

Vulnerable Populations Housing Needs Assessment Report

MARCH 2024



The Resort Municipality of Whistler is grateful to be on the shared, unceded territory of the Líl'wat People, known in their language as Lil'wat7úl and the Squamish People, known in their language as Sk̓wxwú7mesh. We respect and commit to a deep consideration of their history, culture, stewardship, and voice.

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- Squamish Nation and Líl'wat Nation for their input on housing needs in this part of their traditional territories;
- The numerous organizations that volunteered their time to participate in focus groups and interviews (see the full list of participants in Appendix C); and
- Community members who have experienced housing vulnerability and generously shared their time and stories.

We also wish to extend our thanks to Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) for providing a grant in support of this project.

Last but not least, we extend our thanks to Jessie Abraham Planning & Development, the consultant for this project, for their work leading the community engagement, conducting the analysis and writing many parts of this report.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

What is the Purpose of this Report?

This vulnerable populations housing needs assessment report is an assessment of vulnerable populations' housing needs in the Whistler community. The project's key purpose is to identify the existing supply of and community need for emergency, transitional, supportive, and non-market rental housing. This report does not attempt to provide solutions to meeting the identified needs.

This report does not assess market or ownership housing options (including Market Rental Housing, Affordable Home Ownership, and Market Home Ownership). The housing types assessed in this report explore the left-end of the housing continuum and are all non-market housing options; provincial or federal government funding and/or non-profit operators are required to deliver these housing types. Assisted living, long-term care, and other healthcare-based housing options are also outside the scope of this report.

The identified housing needs and forecasted 2033 housing needs do not equate to build out targets, however, they will be used to inform Whistler's long-term housing strategy and will be updated as more data becomes available. This report will also be a key tool for the development of housing options across the housing continuum and to support municipal partners in pursuing grant opportunities.

Who is Considered Vulnerable?

There is no standard definition of "vulnerability". A vulnerable person, for the purposes of this report, is any person who is, or perceived to be, in a disadvantaged position or marginalized and, as a result, may experience barriers to housing.

The methodology used for this report assumes that people do not typically self-identify as vulnerable, nor do they consider themselves as belonging to a vulnerable population; however, they may be experiencing vulnerability.

How was this Report Prepared?

Data from various sources, including Statistics Canada, the RMOW, the Whistler Housing Authority (WHA), and supplementary data from non-profit organizations, was collected and assessed as part of this report. The report was developed using the 2021 Statistics Canada Census of Households data, which was the most recent data available at the time.

Quantitative data was supplemented by qualitative data that was obtained from social service and public sector providers who have direct experience working with vulnerable populations (see *Appendix C: Community Engagement What We Heard Summary*). In addition, personal housing stories from participants with lived experience were collected to enhance understanding of the key issues.

What is "Core Housing Need"?

According to Census Canada and the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation ([CMHC](#)), housing need is defined across the following three dimensions:

- **Affordability** – the household spends less than 30% of its gross income on shelter costs.
- **Suitability** – there are enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of the household according to the National Occupancy Standard.
- **Adequacy** – the housing is not in need of major repairs as reported by residents. Major repairs include defective plumbing or electrical wiring, or structural repairs to walls, floors or ceilings.

If a household experiences need in any one of the above dimensions and would have to spend 30% or more of its gross income to afford the rent for an alternative suitable and adequate unit in the local market, then the household is in **core housing need**. The concept of 'core housing need' was developed by the CMHC.

If the household is in core housing need and has a shelter-cost-to-income ratio of 50% or more, then it is in **extreme core housing need**.

Core housing need data was provided by Statistics Canada. This data is derived from surveys including the Census of Canada, the Canadian Income Survey, and the Canadian Housing Survey.

What are Opportunities for Future Data Collection?

The estimated current and future need identified in this report should be informed by continued and more detailed data collection (such as by Point-in-Time Counts, non-profit housing provider waitlists, unique number of clients seeking rent supplements or requesting emergency housing, or other measurable forms of housing need). Point-in-Time Counts provide snapshots of current conditions, and they are typically conducted on an annual basis and may include people staying in shelters, street living, living in vehicles, couch surfing, or precariously housed.

What is the RMOW's Role in Delivering and Facilitating New Housing?

The RMOW collaborates with higher levels of government, local non-profit organizations and the private sector to facilitate housing options. Additionally, in partnership with its subsidiaries, the Whistler Development Corporation (WDC) and the WHA, the RMOW delivers new affordable housing. WDC is generally responsible for housing development and construction, while the WHA is typically the housing owner and operator. Since 2018, through this model 294 employee housing units have been built or are currently under construction. One apartment building under construction will be owned and operated by the Whistler Valley Housing Society (WVHS), and will provide housing opportunities geared towards essential service employees and social service clients employed in Whistler.

Through the development of the 2023 RMOW Housing Action Plan, the RMOW identified six housing action categories where it can have the most impact facilitating housing. These action categories are:


- Monitor Supply and Identify Needs;
- Protect and Optimize Employee Housing;
- Leverage Municipal Lands;
- Utilize and Expand Finance Tools;
- Encourage the Private Sector; and
- Remove Red Tape Barriers.

These action categories show that the RMOW mainly facilitates housing options through regulations, policies and programs, and collaboration. Regulations, policies and programs are used to determine the location and type of housing that can be built and encourage the development of non-market housing.

What are the Key Findings?

The key findings of the assessment are summarized in the table below. The first two rows set the context by describing each housing type and the population characteristics they serve. The following rows present the outcomes of the assessment by identifying current housing stock and programs, current 2023 housing needs, and anticipated 2033 housing need. Additionally, sub-populations whose needs may be met through multiple housing types, through service delivery or housing programs or other means are identified as "key areas of need". As stated in the Purpose section, the 2023 housing needs and anticipated 2033 housing needs identified do not equate to build out targets, but will be used to inform Whistler's long-term housing

strategy. Also, it is noted that without adequate data, it is difficult to gauge the demand for different housing types and the numbers below for current and future needs are best estimates based on information available at this point in time.



Description of Housing Type	Emergency Housing	Transitional Housing	Supportive Housing	Non-Market Rental Housing
	<p>Immediate, short-stay housing for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.</p>	<p>A type of housing for residents for between 30 days and three years. It aims to transition individuals to long-term, permanent housing. The following paragraphs describe different types of transitional housing.</p> <p>Transition houses are a type of temporary housing for women and children fleeing violence. They offer a safe and anonymous place to stay, with food, staff and services.</p> <p>Safe homes are a type of temporary housing for women and children fleeing violence, where a transition house is not available in the community. Safe home programs provide short-term shelter, emotional support, safety planning and referrals. Short-term safe home shelter is provided in a variety of ways depending on the community.</p> <p>Second-stage housing is a place where people who are experiencing or at risk of violence can live independently typically for 6-18 months, after completing a stay in a transition house or safe home.</p>	<p>A type of housing that provides on-site supports and services to residents who cannot live independently.</p>	<p>Includes government-subsidized housing, non-profit below-market housing, occupancy or employee-restricted units, and rent assistance options that are typically geared to low to moderate income households.</p>

<div>Population Characteristics</div> <div>Current Stock & Programs</div>	<p>People who are experiencing homelessness (e.g., living outside), precariously housed (e.g., day-to-day in a hostel, in a vehicle, couch surfing, or in some other temporary location), at risk of homelessness, or in crisis.</p>	<p>Typically, people who are in crisis and need an intermediate step between shelter and permanent housing. Housing may target specific sub-populations, such as women and children fleeing violence.</p>	<p>People who need support to live independently, including older adults and people with disabilities. Housing may target specific sub-populations, such as youth aging out of foster care.</p>	<p>Low to moderate income families and individuals who experience barriers to finding and maintaining affordable and suitable housing in the private market; or who may suddenly experience vulnerability due to unsecure rental arrangements or sudden changes in employment or family structure.</p>
	<p>One Extreme Weather Response shelter with 18 beds operated by Whistler Community Services Society; this temporary program only operates during periods of extreme cold (below -10° Celsius or during a weather warning). The number of beds is subject to annual approval.</p> <p>An emergency housing program operated by Whistler Community Services Society provides temporary shelter, dependent on tourist accommodation property availability.</p>	<p>One second-stage housing unit (private, secure and low-cost) operated by PearlSpace where women and children fleeing violence can live independently for 6-18 months to help support families that need time to find permanent long-term housing.</p> <p>Whistler has no transition or safe home option for women and children fleeing violence or in crisis. Whistler also has no transitional housing option for people who require immediate and temporary accommodation.</p>	<p>Whistler offers the only youth supportive housing program in the Sea to Sky corridor. The program, operated by Zero Ceiling through support from the Federal Reaching Home funding program, houses nine youth at two housing sites and provides on-site supports. The program operates on short-term lease arrangements and would benefit from long-term housing arrangements in order to maintain and grow the youth supportive housing program.</p> <p>Whistler has no supportive housing options for adults, older adults, or people with disabilities.</p>	<p>347 non-market rental units are offered through the Whistler Housing Authority and Whistler Valley Housing Society.</p> <p>1,038 unique community housing units (employee restricted rentals, employee occupancy restricted properties and employee suites) exist throughout Whistler and are governed by housing agreements. While the majority of these units are considered rental units, employee occupancy restricted properties may also be occupied by a the property owner.</p> <p>An estimated 45 households in the private rental market across the Sea to Sky region receive rent supplements through BC Housing.</p>

Estimated Current 2023 Housing Needs

Emergency Housing	Transitional Housing	Supportive Housing	Non-Market Rental Housing
A year-round emergency housing site with six beds, with either supports on site (e.g., food or clothing) or close to amenities and other services.	<p>One long-term transition house or safe home for women and children fleeing violence or in crisis.</p> <p>Emergency and supportive housing options are highly limited or non-existent in Whistler. Transitional housing bridges the gap from emergency housing or crisis to permanent housing (supportive or independent).</p>	<p>Minimum 20 supportive housing units for adults, older adults, and people with disabilities.</p> <p>Increase youth supportive housing program to 22 beds (from nine beds).</p>	<p>The proportion of core housing need reflects 2021 Census data and the number of households are adjusted to reflect the current population size. An estimated 1,199 households are in core housing need. This is an indicator of need and does not equate to needed new units.</p> <p>These households' current homes are either not affordable, suitable or adequate and in order to be appropriately housed in an alternative adequate and suitable unit in the local market they would need to spend 30% or more of their gross income on rent. The following number of households require the identified shelter costs to secure affordable housing (note that these shelter costs reflect the income groups provided in the 2021 Census):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 114 very low-income households require shelter costs below \$495 to be affordable; • 548 low-income households require shelter costs below \$1,237 to be affordable; and • 512 moderate-income households require shelter costs below \$1,980 to be affordable. <p>Additionally, 37% (446) of all households in core housing need family-size units (i.e., two or more bedrooms).</p>

	Emergency Housing	Transitional Housing	Supportive Housing	Non-Market Rental Housing
Anticipated 2033 Housing Needs	Minimum eight beds and year-round emergency housing site, contingent on annual data collection, such as a Point-in-Time Count, to fully assess demand.	<p>Increase second-stage housing from one to two units for women and children fleeing violence or in crisis.</p> <p>As emergency and supportive housing units are developed, seek opportunities for data collection regarding the need and demand for transitional housing.</p>	<p>Minimum 26 supportive housing units for adults, older adults, and people with disabilities, contingent on establishing regular data collection methods, such as a supportive housing waitlist.</p> <p>Increase youth supportive housing program to 28 beds.</p>	<p>The proportion of core housing need reflects 2021 Census data and the number of households are adjusted to reflect the projected 2033 population size. An anticipated 1,516 households will be in core housing need. This is an indicator of need and does not equate to needed new units.</p> <p>It is estimated that the following number of households by income category will require affordable housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 145 very low-income households; • 693 low-income household; and • 647 moderate-income households. <p>Additionally, 37% (563) of all households in core housing need will require family-size units (i.e., two or more bedrooms).</p>

Key Areas of Need

In addition to the information contained in the above table, the assessment also identified key areas of need. These areas are described below.

Women and Children

Women with or without children may be experiencing barriers to finding suitable and affordable housing for themselves and their families; 21% of all women-led households and 40% of all one-parent female-led households are in core housing need. More affordable (likely subsidized) family-sized housing units (i.e., two or more bedrooms) are required to house this underserved population.

Demand for housing for women and children fleeing violence is increasing. Without adequate transition home options, these populations resort to housing that is overcrowded, substandard, unsafe, or inconvenient.

Older Adults

Older adults, aged 65 and older, make up the fastest growing population in Whistler. Older adults often require accessible or aging-in-place housing options, access to at-home supports, and supportive or long-term care options depending on their health and level of ability.*

People with Intellectual or Physical Disabilities

People with disabilities often face significant barriers to finding appropriate, accessible, and affordable housing. 21% of all households with an intellectual disability and 17% of all households with a physical activity limitation are in core housing need.*

Youth

Whistler attracts a large population of young adults under the age of 25 who want to live and work in the resort community. However, 37% of all households with a head of house under the age of 25 are in core housing need. Youth may not have the resources or knowledge to navigate the housing network and may benefit from youth-specific housing types such as youth supportive housing or non-market rentals reserved for young people.

Indigenous Households

29% of all Indigenous households are in core housing need. Indigenous households may experience a number of barriers to securing appropriate housing, including discrimination and low incomes. Understanding needs, working with Indigenous partners, and offering cultural supports are some of the considerations that should be taken into account when supporting Indigenous households with housing.

Recent Immigrant Households

Whistler attracts a high proportion of newcomers who may not be familiar with the local, or Canadian, housing context, and therefore may struggle to find and maintain stable housing during their first few years. 21% of all new migrant-led households are in core housing need. These households may have limited housing options due to residency requirements that limit access to Whistler's non-market housing, and therefore may require new non-market housing options, housing subsidies, and/or cultural supports.

**Assisted living, long-term care, and other healthcare-based housing options are outside the scope of this report.*



Introduction

SECTION 1: INTRODUCTION

This document is organized into the following sections:

- *Section 1: Introduction* reviews the project context and methodology;
- *Section 2: Community Overview* provides a summary of key demographic trends;
- *Section 3: Current Housing Supply and Supports* provides an overview of existing housing options and gaps in the housing system including populations that are underserved;
- *Section 4: Identifying Current and Emerging Housing Needs* estimates the current and future housing needs for targeted housing types;
- *Section 5: Lílwat Nation and Squamish Nation Engagement* provides a summary of housing barriers, challenges and opportunities that exist for Nation members in Whistler; and
- *Section 6: Next Steps* identifies lessons learned and considerations for moving forward.

In addition, the report provides three appendices as follows:

- *Appendix A* provides definitions for key terms used throughout the report;
- *Appendix B* provides supplementary data for *Section 2: Community Overview*; and
- *Appendix C* provides the Community Engagement What We Heard Summary.

The document also features:

- Green ‘What We Heard’ callout boxes, which include key engagement findings and are qualitative reflections of community perceptions. In other words, they do not necessarily represent the RMOW perspective, but are the engagement participants’ perspectives and are important for understanding the housing picture and experience in the community;
- Blue ‘Experience Spotlights’, which are housing stories from community members with lived experience; and
- Purple boxes that provide additional context and information.

1.1 Context and Background

As a purpose-built, internationally known resort town, Whistler has unique housing challenges. As a desirable location for many different groups (resort workers, lifestyle residents, retirees, second homeowners) there is high competition for a limited supply of available housing.

