

## Appendix 1 – Qualitative Questionnaire

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.

Over the last couple of decades, Victoria has enjoyed a period of strong population and employment growth. Service sector jobs (e.g., tourism, government/public sector, education and technology) have enjoyed growth over this time driving demand for housing. The stable economic climate combined with high quality of life has led to high rates of regional migration from other parts of Canada as well as international immigration to the city.

Victoria also has more low-income households compared to other municipalities in the Capital Region and one of the highest levels of Core Housing Need in Canada. Some of the reasons for this include a larger proportion of single person households, a higher number of senior households on fixed incomes, and a healthy stock of affordable market and non-market rental buildings where households with lower incomes live.

Victoria has observed a significant increase in latent housing demand, or unmet housing need, arising from the underinvestment in social housing between 1990-2010 and a pivot away from purpose-built rental housing in favour of strata apartments for many years.

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

Victoria has adopted an ambitious policy and regulatory framework to address the city's housing challenges and is actively undertaking a number of initiatives and incentives to further support the delivery of affordable homes.

- In 2016, the City adopted The Victoria Housing Strategy. The strategy, now nearing the end of its [second phase](#) (2019 – 2025), commits to 41 specific actions to address the housing crisis according to five strategic goals:
  - Improve affordability, stability, and choice for renters
  - Encourage new housing supply for all residents
  - Encourage a range of housing options to meet the needs of all residents
  - Improve housing target tracking and improve housing policies to optimize impact
  - Try bold, innovative ideas to achieve new results
- The strategy is supported by a robust suite of policies, initiatives, and incentives directly targeting the [creation of affordable rental housing](#) and [support for tenants](#) including:
  - Housing Needs Assessment and Interim Housing Needs Report
  - Fast Track for Affordable Housing
  - Affordable housing partnerships on City-owned sites
  - Inclusionary Housing and Community Amenity Policy
  - Affordable Rental Housing Revitalization Tax Exemption Bylaw
  - Development Cost Charge Grant Policy

- Victoria Housing Reserve Fund
- Rental Property Standards of Maintenance Bylaw
- Tenant Assistance Policy
- Family Housing Policy and Advisory Design Guidelines
- Short-term Rental Regulation Bylaw
- Victoria's OCP recognizes housing as a basic human need and that all people deserve housing that is safe, stable and affordable and that supports personal and public health. The Housing and Homelessness section of the OCP collectively address five broad objectives:
  - 13 (a) That housing development that responds to future demand is facilitated through land use policies and practices.
  - 13 (b) That housing affordability is enabled for housing types across the housing spectrum, particularly for people in core housing need.
  - 13 (c) That the existing supply of rental housing is expanded through regeneration.
  - 13 (d) That a wide range of housing choice is available within neighbourhoods to support a diverse, inclusive and multigenerational community.
  - 13 (e) That partnerships enable stable housing with appropriate support services.

City of Victoria Official Community Plan Section 13: Housing And Homelessness
- The City is currently undertaking to update the [Official Community Plan \(OCP\)](#) and Zoning Bylaw. The draft OCP emphasizes meaningful solutions to addressing housing need by unlocking opportunities for infill housing in all residential areas and supports more intensive infill up to six storeys in areas of the city that are close to commercial nodes, transit and major amenities.

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

Between 2011 and 2021 Victoria's population grew by 13%, leading to a dramatic increase in housing costs, and a chronically low vacancy rate. Current growth estimates indicate that Victoria will need 26,604 new units of housing by 2041 to address the housing crisis. The City's recent and expected population growth continues to drive demand for a range of housing types, specifically rental housing, non-market affordable rental housing as well as suitable housing to retain families.

### 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?

Overall, Victoria's economy is bolstered by a diversity of employment opportunities across the spectrum of low to moderate wages in both seasonal and permanent positions, and has seen moderate employment growth. The employment sectors that represent the moderate to high paying employment include the health care sector (14%), the public administration sector (11%), and other professional, scientific and technical services (10%). There are also a significant number of workers in the retail sector (12%) as well as accommodation and food and beverage services (12%) that offer more seasonal and low- to moderate-paying employment.

Employers struggle to recruit qualified workers due to high housing costs. Labour shortages particularly impact small local businesses such as those in the retail, food and beverage, and tourism sectors who find it challenging to attract and retain employees. Other challenges for

downtown employers include local community safety issues, which also decrease demand in some instances for multi-family housing in the Downtown Core. The shortage of qualified workers also affects the construction industry by increasing overall costs and potential delays, which in turn increases the price of new housing supply. While the majority of the City's residents (65%) work in Victoria, more workforce housing is needed to help retain workers and achieve sustainability and mobility goals.

