Housing Needs Report

Town of Comox

August 2024

Prepared by:

In collaboration with

TOWN OF COMOX

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1 Executive Summary

In 2020, the Town of Comox released its initial Housing Needs Report in response to new legislation and the changing housing market landscape. Similar to many other Canadian communities, Comox has been grappling with escalating housing pressures, exemplified by rapidly rising housing costs.

Recognizing the dynamic nature of the housing market, the availability of new data (particularly, 2021 Census data), and the necessity for updated housing reports, the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD), within which Comox is situated, commissioned this work. It serves as an update to the previously utilized data while incorporating new analyses. The ultimate aim is to provide an overview of the current and expected local housing situation.

1.1 Quick Facts

Demography

- The community's total population and households grew between 2016 and 2021 (5% and 6%, respectively). Similar trajectories continued from then to 2023 and should continue (though slightly slower) over the next two decades.

- Growth has historically been greatest among senior age cohorts, and should continue to be a major contributor, though support should come from other age groups over the foreseeable future.

- Relatedly, the community experienced greatest household family type Census-to-Census growth among non-census families (i.e., single persons or roommate households – which can include older seniors).

Housing

- About half of Comox's dwelling stock was built in the 1990s or prior. Construction activity has not matched this expansion since, though there was a noticeable jump between 2006 and 2010, and a large of apartment units completed in 2022.

- About 77% of local households own their dwelling; 23% rent.

- The median home price rose 46% between 2019 and 2022 – slightly higher than the 42% increase from 2016 to 2019. During approximately the same time (2015 to 2020), incomes rose 32% (which is likely higher than in actuality due to the influence of pandemic relief payments).

- An estimated 62 local units were used as commercial short-term rentals in 2023.

Housing need

- About 7% of local households were in Core Housing Need in 2021. The prevalence of need is higher among renters, single persons, and lone parents.

- Overall, the Town of Comox may need an additional 3,358 housing units to be built by 2041 to meet anticipated demand and mitigate market imbalances – based on the Province's HNR Method.

- Projections anticipate that about 1,036 units could be needed by 2026. Most of the demand should be addressed by market housing, though there exists a forecasted need to supply below-market and deeply affordable alternatives, across both owner- and renter-occupied housing.

1.2 Key Areas of Local Need

Affordable housing

According to the Census, unaffordability remains the largest contributor to Core Housing Need, with about 17% of local households spending more than 30% of their total income on shelter in 2021. Since then, the gap between income purchasing power and actual house prices has widened, indicating a worsening of conditions post-Census.

Income categorizations based on HART methodologies show that approximately 17% of households earned a "very low" or "low" income in 2021. While many in these categories may already be shelter-secure (e.g., retired households with fully paid-off mortgages), this percentage represents a significant portion of the population that may be especially vulnerable to affordability challenges.

Projection work suggests that the community may require 8,3,358 additional housing units by 2041. Of these, at least 806 should be intentionally built at below-market or deeply affordable prices (most of which would be rentals).

Rental housing

Homeownership is becoming increasingly unaffordable for the median household, forcing many who would prefer to own a home to rent instead. Although renting is also experiencing a significant rise in costs, it often remains the more cost-effective option between the two tenures.

Local data shows no change in the share of renter-occupied dwellings, remaining at 23% of households between 2016 and 2021. Broader vacancy trends in the CVRD's urban areas and across BC suggest that the demand for rental housing should continue to grow – as rental vacancy rates continue to decrease, there is a rise in demand for rental housing relative to available supply.

Projection calculations suggest continued rental demand, anticipating an increase over the next two decades. Approximately 41% of all dwellings are expected to be rental units.

Special needs housing

Although data on waitlists and core housing need is not specific to community members with special needs, national disability statistics show that overall rates of disability increased from 22.3% to 27.0% between the 2017 and 2022 surveys. Much of this increase is attributed to the growth of the senior population.

However, increases were also observed among youth and working-age adults, with significant rises in mental health, learning, and developmental challenges. This indicates a broad need for improved access to supportive housing options that cater to various specific support needs.

Housing for seniors

According to BC projections, the community can anticipate that senior-led households overall may be a consistent driver of dwelling demand growth over the next two decades. Total senior-led households may increase 32% (2,815 to 3,710) by 2041 and could represent 44% of total households.

In 2022, the Canadian disability rate among the senior population was 40%, an increase of 3 percentage points since the last survey in 2017. A significant portion of this rate is related to mobility issues, and the likelihood of disability increases with age.

Given the anticipated growth in senior-led households and the elevated disability rate within this group, increased senior housing interventions are necessary. These could include ensuring senior facilities are widely permitted locally, further modifying building standards to support aging in place, or developing and improving existing senior services and programs.

While many solutions fall outside the direct influence of local government, there may be opportunities to partner with other levels of government and local or regional organizations.

Housing for families

Families, particularly couples, are often the most capable of owning or renting a dwelling due to the higher likelihood of dual-income households. This makes families among the most competitive households in the housing market.

Projections suggest that young family households (led by a 25- to 44-year old) may be on the rise of the next two decades, possibly rising 51% and making up 25% of the 2041 total. Consequently, there should be a sustained demand for family-specific dwellings (e.g., those with more bedrooms or larger floor areas).

Shelters to address homelessness

Comox is not the primary provider of units and programs related to CVRD homelessness, though it does offer some supports – mostly in the form of supplements. National and

provincial trends show that overall homelessness is on the rise, with hidden homelessness likely increasing concurrently.

Using HART's income categorization methodology, about 1% of local households (85) were identified as earning "very low" incomes in 2021 (a conservative estimate). These individuals / households are the most vulnerable to changes in their housing circumstances and are the most likely to require emergency housing interventions.

Addressing homelessness locally is ideal, as it allows residents to remain within their community. However, doing so can be challenging. Despite these difficulties, local governments should stay engaged in regional homelessness strategies to help coordinate and determine the allocation of emergency housing services and programs.

Proximity to transportation

Shelter costs are just one of many expenses that individuals and households must manage, and the ability to afford one often depends on the ability to afford another. Access to multiple transportation options is crucial because it offers low-cost alternatives, improves access to jobs and essential services, and enhances overall quality of life.

Comox's Official Community Plan (OCP) takes a comprehensive approach to transportation, recognizing the importance of private vehicle use while encouraging alternative modes of transportation. The OCP's objectives and policies prioritize pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit in public realm improvements, aiming to reduce dependence on private vehicles and increase transportation options through appropriate multi-modal infrastructure.

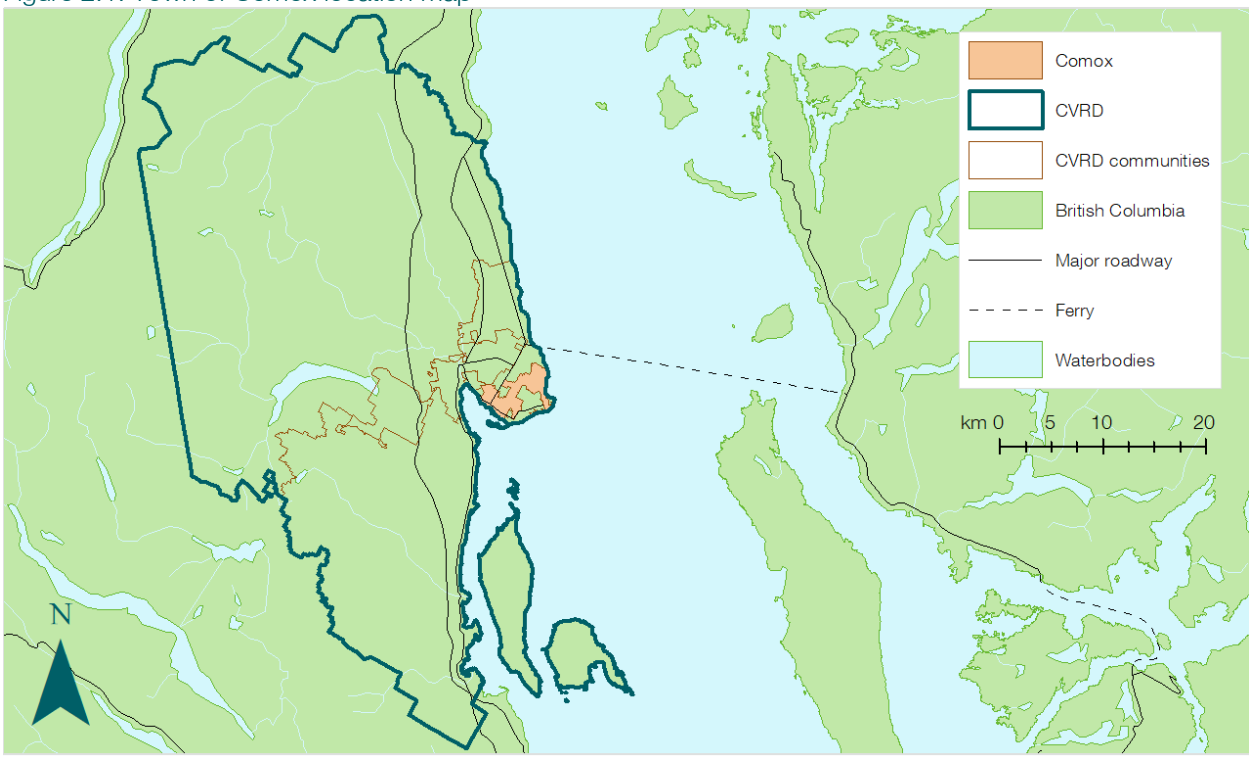
While these comprehensive policies do exist, it is crucial that there is continued implementation of the community objectives. Transportation choices mean there are more equitable options for accessing not only alternative forms of mobility, but for accessing more neighbourhoods and their housing. Furthermore, it supports more compact land use patterns and thus limits sprawl.

2 Project Context

2.1 Study Area

This report's scope is centred on the Town of Comox, which falls within the jurisdictional boundaries of the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD). All data will refer to Comox unless otherwise identified in the text. Figure 2.1 illustrates Comox's location in relation to adjacent communities and the CVRD.

Figure 2.1: Town of Comox location map



Source: BC Geo Warehouse, Statistics Canada

2.2 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to develop an understanding of the current and anticipated housing conditions for the Town of Comox. Overall, a housing needs report (HNR) provides an overview of existing gaps to illuminate the opportunities that might exist to expand upon or create new partnerships critical to the provision of housing.

A thorough assessment of housing need is a vital foundation for the support of future initiatives. The data gathered and insights generated by a needs report can inform land use and social planning initiatives at local levels, as well as provide hard evidence in support of advocacy to more senior levels of government. They are also a useful resource for those engaged in or entering the housing sector.

While an important document for directing policy, an HNR is also a requirement for municipalities, as set out in BC's *Local Government Act* and the Housing Needs Reports

Regulation, as amended by Bill 44. Since provincial regulations dictate what data HNRs must include, this report covers many of the same topics as the 2020 report. However, there are notable differences between the two reports:

1) This report intentionally keeps its written content concise compared to the 2020 document to enhance data clarity and overall readability. The appendix contains a comprehensive collection of data tables for those interested in all the data required by the province for local governments to gather.

2) Like the 2020 HNR, the current version includes a regional report as a supplement. Additional details are available within that report, being the 2024 Comox Valley Regional District Housing Needs Report.

3) This report was prepared without stakeholder consultation or a resident survey. Its sole purpose was to update quantitative data gathered from secondary sources like Statistics Canada, CMHC, and various BC Government departments.

2.3 Methodology

2.3.1 Sources

This report refers to several pieces of data that together contribute to contextualizing the housing conditions experienced by the residents of the Town of Comox. The following is a list of the secondary quantitative data sources (i.e., information collected by other organizations and used for this report):

- AirDNA™
- BC Assessment
- British Columbia Statistics
- Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC)
- Statistics Canada
- UBC Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART)

2.3.2 Data limitations

At a high-level, an analysis cannot be exact without individualized person or household datasets. Relatedly, many of the datasets relied upon in this report are based on samples of the population. While statistically sound to use, sample results may not equate to the entire population. Accordingly, analysis work should not be viewed as precise, but as ballpark figures.

This is especially true for projection work, no matter the source. Any attempt to estimate the change in a variable without knowing future conditions is inherently flawed. In other words, the data collected and analysed represents a time stamp that is subject to a set of economic, social, and environmental conditions that may not hold true in the future. Any outputs from

such exercises should be regarded as guiding posts and should be re-calculated regularly to input new information and course correct if required.

AirDNA™

Proprietary process

AirDNA™ employs a proprietary scraping process to extract short-term rental information from platforms like AirBnB and VRBO. The methodology details are not disclosed due to being a private company. While assumed to be appropriate and accurate, a detailed explanation is unavailable.

BC Assessment

Grouped Information

BC Assessment provides assessment roll spreadsheets for communities across British Columbia for the years 2005/2006 through 2022/2023. Assessment roll information is not on an individual property level; rather, similar types of properties are grouped together in "folios" based on several factors, such as property type and dwelling type. These folio groups also mean that assessment and sale price values reflect averages, making it more difficult to express community level average and median values.

Unit Counts

For purpose-built rental properties, unit totals within folios are sometimes represented by the value "20+," limiting accurate summation. This category is less relevant for owned lots.

British Columbia Statistics

Urban focus

BC Statistics helpfully consolidates most data related to complete Housing Needs Reports, like the new homes registry, non-market housing, post-secondary student housing, and homeless count sources. The database primarily offers data for urban areas, potentially excluding unincorporated or rural data, or suppressing data for confidentiality. This is often due to urban communities having greater data quality and quantity.

Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC)

Reporting landscape

CMHC conducts its Rental Market Survey (RMS) every year in October to estimate the relative strengths in the rental market. The survey collects samples of market rent levels, turnover and vacancy unit data for all sampled structures. The survey only applies to **primary rental markets**, which are those urban areas with populations of 10,000 and more. The survey targets only privately initiated rental structures with at least three rental units, which have been on the market for at least three months. CMHC **only** collects rental data for the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, or the Courtenay Census Agglomeration (CA).

Statistics Canada

Area & data suppression

Some geographic areas are too small to report, resulting in the deletion of information. Suppression can occur due to data quality or technical reasons, limiting the use of granular

Census geographies. This was not a particular concern for this study, but limited the ability to use granular Census geographies (specifically, Dissemination Areas – see **Definitions**).

Random rounding

Numbers are randomly rounded to multiples of "5" or "10," leading to potential discrepancies when summed or grouped. Percentages derived from rounded data may not accurately reflect true percentages, introducing a level of approximation. Furthermore, the sums of percentages may not equal 100%.