In May 2022, the RMOW completed a Housing Needs Report, which identified housing challenges and gaps to be addressed in the community. In particular, the 2022 report revealed how the COVID-19 pandemic demonstrated the number and scale of vulnerable people in the community. Fluctuating business activity meant unstable incomes for many households. Market forces have driven renters out of their housing due to home sales and renovations. Social service providers experienced increased demand in foodbank, mental health, employment, and housing resources. Domestic violence increased, leaving residents in unstable and unsafe housing situations. The 2022 report called for further assessment of housing needs for vulnerable populations, calling the work “a very high priority”.

In response to the 2022 report, the RMOW has commissioned and completed an assessment on housing and vulnerable populations. The key purpose of the vulnerable populations report is to identify the existing supply of and community need for the housing types and populations presented in the table below. In addition to categorizing needs by housing type, the report identifies “key areas of need” which describes housing needs that may span multiple types of housing (e.g., accessible housing).

	Emergency Housing	Transitional Housing	Supportive Housing	Non-Market Rental Housing
Description of Housing Type	<p>Immediate, short-stay housing for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.</p>	<p>A type of housing for residents for between 30 days and three years. It aims to transition individuals to long-term, permanent housing. The following paragraphs describe different types of transitional housing.</p> <p>Transition houses are a type of temporary housing for women and children fleeing violence. They offer a safe and anonymous place to stay, with food, staff and services.</p> <p>Safe homes are a type of temporary housing for women and children fleeing violence, where a transition house is not available in the community. Safe home programs provide short-term shelter, emotional support, safety planning and referrals. Short-term safe home shelter is provided in a variety of ways depending on the community.</p> <p>Second-stage housing is a type of transitional housing where people who are experiencing or at risk of violence can live independently typically for 6-18 months, after completing a stay in a transition house or safe home.</p>	<p>A type of housing that provides on-site supports and services to residents who cannot live independently.</p>	<p>Includes government-subsidized housing, non-profit below-market housing, occupancy or employee-restricted units, and rent assistance options that are typically geared to low to moderate income households.</p>

Population Characteristics	People who are experiencing homelessness (e.g., living outside), precariously housed (e.g., day-to-day in a hostel, in a vehicle, couch surfing, or in some other temporary location), at risk of homelessness, or in crisis.	Typically, people who are in crisis and need an intermediate step between shelter and permanent housing. Housing may target specific sub-populations, such as women and children fleeing violence.	People who need support to live independently, including older adults and people with disabilities. Housing may target specific sub-populations, such as youth aging out of foster care.	Low to moderate income families and individuals who experience barriers to finding and maintaining affordable and suitable housing in the private market; or who may suddenly experience vulnerability due to unsecure rental arrangements or sudden changes in employment or family structure.

The above housing types are important parts of the housing continuum. The housing continuum is a concept that illustrates housing options in a community and helps us understand housing challenges and barriers. A balanced housing continuum in Whistler means people have options to find appropriate housing at all stages of life, and as their needs change over time; this includes addressing the needs of both temporary and permanent employees.

As per the 2022 report, Whistler’s greatest proportion of housing stock includes market housing options (see Market Rental Housing and Market Home Ownership in Figure 1), and affordable housing options through the WHA (see Non-Market Rental Housing and Affordable Home Ownership in Figure 1). This vulnerable populations report takes a more in-depth look at the housing needs identified (in black outline) on the housing continuum shown in Figure 1, which are currently limited or non-existent and typically serve more vulnerable populations.

Figure 1: Targeted Housing Needs within the Housing Continuum



This report does not assess market or ownership housing options (including Market Rental Housing, Affordable Home Ownership, and Market Home Ownership, as per Figure 1). The housing types assessed in this report explore the left-end of the housing continuum and are all non-market housing options; provincial or federal government funding and/or non-profit operators are required to deliver these housing types.

This report will be a key tool for the development of housing options across the housing continuum and to support municipal partners in pursuing grant opportunities. It will also inform the development of the RMOW’s long-term housing strategy.

1.2 Housing Partners

Delivering housing options across the housing continuum requires collaboration and partnership between higher levels of government, provincial organizations, local government, non-profit organizations, private and

non-profit housing providers and, in Whistler, local businesses. The following subsections provide a high-level description of the roles and services contributed by relevant organizations and groups in the local Whistler context.

BC Housing

BC Housing is a Crown Corporation that develops, manages and administers a wide range of subsidized housing options across the province. This includes addressing critical gaps across the housing continuum, which range from emergency shelter and rent assistance in the private market to affordable home ownership. For example, BC Housing offers rent supplement programs for older adults and low-income families for any eligible B.C. resident. To develop a range of housing options, BC Housing works in partnership with the private and non-profit sectors, provincial health authorities and ministries, other levels of government and community groups.

Website: <https://www.bchousing.org/>

Vancouver Coastal Health

VCH is one of five regional health authorities which govern, plan and deliver health-care services. The regional health authority is responsible for identifying population health needs, planning appropriate programs and services, ensuring programs and services are properly funded and managed, and meeting performance objectives. (Source: *Government of BC*, retrieved February 20, 2024.) Additionally, in collaboration with BC Housing, and private and non-profit housing providers, the regional health authorities offer subsidized assisted living programs. (Source: *VCH, Subsidized Assisted Living Handbook*, 2016.) Healthcare based housing options including assisted living and long-term care regulated by the Province are outside the scope of this report.

Website: <https://www.vch.ca/en>

Resort Municipality of Whistler

The RMOW collaborates with higher levels of government, local non-profit organizations and the private sector to facilitate housing options. Additionally, in partnership with its subsidiaries, the Whistler Development Corporation (WDC) and the WHA, the RMOW delivers new affordable housing. WDC is generally responsible for housing development and construction, while the WHA is typically the housing owner and operator. Since 2018, through this model 294 employee housing units have been built or are currently under construction. One apartment building under construction will be owned and operated by the Whistler Valley Housing Society (WVHS), and will provide housing opportunities geared towards essential service employees and social service clients employed in Whistler.

Through the development of the 2023 RMOW Housing Action Plan, the RMOW identified six housing action categories where it can have the most impact facilitating housing. These action categories are:

- Monitor Supply and Identify Needs;
- Protect and Optimize Employee Housing;
- Leverage Municipal Lands;
- Utilize and Expand Finance Tools;
- Encourage the Private Sector; and
- Remove Red Tape Barriers.

These action categories show that the RMOW mainly facilitates housing options through regulations, policies and programs, and collaboration. Regulations, policies and programs are used to determine the location and type of housing that can be built and encourage the development of non-market housing.

Whistler Housing Authority

The WHA is a subsidiary of the RMOW, with the mission to provide Whistler employee housing solutions that support and enable the community to thrive and make Whistler the place to call home. The WHA's employee housing rental program is a non-market housing option for eligible Whistler employees, their families and retirees and includes 327 housing units. The WHA rental program is expanding, with 48 additional rental units currently under construction at 1450 Mount Fee Road and 104 units planned for 1475 Mount Fee Road. The WHA has a focused mandate that does not currently include areas of the housing continuum that would intersect a portion of the vulnerable populations defined in this report.

Website: <https://whistlerhousing.ca/>

Whistler Valley Housing Society

WVHS is a non-profit organization with the mission to provide, and advocate for, a broader spectrum of housing opportunities for the Whistler community by addressing diverse housing needs to help ensure no one is left behind. The WVHS owns and operates 20 existing non-market rental housing units, with 30 units under construction.

Website: <https://wvhousingsociety.com/>

Whistler Community Services Society

Whistler Community Services Society (WCSS) is a non-profit organization with the mission to support and advocate for a healthy community. WCSS supports Whistler's social health and wellness by providing a number of community support programs and services including the food bank, outreach services, the Extreme Weather Response (EWR) shelter and the emergency housing program.

Website: <https://mywcsc.org/>

PearlSpace

PearlSpace is a non-profit organization dedicated to preventing violence against women, Two Spirit, gender-diverse, non-binary, trans people, and children/youth by providing inclusive, supportive services to individuals and communities within the Sea to Sky corridor and Stl'atl'imx regions. Programs and services include transitional housing and supports, a safe home program, homeless prevention program, and affordable housing on a short-term basis.

Website: <https://pearlspace.ca/>

Zero Ceiling

Zero Ceiling is a non-profit organization with the mission to provide young people experiencing homelessness with supportive housing, employment, professional support, life skills, and outdoor adventure that empowers them to live healthy and independent lives.

Website: <https://zeroceiling.org/>

Private Sector and Local Businesses

The private sector, including local Whistler businesses, contribute to providing non-market housing options for Whistler employees. Some local businesses provide staff accommodation through securing private market rentals for their staff, owning and renting market properties to their staff, or developing new

employee restricted rental housing. Additionally, in response to RMOW initiatives developers have contributed to the creation of new non-market rental employee housing.

1.3 Policy Context

2020 Whistler Official Community Plan

The Official Community Plan (OCP) was adopted in 2020 and is Whistler's most important guiding document that sets long-term community direction. Since its incorporation in 1975, the municipality has managed growth and development through its OCP policies and land use regulations, including the development of an approved accommodation capacity measured in bed units. Whistler uses this accommodation capacity to ensure sustainable growth management to balance the needs of its economy, community, and natural environment. The OCP outlines a shared vision for residential accommodation, where Whistler residents have access to a continuum of affordable housing types, which enables people to live and work in the community through a progression of life stages. The plan includes goals, policies and land use designations to meet Whistler's long-term housing needs, and promotes a diversity of housing forms, tenures, residential uses, and densities.

Of specific importance to this report, Policy 5.3.1.4 provides direction to “collaborate with appropriate agencies and organizations to investigate requirements and provide, on an as-needed basis, affordable housing and special needs housing including emergency shelter, transitional housing or special care facilities.” The RMOW mainly facilitates housing options through regulations, policies and programs, and collaboration. This policy supports collaboration between the RMOW and appropriate agencies and organizations with the objective to encourage flexibility and adaptability in residential land uses. It also supports the goal to promote a diversity of housing forms, tenures, residential uses and densities to support the resort community's needs.

Balance Model

The Balance Model is an integrated modelling tool used for community planning, ongoing analysis, and evaluation of progress against the goals set out in the OCP. The model seeks to understand the changing trends in Whistler's population – and study the capacity of services and amenities to support that population. The Balance Model was developed with input from the *Strategic Planning Committee* and is a management tool that provides data and analysis to support staff with their work, and Council in its decision-making. Population projections derived from the Balance Model may also help inform anticipated housing needs.

2021 Whistler Age-Friendly Assessment and Action Plan

The Whistler Age-Friendly Assessment and Action Plan includes an assessment of Whistler's age-friendliness and a plan identifying priorities and potential actions to advance aging-in-place needs and opportunities. The plan speaks to age-friendly housing features, housing availability, and the ability to age-in-place. Actions include recommendations related to policy and opportunities for older adult housing options.

2022 Whistler Housing Needs Report

In April 2019, the B.C. Government amended the *Local Government Act* to require all local governments to develop a Housing Needs Report by April 2022. The purpose of these reports is for communities to gain a better understanding their current and future housing needs. To reflect a new prescribed methodology, new provincial legislation requires an interim report to be completed by January 1, 2025. The next Housing Needs Report will then be required by December 31, 2028 and every subsequent five years.

The 2022 Whistler Housing Needs Report was the first report produced as per the provincial requirement and assesses current housing needs as well as anticipated housing needs over the next five years. Of note for this report on vulnerable populations, the 2022 Whistler Housing Needs Report provided an analysis of core housing need, including data for 2006, 2011 and 2016. The Housing Needs Report also identified the following key segments of current need:

- General need for increased supply of purpose built rentals;
- Housing for low income and vulnerable persons;
- Housing for families;
- Accessible housing; and
- Smaller dwelling units.

It was also concluded that the market alone cannot be relied upon to provide these affordable, suitable, and adequate housing units for Whistler's workforce – as prices have reached a point where the average market property is unaffordable for more than 90% of Whistler's resident population, with diminishing availability of market rentals. While not a conclusion of the 2020 report, it is noted that this is likely to continue as demand continues to outstrip supply. Additionally, with regard to non-market options, construction prices remain high and any affordable projects need significant equity contributions typically not available to the private sector.

2022 Whistler Accessibility Action Plan

The Whistler Accessibility Action Plan outlines actions that identify, remove and prevent barriers to individuals in or interacting with the RMOW. These actions further the RMOW's efforts to make its workplace, services and built environment accessible and welcoming to people of all ages and abilities. Of particular interest are the actions related to housing for people with physical and cognitive disabilities and opportunities related to universal housing design. The Accessibility Action Plan is a legislated requirement of the *Accessible British Columbia Act*, which came into force for municipalities in British Columbia on September 1, 2023.

2023 Housing Action Plan

In the 2023-2026 RMOW Strategic Plan, housing was identified as a top priority. The Strategic Plan particularly identifies the implementation of a Housing Action Plan. The RMOW Housing Action Plan was endorsed by Council on May 16, 2023. This plan outlines actions to address Whistler's affordable housing needs and challenges; it identifies priority actions to be undertaken in 2023 and 2024 and provides a framework to guide future initiatives. The action "complete Vulnerable Populations Housing Needs Assessment" is identified as a 2023 action under the housing action category "Monitor Supply and Identify Needs".

RMOW Council Policy K-01: Employee Rental Housing Policy

RMOW Council Policy K-01: Employee Rental Housing Policy, was endorsed in 2019 and amended in 2022. This policy applies to all rental properties under the management and administration of the WHA and outlines eligibility requirements, housing qualifications and enforcement. This policy is further described in Section 3.

1.4 Methodology

This report is not required to follow the standardized housing data sets as per legislated housing needs reports, although it follows a similar approach. The foundation of the report is built on quantitative data and enhanced by qualitative feedback from interested organizations and community members.

What Data was Used?

Data from various sources, including Statistics Canada, the RMOW, the WHA, and supplementary data from non-profit organizations was collected and assessed as part of this report. The report was developed using the 2021 Statistics Canada Census of Households data, which was the most recent data available at the time.

How is ‘Affordable Housing’ Defined?

Housing is considered to be affordable when shelter costs are less than 30% of before-tax household income. Shelter costs include rent and any payments for electricity, fuel, water, and other municipal services. Affordable housing refers to temporary and permanent housing and can refer to any part of the housing continuum (CMHC, 2019).

How are ‘Vulnerable Populations’ Defined?

Vulnerable populations, for the purposes of this report, are people who are, or perceived to be, in a disadvantaged position or marginalized and, as a result, experience barriers to housing. The methodology used for this report assumes that people do not typically self-identify as vulnerable, nor do they consider themselves as belonging to a vulnerable population; however, they are experiencing vulnerability. The housing types that serve those experiencing the greatest vulnerabilities are emergency, transitional, supportive, or non-market rental housing. Key areas of housing need may span multiple types of housing. For instance, accessible housing for older adults and persons with disabilities can exist in transitional, supportive, or other non-market rental housing options.

What We Heard: Experiencing Vulnerability

People may experience vulnerability in different ways and at different stages of their life. People experience life changes that make them more vulnerable. Examples include a sudden change in employment (including unemployment), housing (e.g., eviction, fleeing violence), family structure (e.g., divorce, separation, becoming widowed), or health (e.g., critical illness or life-changing injury). By identifying the housing gaps and supporting additional types of housing (i.e., emergency, transitional, supportive housing), people experiencing vulnerability have housing options.

What Information is Not Included?

This report does not assess market or ownership housing options (including Market Home Ownership, Market Rental Housing, and Affordable Home Ownership as per Figure 1). The housing types assessed in this report are all non-market housing options (including emergency, transitional, supportive, and non-market rental options), as they serve the greatest number of people who may experience vulnerability.