5) Please describe the housing needs and challenges of priority populations in your community, specifically for the 13 groups identified by CMHC: women and their children fleeing domestic violence; women-led households (especially single mothers); seniors 65+; young adults aged 18-29; Indigenous peoples; people with physical health or mobility challenges; people with developmental disabilities; people dealing with mental health and addiction issues; veterans; 2SLGBTQIA+; racialized groups; recent immigrants (including refugees); and people experiencing homelessness.

- In 2021, Victoria partnered with University of British Columbia's *Housing Assessment Resource Tools* (HART) project to better identify the housing needs and challenges of priority populations in the community. Through [this work](#), single mother-led, senior-led, Indigenous, and refugee claimant households were all identified as groups with significantly higher levels of Core Housing Need than the Community average. Specifically, the majority of these households are spending more than 30% of their income on shelter highlighting the need for non-market housing to support these households.

Percentage of Households in Core Housing Need by Priority Population, 2021  
Victoria CY (CSD, BC)



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.

- The [All Our Voices Engagement Framework](#) puts inclusion and equity at the heart of all City engagement processes to ensure that priority populations have what they need to meaningfully and fully participate.
- The City of Victoria routinely engages with priority population through a variety of city-supported committees and more targeted engagement to gather lived experience and insights on specific topics. All engagement opportunities are designed to address accessibility challenges including:
  - Opportunities to participate virtually or through traditional methods such as in person events, email, letter or phone.
  - All written materials designed to be read by those with grade 6 - 8 reading levels
  - Digital materials that can be translated through text-to-speech software
  - Hard copies of all surveys are available upon request.
  - All in-person events are held in 100% accessible facilities
  - In-person events include childcare support programs, wherever possible
- Examples of ongoing and recent engagement with priority populations include:
  - Advisory committees
    - Accessibility Advisory Committee
    - City of Victoria Youth Council
    - Welcoming City Advisory Committee
    - International Decade for People of African Descent Advisory Committee
  - OCP Engagement
    - In addition to extensive in-person and online engagement conducted for the ongoing OCP update, focus group engagement sessions were held in order to hear from underrepresented priority populations. These sessions targeted individuals experiencing homelessness, those in core housing need, youth, young families, and renters.

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.).

- Homelessness has been a persistent issue in Victoria, with the number of people staying in emergency shelters and camping in public spaces steadily increasing over the past decade. The most significant factor contributing to homelessness in the city is a lack of affordable housing: the long-standing high cost of housing, low vacancy rates, waitlists for subsidized and supportive housing, and inadequate incomes make finding and keeping housing one can afford an increasing challenge.
- According to the [2023 Victoria Point-in-Time \(PiT\) Count and Homeless Needs Survey](#), the top five reasons for housing loss are:
  1. Insufficient income for housing (23.7%)
  2. Substance use issue (17%)
  3. Eviction (14.5%)
  4. Conflict with spouse/partner (11.5%)
  5. Unfit/unsafe housing condition (9.9%)

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.

- Shelter Beds: 350 beds at 9 locations
- Transitional Beds: 669
- BC Housing Extreme Weather (EWR) Response Spaces: 50
- City of Victoria Emergency Winter Weather Response Spaces: 175

According to the 2023 Point-in-Time count, Victoria is missing at least 650 emergency shelter or transitional housing spaces for individuals experiencing homelessness. Lack of services provided in neighbouring municipalities has strained service providers in Victoria and the populations they support. The sustained operation of sheltering services requires significant staffing resources, specialized training, ongoing support services, appropriate facilities, and resourcing which far exceeds current levels.

The City is also challenged in terms of having the staff capacity required to maintain public property and the public realm in areas where the unhoused community are temporarily sheltering or congregating. This requires staff time and resources from a range of groups including; bylaw services, public works (civic services, street cleaning, operations etc.), and the parks team to deal with public complaints and ensure these areas are not unsafe.

The City also supports the [Greater Victoria Housing Security Rent Bank](#) which is an important homelessness prevention tool for households at risk of eviction due to short-term financial emergencies. The Rent Bank provides a combination of case worker support, service navigation, and one-time loans to help pay for necessities like rent, security or pet deposits, utilities, or groceries.

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.

The population projections in Victoria's Housing Needs Report and OCP Goalpost on long-term housing need are based on BC Stats population data. In 2022, BC Stats revised methodologies that capture population growth at the municipal level, with updated data inputs to better account for economic migration and temporary residents.

