both single detached and multi-family dwellings) issued in Port Alberni for new construction between 2010 and 2020, as well as the total number of demolition permits issued. Residential construction slowed down between 2011 and 2016, mostly likely as a delayed reaction to the economic decline between 2006 and 2011. Since 2016, the number of building permits issued by the City has been fairly high.

**Figure 19: Building Permits Issued, Port Alberni, 2010-2020**



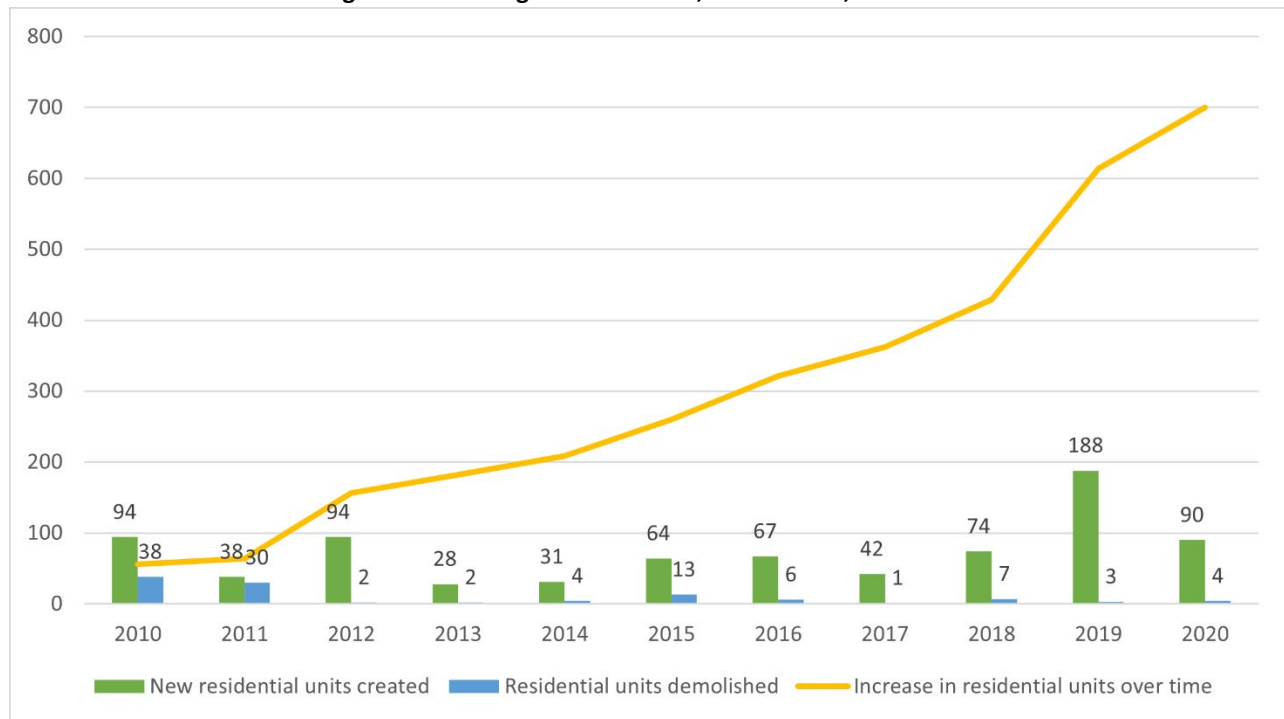
*Source: City of Port Alberni*

In the last 10 years (2010-2020) the City has seen a fairly steady increase in the total number of residential units being constructed within the community. Most recently there was a spike in 2018 in the number of residential units, which can be attributed to new single-family home subdivisions and multi-family buildings being completed. The data in Figure 20 reflects a similar trend as seen in Figure 19, where growth slowed between 2011 and 2015. In total over the last 10 years, 700 new residential dwelling units have been added to Port Alberni. It should be noted that some of these units have replaced demolished units.





**Figure 20: Building Permits Issued, Port Alberni, 2010-2020**



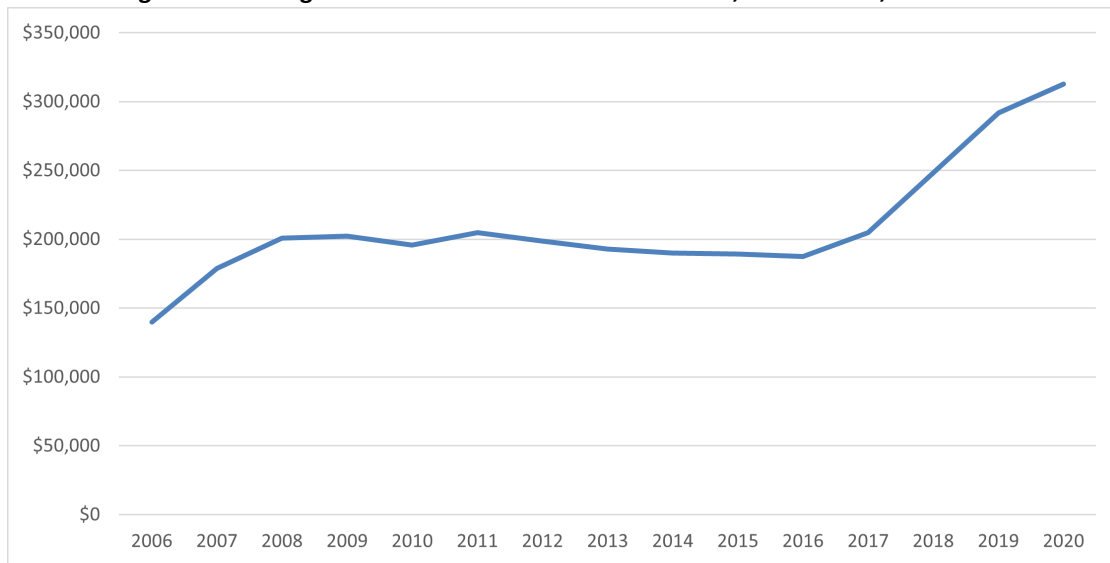
*Source: City of Port Alberni*

## Home Ownership Market

Historically, Port Alberni has been one of the more affordable housing markets on Vancouver Island for homeowners. In recent years, the value of homes in the City have started to increase substantially. The average assessment value remained stable, around \$200,000, between 2008 and 2017, despite the economic issues that the community faced during this time. However, in the last 4 years, the average assessment value has dramatically increased by 53%. As of 2020 the average home price was over \$300,000. Figure 21 shows the average assessment value for residential units in Port Alberni between 2006 and 2020. With slower economic growth in Port Alberni and lower average median household incomes, the local increase in housing prices can mostly be attributed to the overall increased value of housing on Vancouver Island and in many nearby parts of British Columbia. The upward trend in housing prices has a direct impact on the housing affordability. Rising house prices can increase the wealth of homeowners, but may reduce the effective living standards for those who do not own a home. This increase in wealth may be skewed towards older people who have benefited from previously lower housing prices, and thus disproportionately impacts young people who are finding it increasingly hard to get into the housing market.



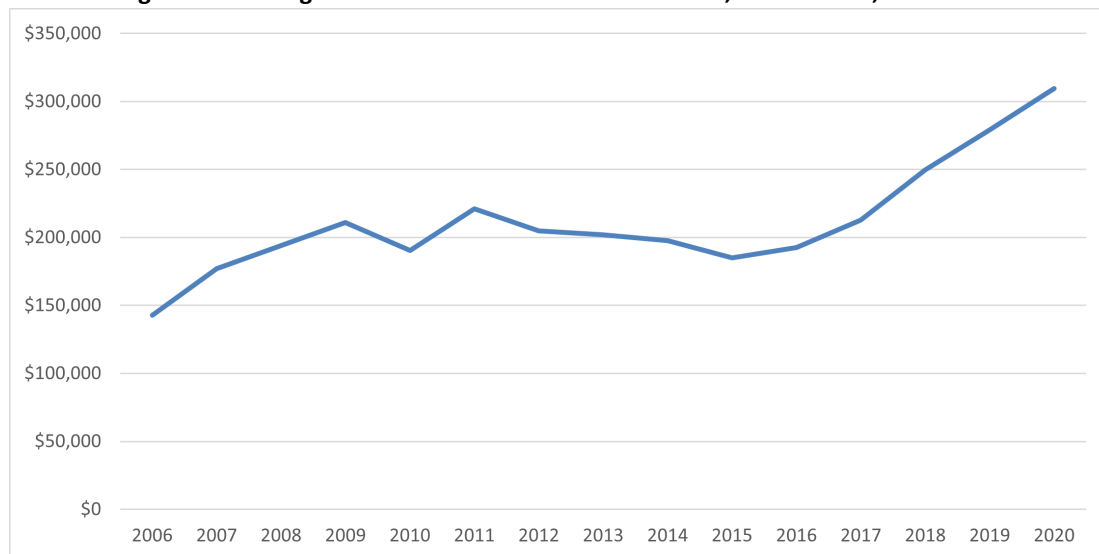
**Figure 21: Average Assessed Value for Residential Units, Port Alberni, 2006-2020**



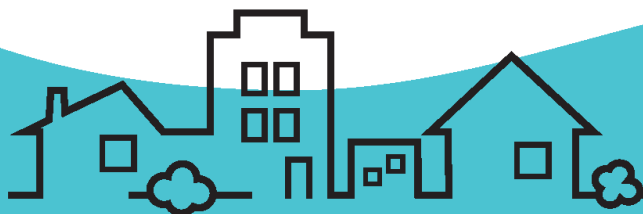
*Source: BC Assessment, 2006-2020*

The average purchase price for residential units in Port Alberni has followed a similar trend as the assessed value. Figure 22 shows the trend in purchase price between 2006-2020. The number of home sales has also increased over the last 4 years as well, although 2020 did see fewer sales than the previous years, most likely due to the COVID-19 pandemic impacting the mobility and movement of people.

**Figure 22: Average Purchase Price for Residential Units, Port Alberni, 2006-2020**



*Source: BC Assessment, 2006-2020*



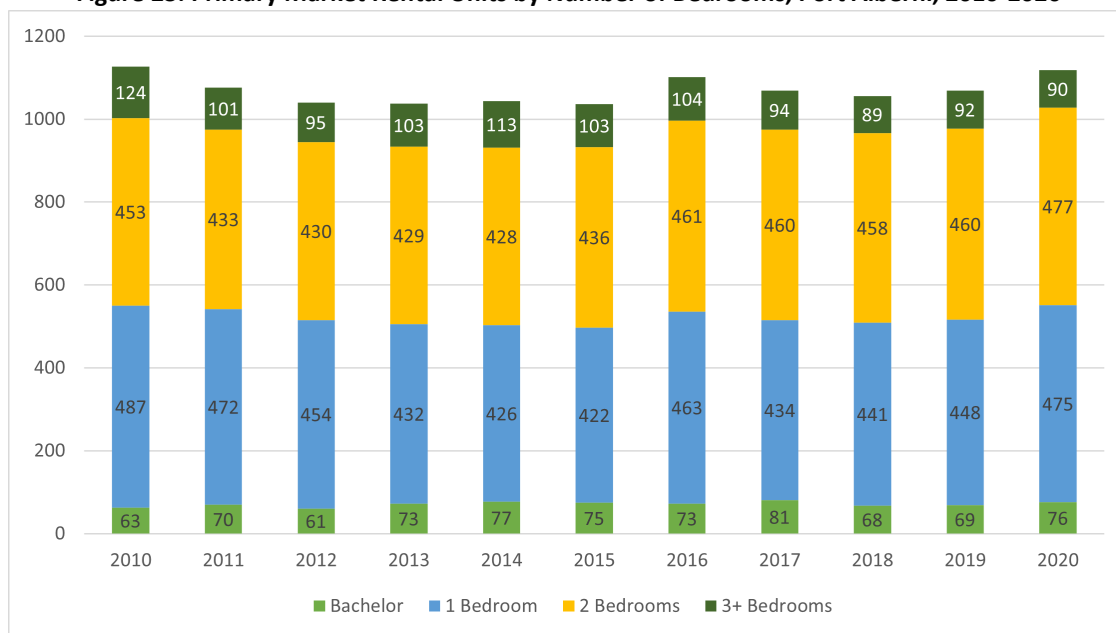
## Rental Housing

As discussed above, the percentage of renters in Port Alberni has increased in recent years and now make up over 30% of all housing tenure. The rental market is divided into 2 sectors, primary rentals, and secondary rentals. Primary rental units are classified as those that are part of a purpose-built building (e.g., rental units in apartment buildings). The secondary rental market is comprised of all other units, such as secondary suites in single detached dwellings, rented single detached homes, rented condominium units, etc. CMHC collects data on the primary rental market on an annual basis, but accurate data on secondary rentals is unavailable for Port Alberni.

### Primary Rentals

Below, Figure 23 shows the make up of primary rentals unit by the number of bedrooms between 2010 and 2020. During this ten-year period, the total number of primary rental units decreased from 1,127 to 1,118. This reduction is due to a number of older apartment buildings catching fire and needing to be demolished. In Port Alberni most primary rental units have either only one or two bedrooms, which often does not meet the needs of young families. During the same period, the number of bachelor units increased slightly, while the number of units with 3 or more bedrooms decreased by 34 units. With this decrease, it is likely now harder for families to find a suitable rental unit.