Assisted living, long-term care, and other healthcare-based housing options are outside the scope of this report. These housing options are healthcare-primary facilities offered through health authorities (i.e., VCH), and are considered outside the realm of community housing.

How did Vancouver Coastal Health Contribute?

This project was funded through a grant provided by VCH. Additionally, the project team met with VCH staff twice to provide updates and receive feedback on the project approach and the findings of the needs assessment.

How were Lílwat Nation and Squamish Nation Engaged?

Lílwat Nation and Squamish Nation were invited to participate in the project engagement through an interview or an alternative format, so that the project team could learn about the housing barriers, challenges, and opportunities that exist for Nation members in Whistler. Squamish Nation provided written comments through the Squamish Nation engagement portal called Squamish Connect. An interview was conducted with the Lílwat Nation Housing Coordinator and Director of Infrastructure.

What Community Engagement was Conducted?

To better understand the targeted housing needs, the RMOW engaged with interested organizations through focus groups and engaged community members through experience interviews. The engagement consisted of two focus groups and five experience interviews. One focus group included social service and housing providers, and a second focus group included public sector organizations. In total, the focus groups included 32 participants with 19 organizations represented. Participants for experience interviews were referred by social service and housing providers and interviews were conducted by phone or in-person; in presenting these interviews in this report, all names and personal information has been removed or changed so that participants are not identifiable. The engagement process is summarized in Figure 2 and key findings are included throughout this report. Additionally, the full engagement results are included in Appendix C.

Figure 2: Community Engagement Overview

Engagement Method	Format	Participants	Timing
Service Provider Focus Group	In-person	13 organizations; 20 participants	May 24, 2023
Public Sector Focus Group	In-person	6 organizations; 12 participants	May 24, 2023
Experience Interviews	Phone	5 participants	June & July 2023

The image is a vertical collage of three photographs. The top photo shows dark trees at night, heavily decorated with strings of green and warm white lights. The middle photo is a close-up of a building facade, possibly a sports bar, with a sign that says 'SPORTS' and 'SAB & BOOTS'. It is also decorated with green lights. The bottom photo shows a busy, snowy sidewalk at night with many people walking, their figures blurred by motion. In the background, there are buildings and more festive lights.

Community Overview

SECTION 2: COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

This section provides an overview of demographic trends in Whistler, primarily based on data from the 2011, 2016, and 2021 Statistics Canada Census data, and supplemented by the RMOW Balance Model and Whistler Housing Survey data. It also discusses key indicators of vulnerability in Whistler, using community data sources as well as 2021 Statistics Canada Census data.

A full data summary and analysis is included in Appendix B. Trends in population growth, age, household characteristics, incomes, and other economic factors play an important role in understanding the housing needs of a community.

2.1 Overview of Demographic Trends

Population

- **Whistler is a growing and diverse community.**
 - Whistler grew by 27% from an estimated 13,083 in 2011 to 16,668 in 2021, adding an additional 3,585 residents and temporary workers over this 10-year period. Increasing population growth can put pressure on existing housing supply and ultimately lead to higher housing costs.
- **Whistler has a high proportion of young adults, and a growing number of older adults and family populations.**
 - The greatest proportion of Whistler's population are adults aged 25-44 (36% of the entire population in 2021).
 - **The fastest growing age groups are older adults over the age of 65** (155% increase over a 10-year period), followed by individuals aged 45-64 (56%). Older adults often require accessible or aging-in-place housing options; or supportive or long-term care options depending on their health and level of ability. Assisted living, long-term care, and other healthcare-based housing options are outside the scope of this report.
 - **The number of families with children is noticeably increasing;** the number of children aged 19 years and younger has been increasing over the past 10 years. Households with children require bigger units with at least two bedrooms depending on the number of children and gender (see the National Occupancy Standard in Appendix A).
- As an international resort community, **Whistler has a high proportion of sales and service workers and is home to a significant number of newcomers and temporary workers.**
 - The greatest proportion of individuals (41%) work in sales and service occupations. Other key industries include trades (16%) and business and administration (15%).
 - 23% (1,795) of employed Whistler residents work from home.
 - **Whistler has a large population of temporary workers** (in 2021, at least 17% of workers were casual, seasonal, or had an employment end date). Temporary employment is less stable, and individuals may experience fluctuating incomes or periods of unemployment.
 - **Whistler is home to a significant number of newcomers.** In 2021, 35% of residents had moved to Whistler from outside the community within the previous five years. In 2021, 25%

What We Heard: Temporary Workers

Census data can miss some demographics, including temporary foreign workers, who rent shared rooms, live in staff housing, or sublet and may not have received or responded to a Census survey. Therefore, data about newcomers may not fully represent reality.

of Whistler residents identified as an immigrant to Canada and 10% identified as a non-permanent resident with a work or study permit or refugee status.

- There are 145 residents identified as having Indigenous ancestry in 2021.

Household Size and Composition

- In 2021, Whistler had 10,065 private dwellings of which 5,597 (56%) were occupied by usual residents (i.e., permanently residing as a homeowner or renter). **Whistler has a high proportion of second homeowners who reserve their property for personal use** (47% of market properties) **or for vacation rentals** (9% of market properties). Demand for market housing by second homeowners can reduce market housing options for residents in the community.
- Whistler has a high proportion of single (one-person) (29%) and couple (26%) households, and a growing number of families with children (23% of households, which can be further broken down into 19% couple families with children and 4% one-parent families).
- Households with roommates make up 13% of households, which is especially high for a community of this size (compared to the B.C. average of 4%), but expected for a purpose-built resort.
- The number of renter households has increased by 35% over the past 10 years (2,450 renter households in 2021). Compared to owner households, **renters experience higher rates of unsuitable and unaffordable housing**. 15% of renter households are overcrowded (i.e., living in unsuitable housing) and 37% of renter households live in unaffordable housing (i.e., spending 30% or more of a household's gross income on shelter costs).

Median Individual and Household Incomes

- In 2021, Whistler's median income for all individuals was \$44,800, meaning the maximum affordable shelter cost per month was \$1,120.
- In 2021, Whistler's median household income was \$99,000.
- Based on the definition of affordability (i.e., maximum 30% of household income is spent towards shelter costs) and median income by household type, the following family types can afford the following shelter costs (see Figure 3):

Figure 3: Maximum Affordable Shelter Costs per Month by Family Type, 2021

Family Type	Median Annual Household Income	Maximum Affordable Shelter Cost per Month
One Couple with Children	\$139,000	\$3,475
One Couple without Children	\$108,000	\$2,700
One Parent Household (Male)	\$81,000	\$2,025
One Parent Household (Female)	\$74,500	\$1,863
Non-Census Family (Including Households with Roommates)	\$64,000	\$1,600

Minimum Wage

- The minimum wage in B.C. is currently \$16.75/hour (as of June 1, 2023).
- A person working full-time (40 hours/week) on minimum wage earns \$34,840 annually and can afford a maximum of \$871 per month on housing costs.

Income and Disability Assistance

- In 2023, 768 individuals (including 157 children) were receiving income or disability assistance in the Sea to Sky region including Squamish, Whistler, and Pemberton (Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, received May 18, 2023).
- **Those on income or disability assistance require very low rents that generally are found only in non-market subsidized housing.**
- Based on the Income and Disability Assistance Shelter Rates, the following household sizes can afford the following maximum shelter costs (see Figure 4):

What We Heard: Disability Assistance

Individuals living with intellectual or physical disabilities, specifically those who receive fixed incomes (i.e., disability assistance), are experiencing barriers to housing or struggle to find and maintain affordable and appropriate housing.

Figure 4: Income and Disability Assistance Shelter Rates, British Columbia, 2022

Household Size	Shelter Maximum
1	\$500
2	\$695
3	\$790
4	\$840
5	\$890
6	\$940
7	\$990

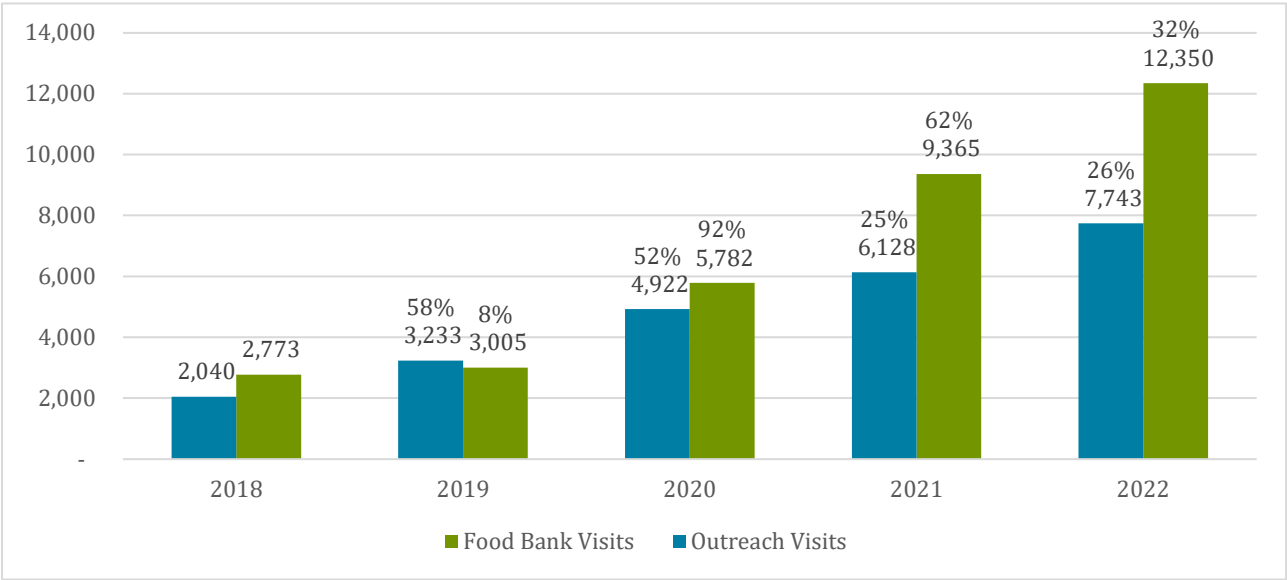
2.2 Indicators of Vulnerability

Foodbank and Outreach Services

Access to foodbank, outreach, and social services are strong indicators of people experiencing vulnerability who may be experiencing barriers to housing or in need of additional support.

Social service providers are seeing increased demand in foodbank and outreach services. As per Figure 5, the number of visits to the foodbank has increased significantly year over year. In the past five years, between 2018 and 2022, foodbank had an additional 9,577 visits (for clarity, this is number of visits and not number of unique visitors). Foodbank access rates can be indicative of the number of people who are experiencing vulnerability and financial pressure from a number of factors including increased costs of living or changes to employment.

Figure 5: Foodbank and Outreach Visits, Whistler Community Services Society, 2018-2022



Source: Whistler Community Services Society, received May 18, 2023.

The number of people accessing outreach services has increased by 5,703 visits during the same period, between 2018 and 2022. Outreach services include support for those experiencing challenges with mental health, financial insecurity, advocacy, physical health and injury, housing, food insecurity, substance use, employment, family/friend relationships, parenting, or violence/conflict in relationships. The top three reasons for accessing outreach services are mental health (11%), access to refuge/shelter or basic needs (8%), and financial assistance (7%).

What We Heard: Social Service & Community Supports

Households are feeling financial pressures from increasing rental rates, inflation, rising costs of food, and increased costs in childcare. Individuals and families have less disposable income, and are resorting to social service and community supports, such as the foodbank, to help alleviate financial pressure.

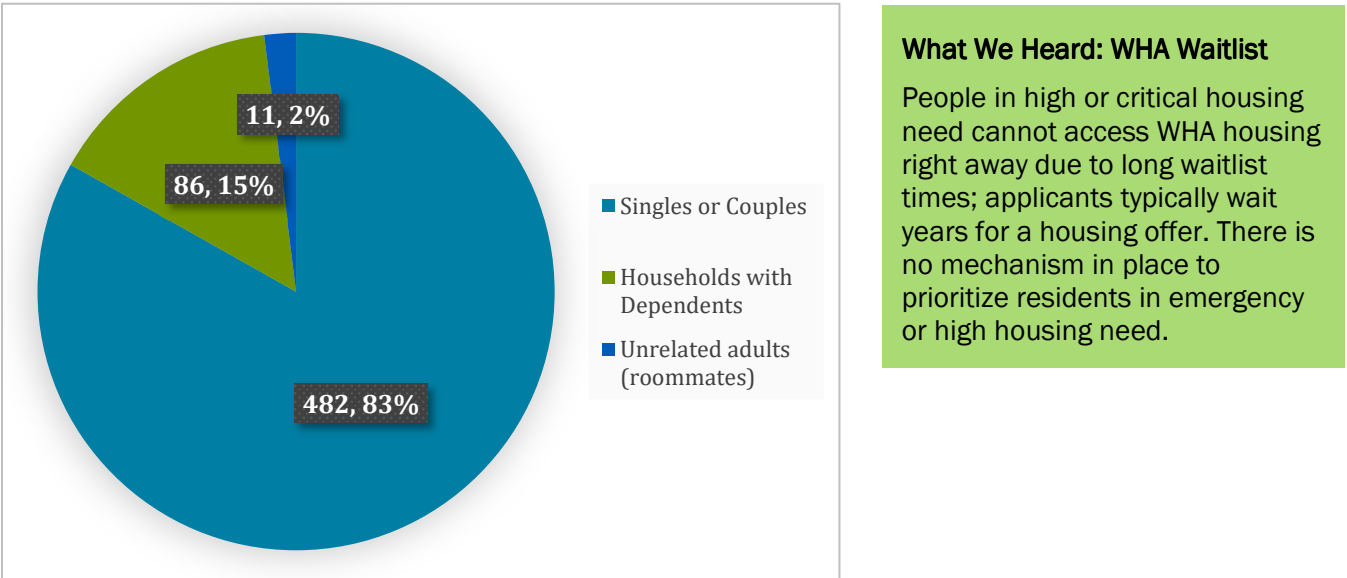
Clients are experiencing less stigma regarding the use of social services and supports, which is critical to overcoming barriers when people experience vulnerability.

The housing crisis is complex; while building more homes is needed, housing solutions should be complemented by social services and other supports.

Non-Market Rental Housing Stock Waitlist

As of April 2023, there were **574 eligible households on the WHA rental waitlist**, see Figure 6 for a breakdown by household type. **Waitlists can be used as a rough indicator of housing needs that are not currently being met.** Housing for singles or couples represents the highest demand (83%), followed by families with children (15%).

Figure 6: Whistler Housing Authority Rental Waitlist by Household Type, April 2023



Source: Whistler Housing Authority, received April 25, 2023.

Further, the waitlist categorizes applicants by age, and includes the following demographic groups of need:

- **41 households** on the waitlist **are older adults** (i.e., the main applicant is over the age of 55); and
- **24 households** on the waitlist **are youth** (i.e., the main applicant is under the age of 24).

Older adults and youth may experience higher vulnerability due to limited resources or income and would benefit from units that target these demographics.

Experience Spotlight: Gloria

Gloria is a single mother of two adult children and works full-time in the retail industry. Gloria lives with her daughter who has special needs and will need full-time support for the rest of her life. Gloria moved to Whistler during the Olympics with her children; she was married and lived in a house. Several years ago, she experienced a relationship breakdown, and she reached out to a local non-profit who helped her move out and find temporary housing for her and her two children.