UBC Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART)

Sourced from Statistics Canada

While HART offers detailed methodologies for their analysis, they do rely on Statistics Canada datasets to perform them. Consequently, the same limitations as stated above apply for HART analysis results.

2.3.3 Quantitative research & assumptions

Demographic projection methodology

For municipalities, the BC government's "Population Extrapolation for Organizational Planning with Less Error" (P.E.O.P.L.E.) provides historical population estimates and projections by gender and age cohorts. Readers interested in the outputs or the methodology can access both from this webpage.

Like for population, the BC government offers historical household estimates and household projections for municipalities. Readers interested in the outputs or the methodology can access both from this webpage.

Unit demand methodology

Total unit demand calculations follow the requirements set out by the HNR Method Technical Guidance document, which aggregates six components of need together (discussed in more detail in the **Analysis** section) to determine how many dwellings may be needed over the next 5 and 20 years. The methodology can be found here.

Affordability analysis

At several points, this document estimates what the reasonable income, rent, or purchase price may be for a particular household. To do so we use the following assumptions:

- Amortization period = 25 years
- Payment frequency = monthly
- Interest rate = the average weekly rate for 5-year fixed mortgage for the noted year
- Down payment = 10%
- CMHC insurance = 3.10%
- Income used for shelter expenses = 30%
- Ancillary shelter costs (i.e., utilities, insurance, taxes) = 25%
- Direct shelter costs (for a mortgage payment or rent) = 1 – ancillary = 75%

2.3.4 Qualitative research

In order to meet legislative requirements of an interim report produced by January 1, 2025, this report considers only the quantitative perspective of local housing circumstances. No specific housing needs report engagement was performed.

2.4 Housing Action

The Town of Comox received its last Housing Needs Report iteration in 2020, just before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic triggered significant changes in housing markets both locally and nationally, making it challenging for local governments to keep pace with these shifts. Despite these difficulties, Comox has been diligently working on its housing policies to better align with the new and anticipated housing realities. As a result, various strategic changes have been implemented, which are now reflected in the community's guiding land use planning documents.

The following is a summary of the referred to changes, inclusive of the document / initiative the change is tied to, the outcomes of the changes, anticipated timelines, and how the changes align along the Housing Wheelhouse.

3 Interim Update Requirements

The first legislative requirements for housing needs reports were introduced in 2019, mandating local governments to collect data, analyze trends, and present reports detailing current and anticipated housing needs. The Town of Comox published its first Housing Needs Report in 2020.

In 2023, amendments to the Local Government Act and Vancouver Charter introduced new requirements for these reports. Local governments must now use a standardized methodology to identify 5- and 20-year housing needs in their communities and update their official community plans and zoning bylaws to accommodate the projected number of units. In addition, communities must also provide an overview of the work performed to address housing need since their last HNR and must provide a statement about the need for housing in close proximity to transportation.

3.1.1 Number of units required to meet current and anticipated need

The following is the result of analysis using the province prescribed HNR Method. Note that method results use 2021 as the base year. For additional analysis, this report also makes reference to an estimated projection if the base year were 2024. For more information, please refer to the Analysis section.

Table 3-1: HNR Method base year versus current year estimates

Description	5-year	20-year
Total demand from 2021 base year	1,037	3,358
Estimated total demand from current year (2024)	1,154	3,393

3.1.2 Statement about the need for housing in close proximity to transportation infrastructure that supports alternate forms of transportation

Shelter costs are just one of many expenses that individuals and households must manage, and the ability to afford one often depends on the ability to afford another. Access to multiple transportation options is crucial because it offers low-cost alternatives, improves access to jobs and essential services, and enhances overall quality of life.

Comox's Official Community Plan (OCP) takes a comprehensive approach to transportation, recognizing the importance of private vehicle use while encouraging alternative modes of transportation. The OCP's objectives and policies prioritize pedestrians, cyclists, and public transit in public realm improvements, aiming to reduce dependence on private vehicles and increase transportation options through appropriate multi-modal infrastructure.

While these comprehensive policies do exist, it is crucial that there is continued implementation of the community objectives. Transportation choices mean there are more equitable options for accessing not only alternative forms of mobility, but for accessing more neighbourhoods and their housing. Furthermore, it supports more compact land use patterns and thus limits sprawl.

3.1.3 Actions taken by the community since their last Housing Needs Report

The Town of Comox received its last Housing Needs Report iteration in 2020, just before the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic. The pandemic triggered significant changes in housing markets both locally and nationally, making it challenging for local governments to keep pace with these shifts. Despite these difficulties, the municipality has been diligently working on its housing policies to better align with the new and anticipated housing realities. As a result, various strategic changes have been implemented, which are now reflected in the community's guiding land use planning documents.

The following is a summary of strategy, policy, and regulatory changes occurring since the initial HNR, inclusive of the document / initiative the change is tied to, the description of the changes, the status of the changes, and how the changes align along the Housing Wheelhouse.

Initiative	Action	Status	Housing Wheelhouse alignment
Response to Bill 44 – Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act[1]	Amend zoning regulations to increase permitted density in areas currently zoned for single-family or duplex housing, relax minimum parking requirements, and pre-zone land to meet housing needs.	June 2024	Market housing
	Update housing needs assessment to identify anticipated housing needs for the next 5 and 20 years/	January 2025	All housing
	Update Official Community Plan to identify areas for residential development to meet anticipated housing needs for the next 20 years.	December 2026	All housing

Initiative	Priority	Status	Housing Wheelhouse alignment
Town of Comox Strategic Priorities 2022 – 2026[2]	Create the conditions for a diversity of housing options.	2022 to 2026	Market housing

[1] Legislative Assembly of the Province of British Columbia. (2023, 4th Session, 42nd Parliament, First Reading). Bill 44 – 2023 Housing Statutes (Residential Development) Amendment Act, 2023. https://www.bclaws.gov.bc.ca/civix/document/id/bills/billsprevious/4th42nd:gov44-1

[2] Town of Comox. (2022). Strategic Priorities 2022-2026. https://www.comox.ca/sites/default/files/2023-10/FINAL%20DRAFT%20Strategic%20Plan%20-%20after%20Oct%2011%20SPC.pdf

Initiative	Priority	Status	Housing Wheelhouse alignment
	Update the OCP through community consultation to develop a vision for the future growth of Comox.		All housing
	Apply for and complete the Complete Community grant program to support future planning decision making.		All housing
	Apply for and complete the CMHC Housing Accelerator grant program to accelerate the Town's modernization process and secure funding for other community benefits.		All housing
	Ensure that each new major development adds positively to the community through appropriate amenity contributions and / or other community benefits		All housing
	Require greenway and connectivity networks in new developments.		All housing
	Complete a Development Cost Charges (DCC) review to ensure equity and fairness in cost allocation in new developments.		All housing
	Create a community amenity policy for developments.		All housing

Initiative	Action	Status	Housing Wheelhouse alignment
Housing Accelerator Fund Actions	Improvement and modernization of development application procedures.	2023 to 2026	All housing
	Updating subdivision and servicing bylaws.		

Initiative	Action	Status	Housing Wheelhouse alignment
	Undertaking a comprehensive Official Community Plan (OCP) review to accommodate evolving housing needs.		
	Simplifying the process for homeowners to obtain approvals for secondary suites, enhancing housing affordability and availability.		
	Diversifying the range of housing options		
Complete Communities Growth Assessment	Analysis of Comox's Housing, Daily Needs, Transportation, and Infrastructure assets to assess how well residents are served across the community, with the goal of having all services within a compact and energy-efficient 15-minute distance.	Underway	All housing

4 Community Profile

4.1 Population

4.1.1 Historical & anticipated population

British Columbia's population grew by over 7% between 2016 and 2021 (according to BC Government estimates), driven by economic opportunities, immigration, and the quality of life. This growth has heightened the demand for housing, infrastructure, and services, presenting both opportunities and challenges for the province as it adapts to a changing demographic landscape.

In contrast, BC's estimates show that the Town of Comox grew 5% during the same period.[3] Table 4-1 provides a summary of the historical population changes across different age cohorts based on the aforementioned estimates and offers insights into anticipated population figures over the next two decades. Figure 4.1 illustrates the changing total population from 2016 and 2021 (BC estimates for Census years) and to 2026 and 2041 (BC projections).

Table 4-1: Historical (BC Gov't estimates) and anticipated population by age cohort (BC Gov't projections)

	Total	0 to 14	15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 to 84	85+
Historical population							
2016 population	14,480	2,005	1,370	2,795	4,245	3,405	655
2021 population	15,265	2,105	1,390	3,015	4,020	3,995	740
% change ('16-'21)	+5%	+5%	+1%	+8%	-5%	+17%	+13%
Anticipated population							
2026 population	16,080	2,010	1,545	3,370	3,815	4,525	815
% change ('21-'26)	+5%	-5%	+11%	+12%	-5%	+13%	+10%
2041 population	18,595	2,275	1,330	4,360	4,520	4,680	1,430
% change ('26-'41)	+16%	+13%	-14%	+29%	+18%	+3%	+75%
% change ('21-'41)	+22%	+8%	-4%	+45%	+12%	+17%	+93%

Source: BC P.E.O.P.L.E estimates, BC P.E.O.P.L.E projections

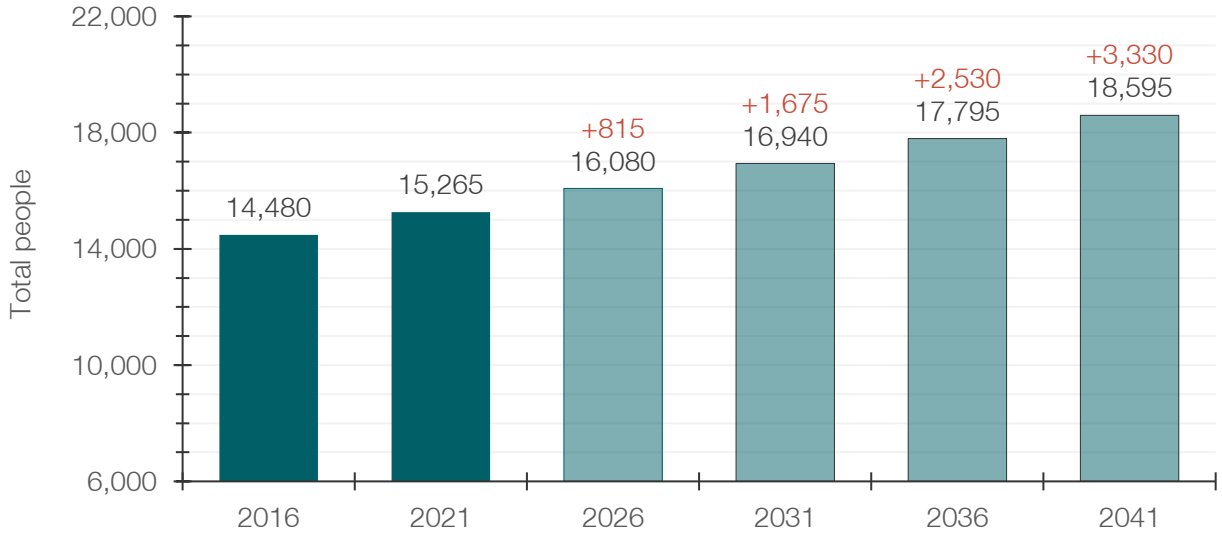
- The province estimates that the community population was home to 15,265 in 2021, up from 14,480 in 2016.
- Historically, the highest rates of growth have largely been among senior (65+) populations. This growth should continue over the next two decades, but is likely to be outpaced by growth among 25- to 44-year-olds.

[3] Note that Statistics Canada's 2021 Census reports a 6% increase in the Town of Comox's population. The difference between the BC estimates (largely based on Statistics Canada data) and the Census is that the former is adjusted to account for possible undercounting during the Census' enumeration.

- The total population may grow 22% from 2021 to 2041, reaching about 18,595 people according to BC calculations. The rate of five-year interval growth should remain about the same over the two decades.

- In other words, about 3,330 more people may call Comox home by 2041.

Figure 4.1: Historical and anticipated population, net anticipated change of population since 2021



Source: BC P.E.O.P.L.E estimates, BC P.E.O.P.L.E projections

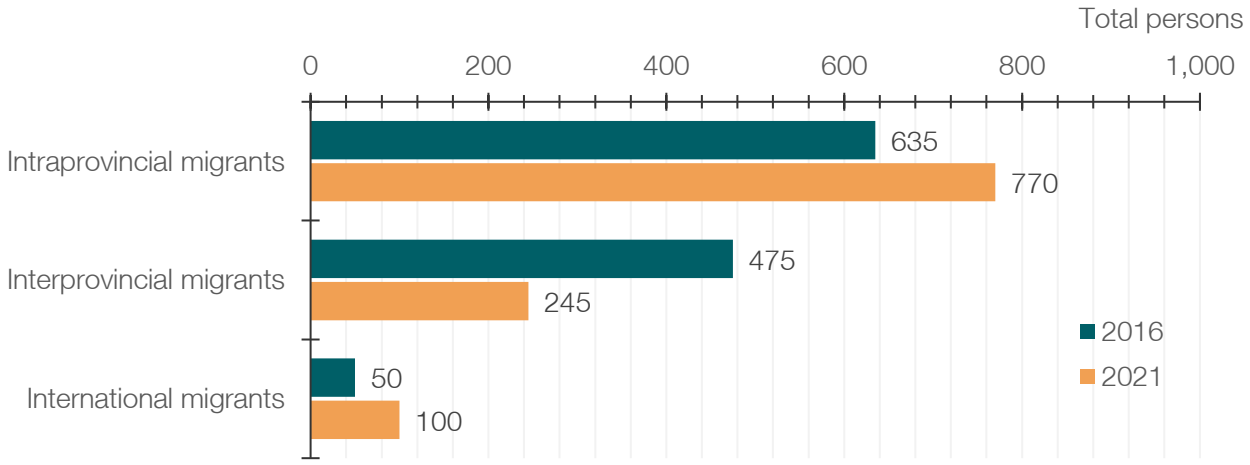
4.1.2 Recent mobility trends

Figure 4-2 illustrates the number of people who moved to the community from outside sources, whether from within British Columbia, from another province, or another country. The data reflects mobility trends for the years prior to 2016 and 2021.

- People moving from other areas of British Columbia (including adjacent communities) are the largest source of incoming migrants, a trend consistent in both the 2016 and 2021 Census results.

- International in-migrants do not typically make up a considerable portion of incoming individuals / households; whereas, migrants from other provinces made up notably less of the overall share in 2021 versus 2016.

