

Housing Needs Assessment Report

North Coast Regional District Electoral Area D



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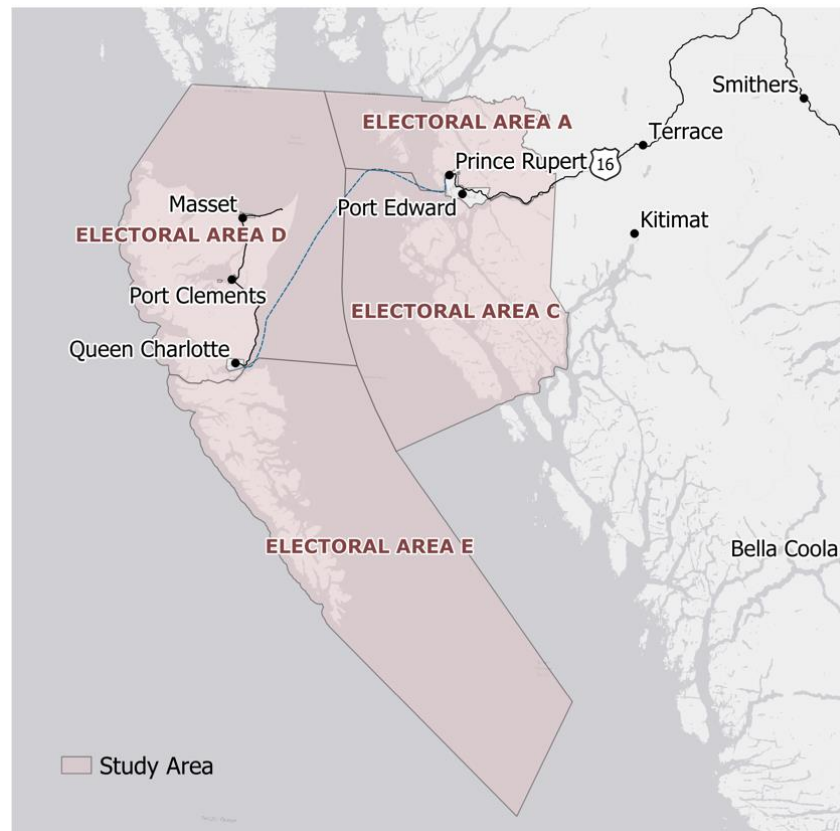
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INTRODUCTION

The north coast of British Columbia (BC) is a unique and beautiful part of the world, attracting tourist visitors from across the province and around the world. At the point where BC meets Alaska on the Pacific Coast, is the North Coast Regional District (NCRD). The area of the NCRD considered for this study specifically excludes the municipal areas within the NCRD's boundaries (City of Prince Rupert, Village of Queen Charlotte, Village of Masset, District of Port Edward, and Village of Port Clements) and excludes the First Nations within the boundaries (Old Massett, Skidegate, Metlakatla, Lax Kw'alaams, Kitkatla, and Hartley Bay).

The NCRD has been experiencing increasing challenges related to the cost and supply of housing. Some of these challenges are common to communities across BC and have received prominent media and political attention, while others are unique aspects of the demographic makeup and geographical characteristics of this region. The NCRD commissioned this report to find solutions to concerns about housing with funding support provided by the Union of BC Municipalities. This report is part of a series of four reports, one for each of the Electoral Areas (A, C, D, and E) of the NCRD. Calibrate Assessments Ltd was engaged to conduct research to measure and define the NCRD's current and future housing challenges and to bring a set of recommendations on how to address these challenges at the municipal level.



Background

The Province of British Columbia enacted new legislation (Housing Needs Report Regulation B.C. Reg. 90/2019) which took effect on April 16, 2019. This legislation requires local governments to collect data, analyze trends and present reports that describe current and anticipated housing needs in their communities. This report will also fulfil the reporting obligations of the North Coast Regional District under this legislation.

Methodology

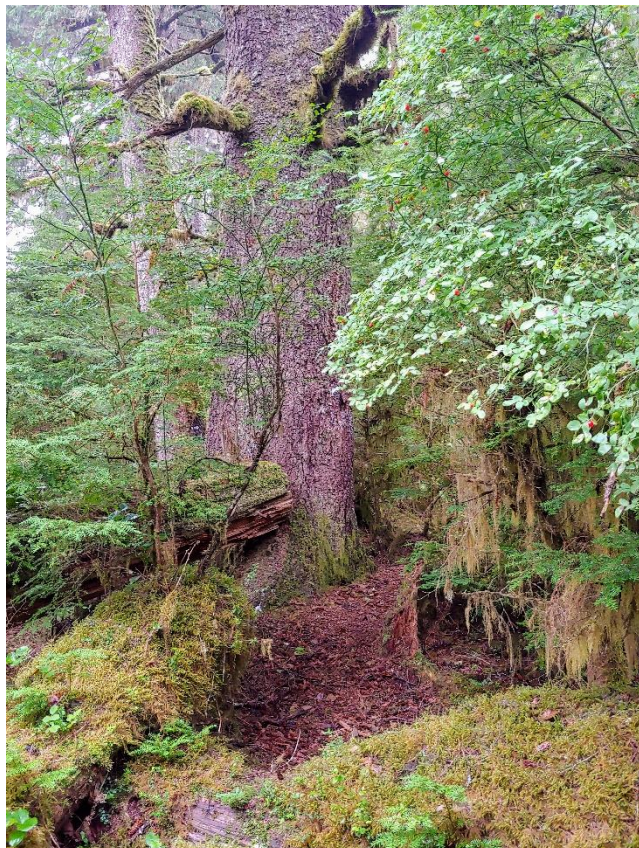
This report begins with a review of the characteristics of the region, with a specific focus on this Electoral Area. In the process of becoming familiar with these communities, and to give them voice into this report, the consultant facilitated opportunities for stakeholder feedback. Phone, video and in-person meetings were held with key stakeholders, open feedback sessions were held in several locations, and an online survey was conducted. Several verbatim quotations from the survey are included throughout this report to bring in the lived experience perspective of residents. Findings from the various forms of the community engagement process are discussed here in this report. The report then turns to the data analysis, providing summary data of community demographic and economic characteristics along with projections. This data gives a sense of the current and anticipated need for housing in the region. A housing profile then looks at the current and anticipated demand for housing in the area. The intersection of the community's feedback, gaps between supply and demand, and anticipated shortages and pricing trends is then examined and distilled into the key housing challenges, both current and anticipated. In the conclusion of the report, these challenges are mapped to a set of actionable recommendations that will lead to solutions.

REGIONAL BACKGROUND – THE NORTH COAST REGIONAL DISTRICT

The NCRD has a population of 18,133 people living across a land area of 19,775.41 km² as of 2016 in the area surrounding and including the City of Prince Rupert, some islands along the coast, and the islands of Haida Gwaii. The four electoral areas A, C, D, and E include much of the land area but only a small percentage of the area's population. The 2016 Census estimated the populations of Area A at 41, C at 68, D at 539, and E at 340, for a total of 988. The remaining population of the NCRD lives within the municipalities and First Nations in the region. The NCRD was formerly known as the Skeena-Queen Charlotte Regional District.

Area D Community Profile

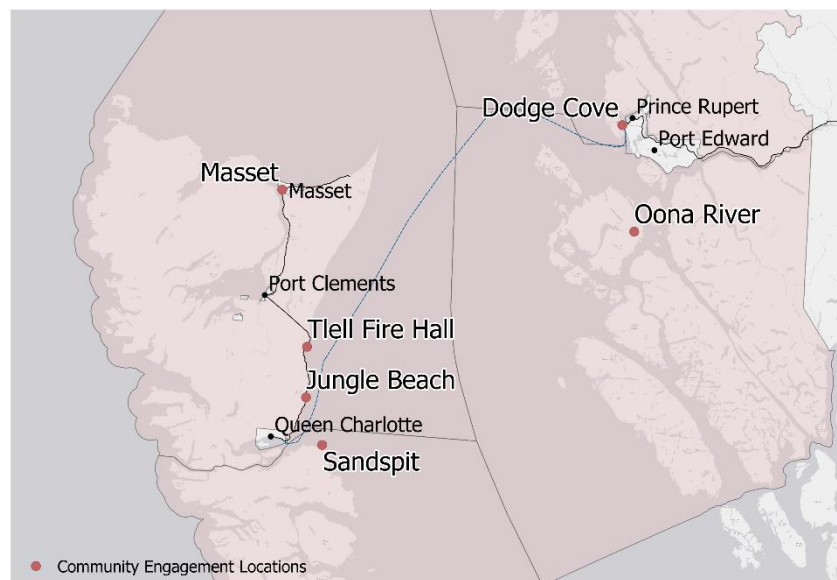
Area D comprises the rural areas of Graham Island in Haida Gwaii. There were 539 residents according to the 2016 Census. Electoral Area D comprises several distinct rural communities including Tow Hill, Tlell, and Lawnhill. The area specifically excludes the municipal villages of Queen Charlotte, Port Clements, and Masset, as well as the Haida communities of Old Massett and Skidegate.



COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT

To properly understand the issues related to housing in any given region, it is crucial to get out and hear people's concerns and discuss their experiences. This helps fill in gaps between available forms of hard data and gives vital clues as to the potential causes for shortages and affordability challenges, as well as informing the direction of some potential solutions. This need for engagement takes on heightened importance in small study areas like this, where many conventional data forms are not available, such as Census data, or are unreliable due to small sample sizes, such as with average sale prices for real estate.

Key stakeholders were consulted, and community engagement meetings were held in each of the four study areas of the NCRD to ensure that the unique voices in distinct community areas are heard. In-person visits were made to all parts of the region by the consultant team. To account for the fact that some members of the community would not be able to attend community engagement meetings, an online survey was also made available to residents and promoted through the NCRD website and social media.



Some of the feedback received at community engagement meetings and on calls was very specific to the issues of the community being discussed. The feedback for this area is presented below.

Other feedback from meetings and calls was relevant across multiple or all areas of the NCRD, and that feedback is summarized and captured below under the heading "Common Themes for the NCRD".

NCRD Electoral Area D Community Engagements

Plans for community engagement in Electoral Area D were timed and crafted to coincide with a reopening of the ability to travel to Haida Gwaii from the mainland and host meetings between waves of the COVID-19 pandemic. We were able to hold three public meetings in Lawnhill, Tlell, and Masset on August 3rd, 4th and 5th, 2021. To allow for social distancing, we set up under portable awning tents and met with people outdoors rather than renting indoor venues. This was also in keeping with direction from the Haida Nation on how to visit safely in Haida Gwaii.