Gloria feels lucky that when she left her marriage, she was already on the WHA waitlist for rental housing. She lived in temporary non-profit housing in Pemberton while waiting for a WHA rental. During that time, she looked online for immediate housing. Gloria felt discriminated against because she had children; landlords would tell her the rental was only suitable for one person. After one year in temporary housing, and six years in total on the waitlist, she was offered a WHA rental and immediately accepted.

Gloria is thankful for WHA housing; she lives in a two-bedroom and knows she can stay there as long as needed, but she feels the rent rate is unaffordable for a single parent. Gloria, like many others that she knows, is living pay cheque to pay cheque. Gloria wishes she could work two or three jobs to make ends meet, but her daughter needs constant care and attention. Even with support workers, Gloria cannot leave her at home for very many hours at a time. Gloria considered living with a roommate to help bring down housing costs, but her daughter would not be comfortable with that. Gloria is considering moving. She is looking at Vancouver Island or Alberta where housing is more affordable, she has friends, and can find work.

Gloria believes there are no options in Whistler for single parents like herself that live on a single income. She feels that rental housing is run like a business. Gloria believes there should be housing with rent geared to what a family or single parent can afford. She wishes rent rates could be on a case-to-case basis, rather than a flat rate. In addition, Gloria believes there is a housing shortage; she believes more housing is needed for all the employees who are looking. She said employees are shopping for employers that offer housing – she has never experienced a greater need for rental housing in Whistler before.

Core Housing Need

In 2021, 24% of Whistler’s renter households were estimated to be in core housing need; and 8% were in extreme core housing need. This means these households are facing housing challenges and they can’t afford a more appropriate unit in the community.

Figure 7 shows the total number of households in core housing need by income category, which may be used to estimate the existing deficit of affordable housing options in the community.

Figure 7: Number of Households in Core Housing Need by Income Category, 2021

Income Category (Max. affordable shelter cost)	Total Number of Households
Very Low Income (\$495)	95
Low Income (\$1,237)	455
Moderate Income (\$1,980)	425
Median Income (\$2,970)	20
High Income (>\$2,970)	0
Total	995

Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021; custom data retrieved from Housing Assessment Resource Tools, UBC, 2023.

What is Core Housing Need?

According to Census Canada and CMHC, housing need is defined across three dimensions:

- **Affordability** – the household spends less than 30% of its gross income on shelter costs;
- **Suitability** – there are enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of the household (according to the National Occupancy Standard); and
- **Adequacy** – the housing is not in need of major repairs.

If a household experiences need in any one of the above dimensions, and would have to spend 30% or more of its gross income to afford the rent for an alternative suitable and adequate unit in the local market, then the household is in *core housing need*. If the household is in core housing need and has a shelter-cost-to-income ratio of 50% or more, then it is in *extreme core housing need*.

Experience Spotlight: James

James is a young adult living in Mount Currie on Lílwat Nation reserve lands and works in the retail sales industry in Whistler. He commutes forty-five minutes every day into Whistler Village from his home. James lives in a two-storey house with his grandma. She suffered an injury several years ago, so she needs someone to live with her to provide extra care and support. James has a separate living space in the house with his own entrance. He feels lucky to have his own personal space for him and his dog and still be close to family that need his support. For two months, before COVID hit Whistler, James was employed by Vail Resorts and lived in staff housing. He had a good experience there and liked being close to work, but there was no personal space – staff shared a bunk bed in a bedroom.

James has looked for housing in Whistler and Pemberton. He wants to live closer to work, but everything is too expensive. He feels that \$1,000/month would be an affordable amount to rent a shared home. He enjoys sharing space with family and friends, but he wants his own bedroom and bathroom and personal space. Unfortunately, James could not find anything in the rental market that could meet his needs or affordability level, so he continues to commute from Mount Currie. He is not aware of any supports that the Nation office can provide in terms of housing off-reserve; they offer on-reserve housing and services, which have a very long waitlist. James believes there just isn't enough housing.

James thinks there should be more affordable housing options in Whistler so people can live closer to where they work. He also thinks there should be more family-style, multi-generational housing forms that offer privacy for individuals, but also allow household members to share space and help one another.



Current Housing Supply & Supports



SECTION 3: CURRENT HOUSING SUPPLY AND SUPPORTS

3.1 Emergency Supports and Services

Emergency housing includes shelters which are immediate, short-stay housing for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless. Emergency housing programs may be supplemented by drop-in services, meal programs, outreach services and other activities or services.



Emergency Housing

Transitional Housing

Supportive Housing

Non-Market Rental Housing

Current Stock & Programs	<p>One EWR shelter with 18 beds operated by WCSS; this temporary program only operates during periods of extreme cold (below -10° Celsius or during a cold weather warning). The number of beds is subject to annual approval.</p> <p>An emergency housing program operated by WCSS provides temporary shelter, dependent on tourist accommodation property availability.</p>
Populations Served	<p>People who are experiencing homelessness (e.g., living outside) or precariously housed (e.g., vehicle living) who need safe shelter during periods of extreme cold.</p> <p>Depending on availability, women and children fleeing violence may access temporary shelter through the emergency housing program.</p>
Populations Underserved	<p>People who are experiencing homelessness, are at risk of homelessness, or are precariously housed require emergency housing year-round.</p> <p>People experiencing barriers to housing often require social services and other community supports (e.g., foodbank, outreach, and mental health services among others).</p>

Extreme Weather Response Program

A cold-weather EWR shelter has operated in Whistler for two years, starting in 2021. The program is operated by WCSS located at 8000 Nesters Road and funded by BC Housing.

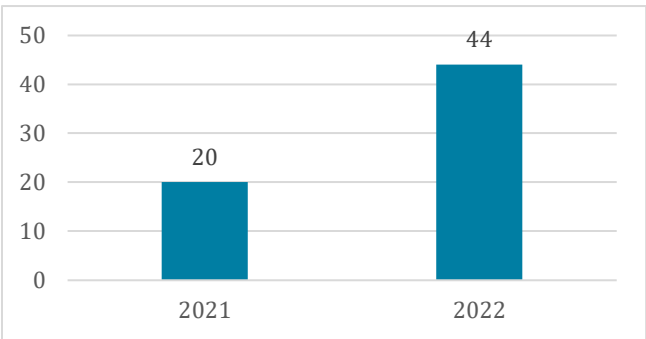
The EWR shelter is activated and open from 6pm to 8am nightly when the following conditions are met:

- Temperatures are -10° Celsius or below; or
- Temperatures are 0° Celsius WITH adverse weather conditions (snowfall, heavy rainfall, blizzard, etc.).

The maximum nightly occupancy was increased in January 2024 from six to 18 beds; occupancy increases are considered on an annual basis and require approval of the Fire Chief. Figure 8 shows increasing number of overnight stays since the program began in 2021. This could be indicative of more extreme weather nights and/or increased demand for overnight shelter stays and increased awareness in the community that the shelter is in place.

Additionally, during operational hours the Whistler Public Library acts as a cooling and warming centre during extreme hot and cold weather events.

Figure 8: Extreme Weather Response Shelter Overnight Visits, 2021-2022



Source: Whistler Community Services Society, received May 18, 2023.

What We Heard: Emergency Shelters & Building Capacity

It is common for emergency shelters to operate under-occupancy when first established. Emergency Housing Shelter programs start slow as the service provider must build trust with community members to feel safe to access the space overnight, to educate the public regarding shelter activation, and to build staff capacity. Therefore, the number of visitors – although an important indicator of increased use – may underrepresent the demand for shelter space.

Service providers have reported that people who are experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness require shelter or emergency options at all times of the year, not just in cold weather.

Emergency Housing Program

Whistler does not currently have a year-round or permanent emergency shelter. However, WCSS operates an emergency housing program for Whistler and area community members to access safe and temporary accommodation. Eligibility is based on financial needs, emergency situations and extenuating circumstances. Length of stay can range from 3-14 nights and is dependent on hotel availability. The emergency housing program may provide immediate, short stay housing for people who are homeless, at risk of becoming homeless, or fleeing violence.

Experience Spotlight: Brian

Brian is a single father of two teenage sons, works full-time as a bus driver, and is living in a WHA rental. Brian waited seven years to get into a two-bedroom rental unit and is thankful to have safe and stable housing for his family. Prior to living in his current unit, Brian was living in his van without his children, in the freezing cold in a wooded area outside Whistler.

Brian has lived in Whistler for over 30 years and used to own a home with his wife. When his family went through a divorce, he had to find rental housing for him and his sons. He looked for rentals in the private market while he waited for a WHA rental to become available. For a few years he lived in a two-bedroom carriage house for \$1,700/month; he liked it there. It was enough room for him and his children and in a good location. Brian was unfortunately “renovicted” from the unit, and suddenly without housing. Finding a two-bedroom in Whistler at a manageable cost was incredibly challenging; all the available units were one-bedroom units, which is not suitable for a family. Brian had nowhere to go and resorted to living in his van. Because he could not maintain stable housing, he lost custody of his children. Brian investigated moving to Pemberton or Squamish, but his children and support network were in Whistler – it would have been more challenging to leave. Brian felt discriminated against when applying for market rentals in Whistler; landlords were suspicious why he was living in his vehicle, which made finding housing even more difficult.

Brian lived in his van, during the cold winter season, for six months before he was offered a rental with the WHA. At the time of the rental offer, he was working three jobs to ensure he would meet the eligibility requirements of the WHA rental program. He is thankful to have stable housing and custody of his children again, although he feels \$2,000/month for rent is higher than he can afford on a single income with two teenage sons. Brian believes Whistler needs options for single parent families; they should not have to struggle like he did. He says even if a family qualifies for rent supplements, they are not enough to bridge the rent-income gap. There should be subsidized rental options for single parent families and less eligibility requirements to ensure families have safe and stable housing.

3.2 Transitional Housing

Transitional housing is a type of housing for residents to reside for between 30 days and three years and aims to transition individuals to long-term, permanent housing.

	 Emergency Housing	 Transitional Housing	 Supportive Housing	 Non-Market Rental Housing
Current Stock	<p>One second-stage housing unit (private, secure, and low-cost) operated by PearlSpace where women and children fleeing violence can live independently for 6-18 months to help support families that need time to find permanent long-term housing.</p> <p>Whistler has no transition or safe home option for women and children fleeing violence or in crisis; and no transitional housing option for people who require immediate and temporary accommodation.</p>			
Populations Served	<p>Women and children who have fled their home due to domestic violence and are transitioning back into the housing market.</p>			
Populations Underserved	<p>Whistler has no transition or safe home options for women and children fleeing violence or in crisis.</p> <p>Whistler has no transitional housing options for people who require immediate and temporary accommodation. There are limited housing options for people experiencing vulnerability (i.e., sudden changes in employment, housing, family structure, or health) and cannot wait for other non-market housing options to become available.</p>			

Women and Children Fleeing Violence

One service provider, PearlSpace (formerly Howe Sound Women’s Centre), offers programs for women – with or without children – who are at risk of violence, or who have experienced violence. Programs include support services, referrals, and assistance in planning next steps. It is noted that while this section and other parts of the report refer to ‘women and children’, PearlSpace is an inclusive organization that provides support to women, Two Spirit, gender-diverse, non-binary, trans people, and children/youth.

Transition House or Safe Home

Transition houses and safe homes are a type of temporary housing for women and children fleeing violence. It is a safe, anonymous place to stay with food, staff, and support services.

Whistler currently has no transition house or safe home. The nearest transition house is in Squamish and the nearest safe home is in Pemberton, meaning that women or children fleeing violence must leave the community to access safe and secure housing when in crisis.

Second-Stage Housing

PearlSpace operates one second-stage housing unit in Whistler, which is a private, secure low-cost townhouse unit where women and children can live safely and independently for 6-18 months. Second-stage housing is an intermediate step between a transition house or safe home for those who struggle to gain access to housing and need help to re-enter the housing market.

Other Types of Transitional Housing

Other types of transitional housing serve populations who need supportive – and temporary – housing in order to bridge the gap from homelessness or crisis to permanent housing (whether supportive or independent housing). Transitional housing is only effective if there are emergency options for people in crisis, and non-market rental options for them to move on to.

Community Data

Currently, there is little data to quantitatively understand the demand for transitional housing options in Whistler. The need for transitional housing can correlate closely with the number of people seeking immediate and temporary accommodation. This data can be collected through service providers who provide emergency accommodation and social services.

What We Heard: Transitional Housing

There are circumstances when people need immediate and temporary accommodation. Examples include a sudden change in employment (including unemployment), housing (e.g., eviction, fleeing violence), family structure (e.g., divorce or separation, becoming widowed), or health (e.g., critical illness or life-changing injury).

Whistler residents wait years to access non-market housing through the WHA; there are limited options for those who cannot wait for housing.

Participants identified emergency and transitional housing as housing gaps; Whistler requires delivery of new types of housing so that people experiencing vulnerability have housing options.

Experience Spotlight: Anita

Anita is a single mother of two young daughters and works full-time in the retail industry. She moved to Whistler from Europe 15 years ago on a working holiday visa and decided to stay. She got married, had two children, and owned a house. Several years ago, due to domestic abuse, it was no longer safe to live with her husband and Anita fled her home. She moved in with a generous coworker. She was grateful to have a room to stay in, but she could not live with her children there. She sought help from local non-profit service providers, who were able to book emergency accommodation at a local hotel for Anita and her children so she could spend one or two nights with them every few weeks.

Anita felt desperate to find housing for her and her children – she responded to hundreds of rental postings. She went to at least five showings. She told landlords she had stable employment, worked full-time, and had great references; however, as soon as she mentioned she had two children they lost interest. She felt discriminated against for being a single mother of two young girls. Anita was offered a placement in a transition house in Squamish, but she did not have a vehicle and would not be able to return to Whistler every day. She was offered another non-profit housing option in Pemberton, but she could not commit to commuting by two buses each day if she had to take her children to daycare and work full-time. Feeling very desperate, she applied for a rental with the WHA. Within nine months, Anita was offered a rental unit. She knows this was very fast, because most applicants wait five or six years, but for someone in an emergency this was a long time. Over those nine months, Anita moved eight times staying with friends and coworkers.

Anita believes there are no options for women or men who are trying to flee domestic abuse. Anita, like other women she knows, does not have family nearby, or in Canada at all. She feels that for people who were not born in the area, it is even more difficult. Whistler needs housing options and emergency supports to help those who do not have family nearby. Whistler needs a safe house or transition housing, or somewhere for people to go when in crisis. She knows more and more moms in the exact same situation she was in.

Anita also believes that there needs to be long-term affordable housing options for single parents. Anita is incredibly grateful for her housing with the WHA, but the rent is still too high. She spends almost 90% of her income on housing costs. There are no affordable options for a single parent who needs a two-bedroom unit. Anita says people tell her to go to a cheaper town or province, but she cannot leave. Her ex-husband is in Whistler, where her children will continue to live, and she cannot leave them. Even though she has stable housing, she continues to look for a more affordable option.

3.3 Supportive Housing

Supportive housing is a type of housing that provides on-site supports and services to residents who cannot live independently. On-site supports are non-clinical and include life skills training, connections to health care, and mental health or substance-use services. Staff are on site 24/7 to provide support.



