Canada Community-Building Fund Requirements: Housing Needs Assessments for Municipalities

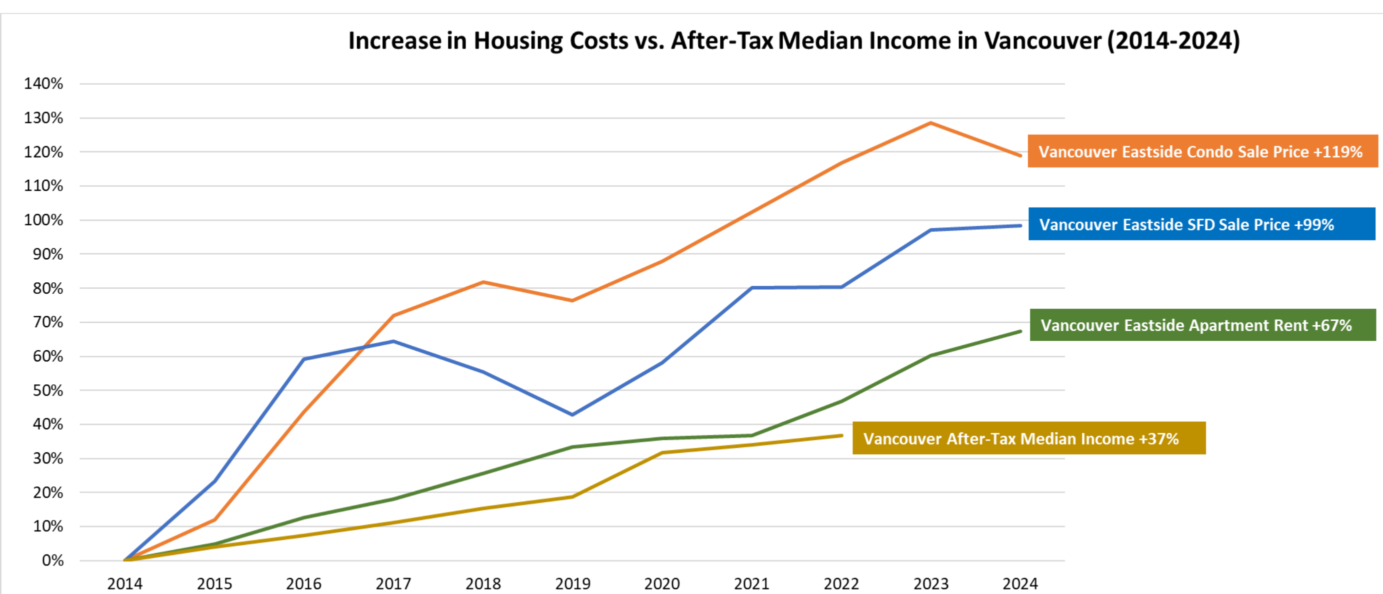
Qualitative questions

City of Vancouver May 2025

1. **Please provide a brief history of how housing in the community has been shaped by forces such as employment growth and economic development, transportation, and migration. Please include any long-term housing challenges the community has faced.**

Vancouver is the central city of the Metro Vancouver region, serving as a major hub for employment, trade, higher education, immigration, and tourism. Over the past 10 to 15 years, Vancouver has seen strong economic and population growth, driven by immigration and the region's attractive climate and natural assets. Vancouver is also known for its high and escalating home prices. New housing supply had been constrained by exclusionary zoning practices in place since early in the city's history and by policy shifts such as the suspension of federal housing programs in the 1980s. In 2018, 85% of the land in Vancouver was zoned for single-family houses. The limited supply, combined with sustained population growth (9.7% growth in population, 2011 to 2021, Census, Statistics Canada), have created a long-standing affordability issue.

For the past 30 years, vacancy rates of purpose-built rental units have been hovering around 1% (CMHC), pushing rents and home prices well ahead of incomes and reshaping who can live in the city. From 2014 to 2024, the benchmark price of a single detached home increased by 99%. As well, average rents in purpose-built rental increased by 67% over the same period (CMHC), see chart below.

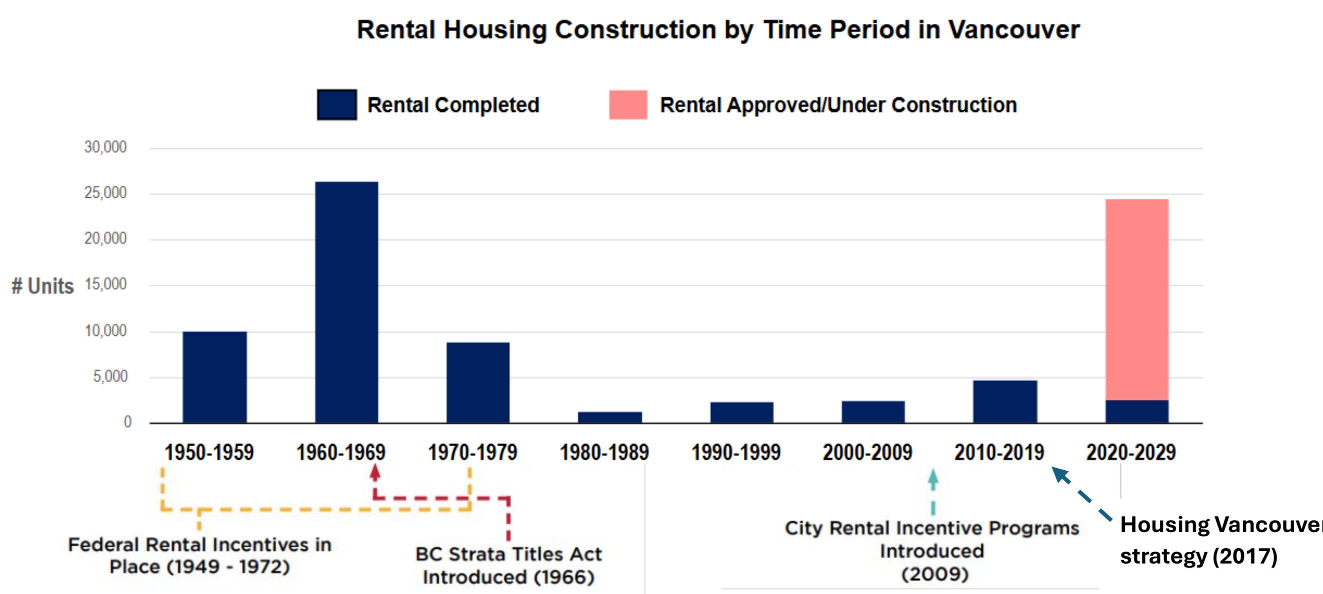


Source: CMHC, Real Estate Board of Greater Vancouver, T1FF

Rising home prices and rents remain a significant concern to many Vancouverites, who see affordability as a barrier to maintaining secure housing and staying in the city long-term. As a result, the city has seen an outflow of moderate and middle-income households to other municipalities in the region. An increase in homelessness has also been observed (with a 51% rise between 2013 and 2023) due to the complicated intersections of multiple factors including a destructive opioid crisis, deepening the vulnerability of those without stable housing.

Please see Housing Vancouver Strategy for more details (page 10-15).