Figure 4-2: One-year mobility of population trends



Source: BC Government purchased Custom Statistics Canada Census Tabulations

4.2 Households

Statistics Canada defines a household as a person or group of persons sharing the same dwelling without another usual residence. A household is the highest-level descriptor of many unique living situations. Households are often categorized in this report by the primary household maintainer's age, which is the age of the person responsible for major expenses like rent, mortgage, taxes, and utilities. When multiple people share this responsibility, the first listed individual becomes the primary household maintainer.

4.2.1 Historical & anticipated households

Total households, and the age distribution of household maintainers, is mostly a function of changes occurring within populations. Many factors come into play for the makeup of households, such as moving across community boundaries, changes in preferences, or new financial circumstances. Consequently, changes in household patterns usually follow a similar trend as those within the greater population.

Household growth is a fundamental component of housing demand. By definition a household requires an available dwelling to occupy. Therefore, household projections are (simplistically) closely linked with the required increase in housing stock to accommodate expected population changes (note that overall housing demand is also influenced by economic and financial factors, but these are omitted from the exercise because they are difficult to predict, particularly at the municipal level).

Table 4-1 provides a summary of historical changes to households across different maintainer age cohorts and offers insights into anticipated household figures for the next two decades. Figure 4.3 illustrates the changing total households from 2016 and 2021 (BC estimates for Census years), and to 2026 and 2041 (BC projections).

Table 4-2: Historical and anticipated households by primary maintainer age (BC Gov't projections)

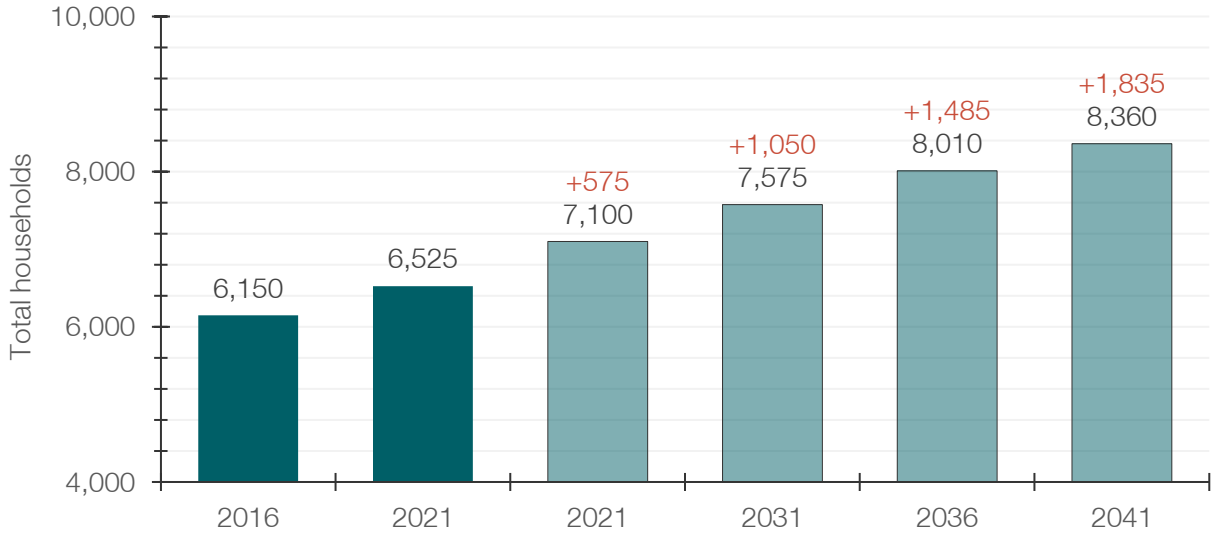
	Total	15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 to 84	85+
Historical households by primary maintainer age						
2016 households	6,150	85	1,310	2,335	2,055	360
2021 households	6,525	85	1,375	2,210	2,495	360
% change ('16-'21)	+6%	+0%	+5%	-5%	+21%	+0%
Anticipated households by primary maintainer age						
2026 households	7,100	95	1,585	2,135	2,860	430
% change ('21-'26)	+15%	+12%	+21%	-9%	+39%	+19%
2041 households	8,360	80	2,060	2,510	2,960	750
% change ('26-'41)	+18%	-16%	+30%	+18%	+3%	+74%
% change ('21-'41)	+28%	-6%	+50%	+14%	+19%	+108%

Source: Statistics Canada, BC P.E.O.P.L.E estimates, BC P.E.O.P.L.E projections, Turner Drake & Partners

- The province estimates that the community had 6,525 households in 2021, up from 6,150 in 2016. Note that these values will differ from Statistics Canada Census results, as reported in later sections.

- Historically, the highest rates of growth have largely been among senior-led (65+) households. This should continue to be the trend over the next two decades, though with increasing emphasis on expanding 25- to 44-year-old-led households.

Figure 4.3: Historical and anticipated households, net anticipated change of households since 2021



Source: Statistics Canada, BC P.E.O.P.L.E estimates, BC P.E.O.P.L.E projections

- Total households may grow 28% from 2021 to 2041, reaching about 8,360 households. Five-year interval growth should gradually soften over time.

- In other words, about 1,835 new households may call Comox home by 2041.

4.2.2 Additional household characteristics

Table 4-3 summarizes the totals and distributions of households by their size per the 2016 and 2021 Censuses, as well as their respective tenure splits. Key data conclusions are:

- Between 2016 and 2021, many household sizes experienced some degree of growth with the exception of 3-person households.

- The 4% increase to total local households between Census periods was primarily driven by the increase in 4+ person households.

- Even with more rapid percentage growth among larger households, the average household size remained about the same at 2.2 persons per household.

- The average household size continues to be larger for dwellings occupied by an owner, than one occupied by a renter.

Table 4-3: Historical households by household size and tenure share

2016 Census	Total	1 person	2 persons	3 persons	4 persons	5+ persons	Average HH size
Total households	6,205	1,830	2,610	815	670	290	2.2
Share of total	100%	29%	42%	13%	11%	5%	
Owner households	77%	65%	83%	82%	81%	79%	2.3
Renter households	23%	35%	17%	18%	19%	21%	2.0
2021 Census	Total	1 person	2 persons	3 persons	4 persons	5+ persons	Average HH size
Total households	6,440	1,895	2,700	785	725	335	2.2
Share of total	100%	29%	42%	12%	11%	5%	
Owner households	77%	65%	84%	77%	83%	74%	2.3
Renter households	23%	35%	16%	23%	17%	26%	2.0
% change ('16-'21)	+4%	+4%	+3%	-4%	+8%	+16%	

Source: BC Government purchased Custom Statistics Canada Census Tabulations

Table 4-4 summarizes the totals and distributions of households by their census-family type per the 2016 and 2021 Censuses, as well as their respective tenure splits. A "census family" is defined as a married couple living with or without children; a couple living common law living with or without children; or a one-parent family living with children. A "non-census family" refers to households with persons who are single without children or unrelated. Thus, they are also known as "single person / roommate households."

Table 4-4: Historical households by census-family type and tenure share

2016 Census	Total	Census-family w/o children	Census-family w/ children	Non-census family*
Total households	6,205	2,240	1,925	2,010
Share of total	100%	36%	31%	32%
Owner households	77%	90%	76%	64%
Renter households	23%	10%	24%	36%
2021 Census	Total	Census-family w/o children	Census-family w/ children	Non-census family*
Total households	6,440	2,320	1,915	2,125
Share of total	100%	36%	30%	33%
Owner households	77%	90%	77%	63%
Renter households	23%	10%	23%	37%
% change ('16-'21)	+4%	+4%	-1%	+6%

* A non-census family is often characterized as a single persons or households made up of roommates.
Source: BC Government purchased Custom Statistics Canada Census Tabulations

- Non-census families experienced the highest rates of growth both as a percentage change and by numerical change – 6% or 115 households between censuses.
- Historically, families without children have held the highest share of total households. This had held between census periods at 36% of overall households.
- Total families with children shrank 1% – a decrease of 10 households.

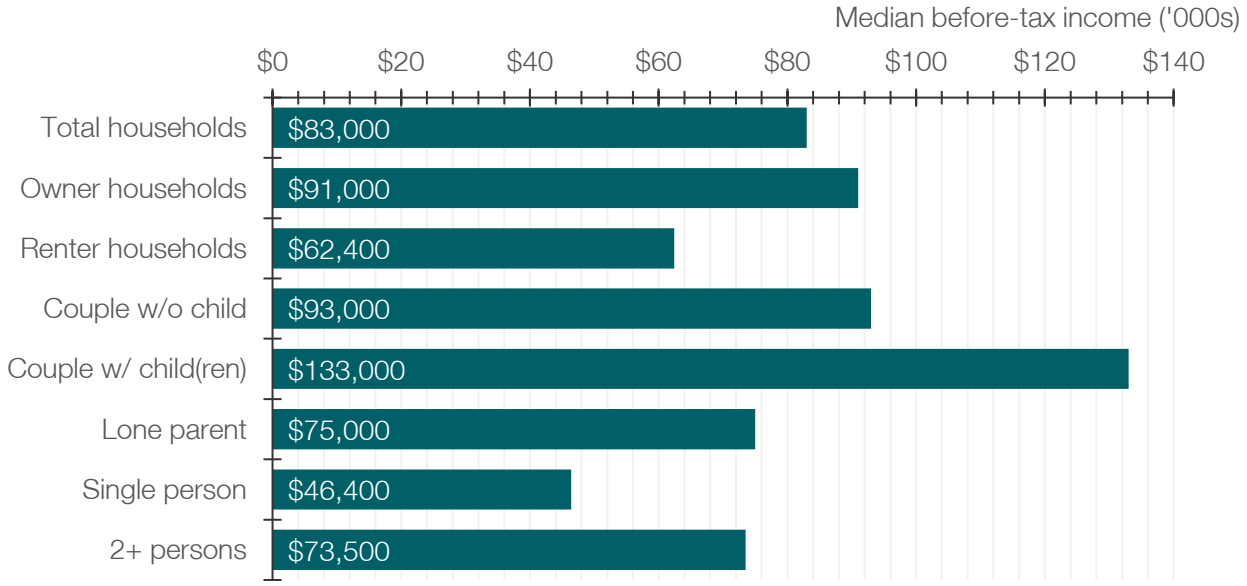
4.3 Income

Most affordability calculations use median before-tax household income – the total income earned by a household before income taxes and other elements are deducted – as their primary input. The level of earnings is largely contingent on the characteristics of a household – i.e., how old is the household, how many people are in the household, does a household own or rent their dwelling?

4.3.1 Median before-tax household incomes

Figure 4.4 summarizes the median before-tax household incomes by tenure and household family type (note that this chart disaggregates lone-parents from families with children and single and 2+ person households from non-census families).

Figure 4.4: Median before-tax household income by tenure and household family type, 2021



Source: BC Government purchased + Turner Drake purchased Custom Statistics Canada Census Tabulations

- In 2021, the median household earned $83,000 before-tax, up from $69,110 (+20%) since 2016. The sharp increase is largely due to the impacts of COVID-19 relief payments, explained later on.

- Two or more person households are more likely earn greater household incomes than single earners. Couples with children and couples without children were the households that had the highest median annual income with $133,000 and $93,000, respectively.

- Owner households, which report a higher average household size, reported a higher median income than renter households.

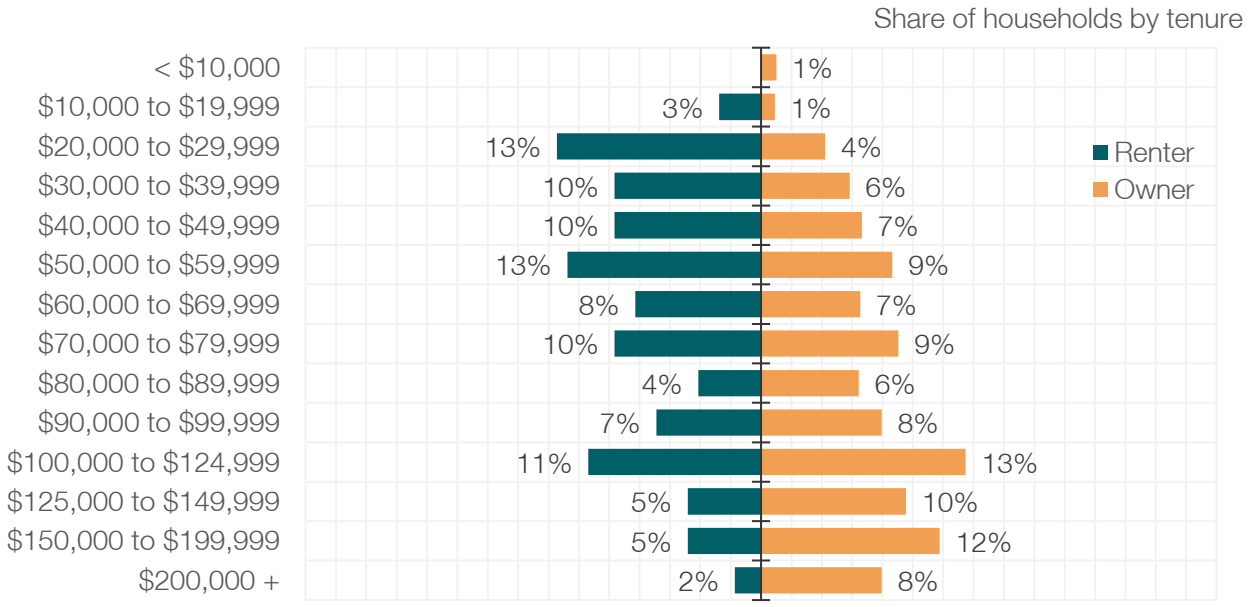
4.3.2 Income distribution

The distribution of household incomes varies greatly depending on the configuration of a household or the housing tenure of a household. Generally, if a household earns a single income, there is higher prevalence of earning lower incomes, which in turn translates to greater chances of experiencing a form of housing hardship. Figure 4.5 compares the distribution of incomes for owner and renter households:

- Renter households, often smaller than owner households, demonstrate a greater share of earners below $80,000 annually.

- In contrast, higher income brackets are made up predominantly by households who own their homes.

Figure 4.5: Income distribution by tenure, 2021



Source: BC Government purchased Custom Statistics Canada Census Tabulations

Figure 4.6 presents the change in household income between census periods. The purpose of the chart is primarily to visualize the impacts of the Canada Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB). While CERB was a necessary stimulus during the heights of the COVID-19 pandemic, from a purely statistical standpoint it has caused inflated changes in income reported between Census periods. This is most clearly depicted in the change in households earning less than $20,000 annually, where approximately 5% of all households earned that amount in 2016, shrinking to roughly 3% in 2021.