	Emergency Housing	Transitional Housing	Supportive Housing	Non-Market Rental Housing
Current Stock	<p>Whistler offers the only youth supportive housing program in the Sea to Sky corridor. The program operated by Zero Ceiling through support from the Federal Reaching Home funding program, houses nine youth at two housing sites and provides on-site supports. The program operates on short-term lease arrangements and would benefit from long-term housing arrangements in order to maintain and grow the youth supportive housing program.</p> <p>Whistler has no supportive housing options for adults, older adults, or people with disabilities.</p>			
Populations Served	<p>Young people aged 19-24, specifically marginalized youth and youth aging out of care.</p>			
Populations Underserved	<p>Currently, there is little data to assess housing needs and demand for supportive housing. Supportive housing can correlate closely with the number of people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness who need on-site support as they are not able to live independently. Supportive housing can also serve populations who experience longer term vulnerabilities, such as older adults and people with physical, mental, and cognitive disabilities.</p> <p>The 2021 Whistler Age-Friendly Assessment & Action Plan considers supportive housing for older adults and calls for consideration of new housing types and to explore new models and opportunities.</p>			

Youth Supportive Housing

Whistler has one supportive housing option specifically for youth aged 19-24, which is operated by a non-profit service provider, Zero Ceiling. This program is made possible by the federal Reaching Home funding program.

In addition to supportive housing, the program includes employment, life skills training, mental health support, case management, and outdoor recreation for youth who are experiencing homelessness or are precariously housed. The program operates out of two homes, one is a market lease that expires in 2024,

and the other home is on a month-to-month lease. These lease arrangements are temporary and unsecure; the program would benefit from a long-term lease or ownership option to ensure youth supportive housing may continue to operate.

The program serves nine youth aged 19-24 who are referred to the organization by other providers. Youth are not required to be Whistler residents prior to entering the program; the program is tailored to support youth who aged out of care and/or may be marginalized. Roughly half of applicants who are referred to the program are from the Sea to Sky corridor, and the remainder are from the Lower Mainland. The program supports participants to live and work in Whistler and benefits the local business community. There is high demand for more youth supportive housing options in Whistler; Zero Ceiling has 13 young people on the waitlist, and no new applications are currently being accepted due to capacity.

Other Types of Supportive Housing

Whistler has no supportive housing options for adults, older adults, or people with disabilities.

BC Housing Supportive Housing Registry

Whistler residents, along with any B.C. resident, can apply for the BC Housing Supportive Housing Registry to access supportive housing throughout the province. The nearest supportive housing options are in the Lower Mainland. Applicants to the Supportive Housing Registry must be:

- Low-income;
- Homeless or at-risk of homelessness;
- May have mental health and/or mental and physical health needs; and
- Require support services to help maintain a successful tenancy.

Community Data

Currently, there is little data to assess the demand for supportive housing options in Whistler. Supportive housing serves populations who may experience longer term vulnerabilities, such as older adults and people with physical, mental, and cognitive disabilities.

The need for supportive housing can correlate closely with the number of people experiencing homelessness or at risk of homelessness who need on-site support as they are not able to live independently. Regular data collection (such as Point-in-Time Counts or housing waitlists) can capture data that may indicate how many people in need of housing also require on-site supports. Data collection is critical to understanding the need for supportive housing.

Supportive Housing for Older Adults

As per the 2021 Whistler Age-Friendly Assessment & Action Plan:

Survey respondents indicated they would like to see supportive housing (e.g., independent living, assisted living) in Whistler. The action plan calls for consideration of new housing types, and to explore models and opportunities for older adult supportive housing.

The action plan also calls for consideration of assisted living and long-term care options, which are outside the scope of this report. These healthcare-based options are offered through health authorities.

What We Heard: Supportive Housing & Data Collection

Supportive housing in Whistler is very limited or non-existent. Existing municipal plans and policies do not adequately address the need for transitional and supportive housing.

Supporting community-based solutions is key. It is necessary to create opportunities for data collection about vulnerable populations to better understand housing needs and gaps. Ongoing engagement and collaboration with residents and local service providers is needed to understand how housing issues are growing and changing, and to make informed policy decisions.

3.4 Non-Market Rental Housing

Non-market rental housing includes government-subsidized housing, non-profit below-market housing, occupancy or employee-restricted units, and rent assistance options that are typically geared to low to moderate income households. This type of housing is suitable for people who can live independently and do not require additional supports. In Whistler, a large portion of the non-market rental stock is managed by the WHA, a wholly-owned independent subsidiary of the RMOW, and is for resident employees and their families. The WHA currently uses a rent-geared-to-income (RGI) approach for non-market rentals, which is further discussed below. While WHA housing is not specifically targeted toward low to moderate income households, the majority of renters likely fall within these income categories.



Emergency Housing

Transitional Housing

Supportive Housing

Non-Market Rental Housing

Current Stock & Programs

Whistler has a variety of non-market rental units. There are 327 units offered through the WHA and 20 units through the WVHS. Whistler also has 1,038 unique community housing units that consist of 713 employee restricted rentals, 123 employee suites, and 202 employee occupancy restricted properties (these 202 units can either be rented to employees or owner occupied if the owner is an employee). These unique community housing units exist throughout the community and are governed by housing agreements. Assuming all units are occupied by Whistler residents, these non-market units make up 56% of all renter households. For clarity, these units do not include employee occupancy and price restricted units sold through WHA waitlist.

An estimated 45 households in the private rental market across the Sea to Sky region receive rent supplements through BC Housing.

Populations Served

Local employees who meet RMOW Council Policy K-01: Employee Rental Housing Policy have the greatest number of options in terms of non-market rental housing in Whistler. The policy includes provisions for senior priority housing applicable to some properties. Units offered through the WVHS are not regulated under the policy.

Low-income older adults and low-income families have access to rent supplement programs through BC Housing. At-risk groups facing homelessness have access to rent supplement programs through local social service providers, notably these programs are temporary supplements and rent supplement amounts are fairly low.

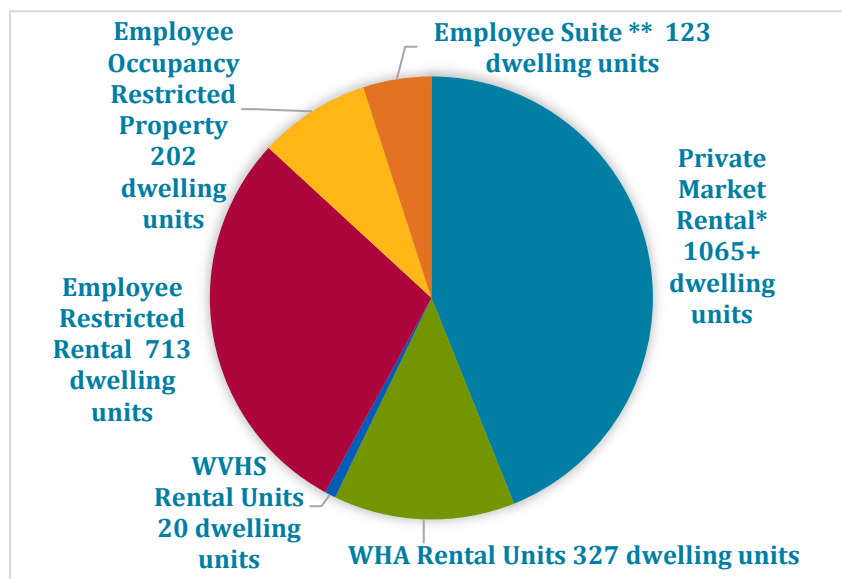
Demand for more non-market rental housing in Whistler is very high. As of November 2023, there are 574 employee households on the WHA's rental housing waitlist, of which 20% (115) are current WHA tenants. Some of these households have indicated that they are interested in housing 'as soon as possible', and for others, their application is a backup plan 'just in case' something happens with their current housing situation. The waitlist includes 41 older adults (over the age of 55) and 24 youth (under the age of 24). In addition, there is demand for housing for local employees who are part of the local workforce but do not meet the eligibility requirements of RMOW Council Policy K-01: Employee Rental Housing Policy.

Based on available data, more affordable and suitable housing options for low to moderate income households is needed, specifically for one-parent families, youth, Indigenous people, new migrants, people with cognitive, mental, or addictions activity limitation, visible minorities, people with physical activity limitation, and older adults. These populations have a high proportion of people in core housing need and were identified during engagement as representing more vulnerable populations.

Non-Market Rental Housing Stock

This section includes a snapshot of rental options to better understand the importance of non-market rental housing. Whistler has at least 2,450 renter households (as per the 2021 Census). The rental housing stock can be broken down into the resident housing types shown in Figure 9. While private market rentals* make up the highest proportion of the resident housing types, approximately an estimated 1,385 households (56% of all renter households) live in non-market housing, with the assumption that units are fully occupied. Non-market housing options include: WHA-managed rental units, WVHS-managed rental units, unique housing stock (employee restricted rentals, employee occupancy restricted properties and employee suites), and rent supplement programs. Each rental option is described further in the following sections.

Figure 9: Rental Housing Stock by Resident Housing Type and Restrictions, 2023



What We Heard: Private Market Rentals

Low to moderate income households cannot afford market rental rates and housing can be unstable. Tenants who are suddenly evicted experience vulnerability and need housing quickly. Some households resort to overcrowding to afford market rates.

Low to moderate income individuals and families rely on non-market housing options to stay in the community.

Source: Whistler Housing Authority, 2023.

*Note: Number of households living in a private market rental is not measured or collected by Census. This is an estimated minimum, assuming a minimum of 2,450 renter households (as per the 2021 Census) exist in Whistler and assuming all other non-market rental types are fully occupied by renter households.

**Number of employee suites is currently under review, as per the WHA.

Context: Private Market Rentals

Private market rentals are homes that are privately owned and offered for rent. Market rentals are increasingly unaffordable for Whistler residents and are considered an unsecure form of housing due to risk of eviction (e.g., if the unit is renovated, sold, or the owner takes back the unit as a primary residence). Understanding housing options in the private market is critical to understanding the demand for non-market rental housing.

An estimated minimum of 1,065* renter households live in private market rentals. As a resort community, rent rates and vacancy rates can fluctuate significantly from season to season; seasonal residents can drive up market rental rates and reduce vacancy rates. As per a recent market scan, a snapshot of average rent rates in the private rental market are shown in the table below. Notably, the lowest average rate for a single or couple in a one-bedroom is \$3,241 per month; for this rate to be affordable, the minimum required income is \$129,640 annually. The lowest average rate for a family (in a two-bedroom) is \$4,511 per month; for this rate to be affordable for a family, the minimum required income is \$180,440 annually. As per household income data published by Statistics Canada (see Section 2), these average rent rates are unaffordable for the majority of Whistler residents.

The following advertised market rents were retrieved from the Pique Newspaper, Craigslist, and Facebook listings. As rents were retrieved from these sources, it is acknowledged that actual market rents may be lower given that people may secure rentals through other means, such as through word-of-mouth.

Advertised Whistler Market Rents by Unit Type, December 2023

	Studio	One-Bedroom	Two-Bedroom	Three-Bedroom	Single Family
Advertised Rent Rate	\$2,609	\$3,241	\$4,511	\$7,627	\$9,808

Source: Whistler Housing Authority, received December 21, 2023.

**Note: The number of households living in a private market rental is not measured or collected by the Census. 1,085 is an estimated minimum, assuming a minimum of 2,450 renter households (as per the 2021 Census) exist in Whistler and assuming all other non-market rental types are fully occupied by renter households.*

Whistler Housing Authority Non-Market Rental Housing

The WHA was established in 1997 as an independent subsidiary of the RMOW and oversees the administration and management of employee-restricted housing. The following provides an overview of WHA rental stock and eligibility requirements.

Housing Stock and Rent Rates

The WHA's employee housing rental program is a non-market housing option for eligible Whistler employees and includes 327 housing units. Further details, including rental rates, are represented in Figure 10.

Additionally, the WHA rental program is expanding, with 48 additional rental units currently under construction at 1450 Mount Fee Road and 104 units planned for 1475 Mount Fee Road.

As per RMOW Council Policy K-01: Employee Rental Housing Policy (adopted July 23, 2019 and revised April 5, 2022), employee rental rates are geared to and categorized by household income targeting 30% of the applicant's gross household income in order to support long-term, secure housing for Whistler's workforce in perpetuity. As of April 2023, 152 (46%) WHA rental units are on an RGI or category-based rent rate, and all new tenants are required to adhere to the policy. Regardless of the RGI rent rate structure, there is a set minimum rent rate per property to cover operating costs for that property and a maximum rental rate. As a result, older properties have a lower minimum rent and newer properties have a higher minimum rent. The minimum and maximum rental rates are subject to annual adjustments with reference to the B.C. Residential Tenancy Regulation or as determined by the WHA. The minimum and maximum 2023 WHA rental rates by project are shown below in Figure 10. Current below-market rents required under RMOW Council Policy K-01: Employee Rental Housing Policy do not necessarily meet the level of affordability required for those in highest housing need.

What We Heard: WHA Employee Rental Housing program

The WHA employee housing rental program is highly reputable and a community strength. However, the eligibility requirements are very strict and not suitable for everyone. Those who do not qualify for the WHA employee housing rental program have no other non-market housing options.

Figure 10: 2023 Whistler Housing Authority Rental Rates by Project

Name/Address	Unit Type	Number of Units	Rental Rate Ranges	
			Minimum Rental Rate	Maximum Rental Rate
Chiyakmesh* 1060 Legacy Way	Studio	40	\$885.00	\$1,671.00
	1-Bedroom	15	\$1,104.00	\$2,080.00
Nordic Court 2120 Nordic Drive	2-Bedroom	18	\$1,575.00	\$3,069.00
	3-Bedroom	2	\$1,730.00	\$3,716.00
Beaver Flats* 2400 Dave Murray Place	Studio	24	\$895.00	\$1,671.00
	1-Bedroom**	26	\$1,140.00	\$2,080.00
	2-Bedroom**	7	\$1,518.00	\$3,069.00
Nester's Apartments 7531 & 7525 Seppos Way	1-Bedroom**	10	\$1,125.00	\$2,080.00
	2-Bedroom	42	\$1,539.00	\$3,069.00
	3-Bedroom	1	\$2,002.00	\$3,716.00
Lorimer Court 6320 Lorimer Court	1-Bedroom	6	\$1,035.00	\$2,080.00
	2-Bedroom	6	\$1,640.00	\$3,069.00
	3-Bedroom	2	\$2,102.00	\$3,716.00
	1-Bedroom	6	\$1,035.00	\$2,080.00

Nita Lake Residences 5151 Nita Lake Drive	2-Bedroom	2	\$1,565.00	\$3,069.00
	3-Bedroom	1	\$2,271.00	\$3,716.00
6415 Balsam Way	1-Bedroom	1	\$1,087.00	\$2,080.00
	3-Bedroom	1	\$2,097.00	\$3,716.00
<i>The projects below are subject to agreements with either BC Housing or CMHC and may have specific additional rent or income limits.</i>				
Cloudburst Court* 1310 Cloudburst Drive	1-Bedroom	4	\$1,459.00	\$2,080.00
	2-Bedroom	23	\$1,921.00	\$3,069.00
Granite Ridge* 1330 Cloudburst Drive	Studio	12	\$1,218.00	\$1,694.00
	1-Bedroom	12	\$1,413.00	\$2,109.00
	2-Bedroom	17	\$2,083.00	\$3,112.00
	3-Bedroom	4	\$2,525.00	\$3,695.00
Lumina (Senior's priority) 8350 Bear Paw Trail	1-Bedroom	14	\$1,604.00	\$2,028.00
	2-Bedroom**	6	\$2,018.00	\$2,991.00
Legacy Passive House* 1020 Legacy Way	Studio	4	Rental rates for this project are at annual fixed rates, regardless of income.	\$1,342.00
	1-Bedroom	13		\$1,671.00
	2-Bedroom	7		\$2,107.00

Source: Whistler Housing Authority, retrieved November 7, 2023.

*The utility costs associated with the primary heating sources for these rental projects are included in the rental rates.