**Figure 23: Primary Market Rental Units by Number of Bedrooms, Port Alberni, 2010-2020**

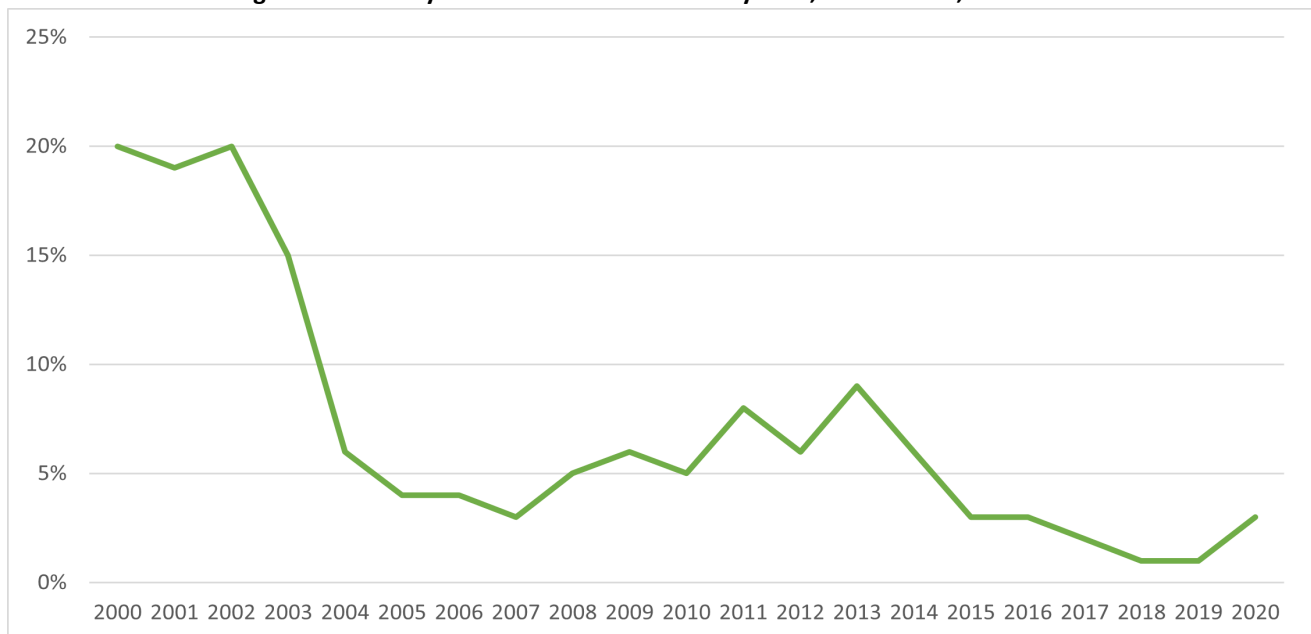


Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 2021

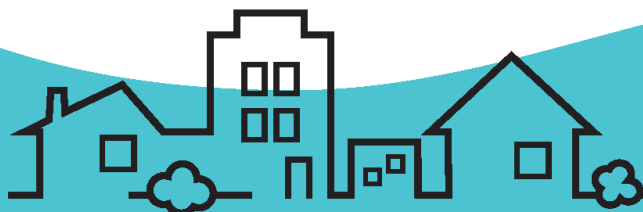


Within Port Alberni's primary rental market, the vacancy rate has decreased since 2000. A major dip in rental vacancy occurred around 2002, although there was a moderate increase during Port Alberni's economic slow-down between 2008 and 2013, and another increase in the last 2 years. This can be seen in Figure 24. In October of 2020, the vacancy rate reached a level considered to be healthier (3%), likely due in part to the completion of two purpose built rental buildings containing a total of 141 units. However, the vacancy rate for units with 3 or more bedrooms was still at 0% at this same time. There is no data on the vacancy rate for bachelor units in 2020, but in 2019, the vacancy rate for bachelor units was also 0%. Based on these vacancy rates, it would likely be most difficult for either families or low-income individuals to find an affordable rental unit in Port Alberni. The breakdown of vacancy rate by the number of bedrooms can be seen in Figure 25.

**Figure 24: Primary Market Rental Unit Vacancy Rate, Port Alberni, 2000-2020**



*Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 2021*



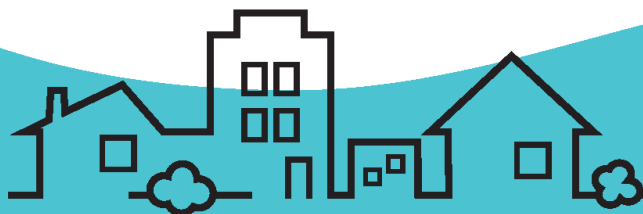
**Figure 25: Primary Market Rental Unit Vacancy Rate by Number of Bedrooms, Port Alberni, 2010-2020**



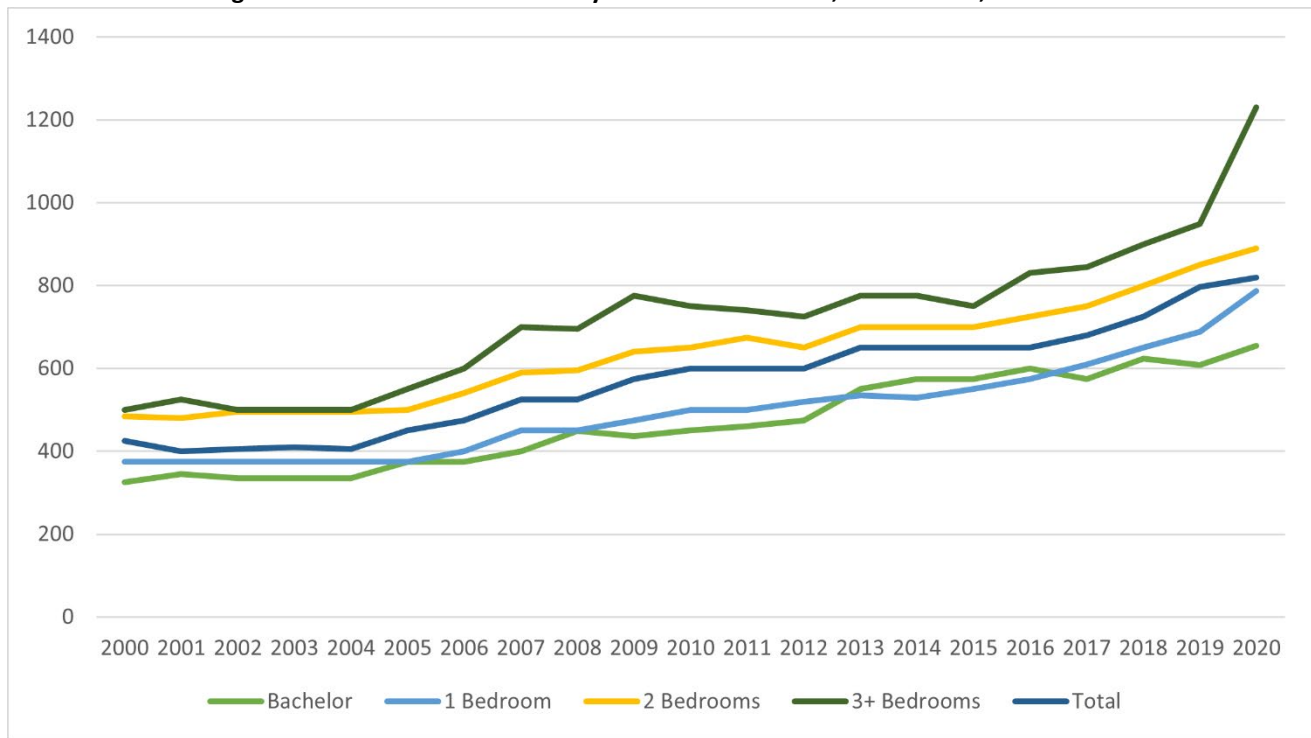
*Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 2021*

The median rent for primary rental units is shown in Figure 26 below. The median rent increased by 93% among all units between 2000 and 2020 to \$802/month. As of 2019 the cost of renting a unit with 3 or more bedrooms has taken the most dramatic increase jumping from under \$949/month to over \$1,231/month, which is likely due to high demand and low supply. Median income data is not available for that entire period, but the median income for renters decreased by 0.9% between the 2006 Census and the 2016 Census, while the median rent increased by 37% during this same period.

Also, it is important to note that the median rent value is based on what all renters are currently paying for their units, both rent-controlled and new tenants. Therefore, renters that have lived in a unit for many years are likely to have significantly lower rents than people who are relocating to a new rental unit or entering the market for the first time. Once a market rental unit is vacated a landlord may price it at whatever they think the market will tolerate. This phenomenon can often restrict the mobility of renters, as the price of relocating becomes more and more unattainable. This is a very different experience compared to home owner selling and relocating within the same community. Conducted in January 2021, a review of the local classified ads shows that 2-bedroom rental units in Port Alberni are generally priced at \$1100-\$1300 per month.



**Figure 26: Median Rent for Primary Market Rental Units, Port Alberni, 2000-2020**



*Source: Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC), 2021*

## Secondary Rental Units

As mentioned above, there is limited data collected on secondary rental units in Port Alberni. The secondary rental market is made up of rented condominiums, townhomes, and single-detached dwellings, as well as secondary suites. In 2016, Census data shows that there were 2,595 renter households, but there were only 1,101 primary rental units. This would indicate that secondary rental units accounted for 58% of rental stock in Port Alberni. Secondary suites have been legal in the City since 2014. According to an estimate by the City's Building Official, there are approximately 20 legally permitted secondary suites within the City. In addition to permitted suites, there are likely many unknown secondary suites that exist. The City does not yet permit Laneway or Carriage homes, though policy to permit that type of housing is currently under review. It is also likely that there are several unauthorized Laneway or Carriage homes in Port Alberni.



## Short-term Rentals

The City of Port Alberni does not currently permit Short-Term rentals, though policy to allow this type of rental is currently under review. The City conducted a Short-Term rental study in September 2019, which found that there are approximately 91 active Short-Term rentals within the City. Of these, about 35 were single detached homes, and some are likely located within secondary suites. The average occupancy rate of a Short-Term rental in Port Alberni is 75%, but this can vary by season. This data was accessed through AirDNA, a data and analytics company.

## Non-market housing

Non-market housing is an important component of the housing continuum. Every community needs non-market housing for the many families, seniors, and individuals who are unable to afford market rent. Table 1 shows the total number of non-market units provided by BC Housing in Port Alberni. BC Housing also provides rent supplements to a total of 255 people (40 people experiencing homelessness, as well as 45 families, and 170 seniors). There may also be other non-market units provided by organizations other than BC Housing that have not been recorded in this assessment due to limitations in data collection.

**Table 1: Number of non-market housing units in Port Alberni as of March 2020**

	Transitional Housing	Homeless Shelter Beds	Women's Shelter	Persons with Special Needs	Supportive Seniors Housing	Low Income Families	Low Income Seniors
# of units	97	23	11	20	69	118	96

*Source: BC Housing, 2020*

At the time of writing this report there are nine different affordable housing projects being planned or in the construction phase that the City of Port Alberni is currently engaged with in some degree. Some of these projects have been approved, while others are not yet public knowledge as they are subject to funding or other approvals. In total there are approximately 380 units of affordable housing between these nine different projects that could accommodate various vulnerable populations.

## Homelessness

The most recent point in time homeless count was conducted in Port Alberni in 2018 to survey people experiencing homelessness. At that time, 147 people were identified as living on the streets. For the purposes of the count, homelessness was defined as people who were without a home of their own for more than 30 days, and who do not pay rent. Of those 147 people experiencing homelessness, 57% were completely unsheltered. Some other key findings from the 2018 Report are:



- 48% of survey respondents self-identified as Indigenous, and 68% were male
- 40% were receiving a Disability benefit
- While a majority of respondents said that rent was too high (82%) and that their income was too low (64%) to afford housing, 46% said that no suitable housing were available to them
- 58% reported having at least two health conditions, and 64% were living with addictions
- 50% of these individuals have lived in the community for at least 10 years

The point in time homeless count provides a snapshot of people who are experiencing homelessness in a twenty-four-hour period, but does not necessarily capture every homeless person in the community. Another point in time homeless count was planned to occur in 2020 but has been postponed due to the ongoing pandemic.

### Emergency Shelter Beds

Individuals experiencing homelessness can access emergency accommodation in Port Alberni, and there are 51 emergency shelter beds within the City<sup>2</sup>. Port Alberni Shelter Society operates the Emergency Shelter Program which is a 24-hour, year-round shelter for individuals and families. This program currently offers 30 emergency shelter beds for temporary accommodation, meals, showers and laundry facilities. The remaining 21 beds are year-round shelter for anyone over the age of 19.

### Affordable Housing Gap Analysis

To understand how home sales prices and rental costs relate to local incomes, an affordability gap analysis was completed. As per CMHC, housing is considered to be “affordable” when shelter costs (including utilities) are no more than 30% of the household’s annual income (before tax).