Figure 4.6: Income distribution of total households, 2016-2021

Source: BC Government purchased Custom Statistics Canada Census Tabulations

4.3.3 Income categories

This report adopts methods used by UBC's Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART), which uses custom Statistics Canada Census tabulations, to establish five household income categories that can help inform the share of the population most at risk of financial pressures related to housing. HART applied the categories built by governments in the US, Vancouver, and Melbourne. The categories are as follows:

- Very low income: 20% or less of area median household income (AMHI), generally equivalent to shelter allowance for income support recipients.
- Low income: 21-50% AMHI, generally equivalent to one full-time minimum wage job.
- Moderate income: 51-80% AMHI, equivalent to starting salary for a professional job such as nurse or teacher.
- Median income: 81-120% AMHI, representing the 'middle class.'
- High income: More than 120% AMHI, the group with the greatest housing wealth.

Table 4-5 offers a summary of these calculations, the share of households that belong to each income category, and the approximate range of shelter costs that a household can afford. Note that the affordable shelter costs use Statistics Canada's 30% shelter-cost-to-income ratio (i.e., affordability threshold) and assumes 25% of shelter costs are ancillary costs like insurance or utilities. Key data conclusions are:

- In 2021, about 38% of households earned a "high income," and could afford a monthly mortgage payment or rent of at minimum $1,870.

- About 17% of households earn a "very low income" or "low income," totalling about 1,055 households. These households can afford at most a monthly mortgage payment or rent of $780.

Table 4-5: Income category summary, 2021

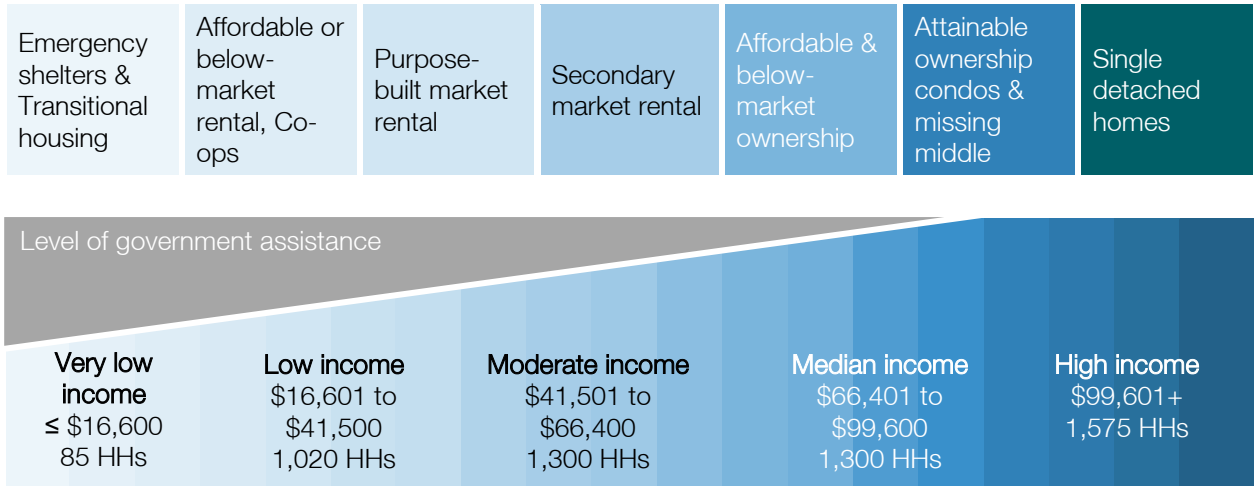
Income category	Annual household income	Affordable shelter cost	Estimated share of total households
Very low income	≤ $16,600	< $310	1%
Low income	$16,600 to $41,500	$310 to $780	16%
Moderate income	$41,500 to $66,400	$780 to $1,245	20%
Median income	$66,400 to $99,600	$1,245 to $1,870	25%
High income	$99,601 +	$1,870 +	38%

Source: UBC Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART)

4.3.4 Income vs. Housing Continuum

Figure 4.7 illustrates a varied version of the housing continuum, as originally formulated by CMHC, and demonstrates how the income categories and the households within each category may align along this continuum.

Figure 4.7: Rough distribution of households on the housing continuum



It is not possible precisely determine the number of households that should occupy each type of housing because there is a lack knowledge about the specific circumstances of individual households. However, this representation gives an estimate of the number of units needed to potentially accommodate the maximum number of households' needs.

Around 1,105 local households with at most low incomes (earning less than or equal to $41,500), often single individuals, are at higher risk of needing emergency housing services due to sudden personal, physical, or financial changes.

5 Housing Profile

As per the 2021 census, of 6,672 total dwellings in Comox, there were 6,440 occupied by usual residents. A dwelling occupied by a usual resident is one where a household lives in the dwelling the majority of the year. This would not include empty homes, recreational properties, or short-term rentals. No data exists for non-usual resident occupied dwellings.

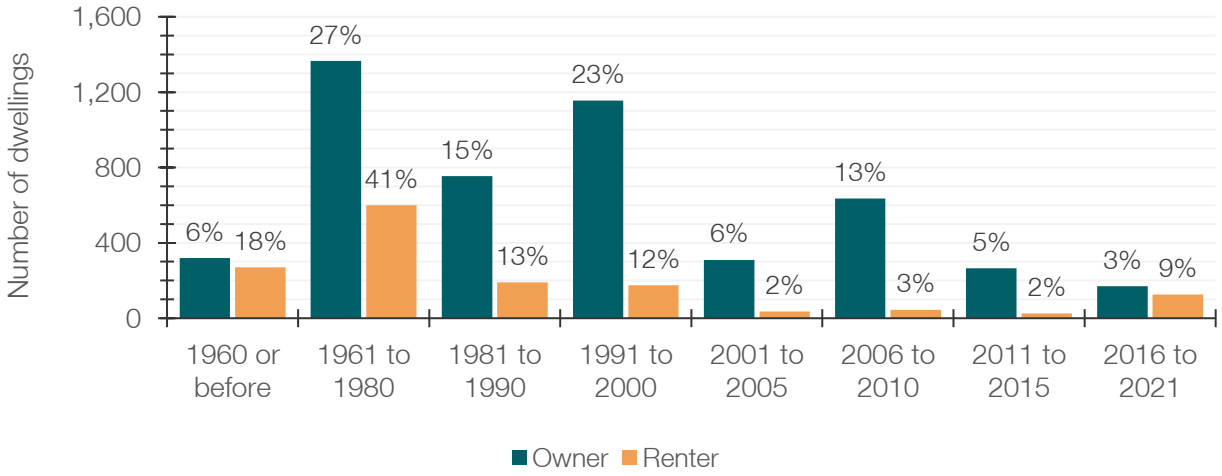
Table 4-1 summarises the totals and distribution by structure type for Comox. Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of the current dwelling stock by its age of construction, disaggregated by tenure.

Table 5-1: Dwellings occupied by usual residents by structural type and tenure, 2021

	Total	Single	Row	Semi	Duplex	Apt (<5 floors)	Apt (5+ floors)	Mobile
Total	6,440	4,240	585	660	90	770	0	90
Share	100%	66%	9%	10%	1%	12%	0%	1%
Owner	77%	89%	74%	47%	56%	44%	-	61%
Renter	23%	11%	26%	53%	44%	56%	-	39%

Source: BC Government purchased Custom Statistics Canada Census Tabulations

Figure 5.1: Dwellings occupied by usual residents by age of construction and tenure, 2021



Source: BC Government purchased Custom Statistics Canada Census Tabulations

- Single-detached homes account for about two-thirds of share of the housing supply (4,245 units), followed by apartments at 12% (860 units, including duplexes).

- Note that that Statistics Canada includes single-detached homes with secondary units within the definition of a duplex. Furthermore, a duplex is defined by Statistics Canada as units that are stacked, not side-by-side as generally understood in BC.

- About half of Comox's dwelling stock was built in the 1990s or prior. Construction activity has not matched this expansion since, though there was a noticeable jump between 2006 and 2010.

5.1 Recent Construction Activity

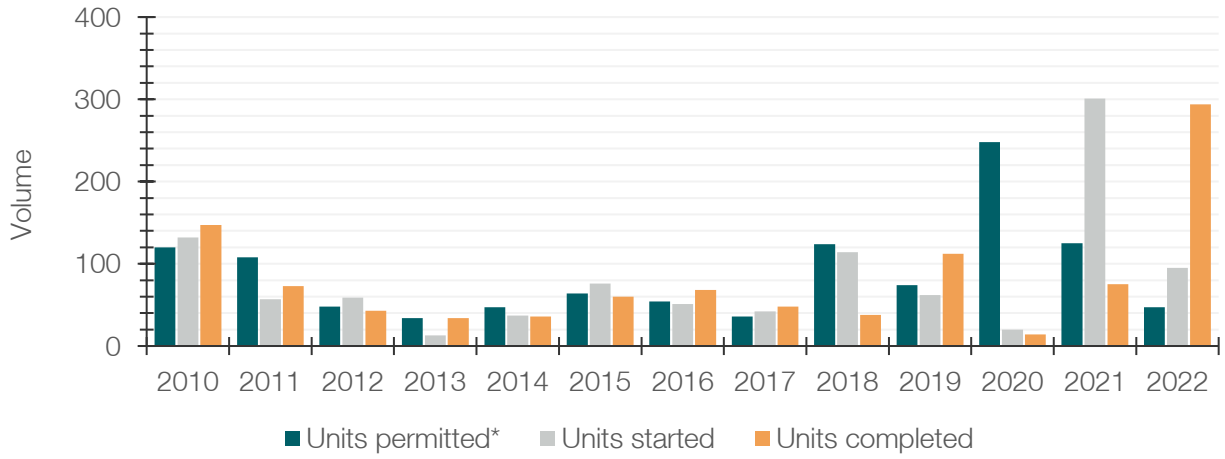
Figure 5.2 shows the trends in construction activity from 2010 to 2022, based on municipal permitting data acquired via Statistics Canada and starts and completions data from the Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC):

- Annual construction activity was relatively consistent since 2010, with large fluctuations occurring in the last three years.

- From 2017 to 2022, 581 units were built. More than half of those (294) were built in 2022 alone.

- The reason for the considerable jump to units permitted in 2020, units started in 2021, and units completed in 2022 is the construction of substantial multi-unit projects – 245 of 294 units completed in 2022 were apartments.

Figure 5.2: Construction activity by total units permitted*, started, and completed



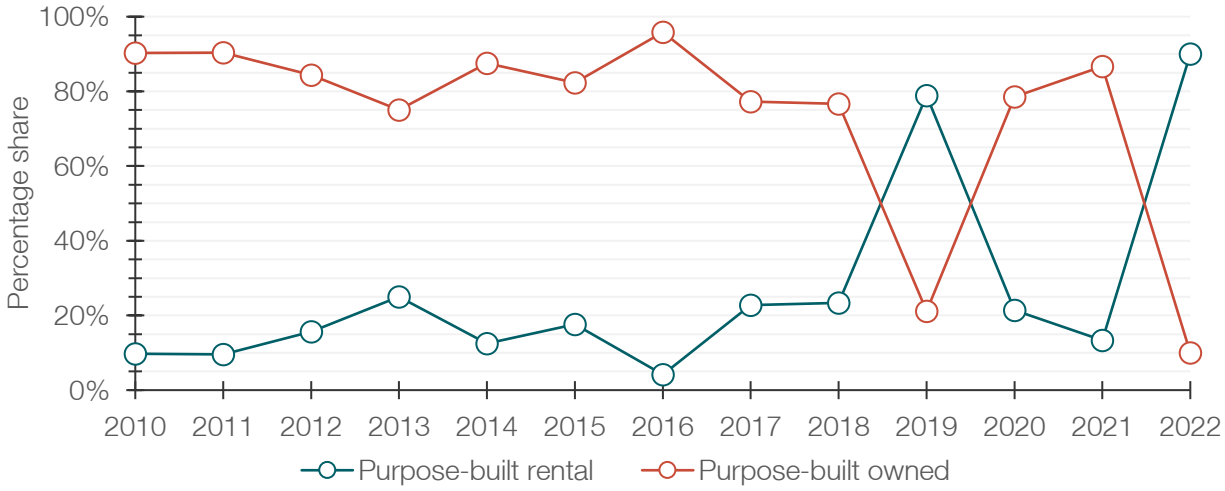
* Data for units permitted for 2022 available up to September of that year – 2022 is adjusted for a full year
Source: Custom Statistics Canada tabulation, CMHC Starts & Completions Survey

A growing population naturally leads to a rise in the number of permitted housing units. As a population expands, the demand for housing also grows. The recent increase in permitted units can be seen a response to high historical rates of growth, complemented by low regional vacancy and increased housing price. Considering that population growth is expected to continue until 2033, the market will need to continue to respond at a sustained intensity to maintain the status quo, and greater intensity to further improve the local market conditions.

The type of units being completed shows the response of the private market to evolving demand trends, specifically as it relates to tenure types. Figure 5.3 shows how historical completed units have distributed between purpose-built rentals and units purpose-built for ownership:

- From 2010 to 2018, completed units have been predominantly for the homeownership markets.
- The tenure split has fluctuated since 2018, with a considerable preference for purpose-built rental apartments in 2019 and 2022.

Figure 5.3: Distribution of tenure type for completed units

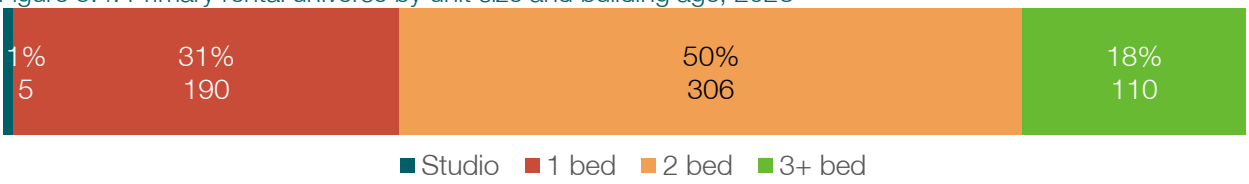


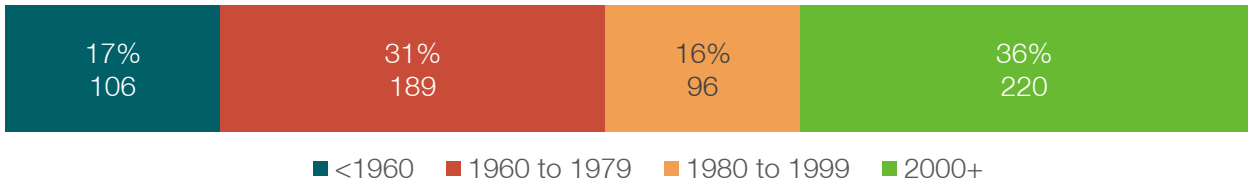
Source: CMHC Starts & Completions Survey

5.2 Rental Universe

CMHC's Rental Market Survey provides detailed "primary rental market" (that is, purpose-built buildings that contain three or more rental units) for the Town of Comox, which includes information about rents, the rental stock, and vacancy – all of which are discussed in this report. Related to the rental stock, Figure 5.4 summarizes the distribution of primary rental stock, distributed by unit size and building age. Figure 5.5 summarizes the overall rental stock: primary versus secondary (every rental that is not part of the primary stock) apartments.