**For the purposes of occupancy limits and rental rates, lofts and dens are considered as if there were an additional bedroom in the unit (e.g., a studio loft is a one-bedroom, a one-bedroom plus den is a two-bedroom).

*** WHA rental unit 3-2110 Sarajevo Drive is not reflected in the chart above.

Eligibility

As per RMOW Council Policy K-01: Employee Rental Housing Policy, applicants are required to meet the following eligibility requirements, with defined terms in the policy in italics:

1. Must be an *employee* in Whistler: either employed or self-employed on an annual basis for an annual average of at least 30 hours per week, employed by a *qualified Whistler business*; or at least 55 years of age and ceased active *full-time employment* but who has been an *employee* for at least 10 of the past 12 years, prior to ceasing *full-time* employment.
2. Must be a resident: either a Canadian citizen or permanent resident.

WHA Seniors-Priority Rental Housing

Eligible older adults who are either Whistler employees or retired Whistler employees are prioritized for tenancy at Lumina, in the Rainbow neighbourhood.

Applicants are housed on a first-come, first-serve basis and are “right-sized” according to the National Occupancy Standard (see definitions in Appendix A).

Whistler Valley Housing Society Rental Housing Stock

The WVHS is a small non-profit organization formed in 1983 prior to the formation of the WHA. The WVHS owns and operates an apartment building with 20 affordable housing units located at 2178 Sarajevo Drive (all three-bedroom units). These units are limited in number but help to diversify the existing non-market housing stock. Tenants of this building are not required to be Canadian citizens or permanent residents to be eligible, although they have to be legally able to work in Canada. New tenant applications are not accepted until there is a vacancy.

Additionally, the WVHS has entered into an agreement to purchase a new apartment building with 30 units, located at 1400 Mount Fee Road in the Cheakamus Crossing neighbourhood, that is currently under construction. Of these 30 new units, up to 15 units may be occupied by essential service employees and up to 15 units may be occupied by social service clients employed in Whistler; any remaining units must be offered to employees on the WHA waitlist. Due to the volunteer nature of the WVHS Board, the WVHS does not currently have a waitlist, but as their housing stock grows there could be a future opportunity to develop a waitlist system.

Essential Service Employees includes:

- Medical workers
- RCMP
- Fire rescue
- Utility works and road maintenance
- Teachers
- Daycare workers
- Transit bus drivers

Unique Community Housing Stock

Whistler has unique housing stock that is privately owned but has land use restrictions outlining who can live on the property. Restrictions are governed by housing agreements covenanted on title. The housing restrictions are broken down into three types as discussed in the subsections below.

Employee Occupancy and Price Restricted Rental (713 Units)

These are privately-owned rental units owned by employers or the private sector (e.g., developers). There are two types of units: 1) those units available to all eligible Whistler employees (e.g., Rainbow Plaza), and 2) those units that are employer-owned rentals for staff housing (e.g., Vail Resorts staff housing at Glacier Lane). All units have restricted rental rates.

Additionally, the number of units in this category is expected to increase as a result of the following current projects:

- 4814 Glacier Lane (Vail Resorts staff housing, 66 dorm style units); and
- 7104 Nancy Green Drive (36 units).

Employee Occupancy Restricted Property (202 Units)

These are privately-owned units that are restricted to employee occupancy (e.g., Nordic Court or Nordic Place Apartments). Any individual can own the unit. The unit must be occupied by an eligible Whistler employee. Subject to the occupancy requirements, the units may be occupied by the property owner or be rented for any amount.

Employee Suites (123 Units*) **number of units currently under review*

These are privately-owned suites in single-family houses. These suites may be attached to a non-market home or private market home. Suites must be occupied by eligible Whistler employees. Agreements have a mixture of rental rate restrictions or no rental rate restrictions.

Rent Supplement Programs

Rent supplement programs are an important component of a community's non-market housing category as they serve the same population as non-market housing stock (i.e., low to moderate income households that can live independently, but experience barriers in terms of affordability and suitability).

BC Housing's Homeless Outreach Program and Homeless Prevention Program

Two social service providers in the Sea to Sky region offer rent supplements through BC Housing's Homeless Outreach Program and Homeless Prevention Program. The programs provide portable rent supplements and support services to individuals in identified at-risk groups facing homelessness to help them access rental housing in the private housing market. The programs target individuals at transition points and are intended to be a short-term or transitional supplement (rather than a long-term rent subsidy). The programs can serve approximately 45 households in the Sea to Sky region at a time. (Source: Sea to Sky Community Services and PearlSpace, received June 1, 2023.)

Housing Agreements & Eligibility

The unique community housing stock, with housing agreements covenanted on title, all have varying definitions of employee/retiree eligibility. RMOW Council Policy K-01: Employee Rental Policy cannot vary the eligibility requirements; any changes to the covenant would require the property owner to apply for a covenant modification/discharge.

Other Non-Market Rental Housing Options in the Sea to Sky Region

Sea to Sky Community Services, in partnership with BC Housing, offers deep subsidy and RGI housing options in Squamish. Rent rates start at \$375 for singles and \$570 for families. As of July 2023, the B.C. Housing Registry had 12 active applications for Whistler residents waiting for subsidized housing units in Squamish. (Source: Sea to Sky Community Services, received June 1, 2023.)

BC Housing's SAFER (Seniors) and RAP (Low Income Families) Rent Supplement Programs

In addition, BC Housing offers rent supplement programs for older adults and low-income families for any eligible B.C. resident. The Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) program offers rent supplements, up to \$734 per month for singles and \$800 per month for couples, for low to moderate income older adults aged 60 years and older who pay more than 30% of gross household income towards rent. The Rental Assistance Program (RAP) offers rent supplements, up to \$1,067 per month for families of three or less and \$1,117 per month for families of four or more, for low-income families (earning \$40,000 annual household income or less). (Source: BC Housing, retrieved June 2023.)

Experience Spotlight: Omar

Omar is 32 years old, works at a local non-profit society and lives month-to-month in shared bedrooms. He currently lives in a shared bedroom in a house that he will need to vacate at the end of the month. Omar found this rental through someone he knew; unfortunately, the shared bedroom was only available for a one-month sublet. Omar paid \$900 in rent and shares the bedroom with another working adult. He will have to find somewhere else to live before next month.

Omar moved to Whistler from Northern Africa in 2019 to work as a chef. Since his arrival, he has moved from shared bedroom to shared bedroom. He first lived in staff housing but has since moved into private market rentals. Omar used to be on the WHA rental waitlist. During his time in Whistler, Omar enrolled in an employment and career training program to help diversify his employment skills. Due to the time commitment required for the employment program, Omar was only able to work 20-22 hours per week. Omar was disappointed when he learned he was no longer eligible for a WHA rental, which requires applicants to work a minimum 30 hours per week; consequently, Omar was removed from the waitlist. Even though he is working full-time again, re-applying means he would be at the bottom of the waitlist, so he continues to look for a private market rental.

Omar thinks he will move to Pemberton after this month, as he heard there is a shared bedroom in an apartment available. He does not want to leave, but there are no options for him in Whistler. In addition, Omar is uncertain where he will live long-term because his household is about to change. Omar has a wife in Northern Africa who applied to come to Canada 14 months ago; they are waiting for her visa application to be processed. Omar is concerned about what he will do when his wife arrives, as it will be even more difficult to find housing for a couple.


Omar believes there is not enough housing in Whistler for all the people that are looking. He believes if you are lucky to find something in Whistler it will be unaffordable. Omar feels fortunate that he can rent shared bedrooms, and that there are more options for people who are single or by themselves. Omar hopes he can stay in Whistler with his wife, but the rental market is forcing him to look outside of the community.

Identifying Current & Emerging Housing Needs



SECTION 4: IDENTIFYING CURRENT AND EMERGING HOUSING NEEDS

This section includes current 2023 housing needs and anticipated 2033 housing needs based on 10-year projections. These estimates are based on a number of assumptions and limitations which should be taken into account when using this report to inform plans, policies, and decisions related to housing. The table below summarizes the outputs of this analysis and then the discussion that follows the table provides further details on the overall methodology, and current and anticipated needs for each housing type. Also, it is noted that without adequate data, it is difficult to gauge the demand for different housing types and the numbers below for current and future needs are best estimates based on information available at this point in time.



	Emergency Housing	Transitional Housing	Supportive Housing	Non-Market Rental Housing
Current 2023 Housing Needs	<p>A year-round emergency housing site with six beds, with either supports on site (e.g., food or clothing) or close to amenities and other services.</p>	<p>One long-term transition house or safe home for women and children fleeing violence or in crisis.</p> <p>Emergency and supportive housing options are highly limited or non-existent in Whistler. Transitional housing bridges the gap from emergency housing or crisis to permanent housing (supportive or independent).</p>	<p>Minimum 20 supportive housing units for adults, older adults, and people with disabilities.</p> <p>Increase youth supportive housing program to 22 beds (from nine beds).</p>	<p>The proportion of core housing need reflects 2021 Census data and the number of households are adjusted to reflect the current population size. An estimated 1,199 households are in core housing need. This is an indicator of need and does not equate to needed new units.</p> <p>These households' current homes are either not affordable, suitable or adequate and in order to be appropriately housed in an alternative adequate and suitable unit in the local market they would need to spend 30% or more of their gross income on rent.</p>

Current 2023 Housing Needs				<p>The following number of households require the identified shelter costs to secure affordable housing (note that these shelter costs reflect the income groups provided in the 2021 Census):</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• 114 very low-income households require shelter costs below \$495 to be affordable;• 548 low-income households require shelter costs below \$1,237 to be affordable;• 512 moderate-income households require shelter costs below \$1,980 to be affordable. <p>Additionally, 37% (446) of all households in core housing need family-size units (i.e., two or more bedrooms).</p>
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Anticipated 2033 Housing Needs	Minimum eight beds and year-round emergency housing site, contingent on annual data collection, such as a Point-in-Time Count, to fully assess demand.	<p>Increase second-stage housing from one to two units for women and children fleeing violence or in crisis.</p> <p>As emergency and supportive housing units are developed, seek opportunities for data collection regarding the need and demand for transitional housing.</p>	<p>Minimum 26 supportive housing units for adults, older adults, and people with disabilities, contingent on establishing regular data collection methods, such as a supportive housing waitlist.</p> <p>Increase youth supportive housing program to 28 beds.</p>	<p>The proportion of core housing need reflects 2021 Census data and the number of households are adjusted to reflect the projected 2033 population size. An anticipated 1,516 households will be in core housing need. This is an indicator of need and does not equate to needed new units.</p> <p>It is estimated that the following number of households by income category will require affordable housing:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 145 very low-income households; • 693 low-income household; and • 647 moderate-income households <p>Additionally, 37% (563) of all households in core housing need will require family-size units (i.e., two or more bedrooms).</p>

Methodology: Assumptions and Limitations

Projections are based on population trends over the past ten years and tell us what might happen if similar actions and external influences continue to exist with respect to growth and development. Real community growth depends on a variety of factors, including the state of the economy, changes in the housing market, regional growth, trends in neighbouring communities, and planning and development decisions. We also must consider that Whistler is unique in that its resident capacity is carefully managed by a growth management strategy and bed unit cap.

Looking back, we know that Whistler's population experienced significant growth over the last 10 years. While a typical housing needs report often refers to growth in number of households for projections, this report refers to growth in number of people. Whistler is unique in that a large proportion of dwellings are owned by second homeowners, and the true number of people living in the community, based on the population of residents and temporary workforce, is a better indicator of community growth.

Looking ahead, projections will be based on historic population growth rates, between 2011 and 2021, and applied annually to 2033 (an average 2.4% annual population growth rate year over year between 2023 and 2033). The projections represent a baseline growth scenario of what might occur in the future if the status quo is maintained. Notably, between 2021 and 2023 there is a sudden population increase of 20.46% over

two years; this is an anomaly that accounts for a correction during the pandemic which saw a sudden drop in number of residents and temporary workers (see Figure 11). This anomaly was not included in determining annual population growth rate of 2.4%.

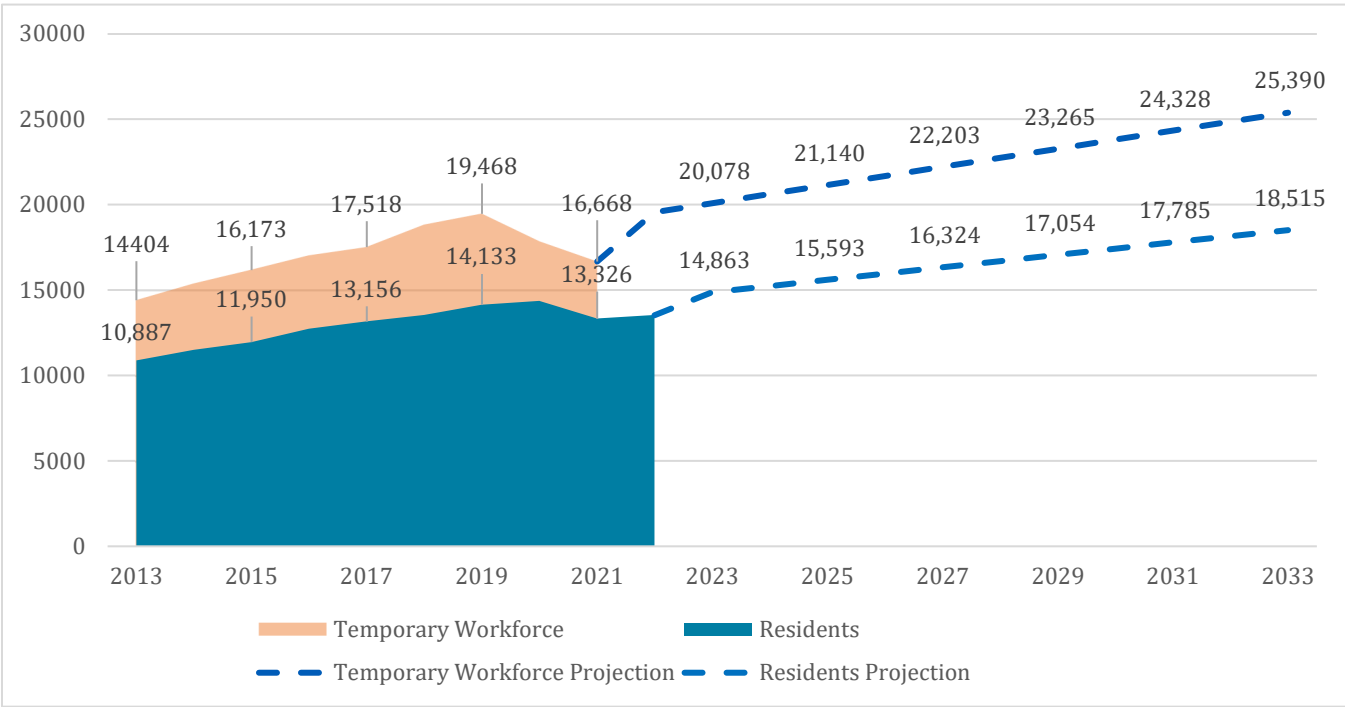
In terms of limitations, with vulnerable populations it is especially difficult to quantify changing needs or capture data of those in crisis. The estimated current and future need identified in this report should be informed by continued and more detailed data collection (such as by Point-in-Time Counts, non-profit housing provider waitlists, unique number of clients seeking rent supplements or requesting emergency housing, or other measurable forms of housing need). Another significant limitation is that projections do not take into account future migration, social, or economic factors which are difficult to quantify and predict.