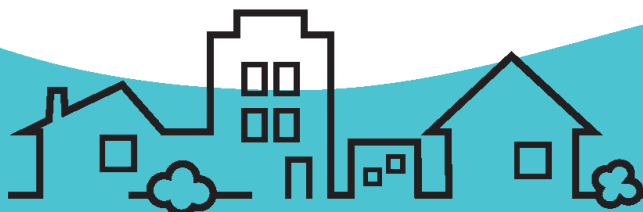
Table 2 below shows the affordable rent and purchase prices for different types of households. The median income was estimated for 2020, and the following criteria were used to calculate the affordable rent and purchase prices:

- Shelter costs are 30% of total income
- Monthly utilities are \$70
- Mortgage interest rate of 3%
- Down payment of 10%

In 2020, the average purchase price of a single detached dwelling was \$322,602 in Port Alberni, and the median rent in October 2020 for all primary rentals units was \$802/month. Table 2 helps identify the affordability gap

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<sup>2</sup> [https://smap.bchousing.org/Shelters-ViewController-context-root/faces/shelters\\_list.jsf;jsessionid=cPdqd047J\\_A\\_LIBMC4bzMoHo0R8-w8udERBZK7Xt6B2h52m5X\\_YVI-76098960](https://smap.bchousing.org/Shelters-ViewController-context-root/faces/shelters_list.jsf;jsessionid=cPdqd047J_A_LIBMC4bzMoHo0R8-w8udERBZK7Xt6B2h52m5X_YVI-76098960)





when we compare the affordable rent and purchase prices to the average purchase price and median rent in Port Alberni. What we learn through this analysis is that households not in an economic family are likely struggling the most with affordable rent and affordable purchase prices. Similarly, we can see that lone parent families are also struggling to purchase affordable homes in Port Alberni. The gap analysis indicates that there is a widening gap between median income in Port Alberni and the median rent and/or purchase prices.

**Table 2: Affordable rent and purchase prices for different types of households**

Type of household	% Population	Median Income	Affordable Rent	Affordable Purchase
Couple with children	16.9%	\$96,177	\$2,334	\$546,974
Lone Parent Families	11.2%	\$39,354	\$914	\$214,123
Couple without children	27.3%	\$70,771	\$1,699	\$398,154
Not in an economic family	44.6%	\$25,930	\$578	\$135,490
All households	100.0%	\$52,348	\$1,309	\$306,629

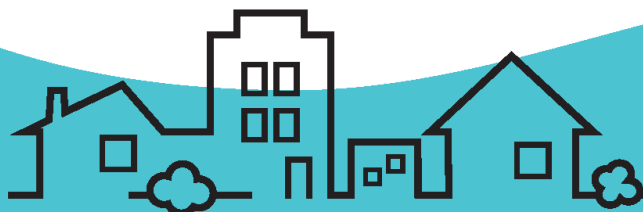
*Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, and CMHC, 2021*

Table 3 breaks down affordable rent and affordable purchase prices for various income groups. According to this, approximately 37% of households (those in the little to no income, low income, and low to moderate income categories) in Port Alberni would require a monthly rent that is less than \$1,055 which confirms that a larger number of people in the community are likely getting priced out of the rental market. With the current trend of rising house prices, it is likely that only those households with above moderate to high incomes will be able to afford purchasing a home in this community moving forward.

**Table 3: Affordable rent and purchase prices by income groups**

Income groups	% Population	Average Income	Affordable Rent	Affordable Purchase
Little to no income	8.0%	\$5,000	\$55	\$12,887
Low income	12.1%	\$20,000	\$430	\$100,752
Low to moderate income	17.2%	\$35,000	\$805	\$188,617
Moderate	11.5%	\$45,000	\$1,055	\$247,194
Moderate to above moderate	9.5%	\$55,000	\$1,305	\$305,771
Above moderate to high	7.7%	\$65,000	\$1,555	\$364,348
High income	33.9%	\$100,000	\$2,430	\$569,366

*Source: Statistics Canada, 2016 Census, and CMHC, 2021*



## Housing Indicators

Housing indicators were established by Statistics Canada and CMHC to identify common and critical housing issues within communities. These indicators are measured nationally, and allow communities to monitor three key housing-related challenges to see how they change over time, and to compare differences between communities. The indicators are measured for both owners and renters, and assesses the following:

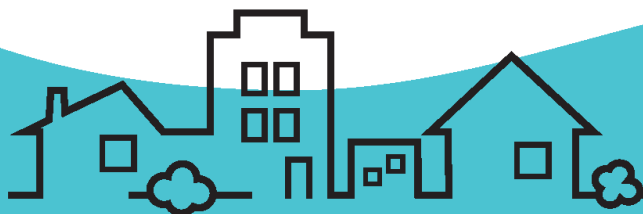
- **Affordability:** shelter costs (including utilities) that are 30% (or less) of total income (before-tax) for the household.
- **Suitability:** the dwelling has enough bedrooms for the size and composition of residents within a household according to National Occupancy Standard (NOS) requirements.
- **Adequacy:** the dwelling does not need major repairs, as reported by the residents.

Below, Figures 27 and 28 demonstrate changes in housing indicators between 2006, 2011 and 2016 for both owner and renter households. Comparing this information helps understand the challenges that each group face when it comes to these three critical indicators.

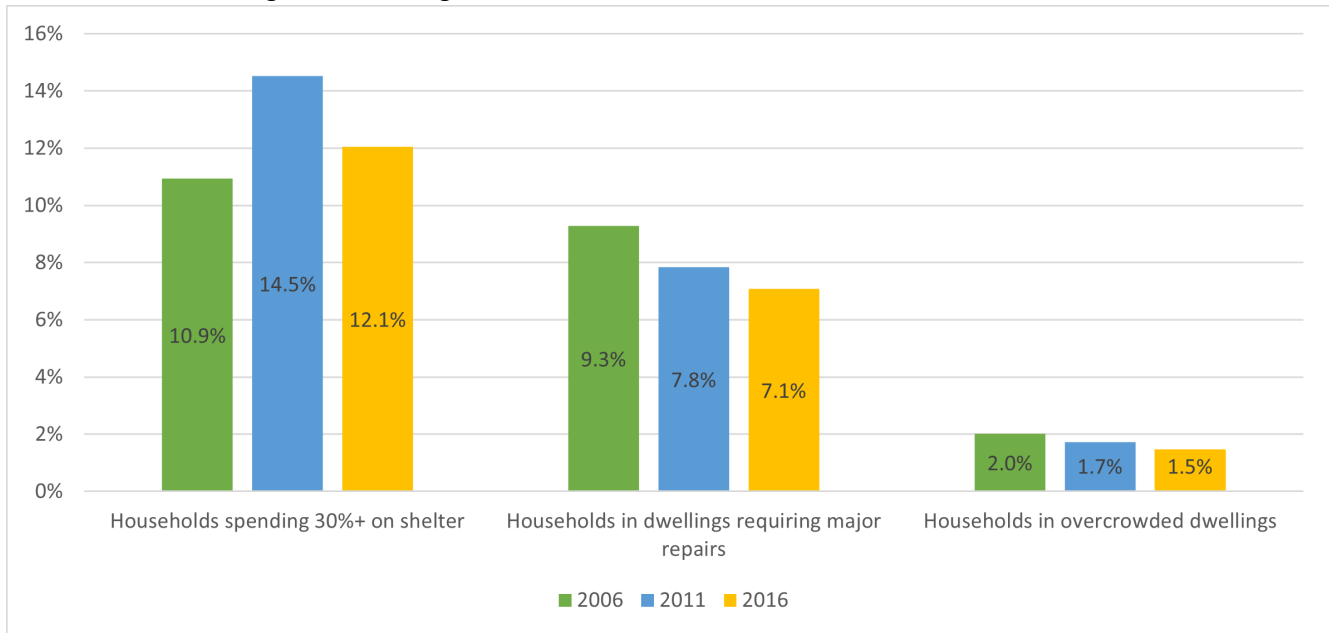
In Port Alberni, like many other communities, affordability is the greatest challenge facing the majority of households. In 2016 62% of all households (renter and owner occupied) faced housing unaffordability (spent more 30 percent or more on shelter costs), while only about 7% dealt with overcrowding. Inadequacy is also an issue in Port Alberni, as about 20% of households indicated that their homes needed major repairs in 2016.

Also, 12% of owner households were spending more than 30% of household income on shelter costs in 2016. The cost of home ownership has typically been considered within reach for many people in Port Alberni, which is reflected in this data. However, as Figure 22 indicates, average purchase prices in Port Alberni have significantly increased which will likely cause the number of owner households experiencing unaffordable housing costs to rise moving forward.

When considering the adequacy of housing in Port Alberni the indicators show that both owner households and renter households have seen improvements from 2006 to 2016, which likely reflects newer housing stock being built and improved economic conditions allowing people to address outstanding repairs. The housing stock in Port Alberni was mostly built before 1980, which will add pressure on many owner households to complete major repairs.



**Figure 27: Housing Indicators of Owner Households, Port Alberni, 2006-2016**



Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016, 2011, 2006 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing

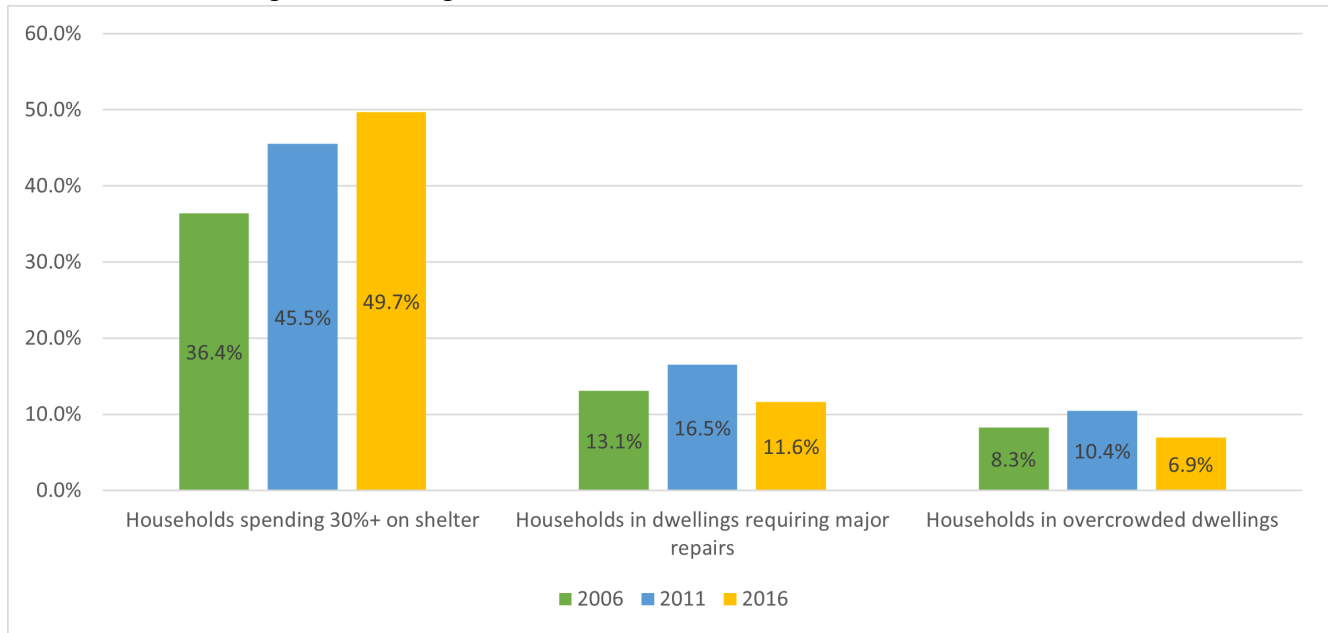
As of 2016 nearly 50% of renter households in Port Alberni exceed the affordability indicator. As rent continues to increase, more renters will continue to spend more than 30% of their income on housing costs.

Renters are also more likely to live in dwellings that require major repairs or that are overcrowded. This could be attributed to the lack of autonomy over their place of residence, meaning they must wait on a landlord or property manager to complete home repairs. Overcrowding may be attributed to the shortage of primary rental units with 3 or more bedrooms in Port Alberni.

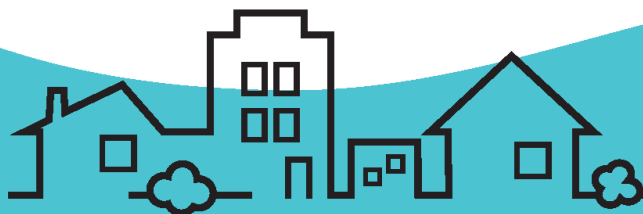
Many renter households will likely continue to face challenges with dwellings requiring major repairs, either due to financial hardship or lack of control over their dwelling unit. It will be important to pay attention to how rental renovations continue to put pressure of rental affordability, as renters may experience greater housing insecurity when landlords or property managers attempt to evict current tenants, renovate the unit, and then rent it at a much higher rate.