In recent years, the City has approved many plans and policies aiming at boosting the construction of new rental housing, including the Housing Vancouver Strategy, 10-year housing targets, Secured Rental Policies, new area plans like the Broadway Plan. The City of Vancouver has also ended the exclusionary zoning practice by opening up single-family zones, first to duplexes in 2018 then to multiplexes up to 6 units in 2023 under the new R1-1 zone, to expand missing middle options. We are starting to see the results of these changes, as shown in the graph below, with record numbers of rental units recently approved and/or currently under construction. For the past decade, Vancouver has been a leader in the region in terms of housing delivery, particularly when it comes to delivering new rental housing (+7,779 units from 2015 to 2024, CMHC).



Source: *Purpose-built Rental Inventory, City of Vancouver*

2. **Please detail the existing municipal housing policy and regulatory context, including approved housing strategies, action plans and policies within Official Community Plans (OCPs).**

Vancouver does not have an OCP as it was not mandatory under the Vancouver Charter, contrary to other municipalities in BC governed by the Local Government Act. However, recent legislation from the Province of BC passed in 2024 requires the City to adopt a city-wide Official Development Plan (ODP) by June 2026. City Staff are currently in the drafting phase, ahead of a first round of public consultation.

Vancouver has had housing policies and strategies in place for decades. In 2017, Council passed the Housing Vancouver Strategy aiming to shift new housing toward the "Right Supply" to meet the needs of a diversity of incomes and building forms. Key priorities include shifting development toward rental and non-market housing, protect and retain the existing rental stock and support marginalized residents. Many actions have been taken since 2017 to implement the strategy: Empty Homes Tax, short-term rental regulation, secured rental enabling policy, family room policy (minimum 2 and 3-bedroom units in new multi-family buildings), Vancouver Affordable Housing Endowment Fund to develop non-market housing on city land, community housing grants, 10-year housing approvals targets, Development Cost Levy waivers for rental and social housing etc.

In June 2022, Council approved the Vancouver Plan, a city-wide long-range planning framework mapping out the city's trajectory until 2050. This is the baseline for the upcoming ODP. This plan is centered around three big ideas, the first being "Equitable housing and complete neighbourhoods" with the goal to allow more housing and opportunities for everyone to choose a livable neighbourhood that meets their needs, while ensuring all neighbourhoods have the amenities that matter most.

To further implementation of both Housing Vancouver and Vancouver Plan, Council adopted new 10-year targets and a new 3-year action plan in June 2024. The new target is to approve 83K net new homes. Planned actions include pre-zoning parts of the city for multi-family building and social housing, supporting the non-profit housing sector, partnerships with senior governments, UNDRIP housing actions, policies enabling more below-market rental, new land use area planning, implementing the SRO Investment Strategy etc. Through the various strategies and action plans, the City is utilizing all the tools at our disposal: regulation, funding/subsidies, advocacy.

Other regulatory context: The Province of BC has passed a number of housing-related legislations in the past 3 years include Housing Target Orders mandating minimum construction levels by 2028, Housing Needs Reports to ensure municipalities assess local needs to make appropriate decisions, ensuring that OCPs/ODPs and zoning by-laws hold sufficient capacity to meet long-term housing needs etc.

3. How have population changes in your community impacted your housing market?

The past decade has seen a significant increase in population (9.7%) and population density (9.5%) in the city of Vancouver (Census, Statistics Canada), which means increased demand for housing. Vancouver also hosts several post-secondary institutions that enroll large international student populations each year, adding extra rental demand in the city and the region.

With the strong demand and the inelastic supply side, new housing projects tend to be quickly absorbed, resulting in prolonged low vacancy rates (around 1%), high average rents and sale prices across the city. For the past decade, the costs between owning and renting an apartment has continued to widen as ownership costs grow (CMHC, 2023). The tight market also contributed to soaring land values.

In recent years, with the implementation of both Housing Vancouver and Vancouver Plan, a number of city policies (as mentioned above) have been enabling rental projects to be approved, resulting in significant increase in new constructions. Development of those projects however could be jeopardized by the current economic headwinds.

Changes in demand are also in process. In 2024, the federal government announced significant cut in international students study permits (IRCC,2024) and the overall immigration goals (IRCC, 2024) for the next 2-3 years. The slowdown in immigration, combined with other demand factors in the market, have jointly contributed to the ease of demand especially on the high end of the rental market, where we've seen vacancies rise in the past year (CMHC 2024 Rental Market Report) resulting in slower rent increases. However, demand for more affordable options is still extremely high and rents are still rising overall.

4. **How have employment and labour conditions (e.g., prevalence of precarious employment, temporary or seasonal workforces, reliance on less predictable sectors such as natural resources, agriculture, tourism, etc.) in your community impacted housing supply and demand?**

Vancouver is experiencing significant economic growth and diversification like the rest of the region. From being a primarily resource-based economy in the mid-20th century, Vancouver has shifted to a largely professional, knowledge and service-based economy. In contrast, over the same period, the percentage of jobs in the transportation, warehousing and wholesale category and the forestry, mining, utilities, construction and manufacturing category have declined as a share of all jobs in the city (City of Vancouver ELER, 2020) .

For more information, please see this summary fact sheet, page 171 of Report - Employment Lands & Economy Review.

Different income-levels, capacities, working schedules and modes are found within and across all sectors, contributing to various housing needs and affordability levels. The adjacency to BC's two largest post-secondary institutions: University of British Columbia and Simon Fraser University, as well as the concentration of global technology companies, have brought high-income and educated workforce to the city's largest and fastest growing sector of Professional, Scientific and Technical Services. Other largest and fastest growing sectors in Vancouver include Health Care, with generally high-income but wide variations between occupations, Retail with a lot of lower-income occupations, and Food and Accommodation Services also with a majority of lower-income occupations. This results in Vancouver having one of the worst income inequality in the country.

In a survey from the Employment Land and Economy Review (ELER), business owners identified housing unaffordability in Vancouver as one of the biggest obstacles for economic development. Businesses face challenges attracting and retaining workers as they cannot find or afford housing or childcare close to work.

5. **Please describe the housing needs and challenges of priority populations in your community, specifically for the 13 groups identified by CMHC:**

    1. **women and their children fleeing domestic violence;**

Domestic violence remains a leading cause of homelessness and housing precarity among women and their children. Twenty three percent (23%) of people counted in the 2023 homeless count identified as women, however, literature suggests this is a significant undercount, as women are more likely to remain in unsafe living conditions, including where they experience partner violence, when the only alternative is homelessness for themselves and their children.

The lack of affordable, and family friendly housing means women and children are left with few options when leaving a violent home. A confounding variable is the comparatively fewer women-specific shelter beds when compared to male-specific beds in Vancouver (approximately 17% are women specific beds while ~44% are men specific beds).

There are Transition Houses providing women and children fleeing domestic violence a safe and supportive space to stay but they do not meet the demand. Additionally, women and children fleeing violence benefit from housing designed specifically for their needs, which may include extra security features, in-building amenities such as secure outdoor play areas for their children and multiple exit avenues. This kind of affordable housing, especially with units large enough for families is rare and does not meet the demonstrated need.