Additionally, Victoria incorporates existing housing needs that have gone unmet, referred to as latent demand, into housing needs projections. Latent demand is reflected in trends and indicators like historically low rental vacancy rates, overcrowded homes and suppressed household formation, and helps to better reflect the housing needs of the populations described above.

Generally, students and temporary foreign worker housing demand is addressed through different types of rental housing in the form of the primary and secondary rental markets. The City has taken steps to promote rental housing over the last 10 years through process improvements and other financial supports (tax incentives, CAC exemption, etc.). More recently, the Provincial Government (BC Housing) has partnered with local post-secondary institutions to deliver a significant amount of on-campus student housing to address the pent-up demand for student housing and relieve pressure in the regional rental housing market.

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

Victoria has the second most expensive rental market in Canada, with high demand driving rent growth, despite a historical influx of new rental units in recent years. The high rents for new units contributed to increasing the city's average rents. Market rents are expected to continue increasing as long as the vacancy rate remains below a healthy rate of 3%.

### Change in Average Rent

Year	2019-2020	2020-2021	2021-2022	2022-2023	2023-2024
<b>Average change in overall rent</b>	4.2%	2.7%	10.2%	6.8%	6.2%

Generally, the City experienced very high levels of demand driven by strong population growth and latent demand arising from historical underinvestment in purpose-built rental housing and non-market rental housing in previous decades.

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

Due in part to the limited development of new rental housing stock in the 1990s and early 2000s, the City of Victoria's vacancy rate steadily decreased until recently. As a result of significant efforts to reverse this trend and address the housing crisis, the City has seen steady growth in the number of new rental homes added to the rental housing market in recent years. This year, despite achieving the highest rental vacancy rate since 2013, the market remains below a healthy rate of between three to five per cent, which is needed to help moderate rental price.

### Rental Housing Vacancy

Year	2020	2021	2022	2023	2024
<b>Rental Vacancy Rate</b>	2.3%	1.0%	1.4%	1.6%	2.5%
<b>Secondary Rental Market Vacancy Rate</b>	0.1%	0.0%	0.0%	0.1%	0.1%

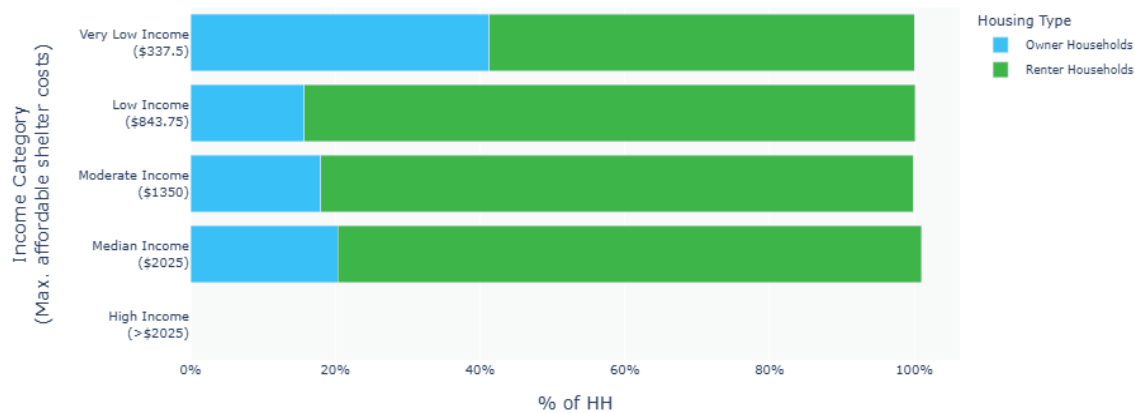
### 12) How have trends in core housing need changed over time between both tenant and owner-occupied households?

Approximately one fifth (19.4%) of Victoria's households are in Core Housing Need with 83% of those households being renters. While the percentage of households in Core Housing Need has seen modest improvements over time, steep rent increases have contributed to the continued overrepresentation of renters in this area. These rent increases are felt most acutely by households on fixed incomes and single person households, such as seniors, low-income families, single parents and low wage workers.

### Core Housing Need by Tenure

Year	2011	2016	2021
<b>Owner</b>	8.4%	8.3%	7.4%
<b>Renter</b>	30.5%	30.3%	26.8%
<b>Total</b>	21.2%	21%	19.4%

Percentage of Households in Core Housing Need, by Income Category and HH Type, 2021 Victoria CY (CSD, BC)



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.

Between 2019 and 2024, 314 homes for low-income and 518 homes for very low-income households were approved by Council (832 total).

The loss of purpose-built non-market housing generally only occurs when non-market housing is being redeveloped, resulting in an appreciable net-gain of affordable units. However, the sale of older apartment buildings in Greater Victoria by institutional investors, has increased in recent years and has had a significant impact on the city's naturally occurring affordable market rental stock.