**Figure 28: Housing Indicators of Renter Households, Port Alberni, 2006-2016**



*Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing*



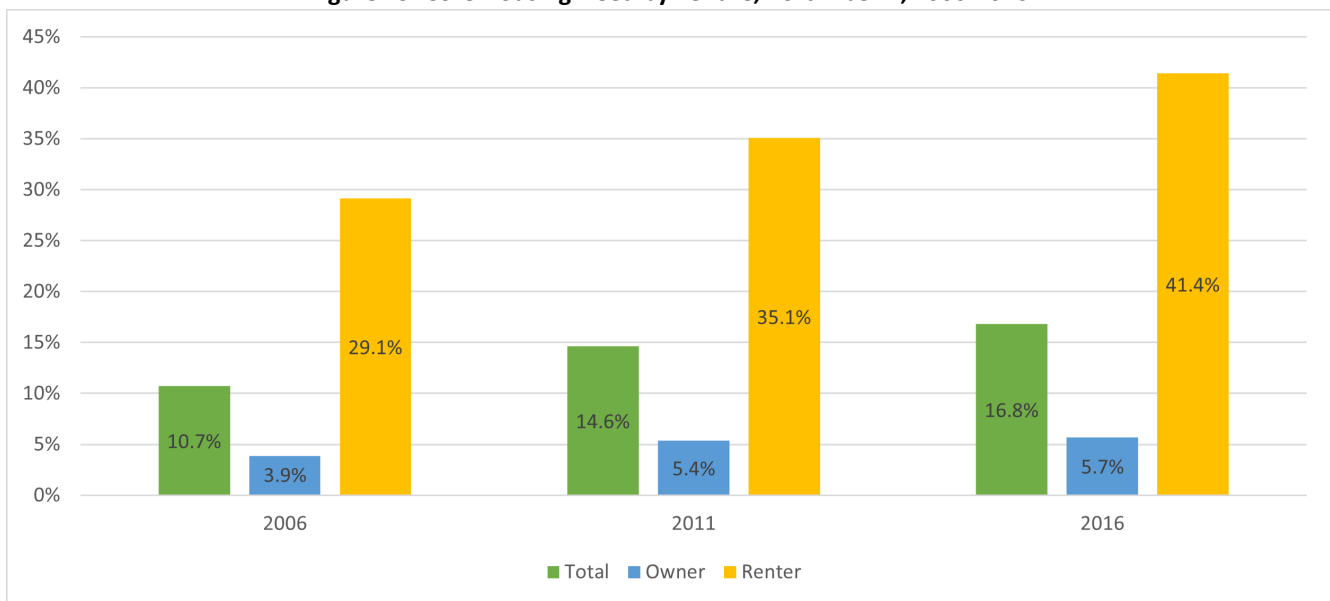
## Core housing need and Extreme core housing need

The housing indicators above show the households facing challenges with the affordability, suitability, or adequacy of their housing.

Core housing need numbers highlight the households that do not meet one or more of the housing indicators, but also cannot afford the median rent or cost for a unit appropriate to their household size (i.e., they cannot afford to move to an appropriate dwelling unit for their needs). Extreme core housing need is a subset of core housing need. Extreme core housing need refers to households that are in core housing need and are spending 50% or more of their total income on housing.

The total percentage of owner and renter households identified as in core housing need has increased between 2006 and 2016, as shown in Figure 29. However, renter households continue to experience much greater difficulties than owner households. In 2016, 41.4% of renter households were identified as being in core housing need compared to 5.7% of owner households. Renter households in core housing need has increased by 12.3% between 2006 and 2016.

**Figure 29: Core Housing Need by Tenure, Port Alberni, 2006-2016**



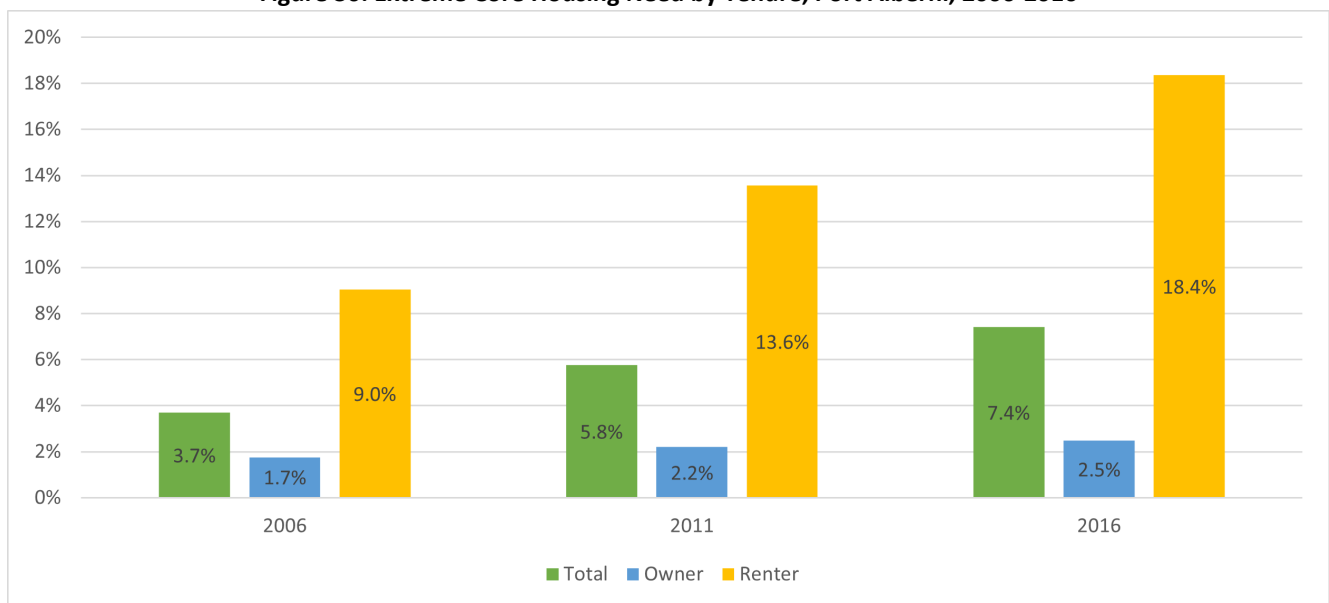
Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016, 2011, 2006 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing



Further exploring the extreme core housing need in Port Alberni, 7.4% percent of households did not meet one or more of the housing indicators and were spending 50% or more of pre-tax income on housing in 2016.

As of 2016, 18.4% of renter households are in extreme core housing need, compared to 2.5% of owner households. Figure 30 shows that the number of households in extreme core housing need also increased during the 2006-2016 period. The most dramatic increase in extreme core housing need was to renter households, which approximately doubled from 9% to 18.4% during this ten-year period.

**Figure 30: Extreme Core Housing Need by Tenure, Port Alberni, 2006-2016**



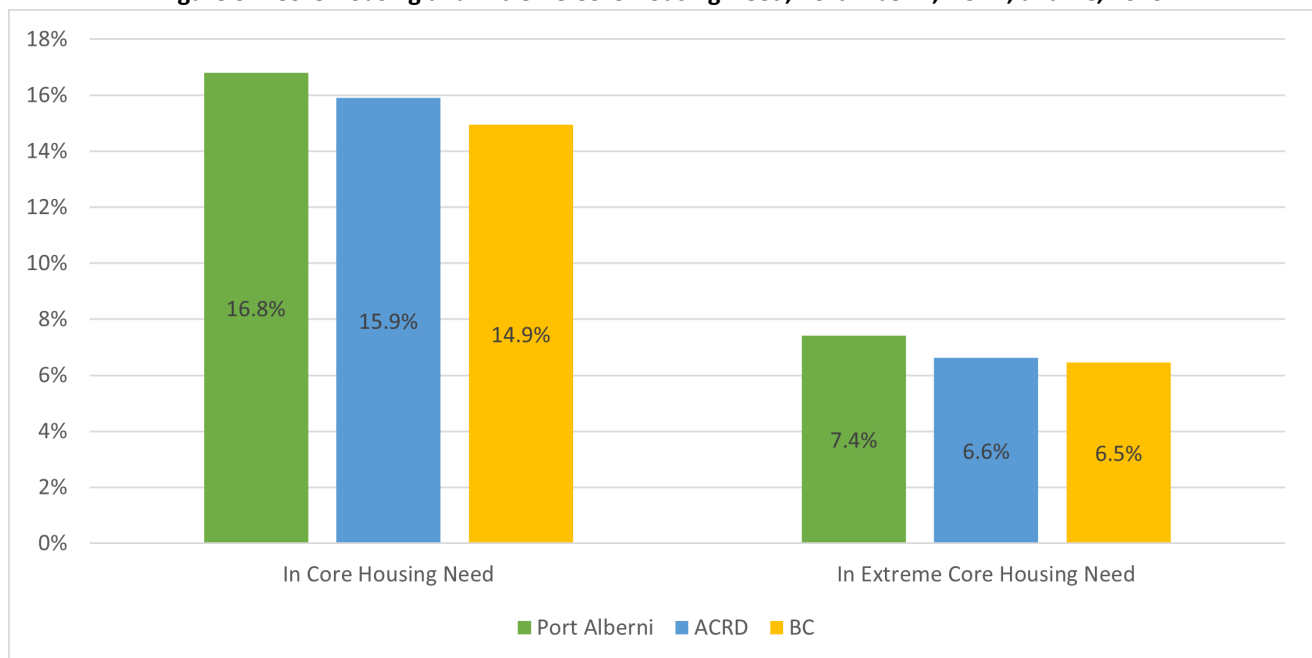
Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016, 2011, 2006 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing



Figure 31 shows a comparison of the percentage of households in core housing need and extreme core housing need in Port Alberni, the ACRD, and BC. Households in Port Alberni are more likely to be in these categories than those in the ACRD or BC.

The low vacancy rate means that many people must choose expensive, inadequate, and/or unsuitable housing options. This is likely because of a shortage of units, especially bachelor and 3+ bedroom units, that are only priced to be affordable to the average renter household in Port Alberni.

**Figure 31: Core Housing and Extreme Core Housing Need, Port Alberni, ACRD, and BC, 2016**



*Source: Statistics Canada, Census 2016 – Custom Information for BC Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing*

## 2.4 Key Findings

### Demographic Profile

- Port Alberni is an aging community that saw minimal to no population growth, and struggled economically between 2006 and 2016.
- The global economic crisis of 2008 appeared to have a significant impact on the city, driving down employment and median household incomes. The community had not fully recovered by 2016.



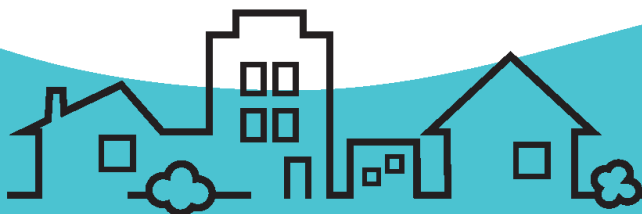
- The number of people living alone has increased over time, which likely impacts the availability of housing in the community.
- In 2016, 17% of Port Alberni's population identified as Indigenous. The percentage of Indigenous people living in Port Alberni increased by about 5% between 2006 to 2016.

### Economy

- Despite some major fluctuations in the economy, Port Alberni has seen the median household income rise by 7.4% from 2001-2016.
- The income gap between renters and owners continues to widen, as the median household income for renters has decreased by 0.9% since 2006 but increased by 1.8% for owners.
- As of 2016 the unemployment rate was 10.3%, which is higher compared to the 6.7% provincial unemployment rate.

### Housing Profile

- Most homes in Port Alberni are single detached dwellings.
- The majority of dwellings have 3 or more bedrooms, but many households only have 1 or 2 people in them.
- Almost 45% of the houses in Port Alberni were built before 1960.
- 700 residential dwelling units have been added to the city's housing stock in the last 10 years.
- About 10% of people who participated in the City's online Housing Needs survey said that they had been refused housing or been discriminated against because of ethnicity, age, sexual orientation, disability, gender, etc.
- Between 2016 and 2020, the average assessment value of residential dwelling units has increased by 53%. Average purchase prices have increased by 45% during the same period. As of 2020 the average home price was over \$300,000.
- From 2010-2020 the number of bachelor units increased slightly, while the number of units with 3 or more bedrooms has decreased by a total of 34 units.
- Primary rental vacancy rates reached a low of 0.7% in October 2018 but have rebounded to a healthier rate of 3% in October 2020.
- The median rent increased by 93% between 2001 and 2020 among all primary rental units.
- Between 2006 and 2016 the median rent for primary rental units increased by 37%, while median income for renters fell by 0.9%.
- Secondary rental units accounted for nearly 58% of rental stock in Port Alberni in 2016.
- In 2018, it was estimated that there are at least 147 people experiencing homelessness in Port Alberni, and 57% were completely unsheltered.
- In 2016 62% of all households (renter and owner occupied) faced housing unaffordability





- 20% of all households indicated that their homes needed major repairs in 2016.
- The total percentage of owner and renter households in core housing need and extreme core housing increased between 2006 and 2016.
- 41% of renter households are in core housing need, and 18% are in extreme core housing need.
- An additional 1,015 subsidized housing units would have been required to provide housing for households in core housing need in 2016, plus an additional 105 near-market rentals for those households spending more than 30% on shelter costs.

### 3: Future Needs

#### 3.1 Community Growth

To determine future housing needs various population, household, and housing unit projections have been calculated. Population and household projections to 2025 are summarized below. The projections are derived from custom BC Statistics population projections for the ACRD. These forecasts are based on past trends, but the actual growth of the community will be influenced by a variety of factors, including growth in the region, availability of housing, and jobs in the community.