In these meetings, we were given a lot of detailed information about the nature of community life on Haida Gwaii, the history of the settler communities, and the unique housing challenges of residents. The following observations were shared by participants in the community engagements and are not necessarily representative of the views of the author of this report or the NCRD. Also, please note that people from one engagement aren't necessarily from that community but may have traveled from another part of Haida Gwaii to attend on a more suitable date.

Lawnhill August 3rd:

- Several of the year-round residents commute regularly to Prince Rupert on private boats for work or to visit another property that they own on the mainland.
- One woman came here through the wwoof program which means that she came to work on a farm gardening or farming in exchange for room, board, and experience. They are not usually given compensation for their work. It is usually a temporary job that can last from a week to even a few years
- There is a new low-income complex in Queen Charlotte (Alder House). It is increasing difficult to find rental housing for people who come to work like healthcare workers. They often get interns or students to help. The health authority usually gets housing before they arrive, but it is getting harder.
- One of the participants said that they are building a rental suite above their garage and they are planning to rent it out, but are still thinking of renting it out short-term/nightly during peak tourist season in the summer.
- Another thing that is in low supply is that there is no housing for adults with developmental disabilities or other needs for minor health care supports.
- It is also hard to find seniors housing. Some people may have to move off the island as they age.
- There does not seem to be much hostility toward Air BnB's despite the lack of rentals. There seems to be a general recognition of the economic benefit from the tourist industry and a respect for people to do what they wish with their own property.
- They are also noticing that house prices are beginning to increase on the islands as well, although not as dramatic as has been experienced in the rest of the province.

Tlell August 4th:

- The economy in this area is dependant on tourism, forestry, and commercial fishing. Things have been quite tough during the COVID period, but the communities have pulled together to support each other's small businesses to get through this period together.
- It is difficult to find trades such as electricians, plumbers, etc on the island. There are few options and builders are often fully booked or very expensive.
- A resident of the Lawn Hill area has a second home on their property. In the past, they used to rent it out as a long-term rental, but found that they had many challenges with renters who either didn't pay their rent on time or would cause damage to the home and then refuse to pay for the repairs. Since then, they have now switched to using this home either to accommodate guests for their small business offering fishing charters, or posting it as an AirBnB.

- Despite the shortage of long-term rental stock, participants at this session and the one at Jungle Beach do not seem overly concerned with the rise of AirBnB's. They feel that homeowners should have the freedom to use their property as they see fit. Upon a suggestion of whether there should/could be any policy or legislation restricting AirBnB's, all of them felt strongly against that possibility (it seems that any effort to increase long-term rental stock should be based on incentives for long-term rentals rather than restrictions on AirBnB's.)

Masset August 5th:

- One participant has been coming to this area for seasonal work for 10 years. He noticed that it was very easy to find rental housing at the beginning of that time period. You could pick up a paper and there would be a list of rentals that were available. His experience has been that it got steadily more difficult to find a place in the last few years. He has never seen places advertised for work, and had to find housing through word-of mouth. This year, he was about to give up when he finally had a friend offer to rent him a room in his house. He speculated that this is a result of people renting out their places as Air BnB's rather than long-term accommodations.
- Employers often provide accommodation for employees if they need to recruit off-island. One of the participants shared that they are renovating a business in Masset and are upgrading the upper floor of the building to be able to provide their own worker housing on-site. This individual reported that they have been doing this for the past few years for their seasonal tourism business.
- An entrepreneur in Masset is building a new structure that was said to have a laundromat on the ground floor, and three housing units on the upper floor. They will be renting them out as Air BnB's rather than longer-term rentals because they believe that this will provide a better financial return on investment.
- One person said that there was a woman who couldn't find a house and so became homeless. Many people from the reserve can't find housing in Old Masset. She had to buy her own house in Masset until she could move into her mother's house. There was one situation where 21 people were living in a three bedroom house.
- In Masset, there are many people who don't live here, but bought cheap lots years ago. They are being held as speculation, so they are left vacant.
- Apparently, there are jobs around, but the wages are so bad that you can't afford housing and food.
- There are many homeless people who have to leave Old Masset and live in abandoned houses.

Online Survey

An online survey was conducted in the spring and summer of 2021 to give the community in the NCRD an opportunity to share their thoughts on the housing needs and demand in the NCRD. The complete survey results are captured in Appendix 1 of this report. There were 188 responses received by the posted deadline, a very strong response rate given the size of the total population. The results below give quotes from Area D only, but additional responses are all captured in Appendix 2. The highlighted ones are presented here to share some of the regional context and views about common challenges

related to increasing housing sale prices and rental rates, and shortages of appropriate forms of housing in most communities.

“There are currently two squatters within 2km radius, mostly on the beach. One is living in a shack and the other in a tent.”

“People couch surf or stay in suboptimal housing because most rental properties have become Airbnb’s.”

“A few people who can not afford rent find vacant homes to squat in.”

“When the hospital was being built a lot of accommodation went to housing workers who needed to be brought in. There are School District building, Canada Parks buildings and FLNRO building that sit empty waiting for workers. These could be utilized by renters or sold for family homes.”

“Many rentals that would be rented by families and locals are now turned into Air B&B's. They are catering to short term tourist accommodations and misplacing local families and residents. Short term money gains. Many have stated they make more money as an Air B&B then a long-term rental.”

“Tourist can afford to spend \$300+ per night while residents cannot afford \$30/day or \$900/month.”

“Many people who own rental properties use them as vacation rentals instead of for long term rentals for local residents.”

“There are a number of homes owned for recreational purposes that sit empty most of the year.”

“Our house has to be vacated June-August for the landlord to come home.”

“I'm concerned that Haida people and long-term community members will be forced out of Haida Gwaii because there is little safe, affordable housing. Many properties are becoming 'summer homes' and these sit empty all but two weeks of the year.

These are wealthy people who can afford high prices that many folks on Haida Gwaii cannot. It would be great to see some priority made to sell to Haida and local people as opposed to the highest off-islands bidder. Or, have some kind of secondary/vacation home tax to at least subsidize affordable and accessible housing.”

“In Queen Charlotte there are a great number of single-family homes owned by the RCMP, DFO, Forestry, and Parks Canada that are almost always all vacant. They are mostly 3-bedroom homes, upkept and maintained but empty. We are experiencing a housing crisis where families cannot find affordable housing and housing prices becoming very inflated over the past 5+ years is making the problem even worse because when houses do come up for sale, they are not affordable for the people who need them most. These houses were built to accommodate the greater number of employees that existed here before government cutbacks in the 90s. It is not right to have so many empty houses in our town when so many people need housing. Our municipal government has attempted to address this concern to the various appropriate federal government agencies and have so far been essentially stonewalled.”

“I live in a temporary space that is not suitable to stay in long-term.

I would move if there were appropriate spaces but none are available. Most are expensive or have weird lease parameters (e.g. stay 10 months and move out in the summer). I have moved 3 times in the 5 years I've been on island. The first rental I was in, I had my lease ended abruptly due to a family member moving into the

space, the second rental had a pest problem (rats). And now I am in a basement suite usually used to temporarily house semester students.”

It’s clear from the nature of the comments on the survey that residents of Electoral Area D have serious concerns about the increase of housing prices, but even more so the lack of suitable long-term rental accommodations due to increasing numbers of off-Island owners occupying homes only seasonally or by keeping them as short-term rental investments.

In addition to the verbatim feedback, the tables below give the breakdown of responses from Area D. The other areas and the full overall results are presented in Appendix 1. For area D residents, however, it seems very clear that the biggest issue by far is the lack of availability of long-term rental housing.

Where do you currently reside?	
Queen Charlotte	23
Port Clements	3
Skidegate Area	5
Lawn Hill	1
Tlell	7
Miller Creek	1
Masset	9
Tow Hill	10
Old Massett	1
How many years have you lived in the North Coast Regional District?	
Less than 1 year	0
1-5 years	15
5-10 years	8
10-20 years	12
20-25 years	4
More than 25 years	21

Have all or most of those years been in the same home?	
Yes	30
No	30

Which of the following best describes your current housing type?	
Apartment	3

Basement suite or other secondary suite	6
Duplex/Triplex	2
Room in someone else's home	4
Hotel/Motel room	1
Single family home	39
Mobile home	1
Recreational vehicle (e.g. travel trailer, 5th wheel)	1

Do you rent or own your housing described above?

Rent	28
Own	31

Is there additional accommodation on the same property?

No	37
Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabins and other secondary detached housing 	22

Is your housing type appropriate for your current needs?

Strongly Agree	16
Agree	17
Neutral	6
Disagree	14
Strongly Disagree	7

If your current housing type is not appropriate for your current needs, what is preventing you from obtaining appropriate housing?

I can afford my preferred housing type, but there are no units of this type where I live	5
I can afford my preferred housing type, but there are not enough units of this type where I live	9
I can afford my preferred housing type, but there are none available in my preferred location	0
I cannot afford my preferred housing type	15

How much do you currently spend on housing per month? (Rent or mortgage only - excluding utilities, taxes, etc)

Less than \$500	11
-----------------	----

\$500-\$1000	36
\$1000-\$1500	12
\$1500-\$2000	1
More than \$2000	0

Do you struggle to pay for your housing?

No	36
Yes, sometimes	20
Yes, all or most of the time	4

If yes, do you currently receive some form of rent payment support? Describe.

Yes	2
No	17

Is your home in need of major improvements or repairs?

Strongly agree	17
Agree	19
Neutral	10
Disagree	11
Strongly disagree	3

Are there many vacant homes in your area?

Strongly agree	6
Agree	4
Neutral	6
Disagree	16
Strongly disagree	28

Is homelessness or squatting an issue in your area? Describe. *(Summary of short answer responses)

Yes	20
No	12

Does your community have difficulty accessing municipal services (transportation, water, electricity)?

*(Short answer descriptions not included here)

Yes (sewer, water, transportation)	13
No	9

Does seasonal accommodation (for seasonal or temporary workers, specifically) present a barrier to providing year-round housing for residents in your community?

Yes	31
No	21
Unsure	2

Does seasonal accommodation (for recreation and tourism specifically) present a barrier to providing year-round housing for residents in your community?

Yes	49
No	9
Unsure	0

If you are an Elder/senior or person with a disability, do you face accessibility challenges in your current form of housing? Select all that apply.