2. **women-led households (especially single mothers);**

There were 18,645 families led by single mothers in Vancouver in the 2021 Census. They have a higher than average vulnerability to high living and housing costs as they tend have a higher prevalence of low-income (20.5% in Low-Income Measure – After Tax) than single fathers (17.5%) or the general population (13%). In 2021, 38% of single-parent families led by women spent more than 30% of their income on housing costs, compared to 33% for Vancouver households generally. About 12% of single mothers live in subsidized rental housing (compared to 6.6% for the general population), but with average rents in the private market increasing much faster than incomes (+69% over 10 years for 3-bedroom units), there is a real need for affordable options for low-income families, in particular for families led by single mothers.

Additionally, single-parent families generally (led by men or women) have a much higher rate of living in overcrowded dwellings (19.8% vs 7.8% for total households) indicating a need for more housing options suitable for families with children. However, only 1.6% of the purpose-built market rental stock offers 3 or more bedrooms (in CMHC's 2024 Rental Market Survey universe), more family-friendly options generally are needed.

3. **seniors 65+;**

Seniors represented 17% of the population of Vancouver in 2021, a share that has grown larger with each census and is forecast to keep growing, as more of the baby-boomer generation reaches retirement age. Seniors have a diverse range of housing needs, with many looking to age in place in their existing homes or communities, others looking for assisted living or other similar housing options with a range of supports. Seniors in rental housing, with low-incomes or in disproportionately impacted communities, may need different types of housing or housing-related supports as well, such as social housing, rent assistance or wheel-chair accessible units. In March 2024, BC Housing counted 1,998 seniors on its social housing waitlist (+41% in 5 years) and provided 3,203 Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters (SAFER) monthly payments. Additionally, the 2023 Homeless Count found that 21% of individuals experiencing homelessness in Vancouver were seniors, with almost half having experienced homelessness for the first as a senior.

In 2024, the City of Vancouver adopted a Seniors Housing Strategy to create safe, affordable, and supportive housing options for older adults, helping them to remain in their communities as their needs evolve.

4. **young adults aged 18-29;**

The Census 2021 recorded ~120,000 Vancouverites aged 18 to 29, or about 18% of the total population. Young adults mainly rent their homes (65%) with the share of renters increasing with age as young adults move out of their parent's homes or student housing. Young adults also have a higher likelihood of living with roommates (19% vs 10% for general population over 15). Among households headed by 15-29 year-olds, the total median income in 2020 was $70,000 (including COVID benefits and starting much lower for younger residents) and 40% of them paid over 30% of income on housing costs. Housing needs of young adults can vary widely based on the stage of life and income levels, family supports or ethno-cultural background. Vancouver is home to several major universities and multiple colleges and post-secondary schools. Vancouver is also a gateway for new immigrants, who tend to be younger than the average existing population, often students and young professional 20-34.

Young adults in Vancouver generally rely on market rental housing and face high rents and limited availabilities. Low vacancy rates in both primary and secondary markets are signs of the strong demand for market rental housing and pressure on the existing stock. Data on the relationship between rents and vacancy rates indicate that higher rental vacancy is associated with slower rent increases. Seventy-four percent of the purpose-built rental market stock was built before 1980 and is now reaching the end of its natural life or in need of major repairs; almost no new rental was added from 1980 to the late 2010s in Vancouver. With new policies in place over the past few years, rental construction in Vancouver is increasing, but efforts must be sustained and expanded to have meaningful effects on affordability and avoid repeating this pattern of rental shortage. The City is also planning on exploring a student housing policy to enable forms of housing dedicated to students, where they wouldn't have to compete with young professionals for the same homes.

Additionally, eight percent of the individuals experiencing homelessness identified in the 2023 Homeless Count Report were under the age of 25. Over a third of overall respondents indicated they were currently or previously had been in care of the ministry as a child or youth, indicating a need for better and longer-term supports for youth aging out of care.

5. **Indigenous peoples;**

Households with at least one person identifying as Indigenous represent 3.2% of Vancouver households. Indigenous households are overrepresented among renters, low-income households, categories of existing housing need (suitability, adequacy and shelter-cost-to-income ratio of over 30%) and residents experiencing homelessness (39% of the respondents of the 2023 Homeless Count). Indigenous households also need housing and related social or supportive services that are culturally appropriate and considerate of Canada's reconciliation efforts. The Aboriginal Housing Management Association "BC Urban, Rural and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy" published in January 2022 (updated in 2024) provides an assessment and details on the specific housing needs of Indigenous people, and outlines a roadmap to meet these needs. Continued collaboration between the City, the Musqueam, Squamish and Tsleil-Waututh Nations, AHMA and other Indigenous housing organizations will be required to understand and address this specific housing need.

6. **people with physical health or mobility challenges, and**
7. **people with developmental disabilities;**

Another form of supportive housing, special needs housing addresses the specific requirements for households with disabled persons, persons with cognitive impairment or health conditions impacting their ability to perform daily tasks. These households can have a variety of housing needs, ranging from an adapted or wheelchair accessible unit layout, to ongoing social and/or medical supports. Households where persons are unable to work and receiving Disability Assistance would also need homes affordable to their means. In March 2025, the Province provided disability assistance income support to over 156,000 people across BC (Source: Province of BC, Employment and Assistance Program open data). Special needs housing may also accommodate seniors or people with socio-psychological challenges as referenced in seniors and supportive housing categories. Vancouver currently requires at least 5% accessible units in new City-owned social housing.

Mental and physical health issue are also compounding factors of homelessness with 63% of the 2023 Homeless Count respondents reporting having two or more health concerns, including learning or cognitive impairment, physical disability, medical condition, mental health issue or addiction.

8. people dealing with mental health and addiction issues;

The compounding effects of trauma, mental health, racism, and an ongoing crisis of toxic drug supply add significant challenges for many Vancouver residents experiencing or at risk of homelessness. The 2023 Homeless Count found ~2,400 individuals experiencing homelessness in Vancouver, with almost two thirds indicating challenges with substance use. Access to safe, secure and affordable housing with necessary supports is critical to one's health and well-being. As of Q4 2024, Vancouver counted ~7,000 permanent supportive units, 54% of which were built over 40 years ago, suggesting a need for re-investment in the existing stock in the near future, on top of a need to expand supportive housing options in the city and region. Additional beds in treatment and recovery facilities are also a necessity to tackle this issue at scale.

9. veterans;

Around 3,700 residents of Vancouver are veterans, with just over half of them renting their home (53% compared to 49% for non-veterans). Across Metro Vancouver, veterans are slightly less likely to be in low-income status, with a prevalence of 10% compared to 11% in the general population of Metro Vancouver. 45% of veterans are 65 years old or over (vs 17.4% general population). 12.5% of the veteran population are identified as in Core Housing Need (comparable to general population), however veterans who rent their homes are more likely to be in Core Housing Need (26%). As with other population groups, housing needs may vary widely depending on age, household make-up, income and ethno-cultural background. For example, Veterans who are seniors and rent their home, and particularly those in low-income face the most important housing challenges, in line with other seniors in the same situation in Vancouver.

10. 2SLGBTQIA+;

Members of the 2SLGBTQIA+ community face multiple compounding barriers and challenges in maintaining housing. This is evidenced by their vastly disproportionate representation among the population of people experiencing homelessness in Vancouver. The 2023 Homeless Count identified 13% of respondents as 2SLGBTQIA+ compared to only 4% of the general population. Pathways into homelessness for this community include identity-based family rejection, gender-based violence, economic instability (due to employment discrimination), healthcare disparities, and child welfare system failures (2SLGBTQIA+ youth are particularly overrepresented among those counted homeless in Vancouver). Furthermore, this community experiences discrimination from landlords when seeking housing, and within the shelter system which generally offers only gender binary options.