Figure 5.4: Primary rental universe by unit size and building age, 2023

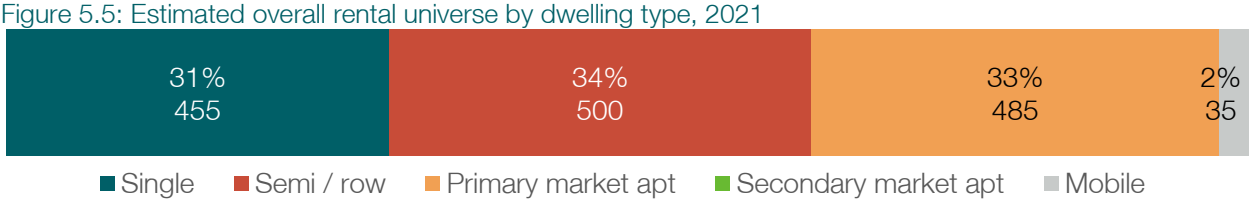




Source: CMHC Rental Market Survey

- Two-bedroom units are the dominant form of unit size in Comox.
- There was a notable slowdown in rental construction in the 1980s and 1990s – construction in the 1960s-70s nearly double the following two decades. The volume of units built post-2000 were also notably higher.
- About 1,470 dwellings in Comox were occupied by renters in 2021 – about 484 at the time were from the primary rental market. In other words, a possible 990 units belonged to the secondary market in the form of lower density forms of housing, like single- and semi-detached homes or rowhouses.

Figure 5.5: Estimated overall rental universe by dwelling type, 2021



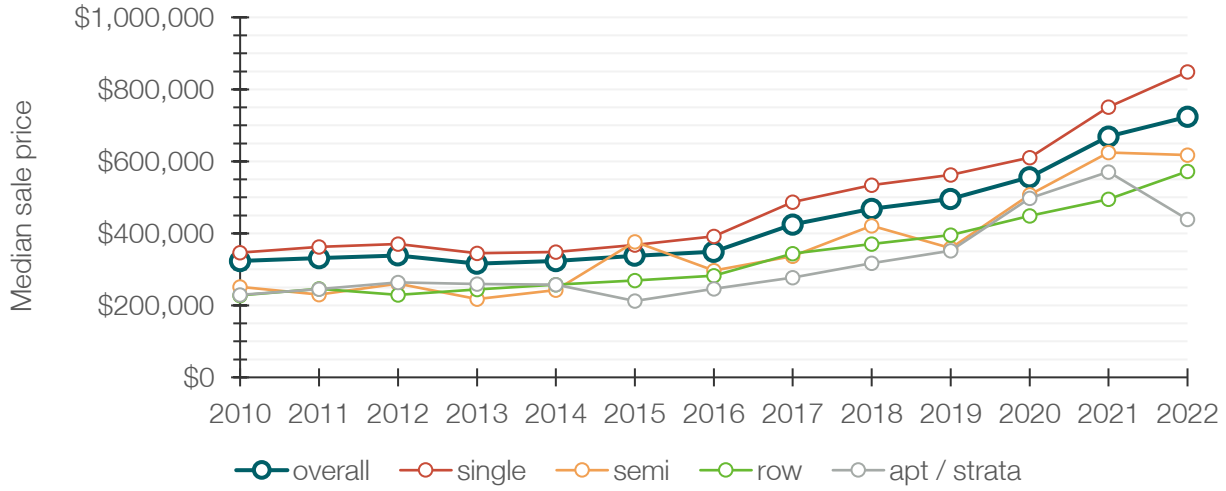
Source: BC Government purchased Custom Statistics Canada Census Tabulations

5.3 Market Housing Activity

5.3.1 Homeownership

Figure 5.6 presents a graphical representation of historical median home prices by dwelling type. The data is sourced from BC Assessment's historical revised rolls, which include sales information up to and including 2022. For those familiar with the dataset, it is worth noting that the dwelling types have been reclassified to align with the categories used by Statistics Canada in their Census questionnaire.

Figure 5.6: Annual median sale price by dwelling type



Source: derived from BC Assessment

Table 5-2 offers the same data, but this time it presents the percentage change in median home prices by dwelling type over specific time intervals.

Table 5-2: Sale price and percentage change by dwelling type and select years

	Sale price				Percent change		
	2010	2016	2019	2022	'10-'16	'16-'19	'19-'22
Overall	$323,200	$349,000	$495,600	$723,800	+8%	+42%	+46%
Single-detached	$346,300	$392,100	$562,100	$848,700	+13%	+43%	+51%
Semi-detached	$251,000	$296,500	$359,000	$617,400	+18%	+21%	+72%
Rowhouse	$227,700	$282,900	$395,600	$572,400	+24%	+40%	+45%
Apartment / strata	$228,700	$245,900	$351,400	$439,100	+8%	+43%	+25%

Source: derived from BC Assessment

- From 2010 to 2016, home prices rose about 8%, or just over 1% annually. Since then, the rate of increase has been substantial. The overall median home price increased by 46% between 2019 and 2022, following a 42% rise from 2016 to 2019.

- Note that inflation was about 9% from 2016 to 2019 and 15% from 2019 to 2022 for owned accommodation in British Columbia, suggesting that inflations share of growth was greatest during the former – indicating that the rising local cost of housing was increasingly due to factors outside broader cost of living increases.

- The most notable single-year increase occurred between 2020 and 2021, where the overall median price rose from $526,300 to $664,000, marking 26% appreciation.

- Unsurprisingly, single-detached homes are the most expensive form of housing – the median price reached about $848,700 in 2022. All defined dwellings experienced appreciation since 2010, and even more so since 2016 and 2019.

5.3.2 Rental market

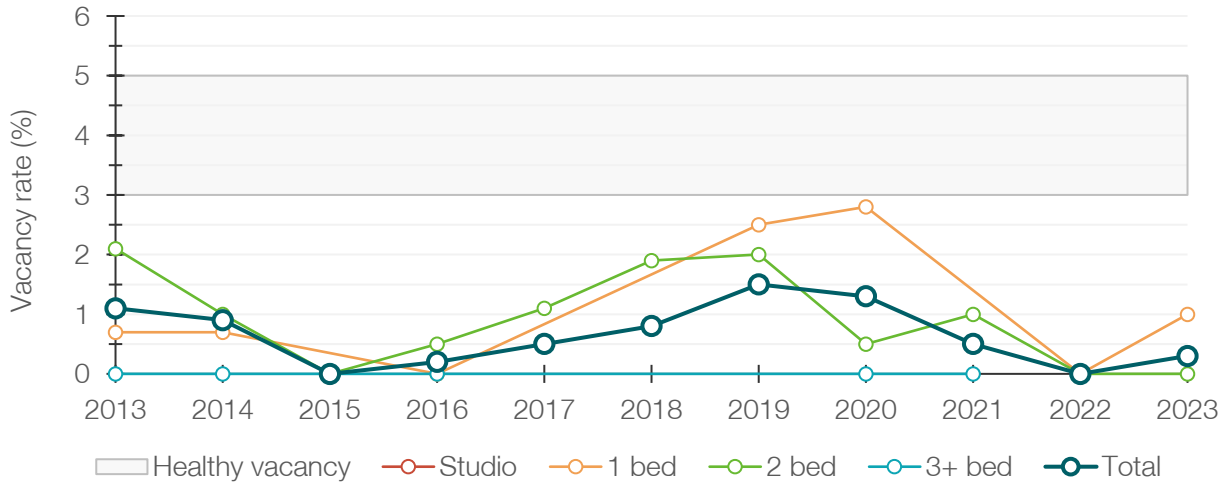
CMHC's Rental Market Survey reports rent and vacancy data for the Town of Comox. Table 5-3 summarizes the median rents by unit sizes and the changes in rent between select years. Figure 5.7 shows how the local rental vacancy rate evolved since 2010.

Table 5-3: Primary rental market median rents by unit size and select years, as of October of each year

	Median rent				Percent change		
	2010	2016	2019	2023	'10-'16	'16-'19	'19-'23
Median apartment	$775	$925	$1,138	$1,325	+19%	+23%	+16%
Studio apartment	-	-	-	-	-	-	-
1-bed apartment	$650	$719	$938	$1,319	+11%	+30%	+41%
2-bed apartment	$795	$900	$1,138	$1,493	+13%	+26%	+31%
3+ bed apartment	$850	$965	-	-	+14%	-	-

Source: CMHC Rental Market Survey

Figure 5.7: Annual vacancy rate by unit size, as of October of each year



Source: CMHC Rental Market Survey

- Comox's median apartment rent increased 16% from 2019 to 2023, a lesser rate of growth than observed from 2016 to 2019.

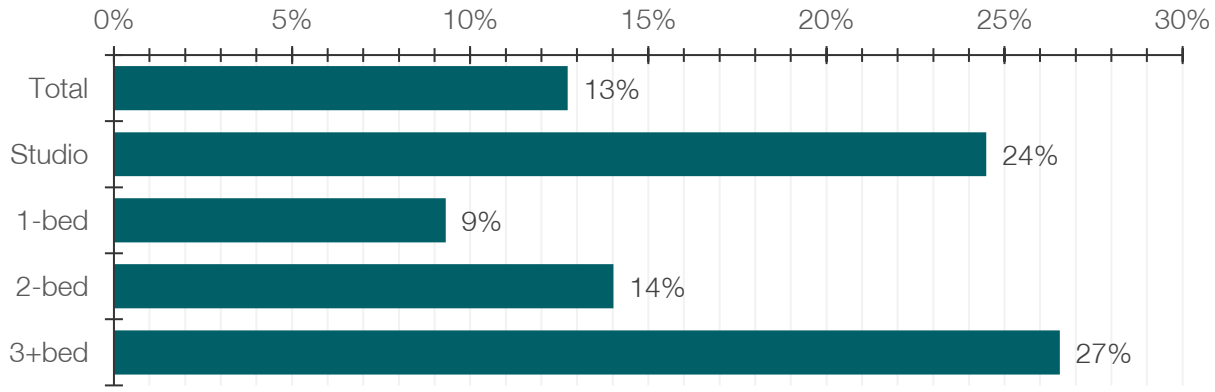
- Median rent increases were noted across all defined unit sizes (where available), with highest growth among 1-bedroom units.

- The more moderate increase in rent is likely due to 1) the sampling method and 2) the relatively slow (until 2022) growth in the rental stock. Overall, CMHC collects rents for occupied and vacant units, meaning long standing leases bring down the median in an environment where there is minimal tenant turnover and slower supply growth.

- Since 2013, the Town of Comox has experienced no year of a "healthy" vacancy rate (between 3% to 5%). This reflects higher demand than available supply, which leads to increased pressure on the cost of renting a unit in the community. In 2023, the reported vacancy rate was 0.3%

Figure 5-8 demonstrates what discrepancy may have existed between a vacant and occupied unit in 2023. The percentages are based on averages of BC communities where data is available (source) and are disaggregated by unit type. Overall, the typical vacant unit in BC was rented out for about 13% higher than the typical occupied unit. Note that this data reflects the primary rental market.

Figure 5-8: Average difference between average vacant and occupied rents, 2023, BC major centres



Source: CMHC Rental Market Survey [4]

5.4 Short-term Rentals (STRs)

Short-term rentals (STRs) continue to proliferate, offering a flexible approach to utilizing residential properties for temporary lodging. This trend blurs the distinction between rental housing and commercial hospitality. With the expansion of the STR market comes growing concerns about its impact on the traditional residential real estate sector, particularly whether STRs are displacing long-term housing options, reducing housing supply, and making it more challenging for households to secure permanent residences.

Figure 5.9 depicts the changes in unique STR properties from 2016 to 2024 (as of July 2024), along with the estimated number of unique properties that could be classified as commercial properties (i.e., a property that is made available and/or is rented more than

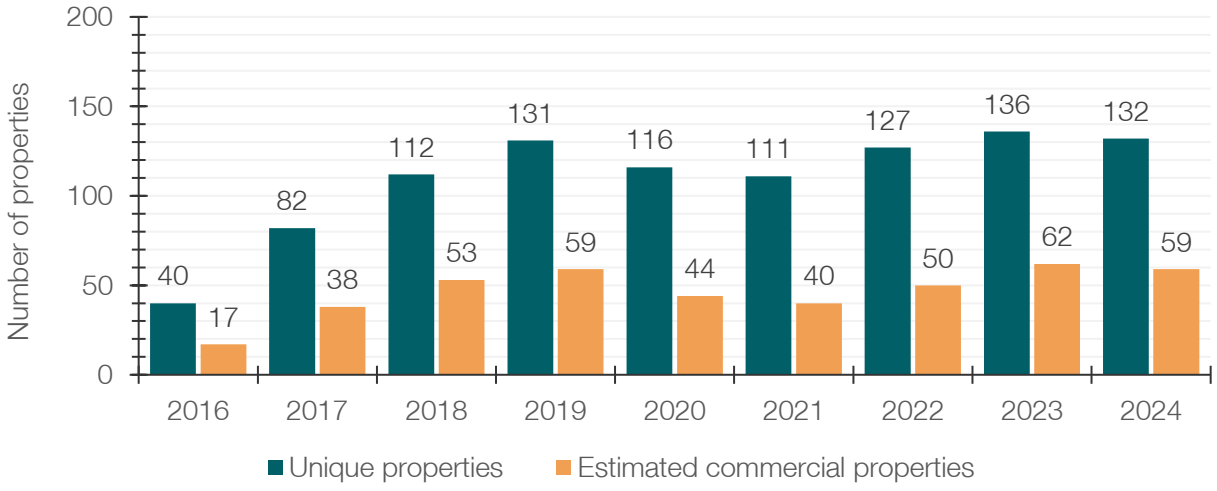
[4] CMHC. (2024, January 31). Rental Market Survey Data Tables. https://www.cmhc-schl.gc.ca/professionals/housing-markets-data-and-research/housing-data/data-tables/rental-market/rental-market-report-data-tables

50% as an STR, demonstrating that the property is intended for commercial/hospitality purposes). This data is sourced from AirDNA™, a company that compiles monthly information on the STR market by collecting data from various STR platforms' public-facing websites. Commercial property estimates are derived from AirDNA™ data by Turner Drake. Note that a "commercial" property indicates that a property is most probably not used as long-term permanent housing but could otherwise be used as such if not used as an STR.