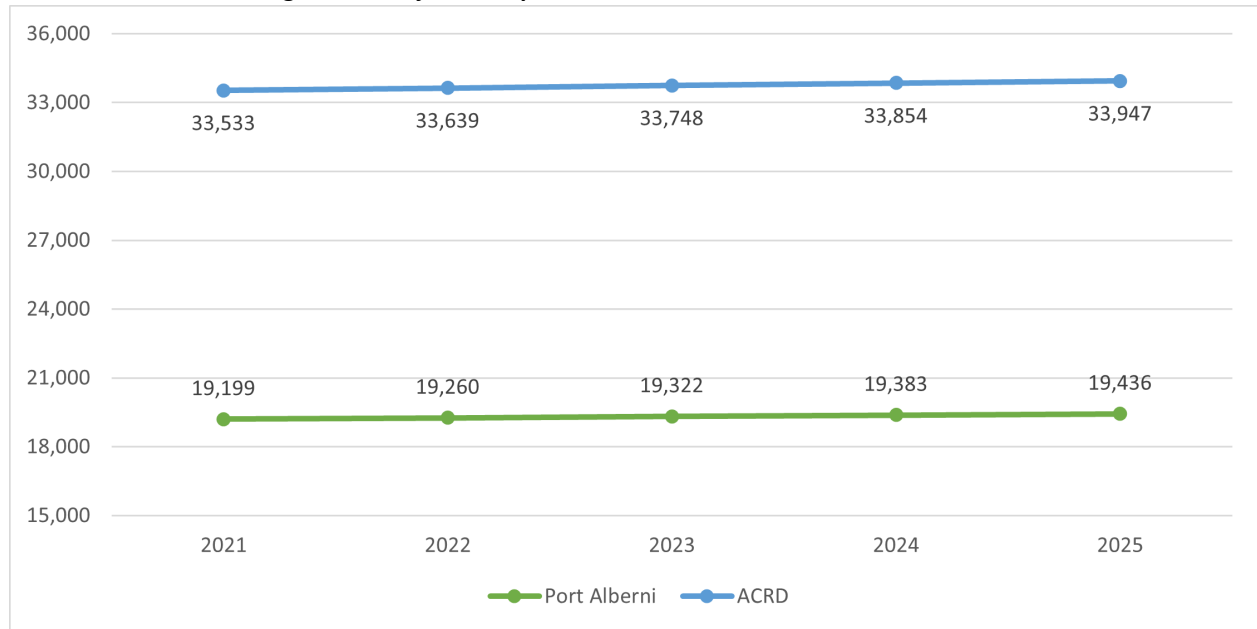
##### **Population growth**

There are many ways to calculate population projections. The projections in this report were developed using Statistics Canada's population projection data which is calculated at the regional district level. The data for the ACRD was used to determine the projections for Port Alberni. As the population growth of the ACRD and the City were similar between 2006 and 2016, it is reasonable to assume that this trend will continue. The Statistics Canada projections assume a growth rate of 0.3% per year. Please note that the population projections are for the total population, rather than the household population numbers that were used for earlier sections of this report.

Based on Census data from previous years, population growth in Port Alberni and the ACRD is expected to be minimal. In Port Alberni the community is expected to grow from 19,199 residents in 2021 to 19,436 residents in 2025, as shown in Figure 32. Due to the relative affordability of housing in the Alberni Valley (when compared to other areas on Vancouver Island), plus the recent increased shift to working from home as a result of the pandemic, it should be anticipated that the population will increase by more than 0.3% each year, provided that new housing development keeps up with the potential demand. Population projections for each of the various age groups were also calculated and can be seen in Table 4.



**Figure 32: Projected Population, Port Alberni and ACRD, 2021-2025**



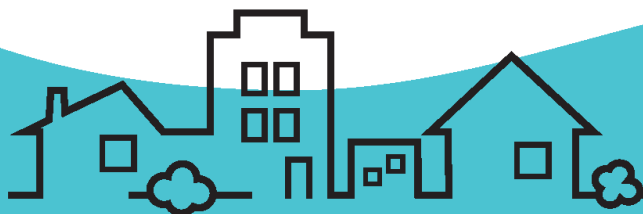
Source: Derived from BC Stats Population Projections, and Statistics Canada Census Profile 2006, 2011, and 2016

**Table 4: Population projections by age group, including 2016 census data**

Age Group	Age 0-14	15-19	20-24	25-64	65-84	85+	Total
<b>2016</b>	2,675	1,065	815	8,755	3,600	415	17,325
<b>2021</b>	2,765	1,114	922	9,254	4,569	576	19,199
<b>2022</b>	2,735	1,117	924	9,187	4,699	597	19,260
<b>2023</b>	2,705	1,101	927	9,139	4,831	618	19,322
<b>2024</b>	2,675	1,105	930	9,071	4,962	640	19,383
<b>2025</b>	2,643	1,088	952	8,999	5,092	661	19,436

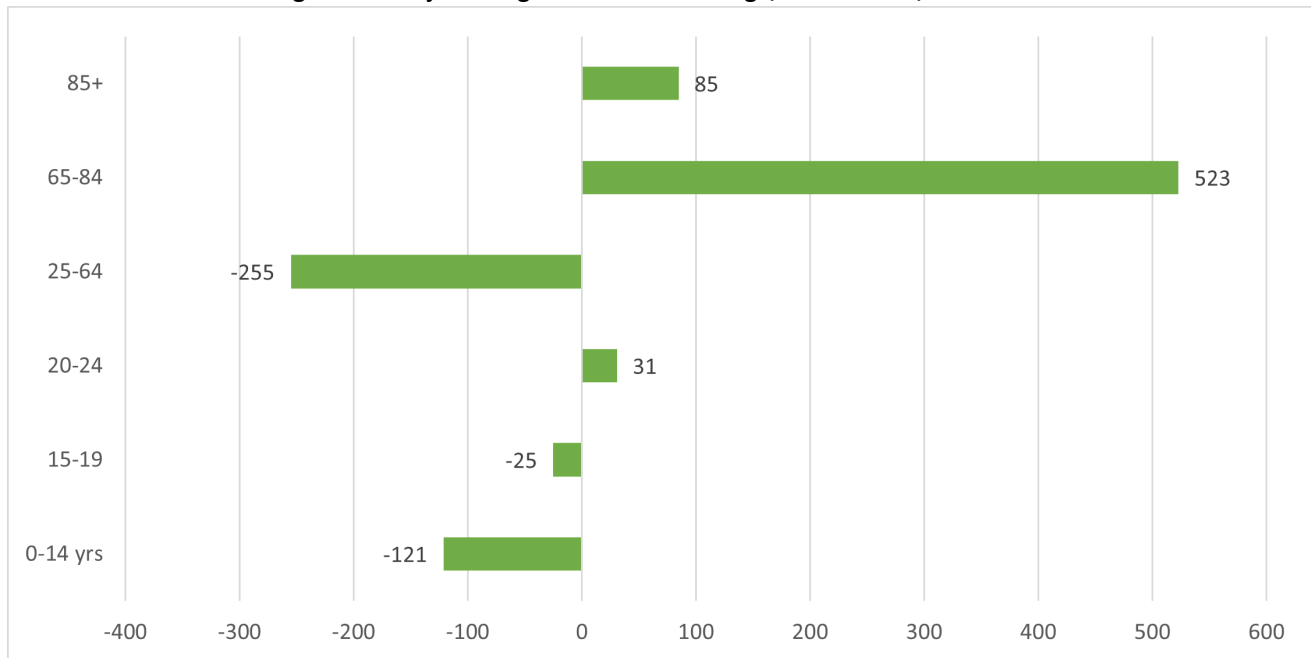
Source: Derived from BC Stats Population Projections, and Statistics Canada Census Profile 2006, 2011, and 2016

Figure 33 shows the projected change in the number of people in each age group between 2021 and 2025. The 65-84 age group is projected to grow the most, which is projected to increase by 12% in the next 5 years. The number of children (0-19) is expected to decrease, as are the number of people of working age (25-64). If, as projected, the fastest growth age group is adults 65 to 84 then there will likely be additional strain on



affordable and accessible housing for seniors. Statistics Canada projects that the average and median ages for ACRD residents will decrease in 2019, before steadily increasing again. Calculations using this data show that the projected median age for Port Alberni in 2025 would be 46.6, which is a decrease from the median age of 48.2 in 2016.

**Figure 33: Projected Age Distribution Change, Port Alberni, 2021-2025**



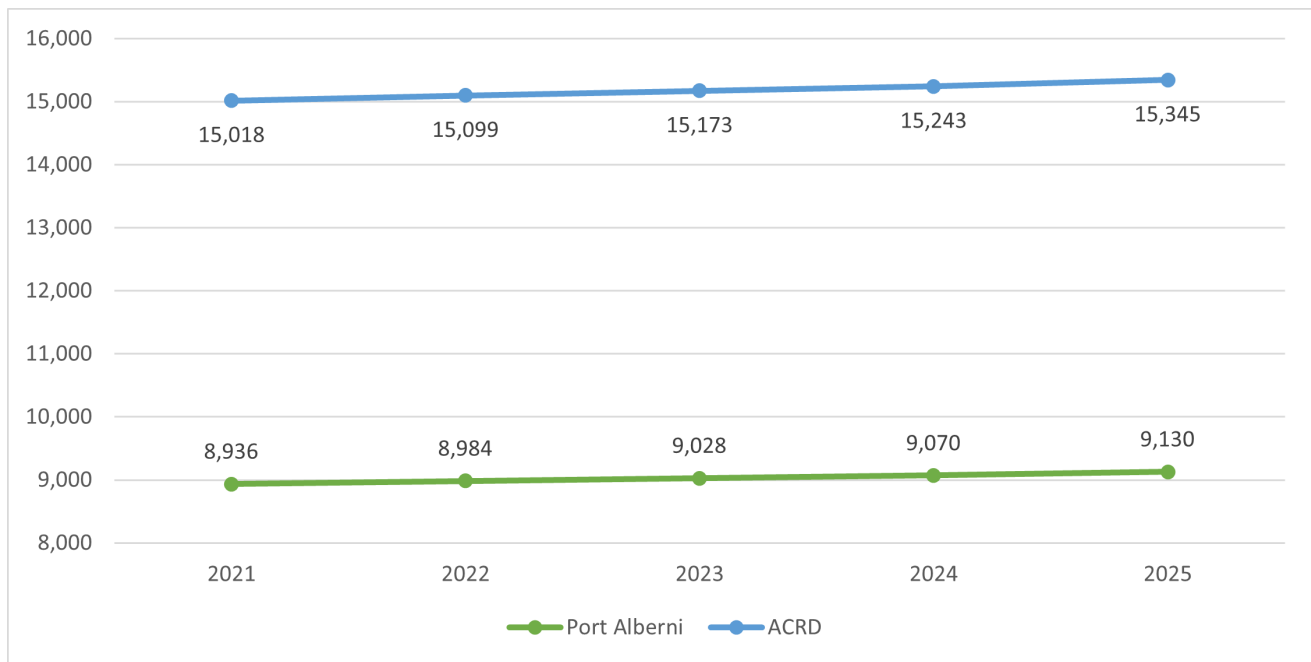
*Source: Derived from BC Stats Population Projections, and Statistics Canada Census Profile 2006, 2011, and 2016*

## Household Projections

Statistics Canada also provides household projection data. To calculate the projected number of households for Port Alberni, it was assumed that the percentage of ACRD households that are in the City would remain the same moving forward, as this number was stable at approximately 60% between 2006 and 2016. Figure 34 shows the growth of households for the ACRD and Port Alberni over the next 5 years. In this scenario, the number of households in the City is projected to increase by 195. The projected average household size is expected to remain at 2.1 for the next 5 years.



**Figure 34: Projected Age Distribution Change, Port Alberni, 2021-2025**



*Source: Derived from BC Stats Population Projections, and Statistics Canada Census Profile 2006, 2011, and 2016*

### Projected Dwellings

Table 5 shows the projected number of dwelling units by size required in 2021 and 2025, given the population projections and average household size above, and the assumption that the distribution of dwellings by number of bedrooms remains the same as it was in the 2016 Census. Between 2021 and 2025 a total of 194 units of housing will need to be added to the community in order to keep up with projected demand.

The largest demand is assumed to be in the 3+ bedroom category, and this might be because of how few 3+ bedroom units currently exist for renters who are facing the most amount of housing challenges in the community. However, given that the number of households containing only one or two people has steadily increased over time in Port Alberni, it would seem most appropriate to build more units with 0-2 bedrooms, and less units with 3 or more bedrooms. This might help address housing affordability, as smaller dwelling units are generally cheaper to rent or purchase as well.



**Table 5: Projected number of dwelling units required in 2021 by number of bedrooms**

Required Units	2021	2025	Increase in units
Bachelor	72	73	1
1 bedroom	1,057	1,080	23
2 bedrooms	2,240	2,289	49
3+ bedrooms	5,558	5,679	121
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,927</b>	<b>9,121</b>	<b>194</b>

Source: Derived from BC Stats Population Projections, and Statistics Canada Census Profile 2006, 2011, and 2016

### 3.2 Key Findings

- Port Alberni is projected to have a population of approximately 19,500 by 2025, given an annual growth rate of 0.3%.
- The number of seniors (65+) is expected to increase by 12% in the next 5 years.
- The number of households is projected to increased to 9,130 by 2025.
- It is projected that an additional 194 dwelling units will need to be constructed by 2025 to keep up with housing demand.