I struggle to maintain my home and surrounding outdoor area	2
Stairs or other architectural features make it difficult for me to navigate my home	3
My housing is more remote than I would like, and I struggle to access community resources	2
I would like to live in a more communal form of housing (i.e. co-op, seniors home), but cannot afford it	2
I would like to live in a more communal form of housing, but cannot find any places available	1
My current form of housing is too large for me	0

****Opportunity was also given for further comments.**

Common Themes for the NCRD

There are some common themes that emerged across all of the different methods of engaging with members of the community.

Housing prices are increasing rapidly in all corners of the NCRD, making it more difficult for prospective buyers from within the region to enter the housing market. They face competition from people outside of the region who are selling off substantial real estate assets in bigger centres such as Calgary or Vancouver, and can always “out-bid” the local buyers with limited income.

All areas of the NCRD are also experiencing a shortage of rental housing. This shortage is most acutely felt in pockets frequented by summer tourist visitors, such as Areas D and E, where long-term rentals are being converted to short-term accommodations.

All four Electoral Areas considered as part of this group of reports are not accessible from the mainland of BC without using private boats, ferries, or airplanes. This has a direct impact on construction costs from the higher cost of sourcing and transporting materials on the mainland and then bringing them in by ferry or barge. Related to this issue, the relatively small population sizes in the NCRD combined with very high wages being offered in bigger urban centres has resulted in a chronic shortage of skilled building trades. This creates a barrier to the creation of incremental new units and could also result in a lack of maintenance which ultimately makes a dwelling uninhabitable.



Finally, there is a general lack of seniors housing in all parts of the NCRD, including the municipalities within its boundaries. This lack of options for seniors is most acutely felt by those living in more remote pockets because relocating onto the mainland will completely disrupt their social networks and create negative health impacts. Finding ways for people to live in their existing homes longer will have positive impacts on these communities and the overall health of many individuals.

COMMUNITY DEMOGRAPHIC & ECONOMIC PROFILES

This section has all the data about the community from sources such as the federal government census and BC Stats. This data is generally related to the measurement of demand for housing through shifting demographics and economic conditions. Due to the fact that the Electoral Areas are sometimes below

the cutoff size that these sources provide (to protect individual privacy of Census respondents), we are only able to provide aggregate information for the entire NCRD in many cases. Where the individual areas’ information is not available, projections needed to be made from community engagements and the surveys to estimate numbers for each Electoral Area for BC government reporting.

Data including Forecasts

The following tables show the overall NCRD data, with breakouts per EA only where available.

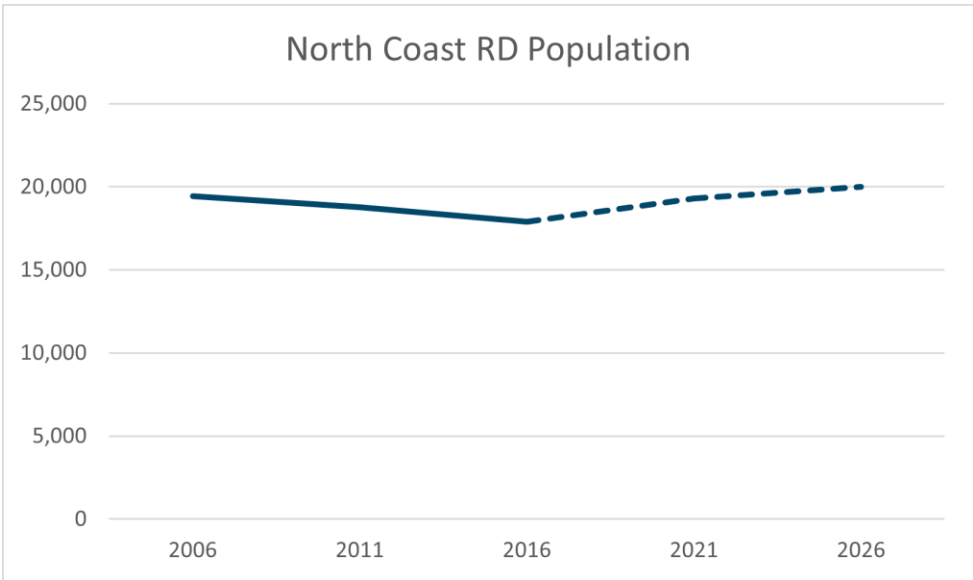


Figure 1 – North Coast RD Population, source Statistics Canada Census Data

The population of the NCRD overall including the municipal areas is projected to continue to increase slightly in the coming five years.

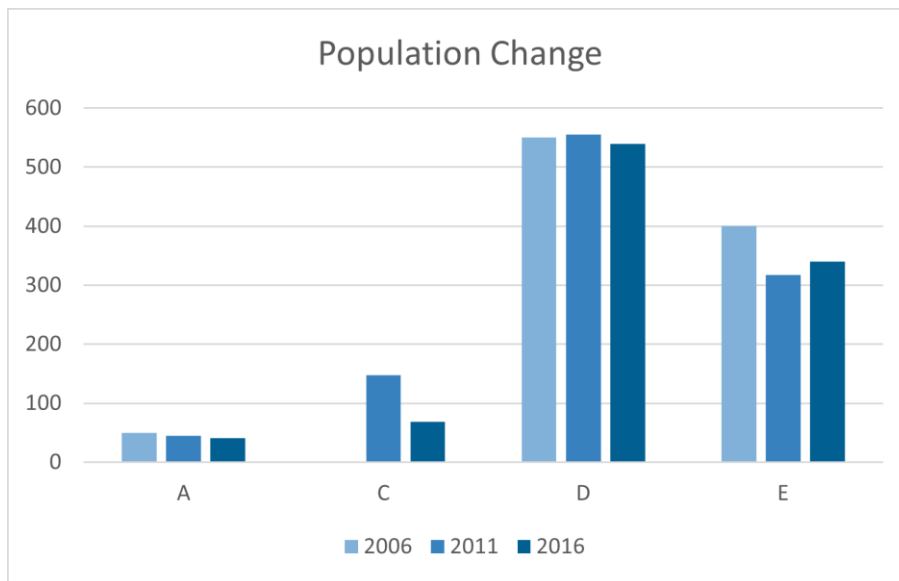


Figure 2 - Population Change in NCRD - Source Statistics Canada Census Data

The population of Electoral Area D is noted as 539 people in the 2016 Census. This reflects a slight decrease from 550 people in 2006.

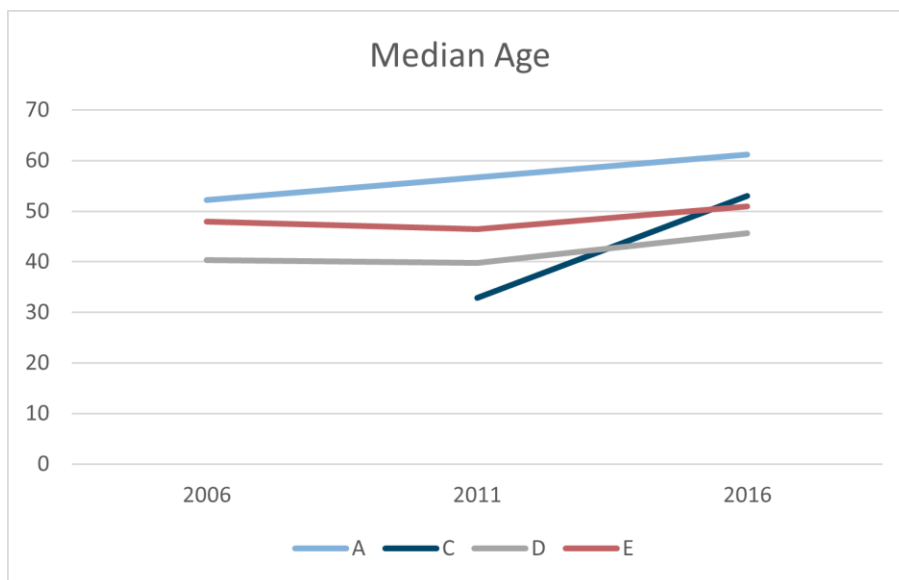


Figure 3 – North Coast EA's Median Age - Source Statistics Canada Census Data

The median age of the NCRD Electoral Area D is increasing steadily according to the Census from 2006 to 2016. The median age in Area D increased from 40.3 years of age to 45.6 from 2006 to 2016. This may reflect the movement of a small number of people given the total population size. The average age as of 2016 was 43.2 years of age, up from 37.8.

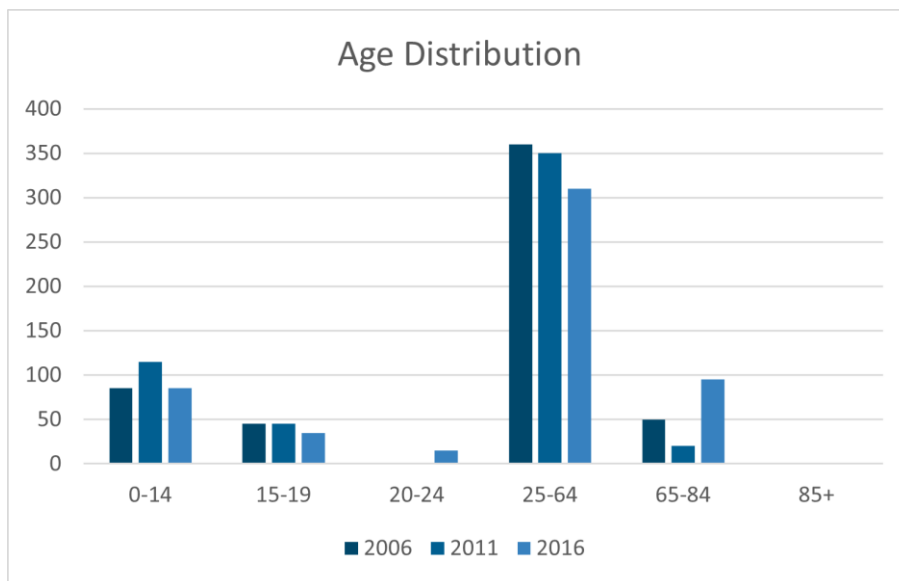


Figure 4 - Age Distribution Area D - Source Statistics Canada Census Data

Area D has a fairly young population with a significant population of children, unlike Areas A and C. The majority of the population are working age, with a relatively small number of people between age 65-84. The distribution graphic shows how the population might not be changing as much overall, but there is a marked and steady decline in the younger and working-age population groups as families with children are in some cases moving off-Island.