- Unique STR properties increased 240% from 2016 to 2023, reaching 136 unique properties across Comox. As of July 2024, 132 unique properties had already been active at least one day locally.

- About 46% of 2023's unique properties – 62 units – were estimated to be used commercially. The estimated commercial share as of mid-2024 was about 45%.

Figure 5.9: Total annual unique short-term rental properties versus estimated* commercial properties



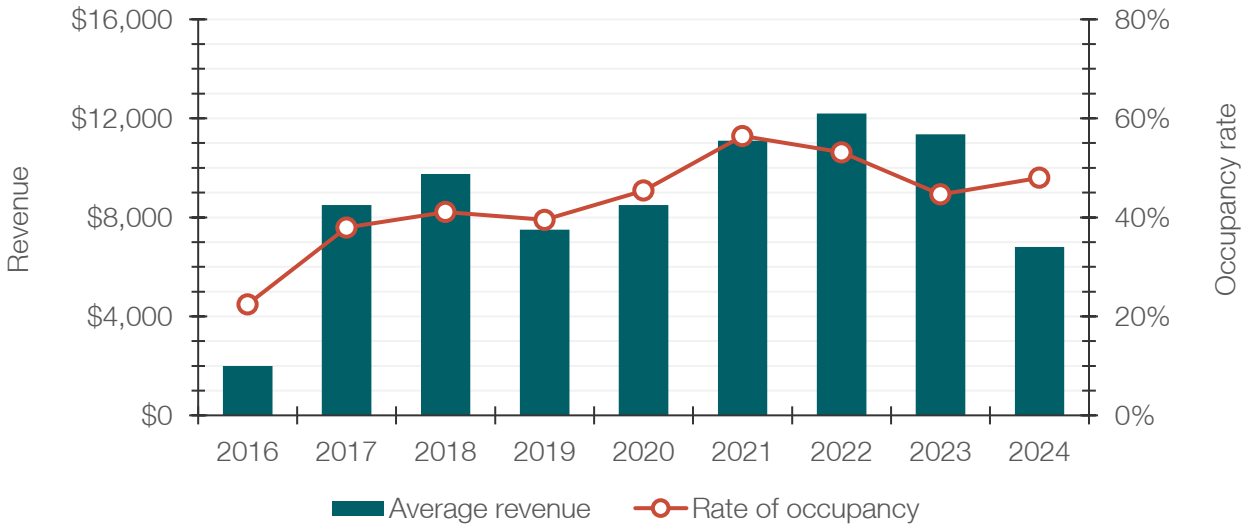
* 2024 data is as of July 2024
Source: derived from AirDNA™

Figure 5.10 expands on the earlier STR data presentation, illustrating the average annual revenue per unit through vertical bars and the average occupancy rate with a line graph.

- Historical average annual revenues per property generally show a consistent upward trend between 2016 and 2023, except for a slight drop in 2019. Average earnings were highest in 2022, reaching about $12,200.

- The average unit occupancy rate, which calculates the number of reserved days over the total available days (inclusive of reserved days), mirrored trends in average revenue.

Figure 5.10: Average annual* revenue per unit versus average rate of occupancy



* 2024 data is as of July 2024
Source: derived from AirDNA™

5.5 Non-market Housing Inventory

Non-market housing encompasses all forms of housing not subject to market forces. This includes public or social housing, affordable housing offered by non-profit organizations, and transitional and emergency shelters, among others.

Table 5-4 provides an overview of the current housing and program offerings within the municipality, as reported by BC Housing in March 2023. Please note that "XX" indicates that a unit of housing or programming may exist but is kept confidential. Notable points include:

- Comox offers rent supplements to 20 unhoused persons – no shelters existed as of March 2023.
- While some transitional / assisted living and independent social housing units do exist in the community, non-market services mostly come in the form of rental assistance in the private market.

Table 5-4: Summary of local non-market housing and programs, March 2023

Emergency Shelter and Housing for the Homeless	
Homeless housed	0
Homeless rent supplements	20
Homeless shelters	0
Total	20

Transitional Supported and Assisted Living	
Supportive seniors housing	XX
Special needs	XX
Women & children fleeing violence	XX
Total	5

Independent Social Housing	
Low income families	XX
Low income seniors	XX
Total	6

Rent Assistance in Private Market	
Rent assistance for families	XX
Rent assistance for seniors	XX
Canada Housing Benefit recipient	XX
Total	116

Source: BC Housing

5.6 Post-secondary Student Housing

North Island College (NIC) is the only post-secondary education institution within the CVRD. Its Comox Valley Campus operates out of the City of Courtenay. Relatedly, Comox does not have a post-secondary institution within its boundaries, nor does it have related post-secondary student housing. For more information about NIC, readers can refer to the **2024 Comox Valley Regional District Housing Needs Report**.

6 Housing Need

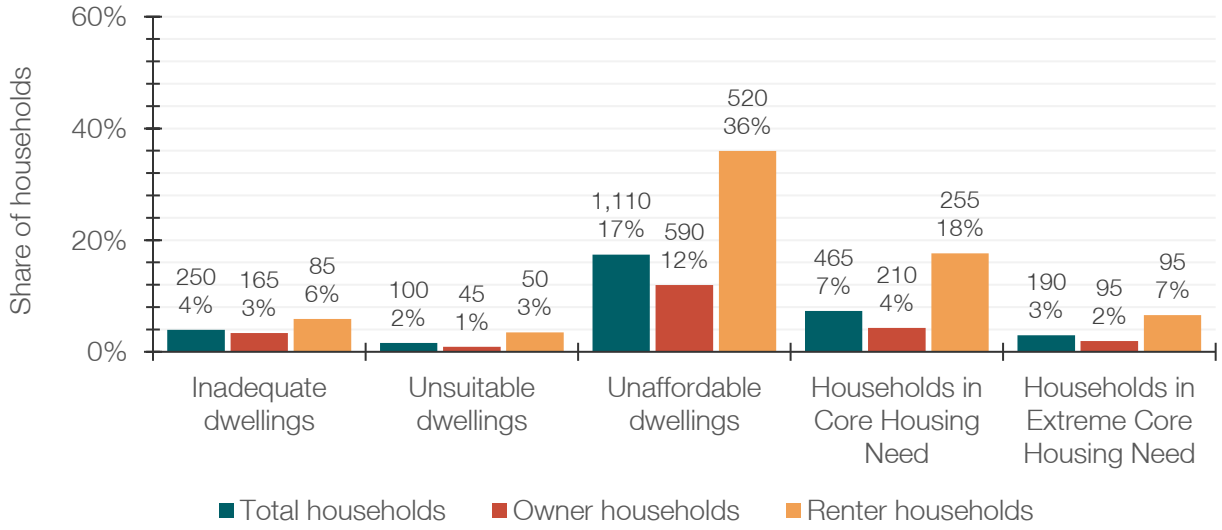
CMHC's Core Housing Need (CHN) metric measures whether a household's living situation does not meet any of three criteria and whether there exist alternatives in the market to meet said criteria. These criteria are adequacy (a dwelling's state of repair), suitability (the prevalence of overcrowding), and affordability (less than 30% of before-tax household income spent on shelter costs). An added metric is "Extreme Core Housing Need (ECHN)," which refers to a household paying more than 50% of their income on shelter costs.

Unaffordability contributes the most to CHN, but a household in an unaffordable home does not necessarily mean they are experiencing CHN. Affordability is based solely on the 30% metric. CHN considers whether affordable alternatives exist. In other words, CHN considers if a household lives unaffordably by choice (e.g., buying a home that is expensive now to enter the market, but may be affordable later as the household income grows) or not.

6.1 Housing Need by Tenure

Figure 6.1 shows the inadequacy, unsuitability, unaffordability, CHN, and ECHN rates for all households as well as households by tenure.

Figure 6.1: Share of households experiencing a specific housing indicator by tenure, 2021



Source: BC Government purchased Custom Statistics Canada Census Tabulations

Key conclusions are:

- About 4% and 2% of local households lived in a home that required major repair or was too small, respectively.
- Unaffordability is the housing indicator most prevalent among households in Comox – 17% of households lived in unaffordable circumstances, paying more than 30% of before-tax income on shelter costs.

- Renter households are most severely affected by housing need: 36% lived unaffordably, 18% experienced Core Housing Need , and 7% experienced Extreme Core Housing Need.

Between 2016 and 2021, there was a general improvement in housing need metrics (particularly, affordability). Nationally, much of this improvement has been due to the impacts of CERB. While the benefit was a necessary stimulus during the heights of the COVID-19 pandemic, from a purely statistical standpoint it has caused inflated changes in income reported between Census periods. Notably, overall rates of Core Housing Need decreased from 8% to 7% locally. It decreased 23% to 18% for renters (more often low income).

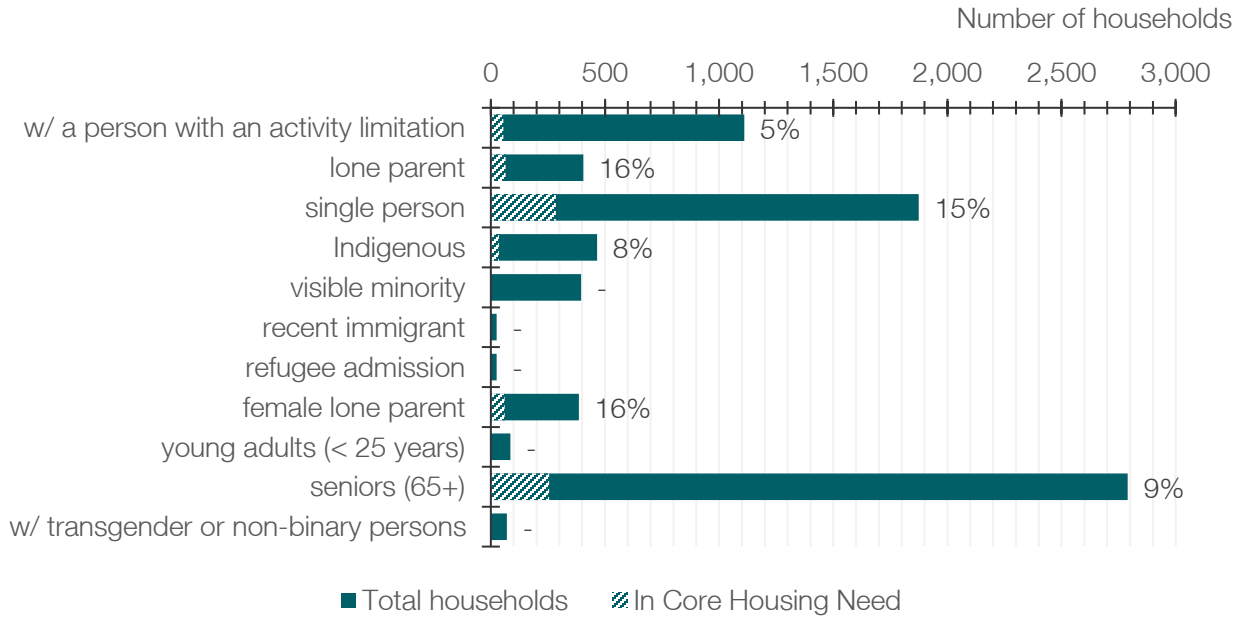
For BC, the implementation of controlled rent increases in 2019 also likely contributed to the decrease, though by how much we cannot be certain. The 2021 rent freeze by the Province would not have been contemplated by the data (incomes are from the year prior).

6.2 Housing Need for Vulnerable Populations

Figure 6.2 summarizes the total and rate of households with a vulnerable person that were in Core Housing Need in 2021. Data is disaggregated by vulnerable population type and is sourced from HART's custom Statistics Canada Census tabulations. Note that some data may not be available due to random rounding or suppression by Statistics Canada.

Generally, single income earning populations face higher prevalence of Core Housing Need (i.e., lone parents or single persons).

Figure 6.2: Core Housing Need for households with a member of a vulnerable population, 2021



Source: UBC Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART)

6.3 Unhoused Persons

Homelessness data for the Town of Comox itself is not available. However, a more comprehensive dataset is accessible for the entire CVRD, and discussed in detail in the 2024 Comox Valley Regional District Housing Needs Report. By examining the broader regional data we can gain insights that can inform strategies, policies, and support systems to tackle homelessness not just in the CVRD but also within Comox.

Briefly, 272 persons were identified as homeless across the CVRD in March 2023, compared to 132 in 2020. While the enumeration process, a point-in-time count, cannot capture the true total unhoused population, it does suggest conditions are worsening – an unsurprising assessment given the regional increase in rents and other factors related to employment opportunities, mental health and addiction.

7 Analysis

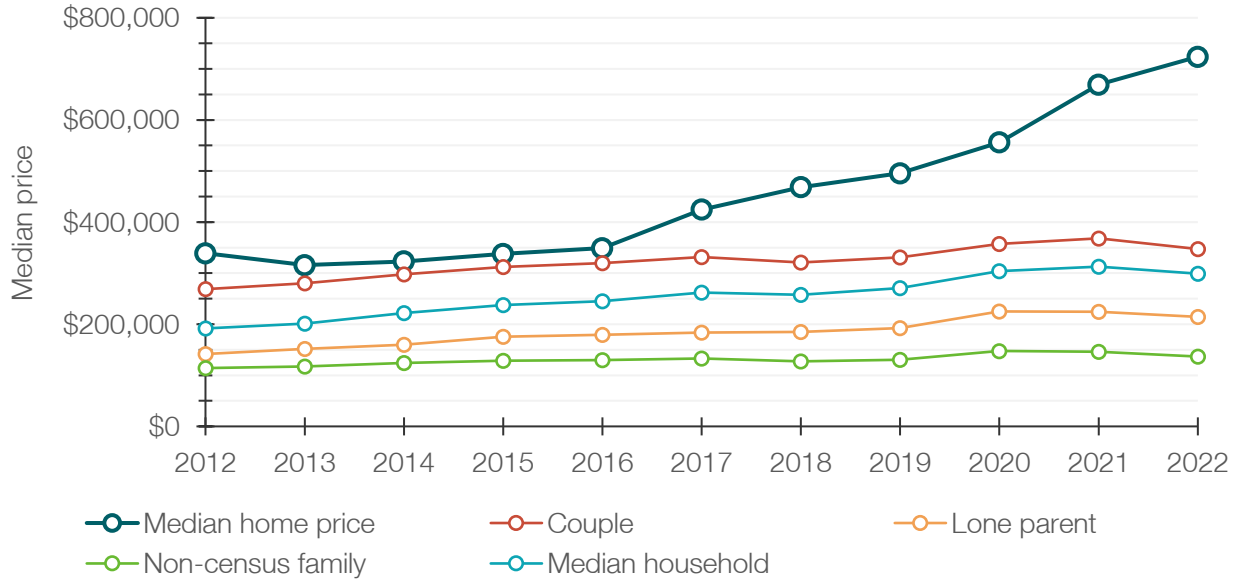
7.1 Housing Attainability

Attainable and affordable housing are often used interchangeably. Both use the affordability threshold assumption (no more than 30% of before-tax household income is spent on shelter costs). Attainable housing is sometimes used to distinguish affordable from subsidized housing – it is a measure of the housing that is affordable to households earning the median income. Alternatively, it is a measure of the monthly mortgage or rent that is affordable to the median household.