## 4: Community and Stakeholder Engagement

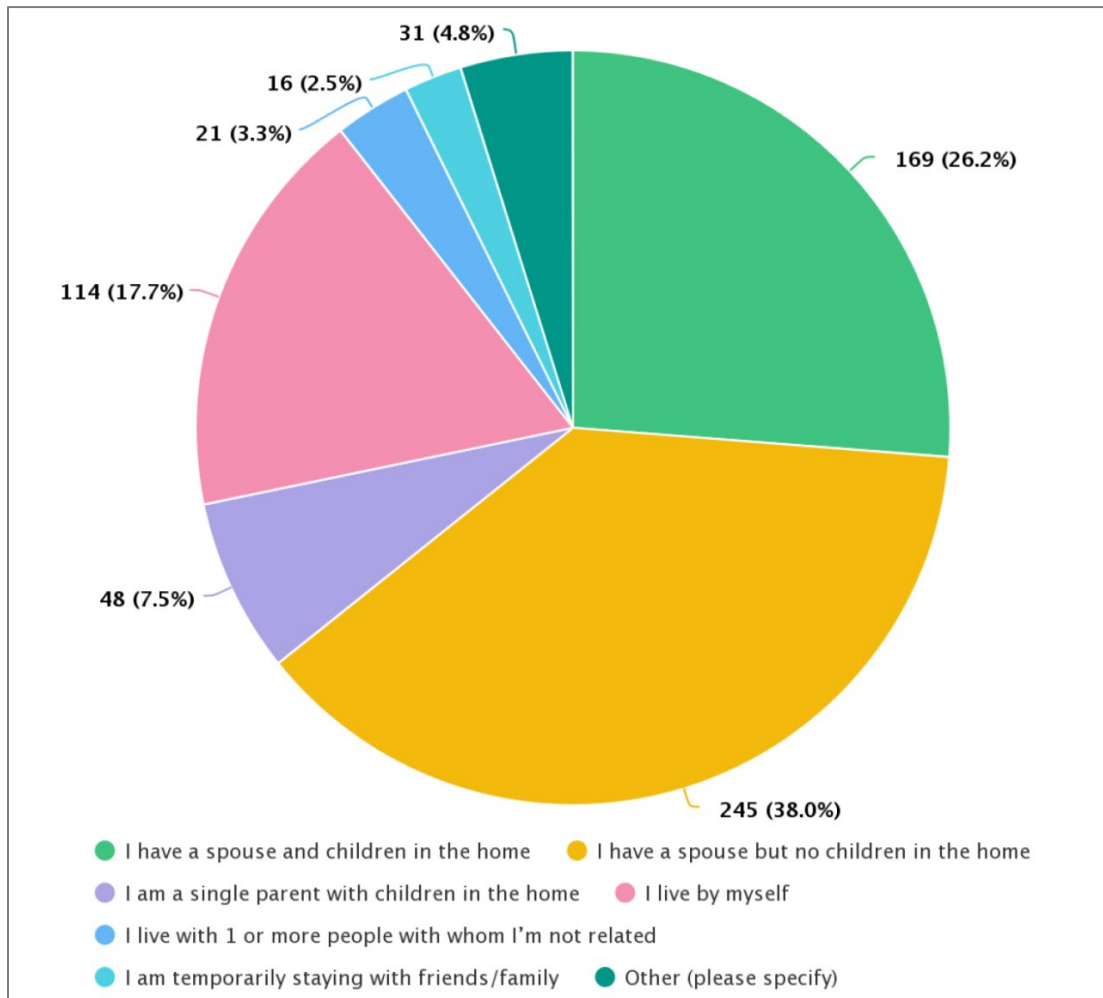
As part of the City's first ever Housing Needs Report, it was critical that supplementary qualitative data was collected and reviewed for the study. As such, the City of Port Alberni and the ACRD worked together on the community and stakeholder engagement portion of their respective Housing Needs Assessments. The ACRD is currently conducting housing needs assessments for the 4 electoral areas (EA) surrounding Port Alberni, Beaufort (EA B), Sproat Lake (EA D), Beaver Creek (EA E), and Cherry Creek (EA F). These are the 5 communities that make up the Alberni Valley, although the ACRD also encompasses the coastal communities of Bamfield, Tofino, and Ucluelet.

### 4.1 Public Online Survey

A public online survey was created and made available to residents of the Alberni Valley between October 27 and November 29, 2020. A total of 668 residents completed the survey, 74% had indicated their primary home was located in the City, and 26% were from the 4 EAs. People of all ages, income levels, and employment statuses provided responses, and 10% of respondents self-identified as Indigenous. More than 40% have lived in the Alberni Valley for more than 10 years. Figure 35 shows the household situation of respondents, who were mostly made up of couples with or without children in the home.



Figure 35: “What best describes your current household situation?”



Source: Alberni Valley Housing Needs Assessment Survey, October – November 2020

Some key highlights from the survey findings include:

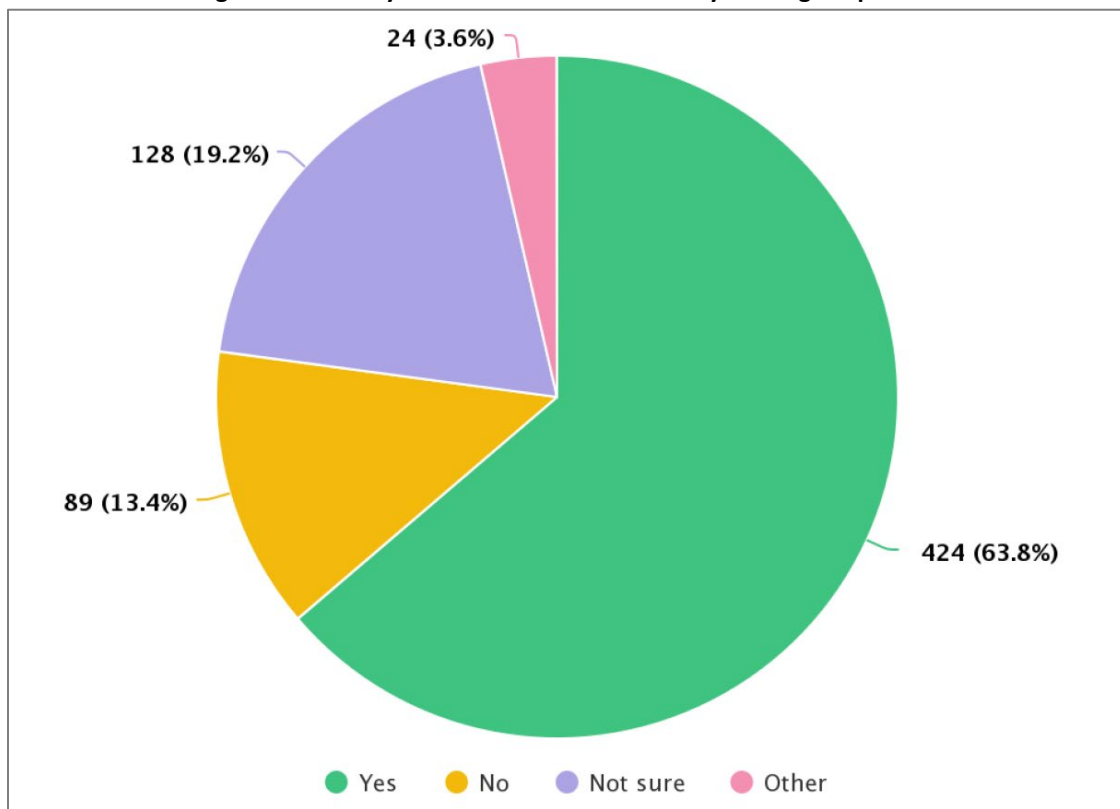
- 73% identified as homeowners and 26% identified as renters.
- 79% said they live in a single detached dwelling, and only 6% said they live in an apartment building.
- About 2.3% of respondents are temporarily staying with family or friends.
- The majority (60%) of respondents live in a 3 or 4 bedroom home.
- About 9% said they have applied to live in subsidized housing.
- 83% would prefer to live in a single detached dwelling, and 86% would prefer to be a homeowner.
- 33% would like to improve their home to be more energy efficient.



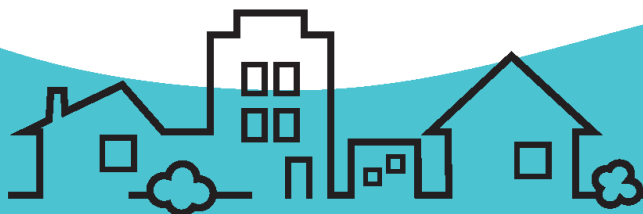
- 33% would like a lower cost for their rent or mortgage.
- Around 11% say they have rented their home as a short-term rental.
- 13% can't find pet friendly housing in the Alberni Valley.
- 58% are spending more than 30% of their household income on housing expenses.
  - Up to 20% said they spend up to half their household income on utilities alone.
- 16% say their home needs major repairs or replacements, and 49% need minor repairs.
  - 40% said that the homes they can afford are of poor quality.
- Up to 68% believe that there is a shortage of homes to rent or own, based on their income.
  - 34% said they cannot obtain a mortgage.
- 10% have been discriminated against and refused housing.

Figure 36 shows that almost 64% of respondents believe that their current dwelling would allow them to age in place.

**Figure 36: "Does your current residence allow you to age in place?"**

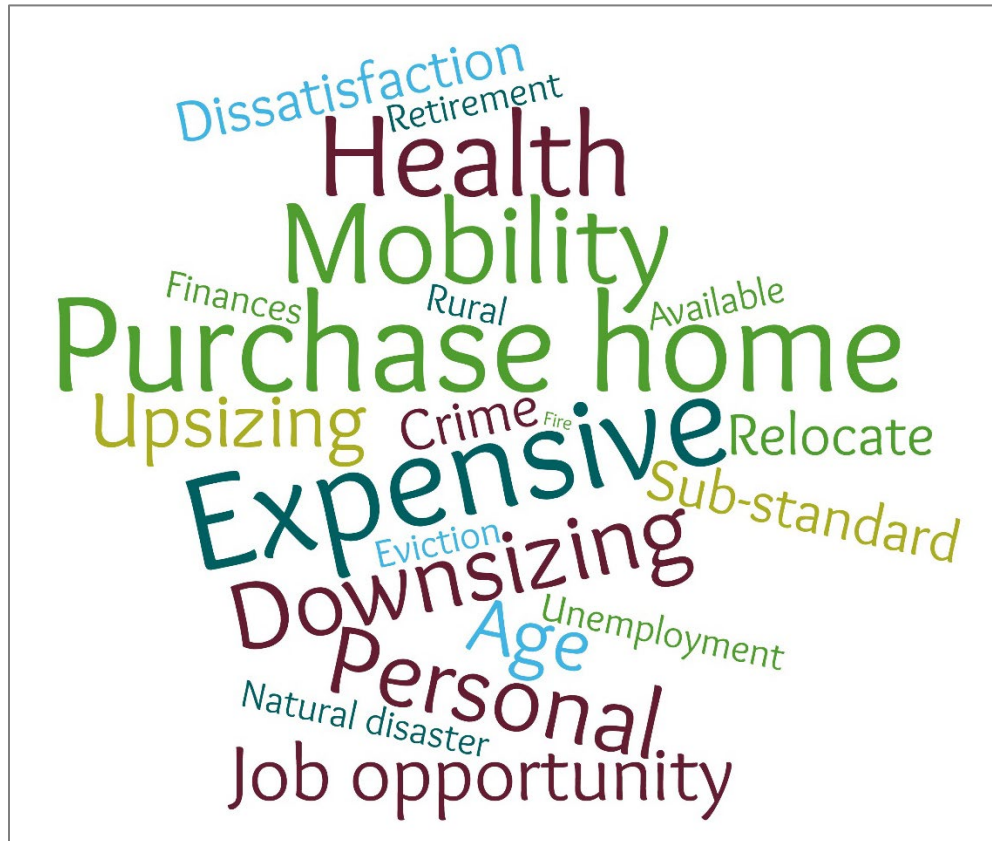


Source: Alberni Valley Housing Needs Assessment Survey, October – November 2020



As part of the survey three open-ended questions were asked. The responses to these three questions have been grouped into themes, and those themes were turned into word clouds, as shown in Figures 37-39. These word clouds are compiled from Port Alberni residents only. The larger text indicates that those words were the most common themes mentioned by respondents.

**Figure 37: “What would cause you to move?”**



*Source: Alberni Valley Housing Needs Assessment Survey, October – November 2020*

While affordability was consistently one of the main themes brought up by respondents, in response to the survey question “what might cause you to move” some unique answers emerged that are worth noting. These include:

- 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
- the need for pet friendly housing or just generally needing more room for pets
- employment in an alternative community and the desire not to commute
- challenging neighbours or problems in the neighborhood.

Many respondents indicated that they felt they had little to no control over choosing when to move. Predominately the lack of control over one's own housing situation was related to two things. In many instance 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.

**Figure 38: "What do you think is the most serious housing issue in the Alberni Valley?"**



*Source: Alberni Valley Housing Needs Assessment Survey, October – November 2020*

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.