4.1 Anticipated Population: Metric for Housing Needs

Since the population growth rate is used as the metric to estimate future housing needs, an understanding of historic and projected population growth must be developed.

If Whistler continues to grow at the same rate as in the past decade, by 2033, Whistler’s population will be 25,390, including residents and temporary workforce. This is an increase of 5,312 people between this year, 2023, and 2033, representing a 26% increase over the next decade, and an average 2.4% annual growth rate year over year (BC Statistics, 2021 and Taxfiler data as per Balance Model, 2021).

Figure 11: Historic and Projected Population Growth including Residents and Temporary Workforce, 2013-2033



Resident Population source: BC Statistics, 2022.
Temporary Workforce Population source: Balance Model, uses BC Statistics population estimates + Taxfiler data (up to 2021) to identify temporary workforce.
*Note: The population projection assumes a growth rate equivalent to 2011-2021. A linear forecast estimates a 2022 growth rate of 17.3%, and an annual average growth rate of 2.4% between 2023 and 2033. Future economic or social influences are not taken into account, nor is the maximum population (or bed unit cap) as per housing supply.

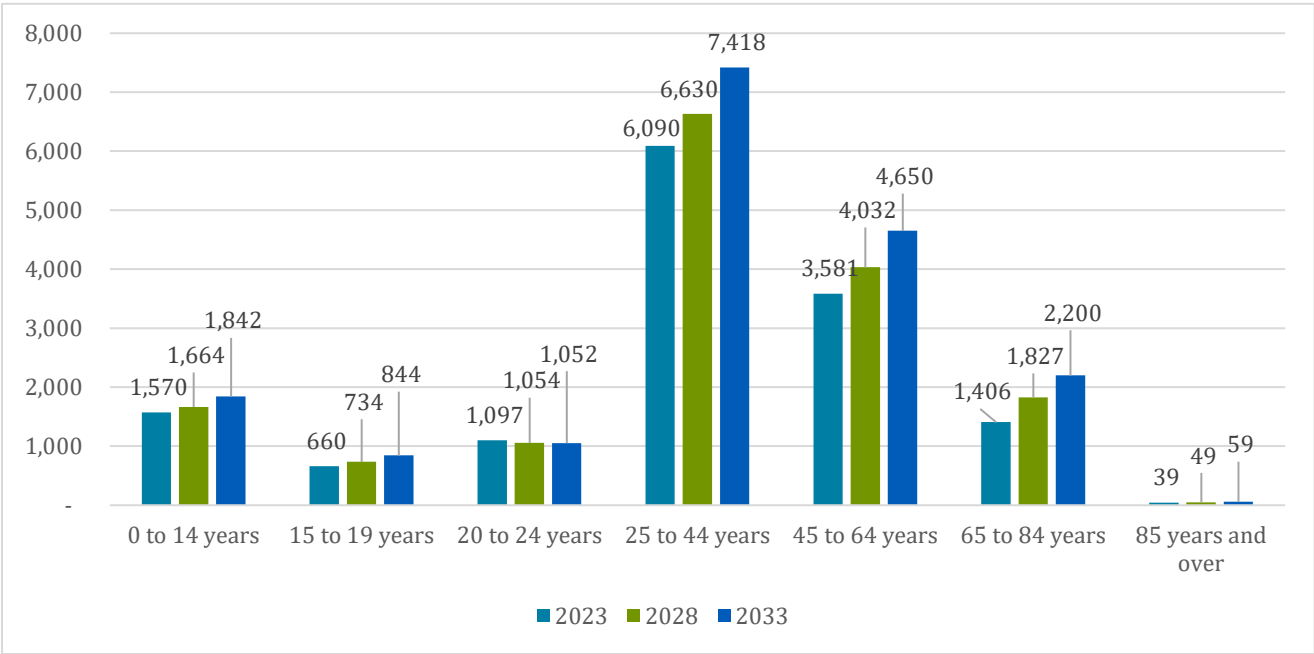
Whistler, like many communities across Canada, has an aging population (median age is expected to increase from 36 years old in 2023 to 39 years old by 2033). There is also expected to be an increased

number of children and families. In particular, if age groups continue to grow at the same rate as in the past decade, by 2033 Whistler will experience the following trends as shown in Figure 12:

- Adults aged 25-44 will continue to make up the highest proportion of the population;
- Older adults aged 65 and over are anticipated to see the highest growth rate (56% between 2023 and 2033); and
- Families with children will experience the second highest growth rate (17% for children aged 0-14 and 28% for children aged 15-19 between 2023 and 2033).

With regard to limitations, it is noted the population projections do not take into account birth and death rates, the number of people that move from one age group into the next age group, or migration; nor do they consider external social and economic factors. Projections are solely based on growth rate trends over the past 10 years.

Figure 12: Historic and Projected Population by Age Group, by Number of People (and Percent Change), 2023-2033



Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021.

4.2 Current and Anticipated Emergency Housing Needs

Emergency Housing Provincial Scan

A provincial scan of comparable communities (with populations under 20,000 people) was conducted to determine the number of emergency housing units within each community (see Figure 13).

Figure 13: Emergency Housing Provincial Scan of Comparable Communities, 2024

Community	Population	#Units
Whistler	13,982	
Queen Charlotte	965	0
Gibsons	4,758	0
Smithers	5,725	0
Merritt	7,051	0
Quesnel	9,889	25
Sechelt	10,847	20
Terrace	12,017	56
Dawson Creek	12,323	17
Salmon Arm	16,065	25
Powell River	17,825	20

Source: BC Housing (2024) Emergency Shelter Program, retrieved March 13, 2024. (<https://www.bchousing.org/housing-assistance/homelessness-services/emergency-shelter-program>)

Year-round emergency shelters are made possible through government and non-profit partnerships. Typically, emergency shelter programs are operated by a local non-profit organization, with subsidies provided by BC Housing to support long-term operations. Municipalities may support all types of non-market housing through zoning, licencing, fee and tax waivers, and expedited permitting. When possible, municipalities may also support these initiatives by providing long-term land leases or facility leases.

Current Emergency Housing Need

In the absence of reliable data, the current need for emergency housing is based on the following qualitative data and assumptions:

- Prior to January 2024, the EWR shelter has been operating with six beds and periodically reaches full capacity;
- For 2024, the capacity of the EWR shelter was increased to 18 beds;
- The program is highly valuable for those who are experiencing homelessness during extreme cold weather events;
- Service providers have stated that the community would benefit from a permanent emergency housing option; and
- Since 2021, the EWR shelter has operated in Whistler Village and Nesters, both locations are easily accessible and close to other amenities and services.

Based on qualitative data, the current need for permanent emergency housing is six beds to be located in an area of Whistler that is close to amenities and other services.

Anticipated Emergency Housing Need

Based on projected population growth alone, and not considering other external economic and social factors, a minimum of eight permanent emergency beds could be required by 2033, as illustrated in Figure 14.

Figure 14: Emergency Housing Need, 2023-2033

Current Need (2023)	2028 (5-Year Projection)	2033 (10-Year Projection)
6 beds	7 beds	8 beds

Addressing homelessness requires data collection and monitoring to respond to individual needs with appropriate housing and supports. It is noted that there is limited data collection in Whistler regarding those experiencing homelessness. In particular, the above projection does not include the estimated number of hidden homeless. According to Homeless Hub (2023): “‘Hidden homelessness’ refers specifically to people who live ‘temporarily with others but without guarantee of continued residency or immediate prospects for accessing permanent housing.’ Often known as ‘couch surfing,’ this describes people who are staying with relatives, friends, neighbours or strangers because they have no other option. They generally are not paying rent and it is not a sustainable long-term living arrangement. They may experience barriers to securing their own permanent housing immediately or in the near future. This population is considered to be ‘hidden’ because they usually do not access homeless supports and services even though they are improperly or inadequately housed.”

What is a Point-in-Time Count?

One of the best methods of determining housing demand for those without homes is through the use of Point-in-Time Counts. According to [Homeless Hub](#) (2023): “This type of counting is known as ‘taking a snapshot’ of the situation.” They are typically conducted on an annual basis, and can include people staying in shelters, street living, living in vehicles, couch surfing, or precariously housed. Homeless Hub also notes, “Some municipalities go even further by developing a questionnaire to ask people experiencing homelessness about their history, background and needs. This includes demographic questions such as age, gender, race, sexual orientation and veteran status. It also asks what services people need or use, whether they would like housing and how long they have been homeless.”

4.3 Current and Anticipated Transitional Housing Needs

Women and Children Fleeing Violence

In the absence of reliable data, the current need for transitional housing is based on the following qualitative data and assumptions:

- Service providers report an increased rate of women and families fleeing violence;
- Whistler lacks an immediate and permanently available safe, anonymous place for individuals fleeing violence to go to for an extended period of time;
- The nearest transition house is in Squamish and the nearest safe home is in Pemberton;
- There are barriers to accessing transitional housing options outside the community because many individuals need to return to Whistler for work or childcare; and
- Without adequate transition home options, these populations resort to housing that is overcrowded, substandard or unsafe.

One transition house or safe home is currently needed and should be maintained long-term. Future transition house and safe home needs should be based on data collected by service providers in order to better understand demand and need for ongoing housing options and programs.

The opening of a transition house or safe home may increase demand for **second-stage housing** in Whistler. Based on qualitative data, women and children may need more intermediate housing options in order to re-

enter the housing market. In the next 10 years, it is estimated that at minimum one additional second-stage housing option will be needed.

Based on advice from PearlSpace, when developing transitional housing it is important the building design, site layout and interior organization is serving the needs of the occupants. For example, in units with shared occupancy, consideration should be given to proximity of bedrooms to communal spaces such as the kitchen. Additionally, the allowable length of stay should be reflective of occupants’ circumstances and what barriers they may be facing to be able to access other safe housing options. The BC Society of Transition Houses developed a checklist of women-centered housing design principles, strategies and actions, that can be used as a resource when designing spaces for women and children fleeing violence.

Figure 15: Women and Children Fleeing Violence Housing Need, 2023-2033

Current Need (2023)	2033 (10-Year Projection)
1 transition house or safe home	2 second-stage houses (1 additional)

Other Types of Transitional Housing

Other types of transitional housing are required to serve populations who need supportive – and temporary – housing to bridge the gap from homelessness or crisis to permanent housing (whether supportive or independent housing). Transitional housing is only effective if there are emergency options for people in crisis, and non-market (supportive or subsidized) rental options for them to move on to; currently, these housing types are highly limited or non-existent in Whistler. As emergency and supportive housing units are developed, opportunities should be sought to collect data regarding the need and demand for transitional housing and which sub-populations they may serve. This data can be collected through service providers who provide emergency accommodation and social services.

4.4 Current and Anticipated Supportive Housing Needs

Supportive Housing Provincial Scan

A provincial scan of comparable communities (with populations under 20,000 people) was conducted to determine the number of supportive housing units within each community (see Figure 16). This list includes BC Housing funded programs and does not include supportive housing programs or projects that are funded from other sources.

Figure 16: Supportive Housing Provincial Scan of Comparable Communities, 2023

Community	Population	#Units
Whistler	13,982	
Queen Charlotte	965	19
Gibsons	4,758	40
Smithers	5,725	22
Merritt	7,051	29
Quesnel	9,889	32
Sechelt	10,847	40
Terrace	12,017	52
Dawson Creek	12,323	32
Salmon Arm	16,065	38
Powell River	17,825	44

Source: BC Housing Supportive Housing Listings, retrieved March 13, 2024.

BC Housing supportive housing clients must meet the following eligibility requirements:

- Low income;
- Homeless or at-risk of homelessness;
- Require supports to live independently; and
- Need support to maintain a successful tenancy.

BC Housing describes supportive housing as follows: “Non-profit housing providers operate supportive housing units. Tenants have self-contained units with kitchenettes and private bathrooms. There are also communal spaces, including, in some buildings, culturally appropriate spaces. Supportive housing provides a range of on-site, non-clinical supports as: life skills training, connections to healthcare, mental health or substance-use services. Staff are on-site 24/7 to provide support.”

Youth Supportive Housing

Whistler has one supportive housing option specifically for youth aged 19-24, which is in high demand. Zero Ceiling, the non-profit service provider, has 13 young people on the waitlist and since early 2022 no new applications have been accepted due to capacity. Waitlist data can be a strong indicator of housing need; as such, the current need for youth supportive housing is estimated to be an additional 13 beds. Based on projected population growth alone, a minimum of 28 beds will be required by 2033, as shown in Figure 17. Notably, this number of beds is likely an underestimate as new applications are not currently being accepted. As this is the only youth supportive housing option provided in the Sea to Sky corridor, it is important to note that the waitlist reflects regional need and demonstrates the success of the program.

Figure 17: Youth Supportive Housing Need, 2023-2033

Current Need (2023)	2028 (5-Year Projection)	2033 (10-Year Projection)
22 beds (13 additional)	25 beds	28 beds

Other Types of Supportive Housing

Per BC Housing, “Supportive housing is subsidized housing with on-site supports for single adults, older adults and people with disabilities who may be at risk of or experiencing homelessness.” Typically, supports are required to help people find and maintain stable housing.

Engagement participants identified the following demographic groups as populations who may need housing supports:

- Older adults, specifically those receiving fixed incomes and in need of accessible housing;
- Individuals living with intellectual or physical disabilities, or undiagnosed people experiencing social disabilities, and specifically those who receive fixed incomes;
- People who have been injured or experienced a major illness or medical issue;
- Individuals struggling with addiction or mental health issues; and
- People experiencing homelessness.

This information alone does not tell us the required number of supportive housing units, but does indicate that Whistler needs supportive housing options. After conducting a regional scan, BC Housing supportive housing sites in communities of similar sizes offer 20-30 supportive housing units (see Appendix B, section 1.10). This report recommends delivering on the lower end of this range, setting a baseline target of a minimum of 20 units. Supportive housing demand should be revisited once a more fulsome data collection method is available, such as a supportive housing waitlist, in order to fully assess demand and identify the specific needs of each sub-population.

Using this baseline number of units, and by applying the projection method, it is estimated that a minimum of 26 beds will be required by 2033, contingent on an updated needs analysis once regular data collection methods are established. This is illustrated in Figure 18.

Figure 18: Supportive Housing Need for Adults, Older Adults, and People with Disabilities, 2023-2033

Current Need (2023)	2028 (5-Year Projection)	2033 (10-Year Projection)
20 beds	23 beds	26 beds

4.5 Current and Anticipated Non-Market Rental Housing Needs

Core Housing Need as an Indicator

There is no single method to assess the number of existing Whistler households facing housing need. However, Census core housing need data can help identify a baseline estimate of existing need for key population and income groups.

Census data from 2021 provides core housing need by household size and income category, which may be considered a valuable indicator of affordable housing needs in the community. It is important to recognize that the 2021 data is a snapshot in time; while this report projects this 2021 data into 2023 and 2033, it is acknowledged that this is just an estimate used for social planning purposes and that many factors will influence how this number will ultimately be measured at the next Census, including the building of additional employee housing units or potential loss of market rental housing units since 2021. The following data reflects both Whistler renters and property owners. For property owners who experience an unexpected

life change and need to leave their home, access to non-market rental housing can provide an immediate and typically more affordable housing option. Core housing data alone does not tell us the required number of units, but does indicate that Whistler needs more non-market rental housing options.

By applying an annual population growth rate as per Figure 11, we can estimate the 2023 number of households in core housing need as presented in Figure 19 below.