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

- Are any of these affordable housing units accessible or specifically designed for seniors, including long-term care and assisted living?
- Does your municipality provide rent supplements or other assistance programs that deepen affordability for households?
- Is your community in need of supportive housing units with wrap-around supports, such as for those with disabilities?

At the end of 2024, there were 865 individuals on the supportive housing waitlist and 1,252 households on the waitlist for subsidized housing in Victoria:

- 288 Persons with Disabilities
- 290 families
- 497 seniors
- 122 single (i.e., singles and couples under age 55)
- 55 requiring wheelchair accessible units

There remains a strong need for more affordable and non-market housing that serves very low- to low-income households in Victoria. Additionally, the revitalization of the aging existing affordable and



market rental housing stock (repair, maintenance, and capital replacement) is urgently needed in order to preserve these much-needed homes.

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.

- a) 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?

Victoria's Interim Housing Needs Report informed the Urban Structure Concept and the policies and targets pertaining to housing for the current OCP Update. After considering estimates of latent demand the City estimates the overall 30-year housing need (between 2021 and 2050) to be approximately 34,600 units.

Ensuring the OCP has enough capacity to “catch-up” and “keep-up” with housing needs is foundational to a sustainable city. However, to build on the foundation the OCP provides, the Victoria Housing Strategy helps to encourage new housing that is diverse and inclusive and meets the needs of all ages, abilities, incomes, lifestyles, and household types.

The City's performance against established housing targets that provide a high-level estimate of the number, form, tenure and affordability of housing needed at different points along the housing continuum is tracked through the [Housing Strategy Annual Review report](#).

Informed by growth projections and the recent housing needs report, the draft OCP takes a systems perspective to weave together a diverse set of strategies that will help meet the diverse social, cultural, ecological, and infrastructure needs. The draft OCP and supporting policy efforts thoughtfully integrate addressing urgent housing need with important livability and infrastructure objectives such as; community infrastructure (plazas, community spaces and parks), active transportation and mobility options, and public realm, as well as the necessary framework of supporting underground infrastructure, roads, and green / blue assets.

- b) 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?

Data collected through the HNR has informed the establishment of the new draft OCP 5-, 20-, and 30-year housing targets for total new homes, new rental homes, and homes suitable for families. These growth targets are supported comprehensive zoning regulations, urban form and mobility policies, climate policies, strong green space and community amenity plans, and the continued growth of economic development and it's supporting infrastructure.



- c) 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:

- i Public Transit
- ii Water/Wastewater Systems
- iii Roads and Bridges
- iv Schools, Parks, Community or Recreational Centres
- v Broadband Service and Access
- vi Climate Risks/Impacts

Without comprehensive and sustained investments into enabling infrastructure to support new housing, the City will continue to be challenged to serve our growing population and meet housing-need targets.

Projected climate change impacts, including increased frequency and duration of extreme heat and precipitation events along with coastal sea level rise and storm surge, reinforce the need for proactive investments in engineered and natural infrastructure solutions alongside new housing supply.

The City of Victoria has identified several key areas for investment over the next decade that are essential for the ability of our community to support forecasted growth, including:

- Underground infrastructure (including water, storm, and sanitary sewers; digital communications)
- Surface infrastructure (including roads, pathways, bridges)
- Natural infrastructure (including coastlines, parks, creeks, trees)
- Community services (including public transit, community safety and well-being, emergency management, fire and police services)
- Public building infrastructure (including civic works and service operation facilities)
- Community infrastructure (community, cultural and recreation centres and libraries)

The City's draft OCP provides guidance on mechanisms, approaches and priorities for delivering community infrastructure through private sector redevelopment and city-led capital projects.

Leveraging local tax dollars with senior government investments and private contributions to deliver the types of infrastructure described above will enable more housing to be built and serviced while achieving other established policy priorities. Examples include:

- Connected parks and green spaces that provide affordable and enriching access to nature and recreational opportunities for residents of all ages and abilities.
- Integrated rainwater management practices that improve water quality and increase potential for cultural practices including shellfish harvesting by the Songhees Nation and Xwsepsum Nation.

- Distributed arts and cultural spaces that contribute to social and economic development and showcase heritage and multi-culturalism.
- Modern, accessible and low-carbon public buildings that enable innovation in public service delivery to better manage risks.
- Accessible, multi-modal transportation solutions that improve transportation affordability and reduce greenhouse gas emissions.
- Integrated disaster risk reduction features and emergency management systems that help our communities prepare for, respond to and recover from disasters.