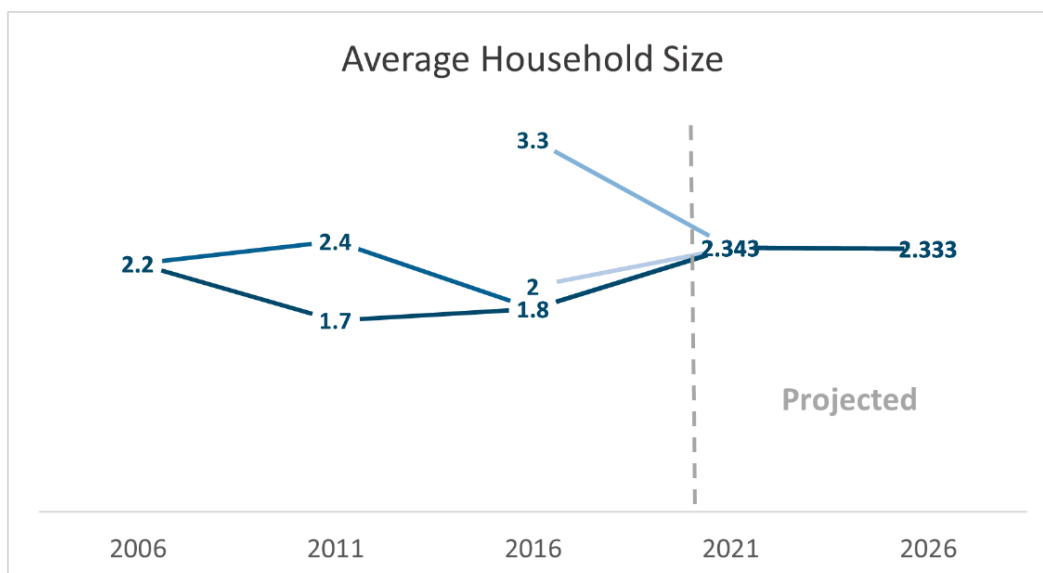


Figure 5 - NCRD overall avg household size - Source BC Stats

The table above shows a fairly stable forecast in household size for the NCRD overall. Unless additional young families move to Area D, it is likely that the average household size will at some point begin to decline.

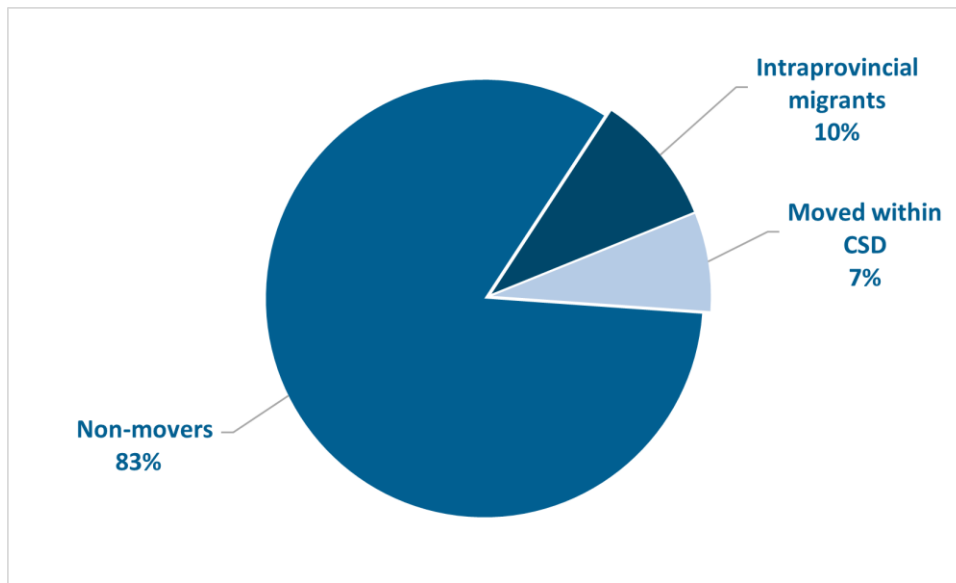


Figure 6 - NCRD EA D Migration - Source Statistics Canada Census Data

The figure above shows that most year-round residents of Area D are long-time residents. Only 10% of residents have moved into Area D in the past year despite significant turnover in housing sales. Some 7% are from within this census subdivision, and none within the last year are from other provinces. Other parts of the NCRD see a more diverse background of migration and movement, with more from out of province, some coming from within BC and others moving within the Census division area.

Income figures are shown below for Electoral Area D alongside the other parts of the NCRD and comparisons to elsewhere. The Area D numbers comprise a significant part of the population of the NCRD but show significantly below average for the NCRD. This is because the NCRD overall figure includes people who live within the municipal areas.

Location	Income 2015 (Constant \$)	Low Income Status (%)
EA A: Dodge Cove	-	-
EA C: Oona River	-	-
EA D: Rural Graham	63,424	19.6
EA E: Sandspit	52,480	16.9
NCRD Overall	64,683	20.0
British Columbia	69,995	15.5
Canada	70,336	14.2

Figure 7 - NCRD EA's and Overall income and low income status - Source Statistics Canada Census Data

The income data for Areas might be helpful context to the reader. The NCRD Overall has an average income for 2015 of \$64,683 with 20% considered “low income”, as compared to the provincial average

for BC which was \$69,995 and 15.5%, or Canada-wide at \$70,336 and 14.2%. Area D’s median household income is roughly comparable to the overall NCRD, as is the percentage of the population

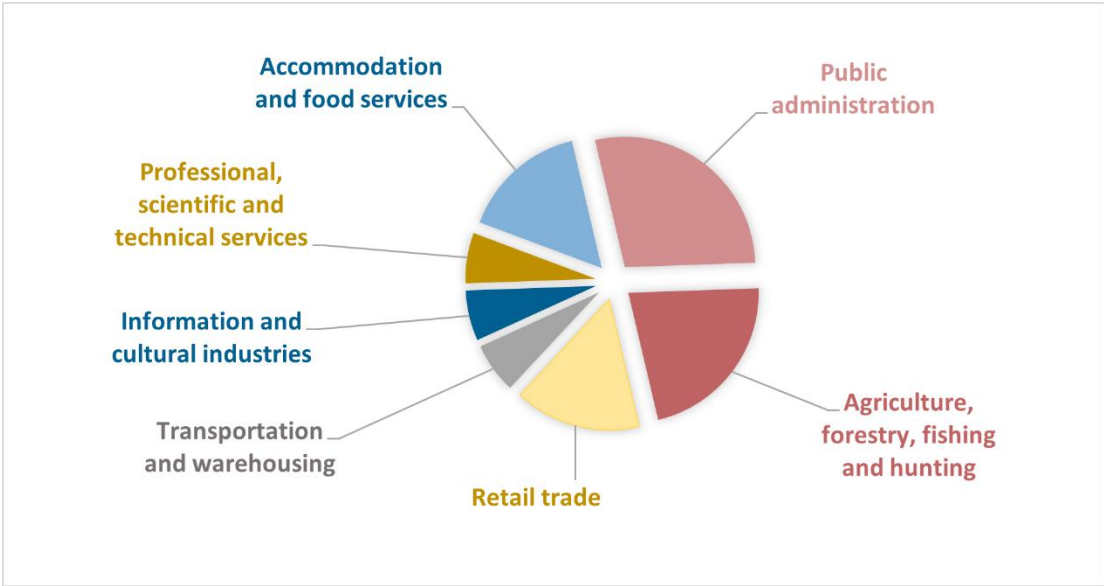


Figure 8 - Economic sectors & labour force NCRD overall - Source Statistics Canada Census Data

For the NCRD overall, it is clear that a very diversified economy has developed. Historically there has been an over-reliance on certain resource booms, leading to sharp increases and declines in housing prices and rental rates/vacancies. This is a positive development which should lead to greater long-term stability for the community and a healthier, more stable real estate market.

Location	Unemployment Rate
EA A: Dodge Cove	0%
EA C: Oona River	0%
EA D: Rural Graham	6.2%
EA E: Sandspit	13.8%
NCRD Overall	12.3%
British Columbia	6.7%
Canada	7.7%

Figure 8 - NCRD Unemployment rates per EA vs BC/Canada - Source Statistics Canada Census Data

The unemployment rates reported above show that the unemployment rates in the NCRD are significantly higher than the provincial and national averages. Area D, however, is within range and even slightly lower than the provincial average unemployment rate. It is clear that although there are challenges with availability of rental housing, residents do not struggle to find employment.

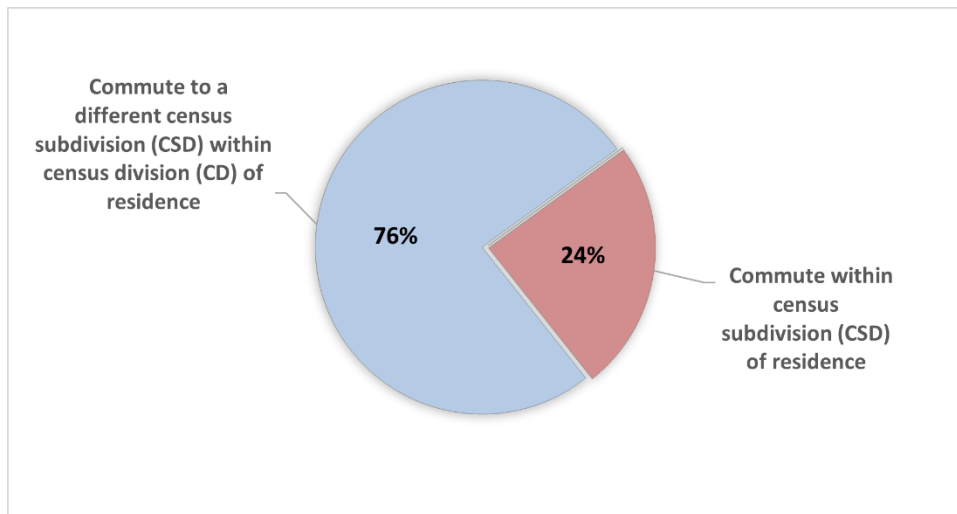


Figure 10 - Commuting distances for Area D - Source Statistics Canada Census Data