11. racialized groups;

Racialized population groups may face specific housing challenges in Vancouver, due to systemic racism and discrimination, colonial heritage and intersection with immigration status, as many recent government-sponsored refugee intake have come from Middle Eastern countries, and young South Asian and Latin-American workers make up a significant segment of BC's temporary foreign workforce. Challenges may also vary widely among these very diverse groups with outcomes partly reflecting the impacts – past and present – of the factors cited above. For example, Chinese and South Asian households have higher than average homeownership (81% and 56%), while Arab, Latin American and Black people have lower than homeownership rates (less than 25%). Similar significant variation is observed with income levels, with some racialized groups more likely to experience higher rates of low-income status (e.g. Arab 44%, South Asian13%, compared to city average of 19%). More generally, households including people identifying with visible minority are more likely to live in overcrowded home, partially due to affordability challenges and partially due to cultural preferences to live in multigenerational which typical housing types in Vancouver may not accommodate easily. Visible minority households who rent their homes are also more likely that spend more than 30% of income on housing than the general population.

Factors such as discrimination, language barriers, historical trauma and colonization have a cumulative effect. They are also linked to homelessness and being unable to break the cycle of homelessness in Canadian society. The 2023 Homeless Count showed that some groups were overrepresented among homeless population compared to general population, e.g. 7% of respondents identified as Black compared to 1.3% of the total population. Because the realities experienced by individuals who are part of racialized and newcomer communities are different from that of other communities, it is important to recognize the unique challenges they may face (Homeless Hub).

Please see the Hogan's Alley Solutions Lab report for more details on the housing experiences and needs of the Black and African community in Vancouver.

12. recent immigrants (including refugees);

Vancouver is a gateway for newcomers to Canada, attracting young professionals, international students, extended families of immigrants already settled in the region and refugees. Generally, recent immigrants overwhelmingly rent their homes (about 80%) when they move to Vancouver, tend to be younger (20-35) and earn lower incomes on average than the non-immigrant population. However, similar to other population groups cited here, recent immigrants group a diversity of profiles, resulting in varying housing challenges and needs, at the intersection of other factors such as immigration pathway, ethno-cultural background, access to supports etc. For example, Vancouver has seen an increase in highly-skilled economic immigrants fueling the booming tech sector and earning high incomes, while also welcoming refugee groups from such places as Syria or Afghanistan.

Many recent immigrants, in particular refugees, face challenges in the housing market due to language barriers, unfamiliar cultural and social customs, discrimination by landlords, and most significantly poverty and lack of financial resources. These challenges are exacerbated in the Vancouver market, due to the already high cost of housing and living. Many refugee claimants to Canada also arrive having experienced trauma in their countries of origins and may live with the resulting mental health impacts.

British Columbia has seen a dramatic increase in refugee claimants in recent years. Reports from shelter providers in Vancouver note a significant rise in the proportion of shelter residents that are refugee claimants with some operators estimating more than half their shelter beds are filled by this group. Our own City of Vancouver Homelessness Services Outreach team has seen a considerable influx of refugee claimants experiencing homelessness and accessing their services to apply for income assistance, seek shelter, and find housing options. This change is now colliding with reductions in settlement services funding from the federal government, further limiting resources to help these groups.

13. **and people experiencing homelessness.**

The 2023 Point-in-Time Homeless Count identified 2,420 residents experiencing homelessness in Vancouver, a number that has grown by 34% over 10 years (2014-2023). This is a much faster rate of growth than the general population (+10% between 2011 and 2021). Point-in-Time counts are also known to be undercounts. Over the same period, the number of emergency and temporary shelter beds to meet the needs of individuals experiencing unsheltered homelessness has grown but does not meet the need in the community. Additional supportive units are also required to provide secure housing for residents facing homelessness or housing insecurity, existing SRO residents and those currently living in over 650 temporary modular housing units. Partnerships with senior governments and non-profits are required to fund and operate supportive housing.

6. **How has your community engaged with priority populations? Please provide an overview of the methodology and assumptions used to conduct engagement with priority groups. Please provide a description of who was engaged, the type of engagement that took place, and the nature of the engagement (e.g. interviews, consultations). If a private individual has been engaged, please anonymize and remove any identifying features from the narrative.**

City of Vancouver consults with the public regularly through various forms including postcard mail-outs, public meetings, open houses, office hours, online surveys through the ShapeYourCity platform, and through community groups. It also engages with stakeholders in the private, non-profit and public spheres through interviews, workshops and information sessions. All planning work goes through one or more public and stakeholder consultation/engagement phase to inform draft proposals.

The 2022 Housing Needs Report was based on collaboration with demography, economy and housing policy experts and academics as well as community engagement for past and concurrent work at the time, including Vancouver Plan, Broadway Plan and Secured Rental Policy. These work programs received thousands of completed surveys, and conducted hundreds of activities with the public (workshops, open houses, interviews, town halls etc.). For more details, see the corresponding council report (appendix D).

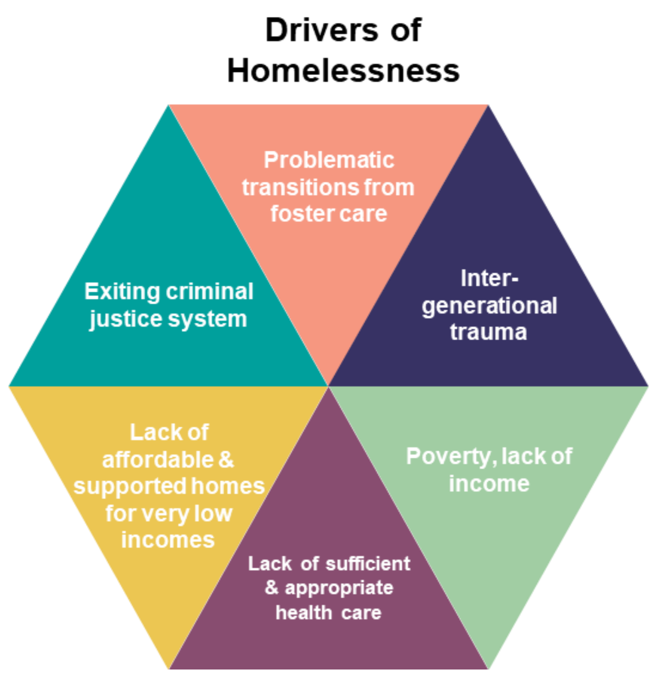
In every consultation effort, especially for housing policy involving vulnerable populations, the city pays extra attention to community groups that are not easy to reach through traditional methods like mail-outs or online surveys or public meetings, including the homeless population, newcomers, seniors, students, busy young families, etc. Policy materials are translated to the six most-spoken languages in the city other than English, or as needed depending on the specific communities the plan or policy is directly impacting. Community organizations working directly with these populations are a great way to gather feedback (e.g. joint events, guided discussion groups etc.).

7. **Please describe local factors that are believed to contribute to homelessness in your community (e.g., the closing of a mental health facility, high numbers of refugee claimants, etc.).**

The intersecting opioid and unaffordability crisis are major drivers for homelessness in Vancouver, and its growth over the past 10+ years. Vancouver has seen housing prices grow faster than incomes as a result of a shortage of supply and swelling demand. Housing became unaffordable for many, especially those on low or fixed-income. During that time, BC's shelter allowance under the income assistance program was kept stable for years at $375 per month (increased to $500 in 2024), an insufficient amount considering average rents in Vancouver were over $1100 in 2015 and currently average over $1900 per month in 2024.