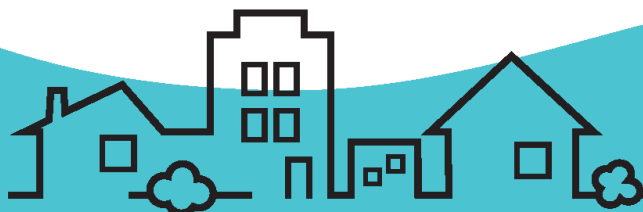
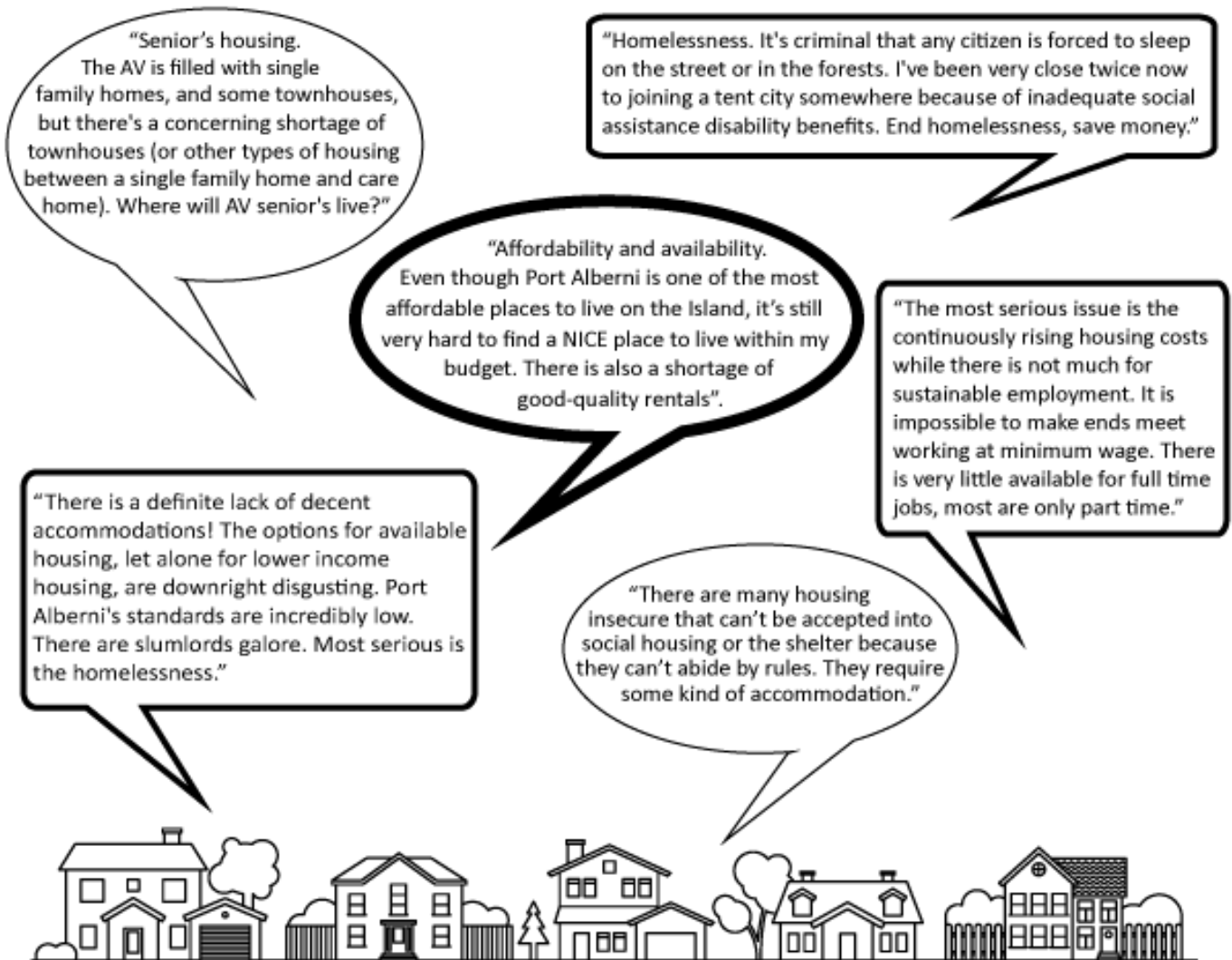
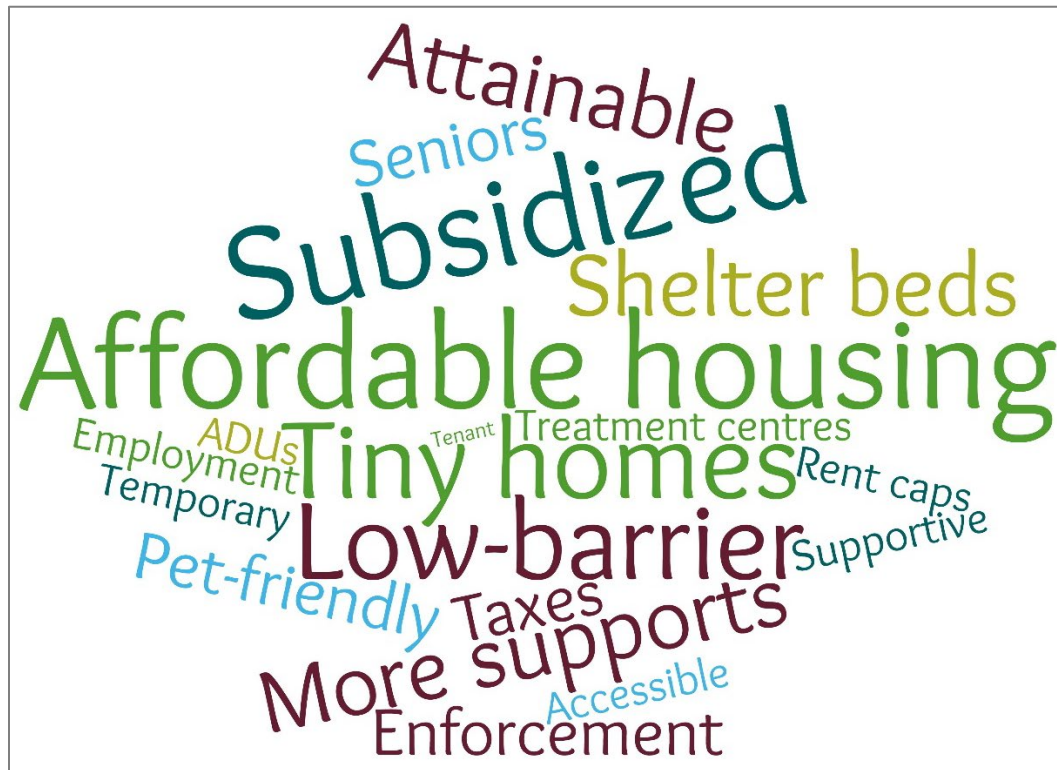


Figure 39: “Do you have any ideas that could improve housing for your community?”



Source: Alberni Valley Housing Needs Assessment Survey, October – November 2020

Generally, respondents provided some overarching ideas about how to address housing affordability in Port Alberni. Many people wanted to see more diversity of housing stock across the housing spectrum, as well as more affordable rentals. Many people indicated that the City should discourage housing speculation as much as possible and try to ensure that landlords are present in the community and maintaining their assets. Other people wanted to see solutions for renters specifically advanced. Secondary suites and other accessory dwelling units (Carriage Homes and Laneway Homes) were generally encouraged by many respondents. Tiny homes and shipping container housing was also mentioned.





## 4.2 Stakeholder Survey

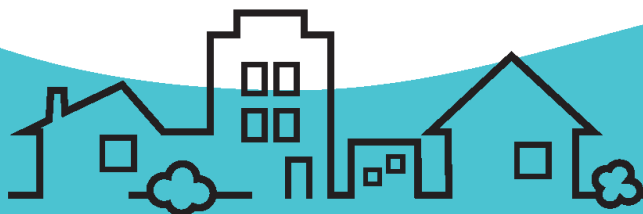
An additional survey was sent out to select stakeholder organizations in the Alberni Valley on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 2020 and remained open until January 31<sup>st</sup>, 2021. Of those invited to participate, 13 responses were collected during this time.

The respondents indicated that the major housing challenges they see are housing affordability, availability, and adequacy, especially for low-income and vulnerable people. The lack of supports available for people experiencing homelessness also has a major impact on the community.

Some of the barriers to resolving housing issues in the Alberni Valley that stakeholders see include limited government support, stigmas surrounding mental health and substance abuse, unscrupulous landlords, and inadequate supports for vulnerable populations.

The stakeholders also provided suggestions for solutions, including:

- More cooperative housing, especially for seniors.
- Developing an affordable housing strategy.
- More supports integrated with housing for vulnerable populations.
- Inclusive zoning that promotes the development of affordable housing.
- The development of more subsidized housing.



### 4.3 Stakeholder Focus Group

Stakeholders were also invited to participate in an online focus group meeting which was held on January 12, 2021. In total 11 people from a variety of organizations in the Alberni Valley participated in the meeting. There were four questions introduced for discussion after a brief presentation about the housing needs assessment process. These questions were:

1. What are the most common/critical housing related challenges to tackle in the Alberni Valley?
2. What impacts has the current housing situation had on your organization/the community as a whole?
3. From your perspective, how is the housing situation different in the City and the 4 Alberni Valley Electoral Areas?
4. Do you have any ideas that can help improve housing in the Alberni Valley?

The key themes that arose from these discussions were:

- The average rent in the communities does not accurately reflect the current situation for many people. Rent for people moving or entering the rental market is generally significantly higher than the average rent. These numbers may have an impact on funding for affordable housing in the Alberni Valley.
- Shelter costs are increasing for seniors and becoming more unaffordable. Even if a senior owns their home, they may not be able to afford renovations to allow them to age in place (accessibility aids, adding secondary suites for family members providing care).
- Unaffordable, unsuitable, and inadequate housing can also affect mental and physical health.
- The average amount of time that people stay in a homeless shelter has increased significantly over the last 10 years due to a shortage of available transitional and subsidized housing units.
- The shortage of affordable housing has created an opportunity for the warehousing of people experiencing homelessness in unsuitable and unsafe buildings.
- The City and the ACRD need to work together with the province and other housing organizations to provide a local solution to housing issues in the Alberni Valley.
- Inclusionary zoning and rent amounts based on income could help ease housing affordability issues.

## 5: Conclusion

The Housing Needs Report has revealed some of the recent key 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 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 due to older local housing conditions, lack of growth and new development, stagnated economic recovery, and an aging population with a depleted work force.



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%. This growth rate would require 194 dwelling units to be built between 2021 and 2025 to accommodate the additional households. The median income in Port Alberni has started to rebound from the economic challenges the community experienced between 2006 and 2016. That being said, the median income in Port Alberni was almost \$20,000 less than the provincial average in 2016.

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. 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.

As the housing needs assessment has showed, 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 are 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.

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. 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. It is also important to consider additional housing for seniors, given the projected increase of 608 persons over the age of 65 in the next 5 years.

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, each of these projects' long-term success will be necessary in order to critically addressing the affordability challenges that lower-income renters in this community are currently facing.





## 6: Next Steps

### **Development Applications**

The HNA can be utilized by the City, other agencies, developers, and non-profit housing providers to identify specific gaps in the housing supply that need to be filled. The City will continue to work with these groups to deliver this targeted supply to the market.

### **Comprehensive Review of the Official Community Plan (OCP)**

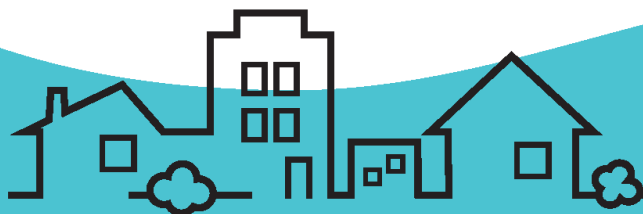
The HNA will be analyzed as part of the upcoming comprehensive OCP review. Information from the HNA report will be incorporated into a housing-specific section of an updated OCP to provide specific housing policy guidance for the City going forward. As part of the OCP update the City will evaluate the degree to which the City's land use plan can meet the housing needs identified by the HNA. With approximately 218 hectares of "Future Residential" land designated in the OCP, there is an abundance of opportunity to provide diverse housing options within these areas as they get reclassified and rezoned.

### **Housing Strategy and Action Plan**

While the Housing Needs Report provides relevant and detailed data about the community and local housing market, the City may also want to develop a Housing Strategy and Action Plan to develop new policy and specific goals and actions to help address the housing needs of Port Alberni. Typically, these documents provide specific tools and objectives, as well as an overarching framework for working with other levels of government, the private sector, and non-profit organizations to facilitate the development of housing, in addition to housing-specific policy identified in the Official Community Plan.

### **Ongoing Monitoring of Housing Supply and Demand**

Provincial requirements stipulate that a HNA must be updated every 5 years. Keeping the HNA up to date will allow the City to periodically take stock of housing demand and supply in the community, undertake a critical review of housing policy with those factors in mind, and adjust accordingly.



## APPENDIX A: DOCUMENT REVIEW

### From the City's Official Community Plan:

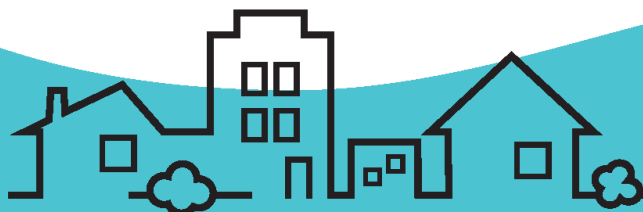
#### Affordable Housing – Policy Objective

The provision of affordable housing is central to the liveability of a community. A number of measures can be used to quantify the threshold for affordability. One such measure used by Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation is that the cost of adequate shelter should not exceed 30% of household income. A range of affordable housing options should be provided to accommodate a wide range of lifestyles and economic profiles such as young families, seniors, singles, those on a fixed income or are low-income households. Such housing can consist of a range of forms including multi-family, high density detached single-family residential, or secondary suites within or associated with single-family dwellings in single-family neighbourhoods. The Plan does not support concentration of specialty housing such as specialty senior's housing in a single location. Rather, it promotes integration of such housing throughout the community in order to provide greater housing diversity.