7.1.1 Homeownership attainability

Figure 7.1 illustrates how the local historical median cost of housing compares to estimated affordable housing prices (based on a set of mortgage assumptions and annual incomes) by household family type. The purpose is to highlight the impact of changing local incomes and prices on affordability.

Figure 7.1: Historical estimated affordable dwelling price by household type vs actual median home price



Source: derived from BC Assessment, custom Statistics Canada dataset[5] and mortgage assumptions

- From 2012 to 2016, the median couple household was the only defined household type to be close to affording the median house price. Couple households are more likely to have two income earners.

- Since 2016, the median price of a home has become increasingly out of reach for all median household types, with the largest widening occurring after 2020.

[5] Statistics Canada. Table 11-10-0012-01 Distribution of total income by census family type and age of older partner, parent or individual. DOI: https://doi.org/10.25318/1110001201-eng

- Notably, the gap between the median house price and the affordable threshold for the median household was approximately $105,000 in 2016, escalating to $425,000 by 2022.

- This highlights the notable disparity between growth in prices versus growth in estimated incomes, leading to an overall degradation of household purchasing power; particularly, for shelter.

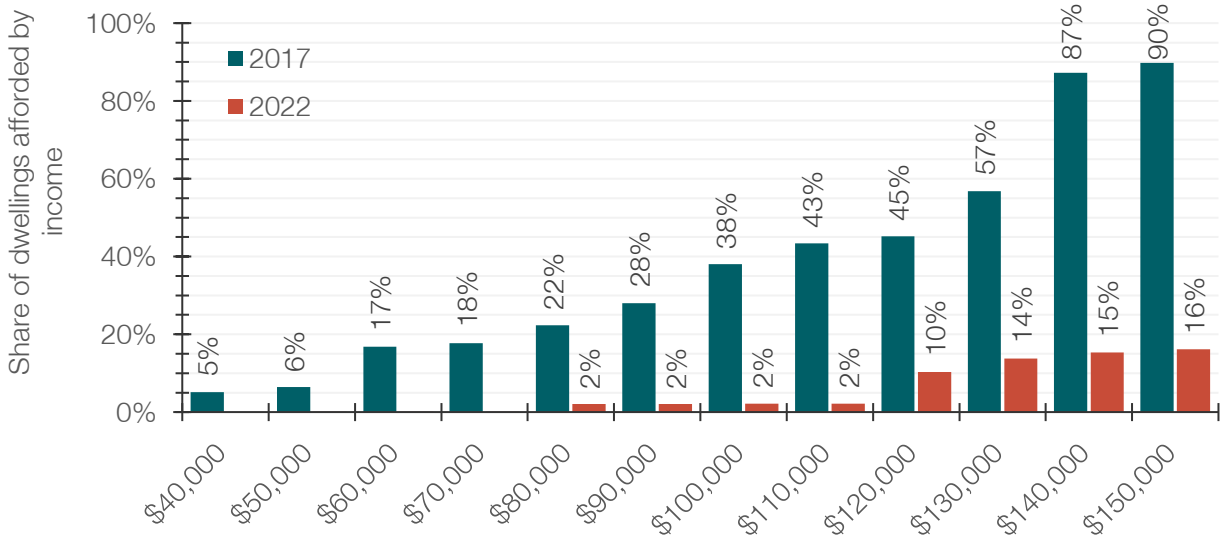
Important note: The gap between the affordable purchase price and actual price reflects the median. There are individuals or households who face significantly greater and significantly less financial challenges related to their shelter. As of 2021, 12% of owner households in Comox reported not reasonably affording where they live.

Figure 7-2 further demonstrates how housing attainability has changed over time by comparing estimates of how many dwelling sales in a given year would have been affordable (i.e., 30% of income) for various income levels. The analysis is based on sales from across the CVRD for a larger sample size.

- In 2017, about 22% of regional sales (including new and old housing) may have been affordable for an $80,000 household income. By 2022, this had fallen to 2%.

- Similarly, a $150,000 income in 2017 could possibly afford 90% of sales, versus 16% in 2022.

Figure 7-2: Change in the share of dwellings afforded by defined income, CVRD



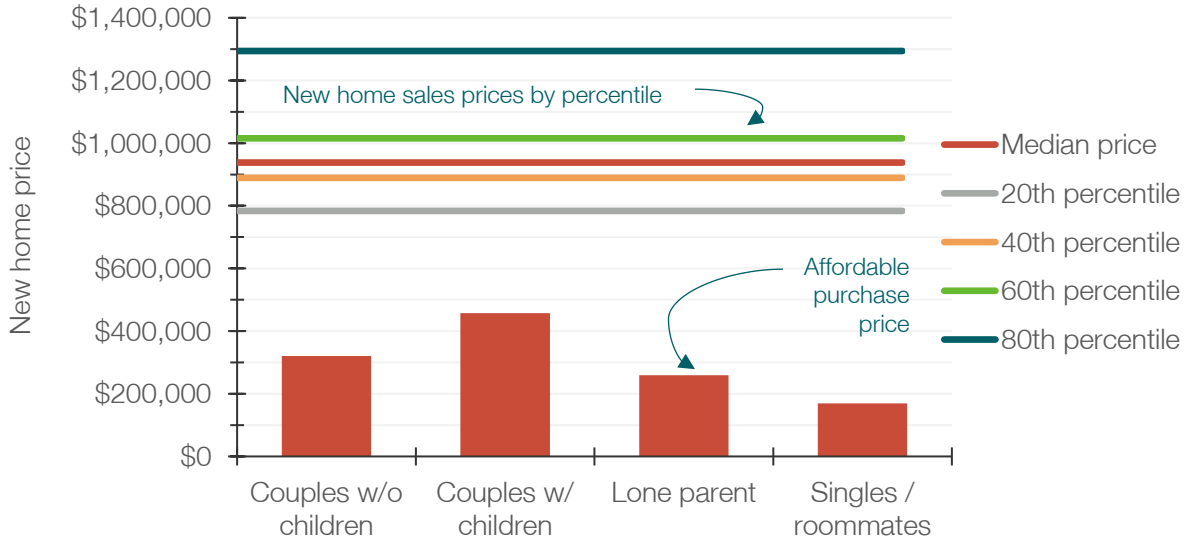
Source: derived from BC Assessment

Lastly, Figure 7-3 displays the disparity between the median estimated sale price that local household incomes (by household family type) could afford versus low-density new home (i.e., single or semi-detached dwellings) sales data by percentile from 2022 for the Courtenay Census Agglomeration.

- In 2022, 20% of new home sales in the Courtenay CA were below $797,000, while 80% were sold above this price. Although it is unclear what percentage of sales local incomes could have afforded in 2022, the visual disparity between the 20th percentile sales price and the affordable prices based on median incomes suggests that new construction is largely out of reach for a significant share of residents.

- While the chart is not truly indicative of the home buyer experience – i.e., the median household is likely to search for older, less expensive housing options – the fact that the vast majority of local household incomes could not afford even the cheapest new home is concerning and suggests broader housing affordability challenges.

Figure 7-3: New home sales percentiles (Courtenay CA, 2022) versus estimated median affordable sales price by household type



Source: derived from CMHC, Turner Drake purchased Custom Statistics Canada Census Tabulations

7.1.2 Rent attainability

Table 7-1 examines whether households with various characteristics, such as type, income bracket, and category, can afford the median rents 2023. Median income is transformed into a "max budget" based on earlier referenced assumptions. If a household cannot afford a certain unit, the cell is marked "no"; if it can, the cell is marked "yes." Furthermore, local median rents are adjusted upwards by the estimated disparity between vacant and occupied rents from major centres across BC.

- Local rents are generally more attainable than local sale prices. Even so, many household types and incomes cannot financially attain the median rent. This is particularly worrisome given that CMHC rents underreport vacant / asking rents (likely even after adjustments are made to estimate these asking rents) since the sample includes long-standing tenancies.

- Notwithstanding, median rents remain out of reach more times than not for single income households and those earning less than $60,000 annually before-tax.

Table 7-1: Attainability of rents using median income of households by characteristic, 2023 estimate

			Median monthly rent, 2023		
			Median	1-bed	2-bed
Income category	Max budget	Share of HHs	$1,495	$1,440	$1,700
Households by type					
Couples w/o children	$1,740	36%	yes	yes	yes
Couples w/ children	$2,490	22%	yes	yes	yes
Lone parent	$1,410	8%	yes	no	no
Singles / roommates	$920	32%	no	no	no
Households by income bracket					
< $70,000	$1,310	39%	no	no	no
$70,000 - $79,999	$1,500	9%	yes	yes	no
$80,000 - $89,999	$1,690	6%	yes	yes	no
$90,000 +	-	46%	yes	yes	yes
Households by income categories					
Very low income	$311	1%	no	no	no
Low income	$778	16%	no	no	no
Moderate income	$1,245	20%	no	no	no
Median income	$1,868	25%	yes	yes	yes

Source: BC Government purchased Custom Statistics Canada Census Tabulations, UBC HART, CMHC

7.2 Anticipated Housing Demand

To determine the current and anticipated housing demand for the Town of Comox, we refer to the HNR demand calculation methodology, released by the Province in June 2024. The purpose of a standardized method for calculating demand ensures that all local governments produce consistent and comparable assessments of their housing need.

The HNR Method estimates the total number of housing units required to address a community's current and anticipated housing needs over 5- and 20-year timeframes, based on publicly available data sources that can be applied to communities of various scales. It is composed of the following six components (labeled A through F):

Component	Housing units for:	Intention
A	Households in Extreme Core Housing Need	To estimate the number of new units required for those in vulnerable housing situations. Extreme need refers to those paying more than 50% of household income on shelter costs.
B	Individuals experiencing homelessness	To quantify the supply of permanent housing units required for those currently experiencing homelessness.
C	Suppressed households	To address those households that were unable to form between 2006 and the present due to a constrained housing environment.
D	Anticipated household growth	To quantify the additional households required to accommodate an increasing population over twenty years. Note that anticipated growth for municipalities is based on the average of local and regional projections (thus, population / household growth trends discussed above may not follow the same trajectory as dwelling projections) and electoral areas use solely regional projections.
E	Increasing the rental vacancy rate to 3%	To add surplus rental units to restore local vacancy rates to levels representing a healthy and well-functioning rental housing market. Typically, rates between 3% and 5% are considered healthy rates.
F	A local demand buffer	To reflect additional demand for housing within a given community, beyond the minimum units required to adequately house current and anticipated residents. This is called the "demand buffer" and is designed to better account for the number of units required to meet "healthy" market demand in different communities. For the purposes of HNRs, a demand factor is based on a ratio of housing price to housing density, and is calculated for each applicable community.

Source: HNR demand calculation methodology[6]

Table 7-2 provides a summary of the result for each component, as required over the next 5 years and 20 years (as per legislative requirements).

- The results indicate that Comox may need to build 1,037 units by 2026 and 3,358 units by 2041. While much of the demand will come from future growth, a notable portion relates to the number of suppressed households since 2006 and the demand buffer adjustment.

[6] Ministry of Housing. (2024, June). Guidelines for Housing Needs Reports – HNR Method Technical Guidance. https://www2.gov.bc.ca/assets/gov/housing-and-tenancy/tools-for-government/uploads/hnr_method_technical_guidelines.pdf

- Components A, B, C, and E contemplate unmet "current" demand, and thus serve as an estimate of the existing shortage (without consideration of demographic growth since 2021, which is the reference year).

Table 7-2: Anticipated housing demand by anticipated period

Component	5 year (by 2026)	20 year (by 2041)
A: Extreme Core Housing Need	49	196
B: Homelessness	38	76
C: Suppressed households	68	273
D: Anticipated growth	720	2,170
E: Vacancy	10	38
F: Demand buffer	151	604
Total	1,037	3,358

7.2.1 Anticipated demand based on current year

Technical documentation from the BC Government for the HNR Method indicates that 2021 is the base year used for demand calculations, with 5- and 20-year projections extending to 2026 and 2041, respectively. Since no official methodology is provided to adjust these projections to the current year (2024 in the case of this report), this HNR also uses 2021 as the base year.

For those interested, Table 7-3 provides a summary of what the results might look like if 2024 were used as the base year. The adjustment is made using a straightforward approach: anticipated growth equals the projected change between 2024 and 2044, plus the change from 2021 to 2024, minus the estimated average dwelling construction during that 3-year period (i.e., the net change in demand). Note that the analysis of the following sections corresponds to the 2021 base year.

Table 7-3: HNR Method base year versus current year estimates

Description	5-year	20-year
Total demand from 2021 base year	1,037	3,358
Estimated total demand from current year (2024)	1,154	3,393

7.3 Distribution of Anticipated Demand

Accurately forecasting the required units by size or type necessitates sophisticated datasets encompassing past, present, and future individual household demand, along with an assessment of the economic feasibility of constructing these units by the private sector. Unfortunately, such granular data is not available, and even if it were, predictions would

remain imperfect. Thus, this report adopts two simple approaches, one to estimate minimum need and another to estimate market outcomes.

7.3.1 Process

The determination of demanded unit size by number of bedrooms varies between market and non-market housing. In market housing, bedroom size is driven by developers who cater to buyer or renter preferences, offering layouts that align with market trends. In contrast, non-market housing focuses on providing essential shelter, generally prioritizing minimum standards to ensure affordability. Thus, units in non-market housing are typically smaller and more utilitarian, designed to meet basic needs rather than personal preferences.