Additionally, BC declared a state of public health emergency in 2016 following record numbers of drug-related deaths. Drug addictions and more generally mental health issues make it difficult for people to retain jobs and housing, and then to return to more stable lives once homeless. Some observers also consider the closure of the mental health focused Riverview Hospital in 2012 without adequate scaled-up alternative as a significant loss for the region. Most recently, the COVID-19 pandemic exacerbated homelessness and drug-related issues by overwhelming the public health system and pushing more people into precarity, despite significant public investment in emergency response.

A lack of permanent supportive and deeply-subsidized housing, rehabilitation facilities and transitional programs also contribute to the difficulty of handling these intersecting crises. In addition, there are currently almost 6,500 residents living in Single-Room Occupancy (SRO) building in Vancouver, originally built for workers around the turn of the 20th century. Now in dire conditions, they provide housing of last resort to the city's most vulnerable residents, but cannot offer stable and safe living and are in urgent need of replacing (see housing needs in question 5). Staff are actively engaged with the Governments of Canada and British Columbia, including the Ministry of Housing and BC Housing, on a high-level Memorandum of Understanding for an SRO Investment Strategy to align government and community partners to work towards replacing SROs with self-contained shelter rate social and supportive housing.



8. **Please identify temporary and emergency relief resources available for individuals experiencing homelessness in your community (e.g., number of shelter beds, resource centres, transitional beds available). If possible, please indicate whether capacity levels are commensurate with need.**

According to the 2023 Homeless Count there were over 2,400 individuals experiencing homelessness in Vancouver, and over 600 of them were not staying within a shelter. The current capacity level of shelter spaces in the city does not meet the growing need. There are over 1,400 shelter spaces spread across 35 shelters that are open 365 days a year, as well as seasonal responses during the winter months. Shelters range from 24/7 shelters to line-up shelters and may serve specific populations (i.e. self identified women, youth etc.). The majority of shelter beds are located within the Downtown Eastside and Downtown neighbourhoods of Vancouver.

Shelters serve as an important emergency response function to prevent people from falling into unsheltered homelessness. The replacement of our existing temporary shelters with permanent, purpose-built shelters is important as an interim measure while housing is being built to ensure we can continue to meet the need of the most marginalized residents. There is also a need for more day-time spaces for people to access during the day for resources and respite.

Individuals experiencing homelessness may be able to access resources at locations such as:

- Drop-in Centres operated through non-profits
- Libraries (21 locations throughout the city)
- Community Centres (24 located throughout the city) including Carnegie, Gathering Place, Evelynne Saller Centre with specific programing for individuals experiencing homelessness
- Neighbourhood Houses

A variety of transitional housing options exist in Vancouver targeted to specific groups experiencing or at-risk of homelessness including:

- Women and their children who have experienced violence (15 sites)
- Individuals who have a history of substance use and are now sober (4 sites)
- Youth 19 and older (6 sites)
- People with a mental illness or mental health condition (8 sites)
- People experiencing or at risk of homelessness (non-specific) (4 sites)

The above list is not comprehensive and does not include:

- A number of additional transitional housing programs that exist under our health authority (Vancouver Coastal Health) which support people experiencing or at risk of homelessness with various health conditions including mental health and substance use or that may need transitional housing upon hospital discharge associated with those and/or other health conditions
- Additional transitional housing for children (under age 19) experiencing or at risk of homelessness

Note some transitional housing for people experiencing or at risk of homelessness also serve more than one intersecting demographic within the above groupings.

Capacity for the transitional housing options above is inadequate considering the high demand for these critical services across all demographics.

9. **Some groups, including students, those in congregate housing, and temporary foreign workers, may be excluded from publicly available core housing need data sources. Communities are encouraged to use this section to describe the housing needs of these respective populations to ensure that all groups are represented in their HNR.**

SROs

One form of collective dwellings that is prevalent in Vancouver and not typically captured in census indicators are Single-Room Occupancy buildings (SROs). SROs are an important part of the housing continuum and are considered a housing of last resort before homelessness for many low-income residents. There are currently 146 open SRO buildings (~6,500 rooms), mostly located in the DTES and most of which are very old buildings (80 years or more). About half are privately-owned and half are government or non-profit owned. Most SRO residents are on income assistance and many experience complex health and/or substance use challenges. Many residents also report poor living conditions: pests, mold, no heat or hot water, broken elevators, and mobility challenges. Other residents report fear and intimidation and pressure to leave so landlord can raise rents in privately-owned SROs. The increasing number of fires and building closures, the Covid-19 pandemic and recent climate events (heat dome/ arctic snap) have all highlighted the urgent need to replace existing SROs with new, self contained, shelter rate social housing. The City, Province and federal government work collaboratively through the SRO Investment Strategy to accelerate replacement of SROs through portfolio-based approach. This collaborative effort will need to be sustained over a number of years to meaningfully address the needs of SRO residents while renewing and protecting the stock of low-income housing.

Student housing

Vancouver hosts or is adjacent to campuses of seven major post-secondary institutions which jointly has over 20,000 student headcounts (BC Post-Secondary Central Data Warehouse, 2024). Many students choose to live in Vancouver even though the campuses are in nearby municipalities. Vancouver also hosts over 140 Private Training Institutions (Private Training Institution Directory, 2025). These factors combined generate a significant housing need in the local rental market, considering most post-secondary students are renters.

The 2022 Housing Needs Report recognized students as part of the young-age renter group without sufficient income or savings to support homeownership, as well as an important composition of external migrants, especially international students. This helps the city to identify housing needs from this unique population group and indicates relevant policy directions.

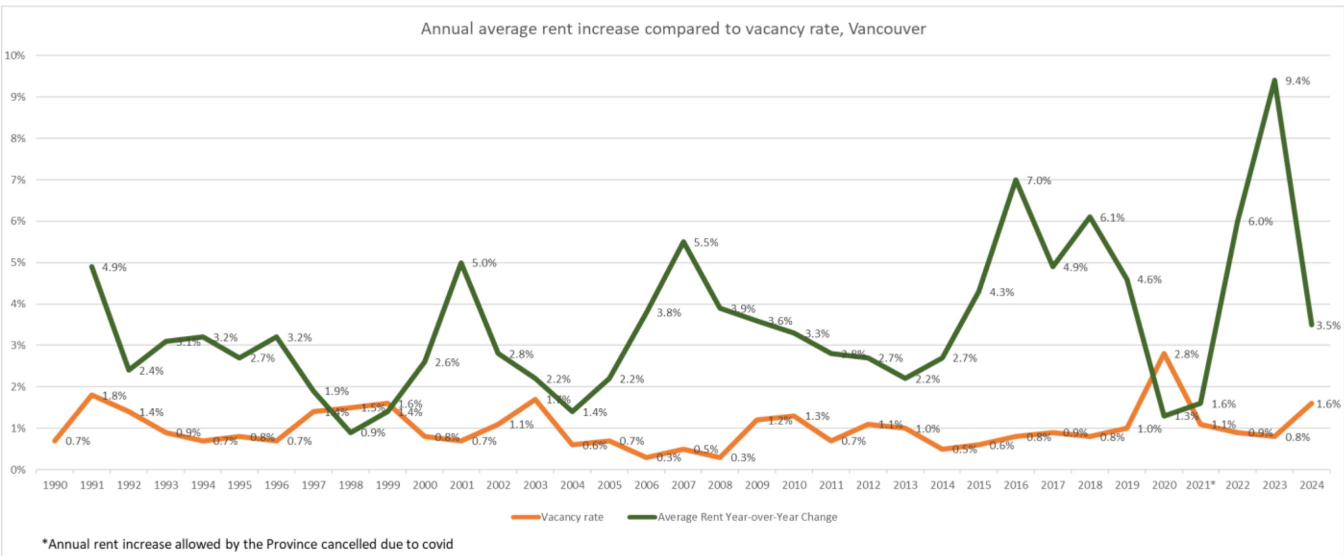
To address this need in the context of lack of affordable housing in general, City Council has directed staff to research post-secondary student profiles in the city and explore student housing strategy framework. This work has not started yet and may be influenced by changes in federal immigration goals and international students cap announced by the federal government, as well as housing/campus plans of some of the major local schools (e.g. University Endowment Lands at UBC, Vancouver City College...).