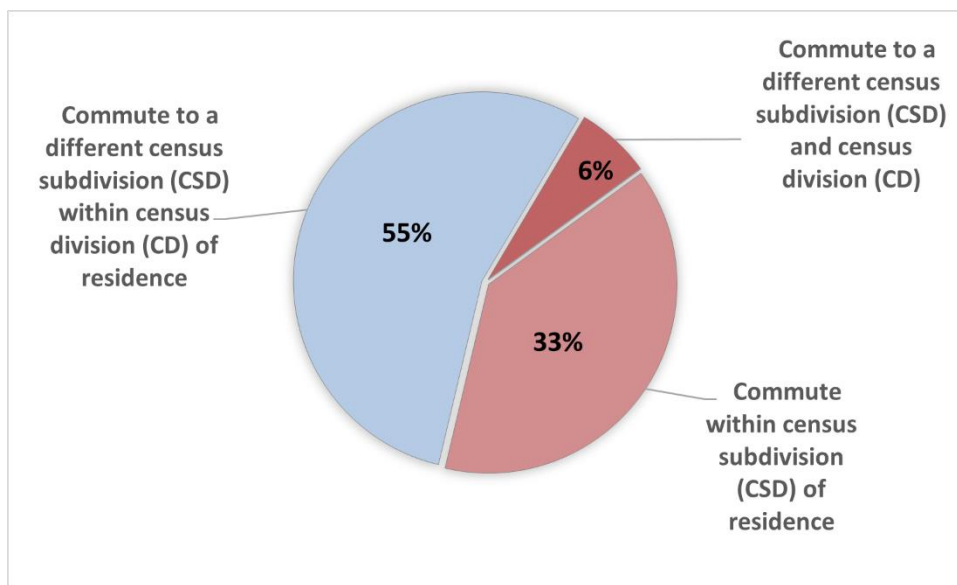


Figure 11 - Commuting distances for NCRD overall - Source Statistics Canada Census Data

The number of people commuting to a different census subdivision or census division (CSD or CD) is reported as being very high for Area D, even higher than the overall for NCRD Electoral Areas. This is likely a result of having a significant number of people living in Area D who are commuting to employment within one of the municipal boundaries (e.g. Masset, Port Clements).

Change in Housing Demand

Based on all of the data above and our findings from the community engagement, we anticipate a continued strong demand for housing in the coming five years. Data from MLS and BC Housing shows sales of most properties occur quickly after listing, and prices have been increasingly steadily as well. The increased proportion of purchasers buying homes as seasonal residences or investment properties for the operation of short-term accommodation is driving up prices. This is also consistent with what we heard in community engagements.



HOUSING PROFILE

This section looks at data from sources such as BC Assessment, BC Housing, municipal information, and MLS information to help define the housing data status quo with respect to quantity, typology and pricing of housing.

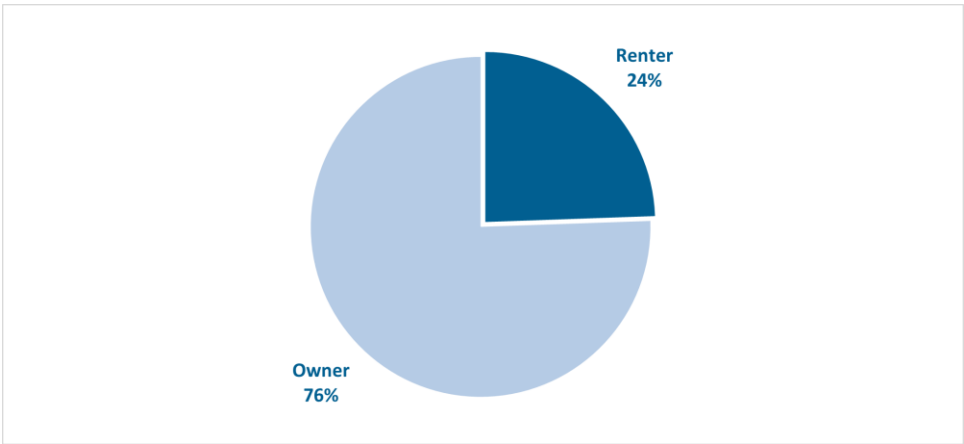


Figure 9 - Renter/Owner prevalence - Source Statistics Canada Census Data

We also look at the prevalence of home ownership vs rentals. In Electoral Area D, the official government statistics show an 76% home ownership 24% renter status as at the 2016 Census. This is a similar owner/renter split as is found in the other major centre of population in rural NCRD, Area E.

Quantity & Typology

This section includes data that breaks down the type and quantity of housing in the study area.



Figure 10 - Number of Bedrooms - Source Statistics Canada Census Data

The Census data above shows a wide range in bedroom count and house size from one to four or more bedrooms.

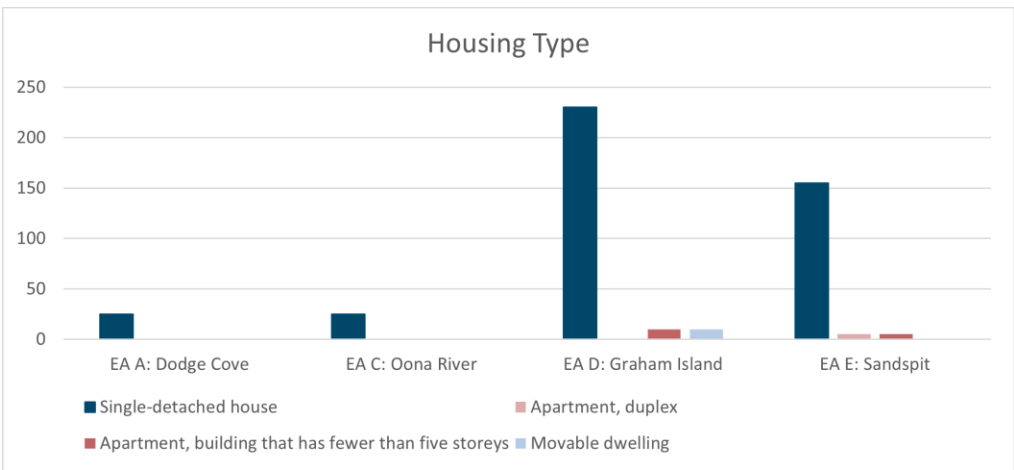


Figure 11 - Housing Type - Source Statistics Canada Census Data, CMHC, BC Housing

The great majority of housing in Area D is single family detached, with a few small multi-family residences and some modular/mobile homes.

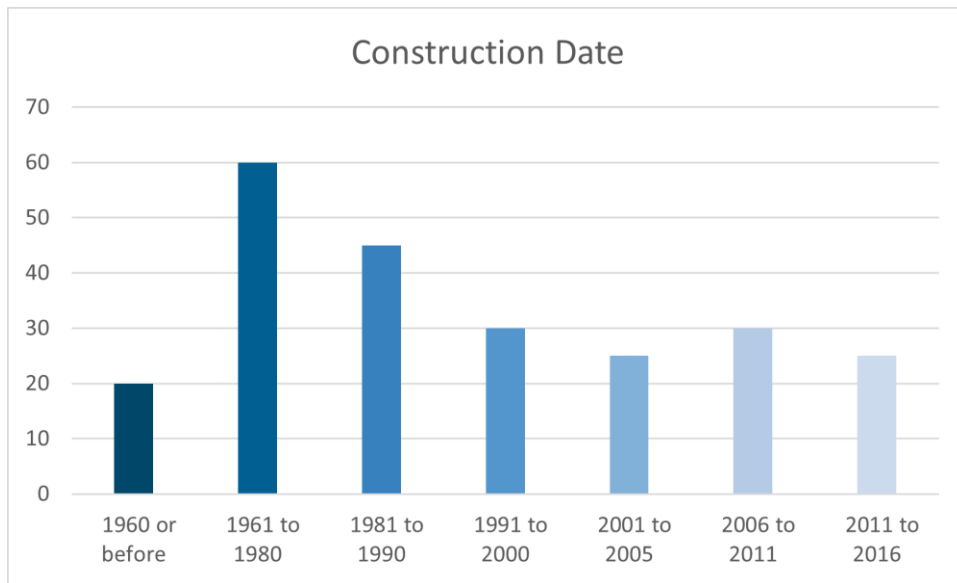


Figure 12 - Construction date in Electoral D - Source Statistics Canada Census Data

The above chart shows that there is a wide range of housing ages in Electoral Area D. Since before 1960, there have been new homes built in all of the periods reported on up to the present time. As we traveled around the area it was clear that there is still new construction activity occurring, including some renovation projects.

The following maps show the distribution of people experiencing core housing need for homeowners, renters, and overall.

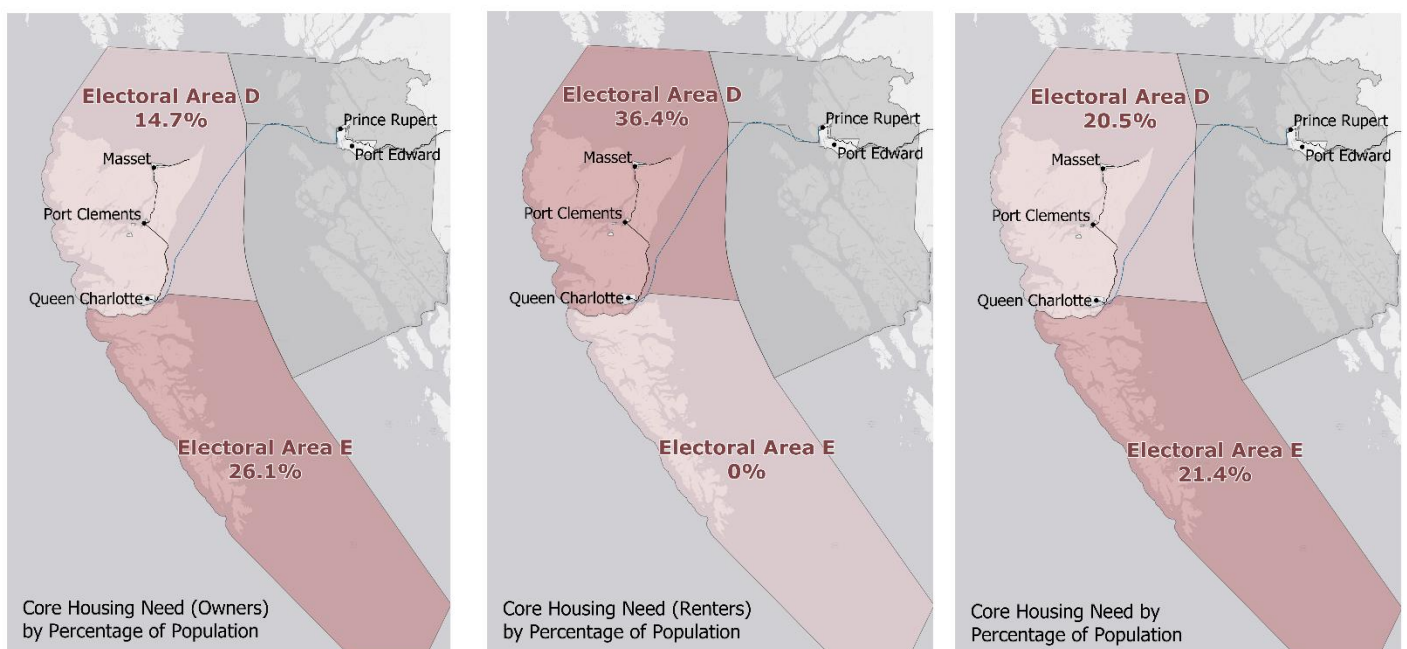


Figure 13: Core housing need overall – Source Statistics Canada Census Data

Core housing need in Electoral D is mainly attributed to the affordability and adequacy standards. While both homeowners and renters in this electoral area are experiencing housing need, core housing need is most acutely felt by renters. This finding aligns well with what we heard in the community consultation about the low vacancy rates and increasing prices of rentals.