#### Future Residential

The Future Residential (FUR) designation applies to undeveloped lands reserved to accommodate residential growth over the next 20 years based on a projected 1.5% growth rate. Of the land designated FUR, approximately 65 hectares is serviced and available for development. A further 176 hectares is available for residential development but is not currently fully serviced. On lands within this designation, there is sufficient capacity to accommodate approximately 3,200 detached single-family residences.

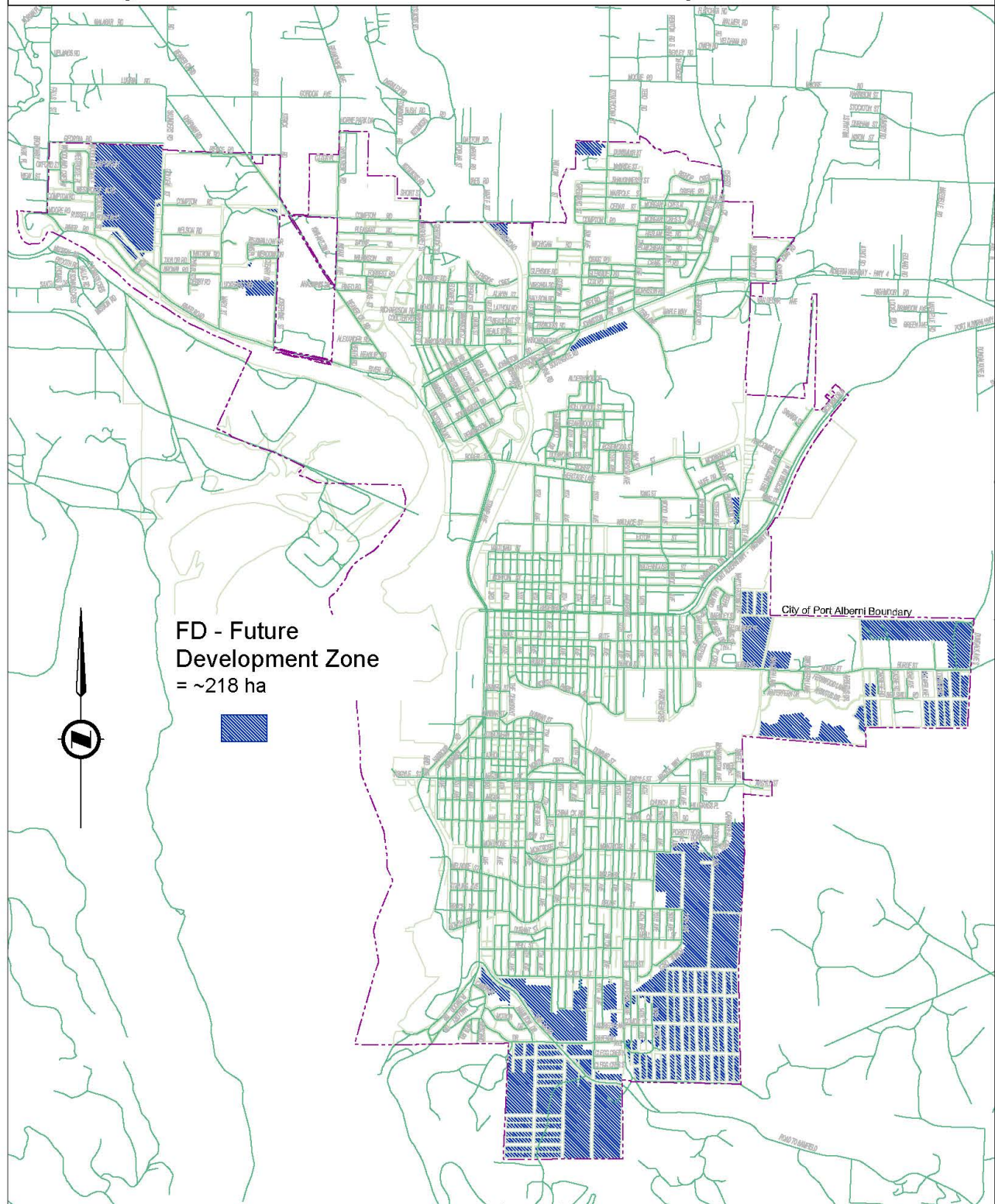
There is also approximately 218 hectares of land zoned as "Future Development" in Port Alberni.







## City of Port Alberni - Future Development zone



#### 4.1 General Provisions

##### Council Policy

1. With the projected increase in the senior's population, the provision of appropriate housing choice and range of care options shall be supported.
  2. The provision of a wide range of housing choice for the benefit of all demographic and socioeconomic segments is encouraged.
  3. The City supports efforts to provide integrated special needs, affordable, and rental housing within the community.
  4. The City will encourage greater residential density in locations near commercial nodes and near transit routes.
  5. The City will support increased residential density along Johnston Road on lands designated Residential (RES) on Schedule "A" (Land Use Map), in support of nearby commercial land use.
- 4.2.3 Development of secondary suites is encouraged within those areas zoned to permit one family dwellings in order to provide for a wider range of housing choice. These can be contained within the primary residential building or in the form of "granny flat" in an ancillary outbuilding subject to zoning regulations.



**APPENDIX B: SUMMARY FORM**
**Housing Needs Reports – Summary Form**
**MUNICIPALITY/ELECTORAL AREA/LOCAL TRUST AREA:** City of Port Alberni
**REGIONAL DISTRICT:** Alberni-Clayoquot Regional District
**DATE OF REPORT COMPLETION:** February 2021

**PART 1: KEY INDICATORS & INFORMATION**
*Instructions: please complete the fields below with the most recent data, as available.*

<b>LOCATION</b>	<b>Neighbouring municipalities and electoral areas:</b>	ACRD Electoral Areas B, D, E, and F
	<b>Neighbouring First Nations:</b>	Tseshaht and Hupacasath First Nations

<b>POPULATION</b>	<b>Population:</b>	17,325	<b>Change since 2006:</b>	0.8%
	<b>Projected population in 5 years:</b>	19,086	<b>Projected change:</b>	10.1% <sup>3</sup>
	<b>Number of households:</b>	8,120	<b>Change since 2006:</b>	6.0%
	<b>Projected # of households in 5 years:</b>	9,130	<b>Projected change:</b>	12.4%
	<b>Average household size:</b>	2.1		
	<b>Projected average household size in 5 years:</b>	2.1		
	<b>Median age (local):</b>	48.2	<b>Median age (RD):</b>	46.6
			<b>Median age (BC):</b>	42.5
	<b>Projected median age in 5 years:</b>	46.6		
	<b>Seniors 65+ (local):</b>	23.2%	<b>Seniors 65+ (RD):</b>	21.2%
			<b>Seniors 65+ (BC):</b>	17.4%
	<b>Projected seniors 65+ in 5 years:</b>	30.1%		
	<b>Owner households:</b>	68.0%	<b>Renter households:</b>	32.0%
	<b>Renter households in subsidized housing:</b>	5.6%		

<sup>3</sup> Calculation reflects the projected changed between 2016-2025.





INCOME	Median Household Income	Local	Regional District	BC
	All households	\$50,595.00	\$55,443.00	\$69,979.00
	Renter households	\$28,385.00	\$32,854.00	\$45,848.00
	Owner households	\$63,516.00	\$66,502.00	\$84,333.00

ECONOMY	Participation rate: 52.2%	Unemployment rate: 10.3%
	Major local industries: Health care & social assistance, retail trade, and manufacturing	

HOUSING	Median assessed housing values (2020):	\$511,041.58	Median housing sale price (2020):	\$304,466.08
	Median monthly rent (Oct 2020):	\$820.00	Rental vacancy rate (Oct 2020):	3%
	Housing units – total:	8,120	Housing units – subsidized:	214
	Annual registered new homes – total (2018) <sup>4</sup> :	83	Annual registered new homes – rental (2018):	20
	Households below affordability standards (spending 30%+ of income on shelter):		23.84%	
	Households below adequacy standards (in dwellings requiring major repairs):		8.56%	
	Households below suitability standards (in overcrowded dwellings):		3.17%	

<sup>4</sup> BC Housing suppresses data when the count is less than 5. In 2018 less than 5 new multi-unit homes were built.



Briefly summarize the following:

**1. Housing policies in local official community plans and regional growth strategies (if applicable):**

- There is currently no Regional Growth Strategy statement in the City of Port Alberni Official Community Plan.
- The OCP includes statements supporting the integration of housing developments for specific sectors of the population (e.g., seniors housing), encouraging the development of a wide range of housing types, and supporting increased density in residential areas surrounding commercial nodes and transit routes.

**2. Any community consultation undertaken during development of the housing needs report:**

- A public online survey in partnership with the ACRD (for the whole Alberni Valley)

**3. Any consultation undertaken with persons, organizations and authorities (e.g., local governments, health authorities, and the provincial and federal governments and their agencies):**

- A stakeholder engagement survey (stakeholders included all the organizations mentioned above)
- A stakeholder focus group meeting held online via Zoom

**4. Any consultation undertaken with First Nations:**

- Invitation to participate in stakeholder survey
- Invitation to participate in stakeholder focus group meeting.

## PART 2: KEY FINDINGS

Table 1: Estimated number of units needed, by type (# of bedrooms)

	Currently (2021)	Anticipated (5 years)
<b>0 bedrooms (bachelor)</b>	72	73
<b>1 bedroom</b>	1,056	1,079
<b>2 bedrooms</b>	2,239	2,288
<b>3+ bedrooms</b>	5,557	5,678
<b>Total</b>	<b>8,936</b>	<b>9,130</b>

**Comments:** Derived from BC Stats Population Projections, and Statistics Canada Census Profile 2006, 2011, and 2016



**Table 2: Households in Core Housing Need**

	2006		2011		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
All households in planning area	7,425	100	7,630	100	7,885	100
Of which are in core housing need	795	10.7	1,115	14.6	1,325	16.8
Of which are owner households	210	2.8	280	3.7	310	3.9
Of which are renter households	580	7.8	840	11.0	1,015	12.9

**Comments:**

Source: Statistics Canada, Census data from 2006, 2011, & 2016

**Table 3: Households in Extreme Core Housing Need**

	2006		2011		2016	
	#	%	#	%	#	%
All households in planning area	7,425	100	7,630	100	7,885	100
Of which are in extreme core housing need	275	3.7	440	5.8	585	7.4
Of which are owner households	95	1.3	115	1.5	135	1.7
Of which are renter households	180	2.4	325	4.3	450	5.7

**Comments:**

Source: Statistics Canada, Census data from 2006, 2011, & 2016

**Briefly summarize current and anticipated needs for each of the following:**

**1. Affordable housing:**

The demand for affordable housing is increasing in Port Alberni, with 50% of renters spending more than 30% of their income (before tax) on shelter costs in 2016, compared to 36% in 2006.

Almost 17% of households in Port Alberni were in core housing need in 2016. An additional 1,015 subsidized housing units would have been required to provide housing for households in core housing need in 2016, plus an additional 105 near-market rentals for those households spending more than 30% on shelter costs.

There are currently ~380 affordable dwelling units in the planning/development stages in Port Alberni, but not all of these have received provincial funding/municipal approvals.





## **2. Rental housing:**

The vacancy rate for primary rentals in Port Alberni was 3% in October 2020, which is an improvement from a low of 0.7% in October 2018. More than 141 primary rental units were added in 2020.

In 2016, 58% of renter households were in secondary market rental units.

## **3. Special needs housing:**

In March of 2020, there were 20 units provided by BC Housing for special needs.

## **4. Housing for seniors:**

In March of 2020, BC Housing had 69 supportive seniors housing units, 96 independent seniors social housing units, and provided rent assistance to 170 seniors. There are approximately 10 residential developments for seniors in Port Alberni and the surrounding area. Seniors (55+) are the fastest growing segment of the population, and the demand for affordable and subsidized housing for seniors is expected to continue to grow. There are ~150 proposed affordable housing units for seniors in the planning stages.

## **5. Housing for families:**

In March of 2020, BC Housing had 118 units for low-income families, and provided rent assistance for a further 45 families in Port Alberni.

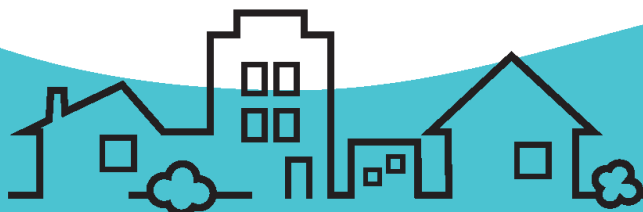
## **6. Shelters for people experiencing homelessness and housing for people at risk of homelessness:**

In 2018, 147 people were identified as experiencing homelessness. 57% were completely unsheltered.

In March 2020, BC Housing identified 97 homeless housed and 23 shelter beds in Port Alberni. Another homelessness count has been approved but is on hold due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

## **7. Any other population groups with specific housing needs identified in the report:**

There are currently 11 dwelling units/beds for the use of women and children fleeing violence, with a second development planned which will provide second stage transitional housing.







**Were there any other key issues identified through the process of developing your housing needs report?**

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 or barriers:

- 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.

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.

One other common theme that emerged through the City's public engagement efforts is a general sense of not having control over their housing situation, which many people noted. Predominately the lack of control over one's own housing situation was related to typically two things. In many instance 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.