10. **How have average rents changed over time in your community? What factors (economic, social, national, local, etc.) have influenced these changes?**

Vancouver has witnessed an increase in average rents by 68% over the past decade. The rental supply has been constrained chronically due to barriers including the longstanding exclusionary zoning practices, regulation and policies favoring ownership housing, and the suspension of the federal MURB program. This meeting the rising demand due to population growth (mostly driven by immigration) has resulted in a low vacancy rate at round 1% for over 30 years, and rents increasing well ahead of wages.

Following the pandemic, the rising ownership costs due to high mortgage rates resulted in a decrease in sales, leading many prospective buyers to remain in the rental market. This added demand contributed to record-high rent levels in 2023 and 2024. At the same time, shifting social dynamics—particularly the growing number of individuals living alone—are also fueling housing demand. These pressures, combined with construction costs escalated in the post-pandemic period, pushing the break-even threshold for new rental developments and further constraining the supply of affordable housing.

11. How have vacancy rates changed over time? What factors have influenced this change?



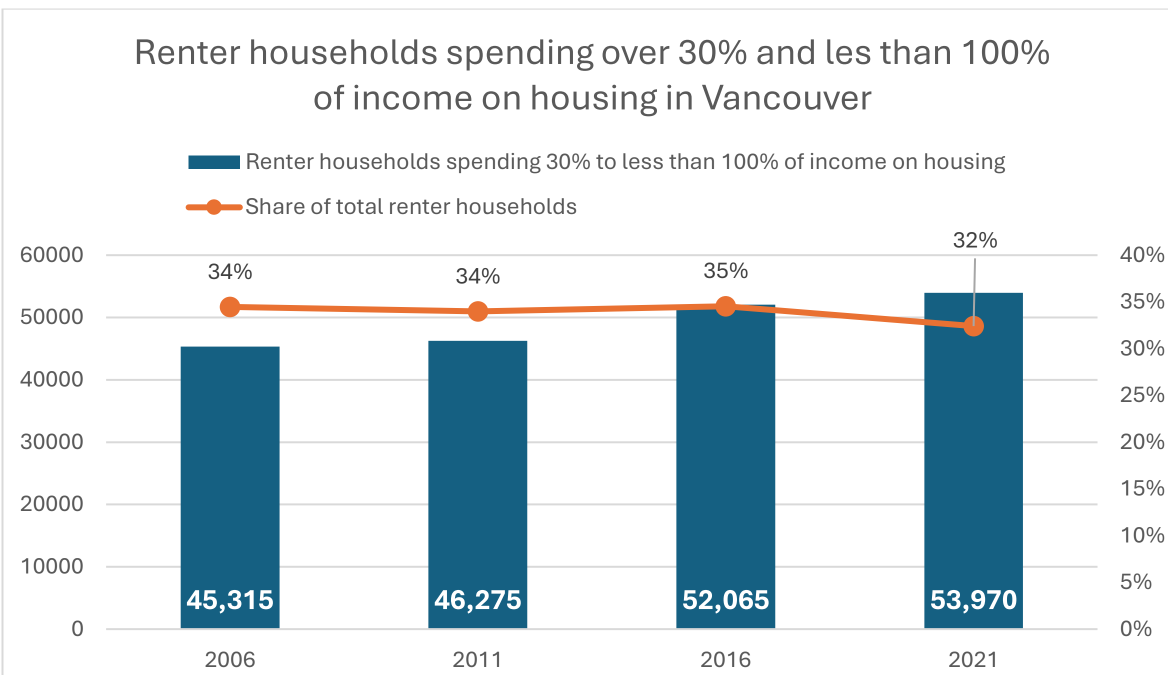
According to CMHC, the vacancy rate in the purpose-built rental stocks has hovered around 1% for the past 30+ years as shown in the orange line in the graph above. During the early stages of the COVID-19 pandemic, a temporary shift occurred as many residents left the city and movement through the rental market slowed, leading to a short-lived increase in the vacancy rate to 2.8%. However, this relief was brief, and market pressures soon returned to pre-pandemic levels.

In recent years, a noticeable shift toward rental housing in new construction has emerged, driven by City policies that incentive purpose-built rental through density bonus, waived Development Cost Levies (DCLs), and supportive community plans. This trend has been further reinforced by a slowdown in condo demand following the pandemic. As a result, the overall rental vacancy rate rose to 1.6% in 2024—the highest level in 20 years, excluding the brief pandemic-related spike. However, this increase is largely confined to newer, more expensive, high-end units, while vacancy rates for affordable rentals remain extremely tight, consistently below 1%.

12. How have trends in core housing need changed over time between both tenant and owner-occupied households?

In Vancouver, 54,200 households are considered to be in Core Housing Need in the Census 2021, up form 48,645 households in 2011. Almost ¾ of the households in CHN in 2021 are renters, a trend we can observe over several census periods. The share of owner households identified as in CHN has stayed stable over the past 4 census periods around 10-11%. In the Census 2021, the share of renter households in CHN went down from 29% in 2011 to 25.7% in 2021, despite absolute numbers increasing, likely due to a combination of rising income and influx of higher-income new renter households and effects of the COVID-19 benefits provided to many Canadians in 2020 which skewed the income-based indicators for that year, including in the Census.

Affordability is the number one reason households are identified in Core Housing Need, followed by unsuitability of dwellings (homes not large enough for the size and make-up of the household). To consider housing needs with a wider lens than the Core Housing Need indicator, the City has analyzed for the Housing Needs Report and target-setting work the wider housing standards, outside of the CHN status. In 2021, 1/3 of households were paying more than 30% of their income on rent, the majority of which were renters (64%). 24,000 households were living in unsuitable dwellings and about 19,000 households lived in dwellings in need of major repairs (below adequacy standard). Many reported falling below 2 or more of the standards. The needs assessment performed by the City in 2022 and 2024 have focused in particular on the intersection of these dynamics by looking specifically at renter households whose housing fall below the standards and who pay more than 50% of their income on housing.



For more information, please see the 2022 Housing Needs Report and the 10-year Housing Targets.