Pricing Trends (Ownership & Rental Markets)

The table below shows the most recent housing sales data compiled by the BC Assessment Authority.

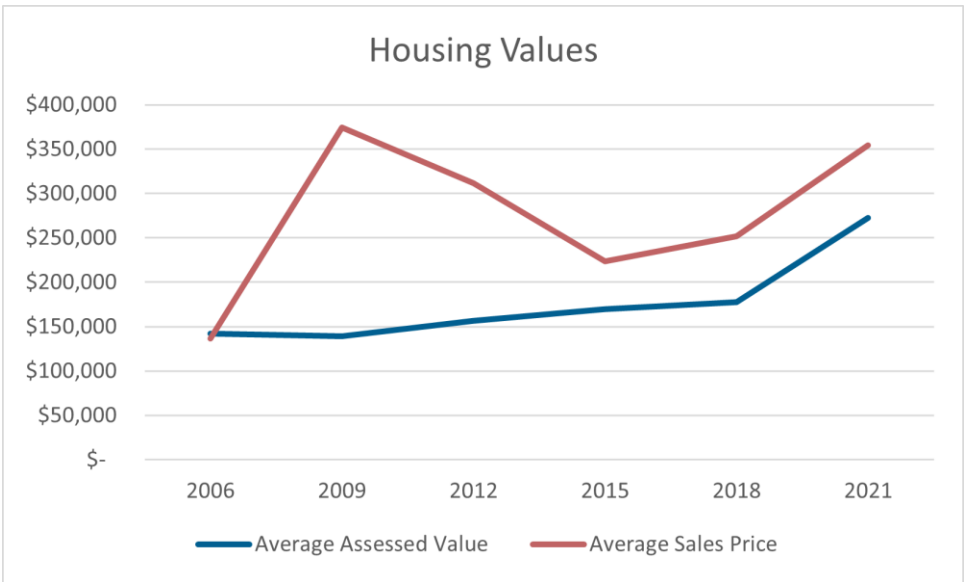


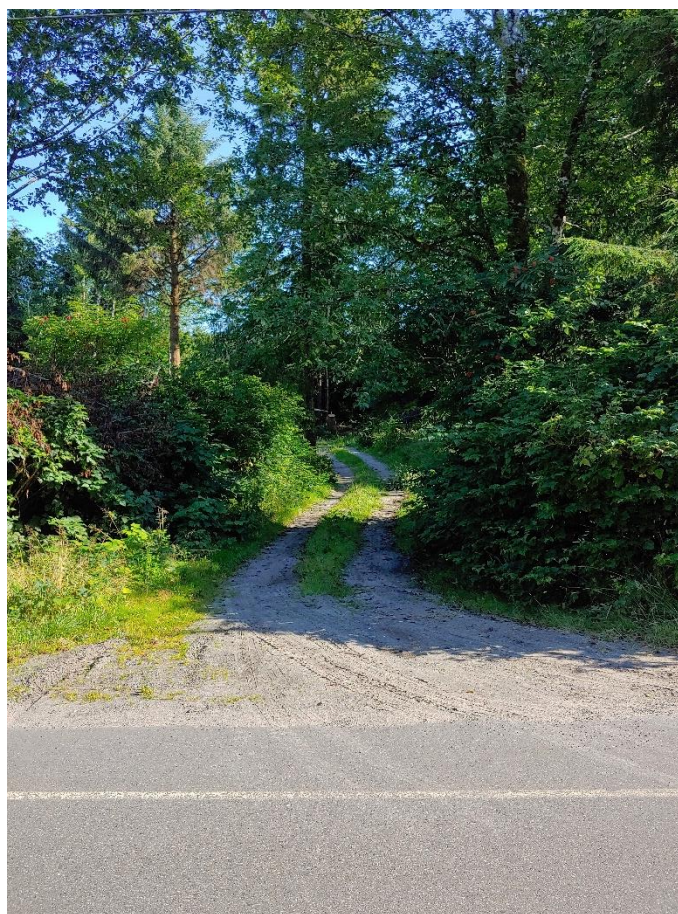
Figure 14 - Housing Values for EA D - Source - BC Assessment Authority 2021

This chart shows that after a slight dip in sales values for housing in 2012 and 2015, prices have bounced back up significantly in the past three year period. This can sometimes be skewed by which types or sizes of homes are turning over. The assessed values have show a more marked increase in the past three years, going from an average of approximately \$180,000 to approximately \$270,000 in only three years.

In the most recent three-year period it is clear that the increase in housing prices has become detached from local economic reality. The macro trends of increasing quality, availability, and affordability of satellite internet alongside rapid increases in asset values of housing in major city centres of Western Canada, and most recently a shift of major employers’ willingness to allow remote work are combining to increase the attractiveness of the NCRD’s housing as seasonal residences. This has the potential to price locals out of the market, a phenomenon reported in the survey and in community engagement.

Supply (Current & Forecast)

Although there is always a steady level of renovation and construction in Area D, the most recent activity is more reflective of off-Island investment into recreational properties. Moving around Area D it is clear that a lot of activity is taking place in prime tourist areas such as Tow Hill on the beachfront and near Masset and Tlell. It is difficult to gauge with accuracy from the road, however, as most rural properties have a lot of privacy offered by the rainforest and are approached on long and private driveways through the trees like the one pictured here.



ANTICIPATED CHALLENGES

After considering the background of the region, community profiles, engagement findings, housing demand analysis, and housing needs analysis, a number of challenges become apparent. To bring all of this together into a coherent summary, we have grouped and categorized this into four key challenges that are currently experienced in the NCRD and specifically in Area D. Most other challenges are connected to these four.

1	Rapid price increases make it more difficult to enter the housing market
2	There is a shortage of rental housing across the region
3	High construction costs, low availability of labour
4	Lack of appropriate seniors housing

1 – Rapid price increases: Housing prices have been increasing steadily over the past 15 years. The most marked increase in assessed values of housing has taken place in the past three years. This trend of accelerating increases in assessed values correlates to average sales prices and feedback from the community. In the community consultation process, this was partially attributed to increasing numbers of out of region individuals purchasing property in the NCRD. Based on continued housing price increases in the rest of BC, it would be reasonable to expect this to continue as part of the macro trends towards increased ability to work remotely. As satellite internet coverage becomes more affordable and reliable in the coming year or two, this price pressure could further accelerate.

2 – Shortage of rental housing: The survey of residents and the community consultations confirmed a significant shortage of rental housing across the NCRD. Very little new construction has taken place, and most of the new units being added are being occupied by short term rentals. As international tourism resumes, it is likely that there will be increased pressure on housing owners to convert long-term rentals into short term vacation accommodation.

3 – High construction costs, low availability of labour: Although not a new issue, the remote nature of the NCRD has as a natural consequence the fact that construction materials in most cases need to be sourced from larger urban areas and transported by ferry or barge. Smaller communities such as those in the NCRD are also more vulnerable to labour shortages if even one or two individuals retires or moves out of a community. Specialized trades are increasingly difficult to attract to perform labour in the NCRD due to a general shortage in other areas of the province, which means they have no need to travel in search of work. People who wish to build new housing therefore need to get very creative and often pay very high wages to attract certain trades.

4 – Lack of appropriate seniors housing: As the population of the NCRD ages, a general lack of appropriate seniors housing will become an increasing problem. This is also more generally a regional issue as there are limited options in the closest urban centres such as Prince Rupert and Terrace. Although housing prices have increased significantly in the NCRD, there has been a similar trend in areas where residents might be expected to relocate when a higher level of care is needed or they are no longer able to maintain a rural property. Some residents are concerned that they will have nowhere to go, or that they will need to break all of their social connections and relocate far from their community.

RECOMMENDATIONS

There are a number of possible solutions to the challenges outlined above. These are mapped out as recommendations, connected to the four key challenge areas named in the previous section. They are derived from the personal experience of the consulting team, a broad review of best practices, and some reflection on the unique challenges of this region and its distinct communities.

The solutions listed below are mapped to the five key challenges using the same numbering system. Some of them offer long-term solutions, while others are possible to implement quickly and mitigate the problems until the longer-term solutions can be brought to bear.

1	Rapid price increases make it more difficult to enter the housing market
a	Share home ownership resources with the community.
b	Encourage owners of underused properties to return them to the market.
c	Investigate taxation on vacant homes.
d	Offer to convene a funding workshop for non-profits, supply information.

1a – Share home ownership resources with the community: Consider adding an information resource page on the NCRD website to share home ownership resources with the community. This could include links to senior government funding and programs such as Registered Retirement Savings Plan Home Buyers Plan, Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation’s First-Time Home Buyer Incentive, and CMHC’s home buyer resources.

1b – Encourage owners of underused housing assets to sell them on to a private investor, consider offering support for rezoning or subdivision.

1c – Investigate taxation of empty homes: Consider implementing a vacant homes tax such as the one used in the City of Vancouver. This could encourage the return of empty and under-utilized properties to the long-term rental market.

1d – Offer to convene a funding workshop for non-profits, supply funding information: The NCRD could act as the convenor and facilitator of a workshop for non-profits operating in or based in the NCRD that might consider creating affordable housing developments. Many of these organizations do not have the in-house staff resources to be able to research what funding programs are available and how to access them. Possible speakers could include representatives from BC Housing, the BC Non-Profit Housing Association, CMHC, and housing consultants.

2	There is a shortage of rental housing across the region
a	Support development of secondary suites/dwellings.
b	Share resources with potential landlords.
c	Consider short-term rental regulations and communicate.
d	Investigate taxation on vacant homes.