The HNR Method, in conjunction with UBC HART's income categories, gives a rough idea of what volume of current and future units demanded may be for market and non-market units. The process for determining the distribution of unit size (by number of bedrooms) for each is outlined below.

Need based on National Occupancy Standards

Understanding the variation in household sizes across different family types is crucial for determining the number of bedrooms required in a dwelling to meet specific needs. To estimate these outcomes, we use 2021 Census Public Use Microdata Files (PUMF) from Statistics Canada for BC's non-metropolitan areas, which allow us to estimate maintainer age to total bedroom conversion rates based on National Occupancy Standards (NOS). This methodology draws inspiration from the approach presented in the City of Burnaby's Housing Needs Report from January 2021.[7]

Briefly, Burnaby estimates the demand for particular unit sizes by determining the minimum number of bedrooms needed (as per NOS) based on the number of persons in a household and their relationship (e.g., a studio or one-bedroom unit as the minimum requirement to meet the needs of a couple without children). This approach is particularly useful when addressing non-market housing provision, a notable limitation being that there is no detailed information about the characteristics of non-market housing occupants. As a proxy, we limited the households studied to those that experienced Core Housing Need in 2021.

Table 7-4 summarizes how unit sizes (by number of bedrooms) may distribute by household type in 2021 for the aforementioned non-metropolitan areas of BC. Figure 7-4 displays the results of converting the table results to unit sizes by maintainer age. The purpose of this relationship being that we can then apply these ratios to household projections.

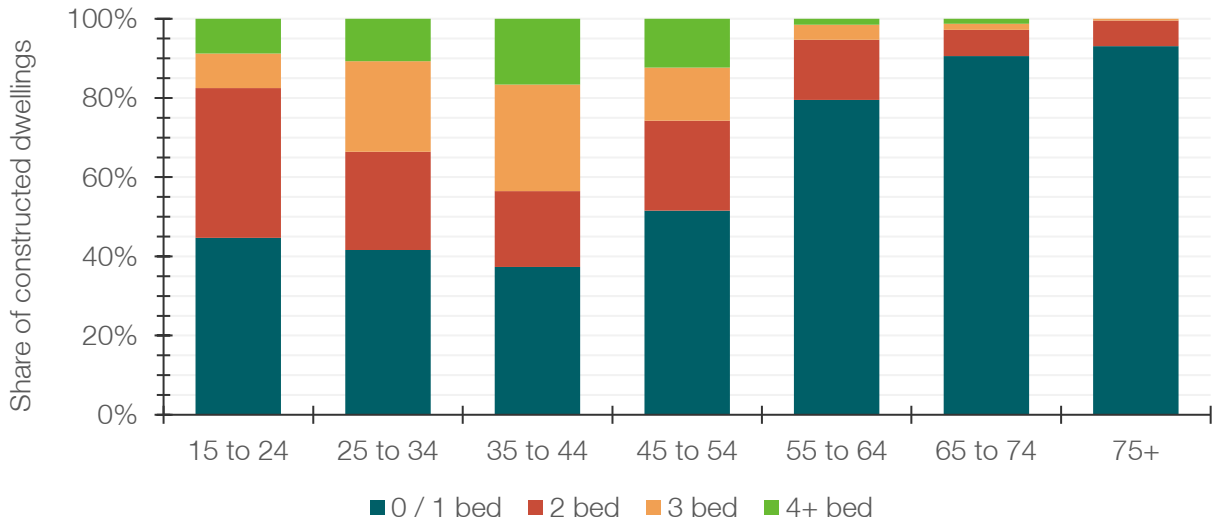
[7] City of Burnaby. (2021 January). Housing Needs Report. https://www.burnaby.ca/sites/default/files/acquiadam/2021-07/Housing%20Needs%20Report.pdf

Table 7-4: Household type to unit size conversion for those in Core Housing Need, BC non-CMA

Household type	Total	Studio / 1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4+ bed
Couple w/o child(ren)	5,810	100%	0%	0%	0%
Couple w/ child(ren)	3,075	0%	39%	36%	25%
Lone parent	8,735	0%	50%	35%	15%
Non-relatives	34,475	92%	7%	1%	0%
Other families	1,470	0%	0%	40%	60%
Total	53,565	70%	15%	9%	6%

Source: 2021 Census Public Use Microdata File (PUMF) – Statistics Canada

Figure 7-4: Household type to unit size for those in Core Housing Need, BC non-CMA



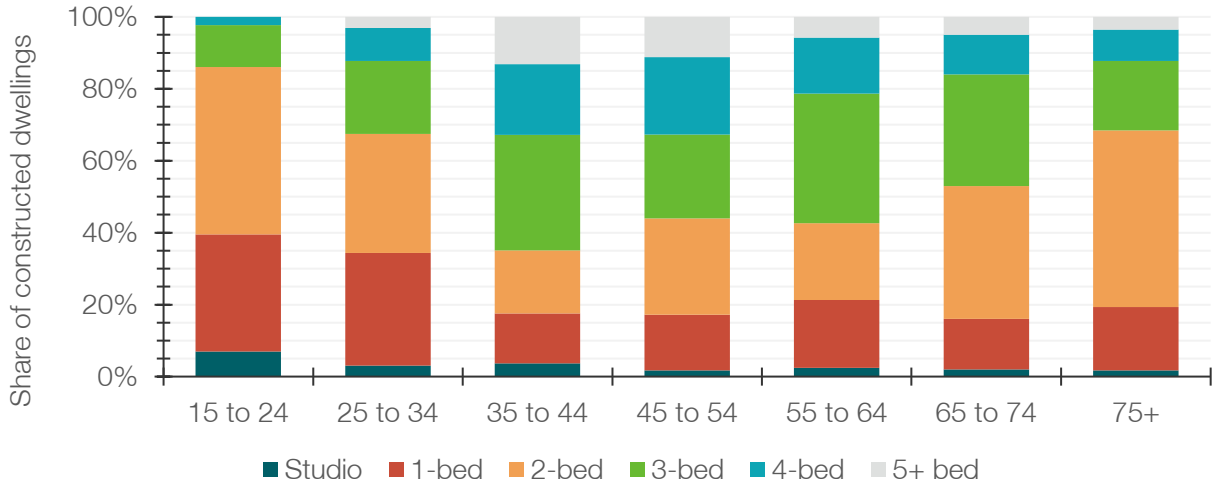
Source: 2021 Census Public Use Microdata File (PUMF) – Statistics Canada

Demand based on recent market housing outcomes

While the preceding analysis addresses spatial requirements, private market outcomes often notably differ. To estimate these outcomes, we utilize the same 2021 PUMF data for BC's non-metropolitan areas. Specifically, we establish how primary maintainers distribute across unit sizes (by number of bedrooms) for dwellings constructed between 2016 and 2021.

By incorporating projected household maintainer age data, we can assess how bedroom demand may evolve over the specified period based on anticipated demographic changes. Figure 7-5 illustrates the construction activity in those five years, disaggregated by number of bedrooms and maintainer age cohorts.

Figure 7-5: Distribution of dwellings (by number of bedroom) among primary maintainer age cohorts, 2016 to 2021, all areas of BC outside CMAs



Source: 2021 Census Public Use Microdata File (PUMF) – Statistics Canada

Results are then further adjusted for the change in the above relationship from 2011 to 2021 (2011 data reflects construction activity from 2006 to 2011) to estimate how preferences may be changing over time (with the understanding and limitation that changes in preference may be influenced more so by the existing strained conditions of BC housing markets).

Minimum need versus potential market outcomes

Table 7-5 provides a concise summary of the overall distributions derived from both analyses, as of the 20-year projection period. The disparity of bedroom number distribution underscores the absence of a universal solution in housing provision. This suggests that while relying solely on the market may lead in a specific direction (i.e., centred around wants/preferences – like a couple purchasing a home with extra bedrooms in anticipation of a growing family), there remains a need to offer smaller unit sizes, especially for affordable housing initiatives.

Table 7-5: Share of dwellings by number of bedrooms, minimum need versus market driven outcomes

	Studio / 1-bed	2-bed	3-bed	4+ bed
Minimum need	70%	14%	10%	6%
Market driven outcomes	20%	32%	27%	21%

7.3.2 Results

As mentioned, a subsequent analysis of the HNR Method provides a rough idea of what Comox could expect in terms of market and non-market housing demand currently and over the projection period. Note that HNR Method guidelines do not prescribe how to perform this analysis, allowing for community level discretion.

Table 7-6 summarizes the results of applying the dwelling size distributions presented in Table 7-5 to these estimations. The outcome of this analysis is a table outlining anticipated

demand, disaggregated by the number of bedrooms and intended market / price model. Note that non-market housing has been further separated into "affordable / below-market" housing (i.e., housing explicitly offered at prices below market, like the 80% of Median Market Rent criteria described by CMHC funding opportunities) and "deeply affordable" housing (i.e., rent-geared-to-income housing, often combined with support services).

To distinguish what portion of the community might benefit from non-market housing, we consider HART's income categories and how they overlap across the housing continuum. Briefly, we apply the historical proportions of households earning "very low" and "low" incomes to demand totals. The demand for deeply affordable and below-market units represents these respective income categories.

Table 7-6: Anticipated demand disaggregated by anticipated price model and required number of bedrooms

	Market		Affordable / below-market		Deeply affordable		Total	
	5-year	20-year	5-year	20-year	5-year	20-year	5-year	20-year
0- / 1-bed	157	507	143	481	37	84	337	1,072
2-bed	257	828	28	98	7	17	293	942
3-bed	212	682	17	66	4	11	234	759
4+ bed	160	537	11	42	3	7	174	586
Total	786	2,553	200	686	51	120	1,037	3,358

- As mentioned, the 5- and 20-year demand projections suggest a need for 1,037 and 3,358 units, respectively.

- Market housing should remain the primary contributor to the local inventory, though there is a clear need for non-market interventions. By 2041, Comox may benefit from 686 affordable / below-market offerings and 120 additional deeply affordable units.

- As suggested by the previously calculated shares of units by number of bedrooms, market housing demand will likely focus more on 2- and 3-bedroom units; whereas, non-market solutions may distribute more to 0- and 1-bedroom dwellings.

For the most part, the market will ultimately decide whether new dwellings are built for rental or ownership based on prices and preferences. Nevertheless, adapting the 2021 PUMF data to estimate how demand might distribute between owner and renter demand is useful for understanding which price models might be most needed over time.

Table 7-7 showcases the results of this analysis, highlighting how different forms of housing may distribute across time and tenure.

- While it is likely that market housing demand will mainly be for owner-occupied housing, there is a notable forecasted interest in expanding the local rental inventory.

- Given that households in greatest housing need are most prominent in the rental market (i.e., greater prevalence of single income earners), rental demand projections suggest about 42% of new units should be at least affordable or at below-market prices. While non-market solutions typically take the form of rentals, data anticipates there could also be demand for below-market ownership options. This could mean alternative forms of ownership such as co-operatives or community land trusts.

Table 7-7: Anticipated demand disaggregated by anticipated price model and tenure

	5-year (by 2026)		20-year (by 2041)	
Price model:	Owner	Renter	Owner	Renter
Market housing	545	241	1,763	790
Affordable / below-market	77	123	267	418
Deeply affordable	0	51	0	120
Total	622	415	2,030	1,328

8 Then & Now

In recent years, significant changes have occurred in the local, regional, and national demographic and housing context. These shifts have been primarily influenced by the COVID-19 pandemic and related migration trends. As a result, this report offers insight into post-pandemic housing need, while the 2020 document focused on the pre-pandemic outlook. The following table summarizes notable changes between documents.

Table 8-1: Key statistics from 2020 and 2024 reports

Item	2020 report	2024 report
Population change (2016 to 2021)	Projected	Actual (BC Estimates)
Total population	+ 7%	+ 5%
Youth (0 to 24)	- 2%	+ 4%
Adults (25 to 64)	+ 4%	0%
Seniors (65+)	+ 20%	+ 17%
Household change (2016 to 2021)	Projected	Actual (BC Estimates)
Total households	+ 10%	+ 6%
Adult-led (25 to 64)	+ 4%	- 2%
Senior-led (65+)	+ 19%	+ 18%
Housing indicators	2016 Census	2021 Census
Inadequate dwellings	4%	4%
Unsuitable dwellings	1%	2%
Unaffordable dwellings	18%	17%
Households in Core Housing Need	8%	7%
Households in Extreme CHN	4%	3%
Change in dwelling prices	2016 to 2019	2019 to 2022
Median purchase price	+ 42%	+ 46%
Change in rents	2017 to 2020	2020 to 2023
Median rent	+ 23%	+ 9%

The previous report projected higher population and household growth between 2016 and 2021 than what actually transpired, largely due to a contracting adult (25 to 64 year old) population and adult-led households. Actual senior-led household growth was also shy of projections, contributing to the

Even if lower than anticipated, household growth does indicate a local increase in housing demand since 2016, further supported by notable rises in local housing prices.

Considering this increased demand and rising housing costs, one might expect affordability metrics to have worsened from 2016 to 2021. However, according to 2021 data, this was not the case; 18% of households lived in unaffordable dwellings and 8% faced Core Housing Need in 2016, while the figures were 17% and 7% again, respectively, in 2021. It is important to acknowledge the impact of COVID-19 relief payments distributed in 2020 (the taxfiler year referenced by the 2021 Census), which temporarily helped many more households afford their shelter / living expenses. Support also likely came from controlled rent increases, implemented by the BC government in 2019. Nevertheless, with increasing housing costs and higher interest rates, it is reasonable to assume that these metrics have likely worsened since 2016, not improved as suggested by 2021 results.

9 Conclusion

The Town of Comox's housing landscape is evolving, driven by an increase in both population and households from 2016 to 2021. This growth trend is expected to continue through the next two decades, indicating a sustained rise in housing demand.

This population expansion has coincided with notable price increases in recent years, with the median home price appreciating 46% between 2019 and 2022.

In 2021, approximately 7% of local households experienced Core Housing Need, with a higher prevalence among renters, single individuals, and lone parents. Meeting the demand for affordable housing options is crucial. Estimates suggests that about 686 below-market and 120 deeply affordable units could be required over the next 20 years to meet the needs of those most vulnerable.

Overall, the Town of Comox may need an additional 3,358 housing units to be built by 2041 to meet anticipated demand and mitigate market imbalances – based on the Province's HNR Method. Projections anticipate that about 1,037 units could be needed by 2026. Most of the demand should be addressed by market housing, though there exists a forecasted need to supply below-market and deeply affordable alternatives, across both owner- and renter-occupied housing.