13. In the last five years, how many affordable units for low and very low-income households have been built, and how many have been lost? If data is not available, please describe how the loss of affordable housing units may have impacted your community.

Approximately 1,665 units for low (under BC's Housing Income Limits) and very-low (at the shelter component of BC income assistance) income households have been completed in Vancouver between 2020 and 2024 by non-profits and government partners. However, a portion of these units come through the renewal of existing subsidized housing, meaning some affordable housing was lost in order to build more new affordable housing. Units rented at these levels of affordability require substantial subsidies to be built and operated, making them all the more difficult to replace and expand.

Additionally, as mentioned in previous questions, Vancouver has a number of Single-Room Occupancy residential hotels and buildings which offer housing of last resort for the most vulnerable populations in Vancouver. These buildings are protected by the SRA by-law, Privately-owned SROs are being removed from the City's low-income housing stock at a rapid rate due to two intensifying trends: disinvestment in the most affordable SRO buildings, leading to unsafe conditions and building closures, and rapidly escalating rents in the better maintained buildings, both of which are contributing to the ongoing homelessness crisis in Vancouver. Please see the 2023 Low-Income Housing Survey for more information.

The City has put policies and regulations in place to try and protect existing affordable rental housing, such as the Rental Housing Stock Official Development Plan, the Tenant and Relocation and Protection Policy, the SRA by-law and most recently SRA vacancy control by-law. The City is also working on zoning changes that facilitate building housing on sites that do not currently have affordable housing (e.g. Vancouver's social housing initiative).

14. **Please describe available affordable and community housing options and needs/gaps currently in your community. Examples can include:**

Vancouver has ~31,500 non-profit housing units: 17,400 social housing, 7,600 supportive housing and 6,300 co-op units. About 30% of the stock is over 50 years old and is or will soon be in need of renewal. Around 29% of the units are geared specifically towards seniors, and another 29% are family-oriented units.

1. **Are any of these affordable housing units accessible or specifically designed for seniors, including long-term care and assisted living?**

For new developments, the City has a requirement that all new social and supportive housing have at least 5%of the units be wheelchair accessible. Additionally, the Vancouver Building By-law has specific adaptability requirements for 100% of new multifamily buildings.

In 2024, the City adopted a Seniors Housing Strategy, developed with input from community partners like Vancouver Coastal Health and BC Housing. A rezoning policy was also adopted to enable more seniors-specific housing across Vancouver including private options with supports and opportunities for 100% non-profit and government-owned subsidized community care and assisted living, as well as social housing for seniors. During planning of this strategy, it was identified that there is a shortage of ~300 subsidized long-term care beds and 90 subsidized assisted living units in 2025, a number expected to grow to a shortfall of ~1,500 beds and 350 assisted living units within 10 years if nothing is done to address the issue (Vancouver Coastal Health).

2. **Does your municipality provide rent supplements or other assistance programs that deepen affordability for households?**

Affordability in new social and supportive housing buildings is secured by housing agreements (covenants on title signed between the building owner and the city), with a minimum of 30% of the units required to be affordable to households earning less than the Housing Income Limits set by Province (current ones as of January 2023, to be updated summer 2025). In some areas of the City like the Downtown Eastside, or for buildings that received funding from the Province, affordability requirements may be deepened. Most social housing providers set their units' rent at 30% of the tenants' income (rent geared to income).

The City does not directly provide rent supplements as this fall sunder Provincial jurisdiction. However, the City's outreach team dispenses rent supplements for homeless clients with funding coming from the Province. Outside of income assistance programs, the Province has two main rent supplements schemes: the Rental Assistance Program and the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters.

3. **Is your community in need of supportive housing units with wrap-around supports, such as for those with disabilities?**

More supportive and deeply-subsidized housing is needed to address the housing needs of individuals suffering from mental health and addiction issues, transitioning out of homelessness, in need of specific supports to help with daily life.

Please see question 5 "people dealing with mental health and addiction issues", "people with physical health or mobility challenge & people with developmental disabilities" as well as "people experiencing homelessness".

15. **This final section aims to determine how your community anticipates using the results and findings captured in the HNR to inform long-term planning, as well as concrete actions that can address identified needs. Please use the following questions to describe how those linkages will be made.**

    1. **How will this HNR inform your OCP, housing policies and/or actions going forward? For example, if the HNR identifies specific needs in your community across the housing spectrum – such as housing needed for priority populations, units for large households in denser form factors, more diverse structural types such as missing middle housing, or more affordable and higher-density housing near transit – how could actions and changes in policy and planning help address those needs?**

Under recent legislation from the Province, the future ODP currently in development as well as the Zoning and Development Bylaw are required to enable sufficient capacity to meet the estimate of units needed over 20 years (per Provincial methodology, see attached provincial Housing Needs Report 2024 Amendment). The ODP must also include policies to address needs identified in the nine needs statement included in the Housing Needs Report.

Generally, housing needs always inform new policies or land use planning to ensure they are meaningful and appropriate. For example, staff are currently working on pre-zoning large parts of the city to make it easier to build social housing, on implementing the SRO replacement strategy, on pre-zoning some areas close to rapid transit to facilitate housing delivery etc. Please see the attached Housing Needs Report 2024 Amendment for a list of actions to address housing needs.

2. **How will data collected through the HNR help direct those plans and policies as they aim to improve housing locally and regionally, and how will this intersect with major development patterns, growth management strategies, as well as master plans and capital plans that guide infrastructure investments?**

Housing Needs Assessment data will support city and regional strategies to develop more housing around transit, local retail hubs etc. The general assessment of housing units needed, under the methodology prescribed by the Province, is on a city-wide level, providing flexibility for the City to plan growth framework that work with the local context and fit in with the wider regional land use planning framework, Metro Vancouver's Regional Growth Strategy.

Capital and infrastructure planning are informed by policy directions in both city-wide and area planning work (e.g. Vancouver Official Development Plan), at the neighbourhood, city-wide and regional levels, directions which are based on needs assessment and projections for housing, jobs and all the supporting infrastructure listed below (e.g. water and sewer, parks, community centres, climate resilience etc.). However, the current Financing Growth framework may not be sufficient to keep up with all the housing supply measures advanced by the City and both senior governments, leaving infrastructure planning and especially infrastructure funding to either play catch-up, or to be a limiting factor in these plans and their outcomes (e.g. insufficient sewer infrastructure in low-density areas to support densification). This is especially important as the shift in housing development to emphasize delivery of rental and non-market housing will likely result in proportionately less development revenue to support delivery of infrastructure and other public amenities. While the Province's recent Housing Statutes (Development Financing) Amendment Act (Bill 46) presents an opportunity for the City to modernize and optimize its Financing Growth framework and tools, it is important to note that the available tools for municipalities to support growth are limited and outdated. As a result of these factors, Council may need to make difficult decisions regarding allocation of limited development revenue to ensure core municipal infrastructure and community amenity needs are prioritized.