2a – Support development of secondary suites/dwellings: There is untapped potential for additional development of secondary suites or dwellings. Homeowners could be encouraged to enter this market by having the NCRD publish reminders of the current regulations and provide some examples of best practices with affordable and creative ways to create a secondary suite or dwelling which is safe and affordable.

2b – Share resources with potential landlords: Create and share information resources for potential landlords. Many of these already exist, so this could be as simple as sharing links to BC government information pages, Landlord BC etc.

2c – Consider short-term rental regulations & communicate: Although there is strong support in the community for maintaining the right of homeowners to operate short-term vacation accommodations on their properties, the strong market for these has resulted in the conversion of many long-term rental homes into short-term accommodations. There were over 75 listings on AirBnB for NCRD Areas D & E including the municipal areas within their boundaries at the end of 2021. Many of these are principal residences. One option that could be considered is limiting short-term rentals to only be for secondary suites and dwellings.

2d – Investigate taxation on vacant homes: As per section 1, a vacant homes tax would also positively impact the availability of rental housing.

3	High construction costs, low availability of labour
a	Provide education on more affordable options. Investigate modular options and floating homes, sharing resources via NCRD website and social media.
b	Coordination of transportation between developers and builders: create a portal for people to connect with each other.

3a – Provide education on more affordable options: The NCRD staff could investigate creative options for construction, looking at best practices in other remote and coastal communities for alternative housing such as modular and floating homes. Examples of this could be shared on the NCRD website and social media to assist people who wish to build additional housing but are struggling with the high cost of construction and low availability of qualified trades.

3b – Coordination of transportation: One of the reasons for the high cost of materials and labour is the inefficiency of traveling from outside the NCRD for a single job, or transportation of materials for smaller jobs. This cost is exacerbated by the shortage of accommodations, especially during the tourist season. If a number of smaller jobs could be coordinated, it could create more efficiency for transportation of materials and make it more attractive for labourers to travel into the NCRD for work. The existing strong sense of community would make it possible to attract trades by including attractive accommodation options or recreation. All of this would be made more realistic if a portal was created where people could connect with each other and coordinate projects. Alternately, some resources with suggested methods of cooperation could be posted to the NCRD site.

4	Shortage of appropriate housing for seniors
a	Communicate findings from this research to municipal governments and FNs
b	Keep seniors in homes longer by working with Northern Health and advocating for improved ferry services across the region.
c	Consider creating a shared position for a regional housing coordinator.

4a – Communicate findings to municipal governments and FNs: Most of the municipal governments within the NCRD area have already completed their Housing Needs Assessments. This report should be shared with these governments to ensure that they are aware of the shared problems with a lack of seniors housing. Although the shortage of appropriate seniors housing in the NCRD begins with current residents, the municipal areas will be impacted by residents in the surrounding NCRD areas and not just their own seniors. Cooperation will be very important to address this issue as the solution to the lack of appropriate housing for seniors in the NCRD is most realistically going to be solved by the construction of suitable seniors homes in the municipal areas.

4b – Keep seniors in homes longer: As people in the NCRD age, they need to travel more frequently to health facilities in Prince Rupert and beyond. The provision of increased mobile health services and clinics in the rural areas or peripheral municipalities will allow seniors to remain in their existing homes longer. This will ultimately be more cost effective by reducing the amount of time people spend in hospitals and buy some time for the creation of additional seniors housing in Prince Rupert. Advocating for increased and improved ferry service will also make it easier for seniors to remain in their existing communities longer.

4c – Consider creating a shared position for a regional housing coordinator: All of the challenges noted in this report are regional in nature, and therefore require a coordinated approach. If the lack of adequate housing supply or lack of affordable rental housing is addressed in one area but not the others, the overall impact will be muted at best. If these issues are not tackled cooperatively, there is a risk that each of the municipal governments will wait for the others to bring solutions. By creating a shared position for a regional housing coordinator, mutual solutions can be sought out. The coordinator could convene joint meetings and research the best ways to implement the recommendations in each area and municipality. They could also put in joint funding applications to address common challenges. Although having a housing coordinator might not be affordable for any one of the local governments, a shared funding model would make this more realistic to implement and ensure that the Housing Needs Assessment reports result in action.

The full set of recommendations can be summarized with a single theme statement:

“Supporting the solutions to a healthy housing ecosystem”

The history of the North Coast Regional District reflects a strong resilience to overcoming challenges, and a need for independently finding solutions to problems. The nature of living in remote communities

that are far from the support offered by government and the resources available in cities is that people must become creative in finding their own solutions to community challenges. With the small size of the rural communities of the NCRD, it is becoming very difficult to continue to do this in the face of external pressures. With some support from the NCRD government, particularly in using its convening power to connect people to some of the resources available from senior government, the communities of the NCRD can work together to help find solutions to their housing needs. A healthy housing ecosystem is within reach, but can not be achieved if the rural areas, municipal governments, and First Nations in the NCRD do not cooperate with each other. Some coordination will be needed, but the seeds of success lie within the people of the North Coast and the strong foundation of community spirit and resilience.



APPENDIX 1: FULL SURVEY RESULTS

Overall combined survey results for EAs A, C, D and E are included here followed by responses only from EA D.

Overall Combined Survey Results

Where do you currently reside?	
Sandspit	37
Prince Rupert	86
Port Edward	2
Hartley Bay	1
Oona River/Porcher Island	3
Queen Charlotte	23
Port Clements	3
Skidegate Area	5
Lawn Hill	1
Tlell	7
Miller Creek	1
Masset	9
Tow Hill	10
Old Massett	1
How many years have you lived in the North Coast Regional District?	
Less than 1 year	2
1-5 years	23
5-10 years	27
10-20 years	28
20-25 years	21
More than 25 years	87

Have all or most of those years been in the same home?	
Yes	87
No	101

Which of the following best describes your current housing type?	
Mobile Home	4
Apartment	17
Basement suite/secondary suite	13
Duplex/Triplex	9
Room in someone else's home	10
Hotel/Motel room	3
Single family home	126
Recreational vehicle (e.g. travel trailer, 5th wheel)	3

Do you rent or own your housing described above?	
Rent	84
Own	102
N/A	2

Is there additional accommodation on the same property?	
No	138
Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabins, secondary suites, mobile homes for rent, "sometimes someone sleeps in their car on the property". 	50

Is your housing type appropriate for your current needs?	
Strongly Agree	52
Agree	56
Neutral	22
Disagree	34
Strongly Disagree	25

If your current housing type is not appropriate for your current needs, what is preventing you from obtaining appropriate housing?	
I can afford my preferred housing type, but there are no units of this type where I live	25
I can afford my preferred housing type, but there are not enough units of this type where I live	30
I can afford my preferred housing type, but there are none available in my preferred location	0
I cannot afford my preferred housing type	48

How much do you currently spend on housing per month? (Rent or mortgage only - excluding utilities, taxes, etc)

Less than \$500	41
\$500-\$1000	80
\$1000-\$1500	39
\$1500-\$2000	18
More than \$2000	4

Do you struggle to pay for your housing?

No	123
Yes, sometimes	50
Yes, all or most of the time	16

If yes, do you currently receive some form of rent payment support? Describe.

Yes	6
No	44

Is your home in need of major improvements or repairs?

Strongly agree	54
Agree	53
Neutral	43
Disagree	27
Strongly disagree	13

Are there many vacant homes in your area?

Strongly agree	21
Agree	19
Neutral	18
Disagree	38
Strongly disagree	92

Is homelessness or squatting an issue in your area? Describe.
*(Summary of short answer responses)

Yes	88
No	35
Unsure	3

Does your community have difficulty accessing municipal services (transportation, water, electricity)?
*(Summary of short answer descriptions)

Yes (poor water quality in EA A especially, lack of transportation, lack of harbour access in EA C)	62
No	36

Does seasonal accommodation (for seasonal or temporary workers, specifically) present a barrier to providing year-round housing for residents in your community?

Yes	90
No	72
Unsure	15

Does seasonal accommodation (for recreation and tourism specifically) present a barrier to providing year-round housing for residents in your community?

Yes	91
No	63
Unsure	18

If you are an Elder/senior or person with a disability, do you face accessibility challenges in your current form of housing? Select all that apply.

I struggle to maintain my home and surrounding outdoor area	23
Stairs or other architectural features make it difficult for me to navigate my home	13
My housing is more remote than I would like, and I struggle to access community resources	7
I would like to live in a more communal form of housing (i.e. co-op, seniors home), but cannot afford it	9

I would like to live in a more communal form of housing, but cannot find any places available	14
My current form of housing is too large for me	7

****Opportunity was also given for further comments.**

Electoral Area D

Where do you currently reside?	
Queen Charlotte	23
Port Clements	3
Skidegate Area	5
Lawn Hill	1
Tlell	7
Miller Creek	1
Masset	9
Tow Hill	10
Old Massett	1
How many years have you lived in the North Coast Regional District?	
Less than 1 year	0
1-5 years	15
5-10 years	8
10-20 years	12
20-25 years	4
More than 25 years	21

Have all or most of those years been in the same home?	
Yes	30
No	30

Which of the following best describes your current housing type?	
Apartment	3
Basement suite or other secondary suite	6
Duplex/Triplex	2
Room in someone else's home	4
Hotel/Motel room	1

Single family home	39
Mobile home	1
Recreational vehicle (e.g. travel trailer, 5th wheel)	1

Do you rent or own your housing described above?

Rent	28
Own	31

Is there additional accommodation on the same property?

No	37
Yes <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cabins and other secondary detached housing 	22

Is your housing type appropriate for your current needs?

Strongly Agree	16
Agree	17
Neutral	6
Disagree	14
Strongly Disagree	7

If your current housing type is not appropriate for your current needs, what is preventing you from obtaining appropriate housing?

I can afford my preferred housing type, but there are no units of this type where I live	5
I can afford my preferred housing type, but there are not enough units of this type where I live	9
I can afford my preferred housing type, but there are none available in my preferred location	0
I cannot afford my preferred housing type	15

How much do you currently spend on housing per month? (Rent or mortgage only - excluding utilities, taxes, etc)

Less than \$500	11
\$500-\$1000	36
\$1000-\$1500	12
\$1500-\$2000	1
More than \$2000	0

Do you struggle to pay for your housing?	
No	36
Yes, sometimes	20
Yes, all or most of the time	4

If yes, do you currently receive some form of rent payment support? Describe.	
Yes	2
No	17

Is your home in need of major improvements or repairs?	
Strongly agree	17
Agree	19
Neutral	10
Disagree	11
Strongly disagree	3

Are there many vacant homes in your area?	
Strongly agree	6
Agree	4
Neutral	6
Disagree	16
Strongly disagree	28

Is homelessness or squatting an issue in your area? Describe. *(Summary of short answer responses)	
Yes	20
No	12

Does your community have difficulty accessing municipal services (transportation, water, electricity)? *(Short answer descriptions not included here)	
Yes (sewer, water, transportation)	13
No	9

Does seasonal accommodation (for seasonal or temporary workers, specifically) present a barrier to providing year-round housing for residents in your community?