3. **Based on the findings of this HNR, and particularly the projected housing needs, please describe any infrastructure gaps that may potentially limit the ability of your community to support forecasted growth unless they are addressed, or that could facilitate more complete and resilient communities. This can relate to any type of enabling infrastructure needed for housing, including fixed and non-fixed assets, as well as social, community or natural infrastructure. Communities are encouraged to illustrate how infrastructure gaps impact their housing systems and growth. Examples of types of enabling infrastructure may include:**

The City of Vancouver faces significant infrastructure gaps that, without senior government partnerships and/or new funding tools, will make it challenging to deliver the housing required to support forecasted growth and foster more resilient communities. Densification, land use changes and climate change are all creating an urgent need to systematically upgrade essential infrastructure as Vancouver continues to grow. Upgrades include potable water, wastewater and stormwater systems, fire protection, parks, childcare, and community facilities. These upgrades require substantial capital investments to both renew ageing assets and expand capacity to accommodate increasing demand.

i. Public Transit

Vancouver has one of the busiest transit systems in North America. Unlike in most cities, transit demand far exceeds capacity, but ongoing funding challenges have limited service improvements. If stable, long-term funding can be found, strategic investments will increase transit capacity, helping us meet existing and future demand, and enabling us to reach City, regional, and provincial transportation targets. Translink, the regional authority managing the public transit network, has warned of funding challenges potentially impacting service levels and capacity to expand service as population growth if not addressed. Additionally, the Province and the Federal government are both encouraging municipalities to maximize returns on investment in public transit by increasing housing and population density around it. This implies that population growth and public transit management go hand in hand, one cannot be done without the other.

For example, the 99-bus line serving the Broadway Corridor, intersecting with 3 subway lines and connecting the University of British Columbia to the rest of the city and region, is the most utilized bus line in North America with millions of boardings per year. Now a new subway line is currently under construction and an area plan (the Broadway Plan) is enabling growth and density of population, job and housing around the new rapid transit. However, it doesn't go to UBC, the 99-bus line will continue to operate between the end of the SkyTrain at Arbutus St and UBC. An extension to UBC will be subject to future planning and substantial financial investment in partnership with senior government but will be key to ensure better connection to and from one of the leading Canadian universities and allow densification of currently low-density areas along the way. This extension will for instance be a key driver for the Jericho Lands proposal, which plans to bring ~13,000 new homes, 24,000 residents and 3,000 new jobs to the area over the next 25-30 years.

ii. Water/Wastewater Systems

Two of the most expensive infrastructure challenges related to growth are the separation and expansion of the City's combined stormwater and sewage systems, and stormwater infrastructure upgrades. Many of Vancouver's older single-family neighbourhoods, where density could be substantially increased, still rely on combined sewer pipes that are not sized to support high-density development. Additionally, stormwater upgrades are required to help manage increasing impervious surfaces, as well as the more frequent and intense rainfall events caused by climate change. While the City continues to advance sewer and stormwater capacity upgrades, the increasing tax/fee impacts on residents and businesses (including those levied by Metro Vancouver e.g. for the $10 billion Iona Wastewater Treatment Plant project to support secondary treatment and renewal upgrades) is becoming unsustainable, which will impact the pace of infrastructure upgrades to support new housing.

Historically, growth has been largely funded through development contributions, including Development Cost Levies (DCLs), Community Amenity Contributions (CACs), and Density Bonusing (DBZ). However, with the mandate to build more rental and affordable housing, the traditional "growth pays for growth" funding model is increasingly unworkable. Non-market housing developments cannot realistically contribute to funding infrastructure expansion, compounding financial strain on existing funding mechanisms.

Additionally, cumulative impacts on housing delivery caused by development cost charges—including those levied by Metro Vancouver and TransLink—need to be factored in. To incentivize the right supply of housing, the City has been waiving DCLs on rental housing projects. Further financial support measures, such as DCL and CAC deferrals, are being considered to keep market rental projects viable. While essential for maintaining development viability, these measures will further impact the City's ability to fund critical growth-supporting infrastructure.

The City's Broadway Plan, approved in 2022, is an example of the infrastructure costs required to accommodate high-density growth. The Plan enables additional heights and densities for secured rental and below-market rental housing around the future Broadway Subway. The Broadway Plan outlines a ~$1 billion investment in utilities infrastructure (covering potable water, sewer, drainage, and green infrastructure) to support projected growth of 59,995 residents over the next 30 years.

	Current (2016 Census)	10yr	30yr
		Total	Total
Population	82,716	117,252	142,711
Jobs	69,483	112,684	132,811
Sewer and Drainage Upgrades (Including Green Rainwater Infrastructure)*	n/a	$218.1M	$763.9M
Potable Water Upgrades*	n/a	$2.4M	$11.4M

* Infrastructure built with the 30 year growth costs will be sized for the ultimate servicing of the plan area with a larger population, per the City's typical practice.

iii. Schools, Parks, Community or Recreational Centres

Supporting housing growth also requires expanding or building new community centres and parks. Many of Vancouver's recreation spaces and facilities (24 community centres and over 230 parks) were developed during a rapid period of growth in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s. Many of these facilities are now in need of repair or renewal to serve rapidly growing populations in densifying areas. Several facilities are already over capacity in neighbourhoods that have accommodated significant growth.

The renewal of existing facilities is largely funded through property taxes, as only the growth-related portion is eligible for development contributions. High costs of land, materials, and construction have created an environment in which the City is unable to keep up with both facility renewal and new facility creation.

Below are two examples of the costs to expand and renew community facilities:

Vancouver Aquatic Centre - Total Capital Plan: $170M

In 2019, the Vancouver Aquatic Centre, built in 1974, was identified as nearing the end of its lifespan. The plan for its renewal and expansion includes a leisure pool, 8 lane - 25m lap pool and dive tank.

Marpole Oakridge Community Centre - Total Capital Plan: $72.5M

Renewal (29,000 sq. ft) and expansion (11,000 sq. ft) of the original Centre built in 1949. The new Centre will serve the growing population in the Marpole Neighbourhood, which experienced 43% growth from 1981 to 2011. In 2019, Marpole was home to approximately 25,000 residents with an expected population increase of 52% (12,500 residents) by 2041. The new Centre will serve residents with a childcare centre, after-school care, gym, sensory room, and multi-purpose spaces for sports, arts, and cultural events.

iv. Climate Risks/Impacts

Vancouver is anticipating the impacts of climate change through the Climate Change Adaptation Strategy (CCAS), in addition to efforts reducing Vancouver's climate pollution (Climate Emergency Action Plan and Zero Emissions Plan). Local projections show that, by 2050, Vancouver can expect extreme heat events with warmer summers and more frequent heatwaves; poorer air quality due to more frequent wildfire smoke and ground level ozone; more frequent and longer drought episodes; shifting precipitation pattern bringing more frequent and intense rainfall events; and sea level rise by as much as one meter in 2100, worsened by king tides and storms. As an example, the year 2021 saw both a heat dome in July and a severe atmospheric river in November provoking flooding and mudslides throughout the region. King tides in 2021 and 2022 have cause major damage to the Stanley Park seawall, destroyed the Jericho Pier and damaged Kitsilano Pool. Wildfires and droughts are already recurring events every year from May to September.

The CCAS, adopted in 2012 and updated every 5 years, aims to reduce Vancouver's risk to climate impacts, and protect people, ecosystems, infrastructure, and services from changes we can't avoid. Considering the scale of the challenge facing Vancouver and the current funding limitations, the City will need support and partnerships with senior government and industry stakeholder to ensure Vancouver is resilient to anticipated climate changes and continues to offer a safe and healthy quality of life to its residents, as population grows. The City is currently working on an update of its climate Plans with the goal to prioritize actions with the biggest impacts and centering on equity.