Yes	31
No	21
Unsure	2

Does seasonal accommodation (for recreation and tourism specifically) present a barrier to providing year-round housing for residents in your community?

Yes	49
No	9
Unsure	0

If you are an Elder/senior or person with a disability, do you face accessibility challenges in your current form of housing? Select all that apply.

I struggle to maintain my home and surrounding outdoor area	2
Stairs or other architectural features make it difficult for me to navigate my home	3
My housing is more remote than I would like, and I struggle to access community resources	2
I would like to live in a more communal form of housing (i.e. co-op, seniors home), but cannot afford it	2
I would like to live in a more communal form of housing, but cannot find any places available	1
My current form of housing is too large for me	0

****Opportunity was also given for further comments.**

APPENDIX 2: SURVEY VERBATIM RESPONSES (ALL AREAS)

Electoral Area A

We live close to downtown and own a commercial building. We had to put up a gate to stop people from sleeping and defecating in our entranceway. We regularly see people sleeping in or around a number of other commercial entranceways (Fisherman's Hall, the Spot, the party spot near the college) and we have seen tents in the greenspace.

There has been significant loss of affordable housing in recent years. Prices to purchase homes have also gone up significantly and are becoming unaffordable for an average person/family.

Impossible housing situation. Very high prices & nothing available.

My landlord was letting people sleep in a tent in the back yard.

I have my homeless brother and his two kids living with me.

More people are renting accommodations to transient workers or travellers. It provides more income but also protects the homeowners as current laws make it difficult for landlords to deal with problem tenants.

People coming in to work at port can afford higher rent, so they take the low-income homes for rent and drive up the prices. In the last year rents have almost doubled.

There has been a loss of units due to apartment buildings and houses burned down and water damage causing condemned units. Due to this, there is NOT enough units for year-round residents, thus not enough units to house temp workers. However, many homeowners are furnishing homes for rent specifically for temporary workers as Executive Homes.

House owners save their suites for seasonal workers who are willing to pay high prices temporarily.

A number of single-family dwellings appear to be owned by corporations for use by seasonal / itinerant workers. Occupied largely in summer months only.

There are many workers for industry that come in to town and have accommodations provided at a high price from their employers, which has uses up the rentals available in our town and makes those left unaffordable. There has also been a big push from the local college to bring in more international

students as it is lucrative but they haven't constructed dormitories or anything for their students which adds to the housing crisis.

Just another demand driver that drives prices up. Homes being converted to Air BnBs or rented short term in an already tight housing market leave less housing for others. Or, long term residents need to pay prices that are closer to recreation/short term prices, making it unaffordable. We need housing of all shapes and sizes, including traveler and student accommodations to take the pressure of the long term, traditional housing supply.

Tenants in this community are brutal. Some play the rules to their advantage and exploit to get free rent as it takes months to get people like this out. It makes it difficult for homeowners and for others to find a place to live. I will Airbnb my suite once I can get my tenant out. Too much late rent, parties, fighting etc.

As a paramedic, we are very understaffed but cannot recruit people here because they can't find accommodations.

I am a landlord. The prices in our community (ie the rents I can charge and the prices of homes) are completely of sync with the underlying value of the properties. There are many vacant lots, especially downtown, that could be developed into dense housing, with relatively small development costs for Prince Rupert. However, what I see is that they just aren't profitable ENOUGH for private developers to fill the need. It's not that you couldn't make money, it's just they can make MORE money, and/or EASIER money in other places. The government needs to step in and develop these properties, and something closer to a breakeven cost. This will help stop the skyrocketing home prices and rents. While I am benefiting from home equity and increased rents, I worry about what this continued trend will do to my neighbours who rent and/or are just starting out trying to build a life.

From a senior: I live too far from town and commuting to dt takes alot out of me. It cost money for cabs. I have problems with my knee caps and its hard for me to walk at times. I live on the 3rd floor and trying to request a transfer but they don't have any 1 bedroom or 2 bedroom apartments or townhouses where I live that is close to town. I need a unit that is on the main floor, but even if I could get a transfer it will cost me money to move.

It's too expensive to rent or buy. Additionally there are not a lot of options leaving people in more risky situations. Housing and rentals should be affordable so people can also set aside money for savings, pay off student loans, etc. People need security and good homes in order and therefore peace in order to add to society in greater ways. If everyone is on a rat-race and trying to get their basic needs met, it's so hard to stop and contribute further to the good of society, community, etc.

We want to move to Oona River but need affordable housing for our daughter, who has a good job but can't afford rent or find a place. There are lots of people in her position and I don't think it's fair.

Housing speculators and flippers appear to be prolific in all areas of Prince Rupert. Significant number of homes under constant renovation which appears to never end. Others are partly renovated with work stoppages, left in states of disrepair with no apparent intention of completion. Many of these began as reno-victions with renters displaced and communities disrupted. Clear signs of large scale investors playing the housing market. Possible signs of money laundering. While seasonal / recreational ownership of single-family dwellings is a significant problem, the number of speculators squatting on properties is much more a concern. Not only do these represent vacant but usable housing, they drive up prices to unreasonable levels. There is an artificial scarcity of rental housing caused by speculators / reno-victions / apparent money-laundering schemes.

Institutions in our city such as healthcare and education have difficulty recruiting new staff to our city due to lack of housing.

I am 80 years old, a widow, and I own a beautiful, large family home. I am finding it very difficult to climb two flights of stairs and maintain the gardens and do repairs on the house (no repair people available). There's a 3 year wait for a repair person. I want a 2 bedroom, 2 bath apartment located close to downtown with parking and then I can sell my home to a family. In my area of Prince Rupert, there are a lot of seniors living in large family homes and we all want the same thing. The apartment needs to be a nice place and large enough to have family and friends come and visit. The senior apartments on 7th East are needed but they are NOT large enough for 75% of us. Many thanks.

Electoral Area C

Lack of housing for rentals as many turned into Airbnb's

Would like to have affordable housing in prince rupert for longer stays for shopping or medical

Electoral Area D

There are currently two squatters within 2km radius, mostly on the beach. One is living in a shack and the other in a tent.

People couch surf or stay in suboptimal housing because most rental properties have become Airbnb's.

A few people who can not afford rent find vacant homes to squat in.

When the hospital was being built a lot of accommodation went to housing workers who needed to be brought in. There are School District building, Canada Parks buildings and FLNRO building that sit empty waiting for workers. These could be utilized by renters or sold for family homes.

Many rentals that would be rented by families and locals are now turned into Air B&B's. They are catering to short term tourist accommodations and displacing local families and residents. Short term money gains. Many have stated they make more money as an Air B&B then a long-term rental.

Tourist can afford to spend \$300+ per night while residents cannot afford \$30/day or \$900/month.

Many people who own rental properties use them as vacation rentals instead of for long term rentals for local residents.

There are a number of homes owned for recreational purposes that sit empty most of the year.

Our house has to be vacated June-August for the landlord to come home.

I'm concerned that Haida people and long-term community members will be forced out of Haida Gwaii because there is little safe, affordable housing. Many properties are becoming 'summer homes' and these sit empty all but two weeks of the year. These are wealthy people who can afford high prices that many folks on Haida Gwaii cannot. It would be great to see some priority made to sell to Haida and local people as opposed to the highest off-islands bidder. Or, have some kind of secondary/vacation home tax to at least subsidize affordable and accessible housing.

In Queen Charlotte there are a great number of single-family homes owned by the RCMP, DFO, Forestry, and Parks Canada that are almost always all vacant. They are mostly 3-bedroom homes, upkept and maintained but empty. We are experiencing a housing crisis where families cannot find affordable housing and housing prices becoming very inflated over the past 5+ years is making the problem even worse because when houses do come up for sale, they are not affordable for the people who need them most. These houses were built to accommodate the greater number of employees that existed here before government cutbacks in the 90s. It is not right to have so many empty houses in our town when so many people need housing. Our municipal government has attempted to address this concern to the various appropriate federal government agencies and have so far been essentially stonewalled.

I live in a temporary space that is not suitable to stay in long-term. I would move if there were appropriate spaces but none are available. Most are expensive or have weird lease parameters (e.g. stay 10 months and move out in the summer). I have moved 3 times in the 5 years I've been on island. The first rental I was in, I had my lease ended abruptly due to a family member moving into the space, the second rental had a pest problem (rats). And now I am in a basement suite usually used to temporarily house semester students.

Electoral Area E

People are living in temporary tiny homes, campers, on beaches, etc.

There are many houses owned by companies who rarely, rarely use them to house their workers, and the homes just sit empty the majority of the time, falling into various states of disrepair.

Lots of empty houses. On my road, Copperbay Rd there are 8 empty houses.

Many vacant vacation homes, cabins, that are only used during summer months. Sit empty the rest of the year.

I know people who have lived out of their vehicles in the summer months because there is no accommodation.

Yes !!!There are way too many empty houses in Sandspit owned by people who have not lived in, or even been here for a holiday or to do maintenance for many years. Many of these houses are falling into disrepair !! This makes the town look shoddy. Many young people are crying out for a house here and would dearly love to purchase one of these places. Something needs to be done about this situation and if it was left to me I would recommend a hefty empty house tax in this town, Our school numbers are historically low and having these empty houses full of families with young kids would be the best thing for the health of our town. I meet many people from all over the islands and further afield who would happily love to live in Sandspit , work from home and bring up kids in this safe small community.

We need communal type seniors housing, we need summer employment worker housing, we need something done with our hotel The Sandspit Inn, that closed down a year ago. Hotel is on Transport Canada (TC) land and they would not extend lease. Would make good seniors housing with some renovations. Was a 20 room hotel, with bar, restaurant, was a centre of the community, now vacant and empty of furniture etc. Quite a pity. My trailer is also on TC land and there are empty houses on TC land. TC refuses to rent them out even though we have a housing shortage. TC is NOT very community minded. They need to subdivide and sell off their land they don't need to locals, or at the least, start renting out their housing again, and allow someone to come in and invest in The Sandspit Inn.

It would be nice to see tax incentives to make it easier to rent long term vs. Renting to high paying short term. I'm personally regretting my decision to rent long term because of the over all cost associated.

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