Figure 19: Number of Households in Core Housing Need by Household (HH) Size and Income Category, 2023

Income Category (Max. affordable shelter cost)	1 Person HH	2 Person HH	3 Person HH	4 Person HH	5+ Person HH	Total
Very Low Income (\$495)	114	0	0	0	0	114
Low Income (\$1,237)	385	120	24	18	0	548
Moderate Income (\$1,980)	169	205	102	36	0	512
Median Income (\$2,970)	0	0	0	24	0	24
High Income (>\$2,970)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	669	325	126	78	0	1,199

Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021; custom data retrieved from Housing Assessment Resource Tools, UBC, 2023.

Further to the data provided here, it is important to estimate how household size translates into housing size type (i.e. number of bedrooms), which can be a more useful indicator of how housing could be delivered in the community. To estimate housing needs by household types, the following assumptions are applied:

- All one person households can occupy a studio.
- 74% of two-person households are couple families requiring a one-bedroom, as per 2021 Census data that indicates the ratio of couple-family households (1,460) versus two-person households (1,970).
- 80% of three- and four-person households are couple families with children requiring a two- or three-bedroom unit, in which a couple can share a bedroom, as per 2021 Census data that indicates the ratio of households with couple families with children (1,180) versus all households with children (1,470). Families with two children are assumed to be of different genders and require separate bedrooms.
- 80% of 5+ person households are couple families, in which families with at least three children have two children of the same gender sharing a bedroom.

These assumptions are based on the CMHC National Occupancy Standard for suitable housing, which is how many people a given dwelling unit might accommodate given the number of bedrooms. The distribution of household size by dwelling size is further depicted below in Figure 20.

Figure 20: Household Size by Dwelling Size Assumed Percentage Distribution

Household Size	Dwelling Size				
	Studio	1-Bedroom	2-Bedroom	3-Bedroom	4 or more Bedrooms
1 person	100 %	0%	0%	0%	0%
2 persons	0%	74%	26%	0%	0%
3 persons	0%	0%	80%	20%	0%
4 persons	0%	0%	0%	80%	20%
5 or more persons	0%	0%	0%	80%	20%

After applying these assumptions, Figure 21 estimates the current 2023 need for housing by household type and income category.

Figure 21: Estimated Number of Households in Core Housing Need by Household Type and Income Category, 2023

Income Category (Max. affordable shelter cost*)	Studio	1-Bedroom	2-Bedroom	3-Bedroom	4+ Bedroom	Total
Very Low Income (\$495)	114	0	0	0	0	114
Low Income (\$1,237)	385	89	51	19	4	548
Moderate Income (\$1,980)	169	152	135	49	7	512
Median Income (\$2,970)	0	0	0	19	5	24
High Income (>\$2,970)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	669	85	298	105	43	1,199

Note: Shelter cost is measured in 2020 dollars when data was collected and has not been adjusted for inflation as this may have unintended consequences on the breakdown of household needs per income category.

Further to this, it is possible to project future 2033 housing needs by applying a ten-year growth rate of 26%, as shown in Figure 22.

Figure 22: Anticipated Number of Households in Core Housing Need by Household Type and Income Category, 2033

Income Category (Max. affordable shelter cost*)	Studio	1-Bedroom	2-Bedroom	3-Bedroom	4+ Bedroom	Total
Very Low Income	145	0	0	0	0	145
Low Income	487	113	64	24	5	693
Moderate Income	213	192	171	62	9	647
Median Income	0	0	0	24	6	30
High Income	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	845	107	376	133	54	1,516

Note: Shelter costs are not shown in this figure as the 2021 values are anticipated to be too remote from the values that would exist in 2033.

It is important to note that the number of new units actually required to address needs may not be the same as the estimated number of units shown here. For instance: some households may be served through actions other than a newly built home; rent supplements can provide a solution to those with adequate and suitable housing (with the limited noted in the section below); and other units may become available as existing households move or migrate out of Whistler. Indisputably, due to rising market rental rates, very low-, low-, and moderate-income households will need to be served by non-market housing options to stay in the community. Of note, economic impacts and migration could significantly alter estimated housing needs, especially in a resort community.

Rent Supplement Programs

Social service providers report that **the rent supplement amount is too low to bridge the gap between household income and market rent**. For example, a one-parent (male) household earning median income can afford \$2,025 per month and the average rental rate for a two-bedroom in the private market is \$4,677, meaning the income-rent gap is approximately \$2,650 per month. Applicants can receive up to \$450/month towards shelter costs or living expenses, which is too low to make a significant impact on affordability.

4.6 Key Areas of Need

Key areas of need refer to sub-populations whose needs may be met through multiple housing types, through service delivery or housing programs, or by other means. Meeting the needs of these demographics should be considered in future housing plans, policies, and decision-making. This section provides an overview of Statistics Canada 2021 core housing need data and what we heard through community engagement to identify and inform Whistler's key areas of need. It then discusses specific key areas of need in more detail.

Core Housing Needs by Household Demographics

The following further identifies core housing need by household demographics (2021):

- 40% of all one parent female-led households are in core housing need;
- 37% of all households with head of house under the age of 25 are in core housing need;
- 29% of all Indigenous households are in core housing need;
- 21% of all new migrant-led households are in core housing need;
- 21% of all women-led households are in core housing need;
- 21% of all households with cognitive, mental, or addictions activity limitation are in core housing need;
- 18% of all visible minority households are in core housing need;
- 17% of all households with physical activity limitation are in core housing need;
- 13% of all households with head of house over the age of 65 are in core housing need; and
- **19% of all Whistler households are in core housing need** (in comparison, 13% of all households in B.C. are in core housing need).

What We Heard: Who is struggling

- Older adults, specifically those receiving fixed incomes and those needing supports
- People who recently experienced a change in employment (including unemployment), housing (e.g., eviction), family structure (e.g., divorce or separation, becoming widowed), or financial situation
- People who lack a social network or experience language barriers, including newcomers (e.g., immigrants, refugees, or seasonal workers)
- Individuals living with intellectual or physical disabilities, or undiagnosed people experiencing social disabilities, and specifically those who receive fixed incomes
- Families, including low to medium income households, large households with multiple children or multi-generational living situations, or families struggling to find childcare
- Women and/or children fleeing violence or an unsafe living or rental situation
- Survivors of human trafficking
- Households that do not meet the eligibility requirements for WHA housing programs
- Young adults (aged 19-35)
- Workers who have housing that is conditional on employment
- Members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community
- Single racialized men
- Individuals struggling with addiction or mental health issues

Women and Children

Women with or without children may be experiencing barriers to finding suitable and affordable housing for their families; 21% of all women-led households and 40% of all one-parent female-led households are in core housing need. More affordable (likely subsidized) family-sized housing units (i.e., two or more bedrooms) are required to house the underserved population of women with children.

Demand for housing for women and children fleeing violence is increasing. Whistler service providers report that women and children are not able to wait for appropriate housing and often cannot leave Whistler to access a safe home (in Pemberton) or transition house (in Squamish) due to ties to Whistler (e.g., childcare, employment, or access to social services). Without adequate transition home options, these populations resort to housing that is overcrowded, substandard, unsafe, or inconvenient. There is a need for a long-term transition house in Whistler to help anyone fleeing domestic abuse or an unsafe living situation.

Older Adults

According to CMHC, “Because Canadians are living longer, there are more and more people at the highest end of the age spectrum who need health care and daily living supports.” CMHC also provided the following information, which is applicable to the Whistler context: “The large seniors’ population in small and rural towns can create challenges for housing, as well as services. Often the population density isn’t high enough to support certain seniors’ services and housing options are often limited.” Private, public, and non-profit organizations can play an important role in meeting the needs of these older adults; some older adults benefit from at-home supports that allow them to stay in their current home for longer. CMHC reports that ‘older seniors’ (aged 75 and over) may be more focused on independent living that offers additional supports (such as aging-in-place), however the move to housing with support services begins in earnest in their late 70s. The ‘oldest seniors’ (85 and over) are likely to consider relocation to healthcare facilities, such as assisted living or long-term care. (Source: CMHC, *Housing for Older Canadians: The Definitive Guide to the Over-55 Market*, 2020.)

2021 Whistler Age-Friendly Assessment & Action Plan

Survey respondents (almost 60%) indicated that their homes were not accessible or would not allow them to age-in-place.

The action plan includes enhancing availability of accessible housing in the community.

In 2023, Whistler has an estimated 666* residents aged 75 and older. By 2033, the population of ‘older seniors’ aged 75 and over in Whistler is expected to increase by 235* (35%). Older seniors are more likely to require supports, either in-home or some level of supportive or living assistance. This projection includes an additional 20 ‘oldest seniors’ (aged 85 and over) who could require assisted living or long-term care (which are considered healthcare facilities outside the scope of this report). (*Number of people calculated as a proportion of age group as defined by the 2021 Census.)

People with Intellectual or Physical Disabilities

People with disabilities often face significant barriers finding appropriate and affordable housing. 21% of all households with an intellectual disability and 17% of all households with physical activity limitation are in core housing need.

Engagement participants reported a significant need for accessible housing for older adults and people with special needs. Participants noted these housing types are missing in the community, especially for people with intellectual or physical disabilities. These demographics require accessible housing that is universally designed for a wide range of needs over the lifetime of residents.

A local government is able to require a portion of units be built to adaptable housing standards. A local government can also incentivize fully accessible units. Individuals with intellectual or physical disabilities who require supports on site need supportive housing units.

2022 Whistler Accessibility Action Plan Actions

The Plan calls for the following actions to address accessible housing:

- Integrate accessibility into the RMOW Housing Needs Report and aim to increase the number and type of accessible employee housing units accordingly; include assessing the need for supportive housing for local neurodivergent adults and/or adults with a cognitive disability
- Explore and establish incentive mechanisms and standards to guide housing development and renovations to meet the need for accessible housing
- Update Seniors Housing Policy to address specific aging-in-place features for all older adult housing units
- Ensure that WHA waitlist members with disabilities can be housed in accessible units when it is their turn for housing
- Investigate existing accessibility retrofit programs for privately-owned housing
- Increase public awareness of the accessibility retrofit subsidy (i.e., BC Rebate for Accessible Home Adaptations)

Youth

Whistler attracts a large population of young adults under the age of 25 who want to live and work in the resort community. However, 37% of all households with head of house under the age of 25 are in core housing need. Youth may not have the resources or knowledge to navigate the housing network and may benefit from youth-specific housing types such as youth supportive housing or non-market rentals reserved for young people.

Indigenous Households

29% of all Indigenous households are in core housing need. Indigenous households may experience a number of barriers to securing appropriate housing, including discrimination and low incomes. Understanding needs, working with Indigenous partners, and offering cultural supports are some of the considerations that should be taken into account when supporting Indigenous households with housing.

Recent Immigrant Households

Whistler attracts a high proportion of newcomers who may not be familiar with the local, or Canadian, housing context, and therefore may struggle to find and maintain stable housing during their first few years. 21% of all new migrant-led households are in core housing need. These households may have limited housing options due to residency requirements that limit access to WHA non-market rental housing, and therefore may require new non-market housing options, housing subsidies, and/or cultural supports.

Líl'wat Nation & Squamish Nation Engagement



SECTION 5: LÍŁWAT NATION AND SQUAMISH NATION ENGAGEMENT

The purpose of the engagement with Lílwat Nation and Squamish Nation was to learn about the housing barriers, challenges, and opportunities that exist for Nation members in Whistler. Guiding questions were shared with Lílwat Nation and Squamish Nation regarding living in Whistler, community strengths, gaps in services and opportunity areas. In addition, the RMOW notes there are funding programs available to subsidize the delivery of Indigenous housing (e.g., Indigenous Housing Fund) by First Nations or in partnerships with not-for-profits.

Lílwat Nation

Lílwat Nation was invited to participate in the project engagement through an interview or an alternative format. An interview was conducted with the Lílwat Nation Housing Coordinator and Director of Infrastructure on October 16, 2023. The following summary reflects the insights that were shared.

Approximately 50-80 members of Lílwat Nation are employed in Whistler, with the number fluctuating depending on the season. They commute three hours a day to attend work in Whistler.

There are also about ten to twelve Lílwat Nation members who spend considerable time in Whistler who are experiencing homelessness, in need of housing or have precarious living situations. The bottle return program and access to collectable recyclables in Whistler attracts some of these members to take the bus to Whistler as there is no recycling deposit program on reserve. Should these individuals seek housing in Whistler, there would need to be supports to help them retain the housing.

When asked about existing community strengths related to housing and support services in Whistler for supporting members of Lílwat Nation, we heard that the Squamish Lílwat Cultural Centre (SLCC) provides employment and training. Otherwise, no known supports available from the greater community were identified.

Lílwat Nation manages some housing supports for its members. There is a new transition house in Mount Currie for women and children. It has four self-contained three-bedroom units; one is accessible and they also have lock-offs. This transition house is sometimes exchanged with those seeking shelter in Squamish to provide separation; if a transition house existed in Whistler a similar exchange could also be beneficial. There is also supportive housing nested in the existing housing stock. Additionally, the Nation is working on a small homes project, which aims to build six homes on one lot, and generally seeks to replace older housing and densify lots.

When asked about what gaps exist in service delivery for members of Lílwat Nation experiencing housing challenges in Whistler, we heard that Whistler currently lacks affordable housing for young people who enjoy working with others from around the world, as well as enjoying the seasons and sporting opportunities provided in Whistler. The sport minded adventurous youth, young adults, individuals, and young families are currently underserved when it comes to non-market housing in Whistler.

When asked what opportunities exist when it comes to housing members of Lílwat Nation in Whistler, we heard that there are opportunities for affordable housing on First Nation owned land in Whistler, or in community areas, like BC Housing Aboriginal Housing in other communities. All housing forms would be appropriate to meet the diverse demographics, including housing for employment or sports minded individuals. It would be best if traditional Lílwat Nation language and culture are reflected in the housing through design or programming.

To support members of Lílwat Nation who would like to live in Whistler, affordable housing, including subsidized housing and supportive housing for individuals who wouldn't be able to maintain long-term housing without supports, would need to be implemented. For the most marginalized, support services for personal wellness, basic life skills, financial support services, daycare, family wellness, nutrition and healthy living supports would be required on site. Tax considerations with respect to living on or off reserve are also important factors for individuals who would like to live in Whistler and would require further review.

When asked what the one thing the RMOW needed to know when it comes to housing needs for members of Lílwat Nation in Whistler, of note was the importance of living with the land and on the land, living with other people for the enjoyment of why Whistler was made where it is, whether it be for work, play or other quiet peaceful things.

Squamish Nation

Through the engagement portal, Squamish Connect, Squamish Nation was invited to participate in the project engagement through an interview or an alternative format. On August 22, 2023 the Squamish Nation referrals manager provided the following written comments:

We have the following input points with regards to this initiative:

- *As staff housing is a barrier to Squamish Nation members to work in Whistler, we expect more staff housing options to open up employment and other opportunities.*
- *We expect better support and wraparound services around housing which includes but is not limited to support staff within premises or on call.*
- *We expect dispute resolution services which can be provided on ad hoc basis for Nation members. Also, the staff to have cultural awareness training to handle delicate situations.*
- *Housing should be developed keeping basic needs and requirements in mind like accessibility to amenities and daily needs.*
- *Transportation accessibility should be a priority while planning any new housing project.*
- *Emergency and communication plans should be in place and include timely informing Squamish Nation, if need be.*

Next Steps



SECTION 6: NEXT STEPS

This report will be a key tool to contribute to the development of housing options across the housing continuum and to support municipal partners in pursuing grant opportunities. It will also inform the development of the RMOW's long-term housing strategy.

The following section of this report outlines lessons learned from this assessment and provides direction on next steps moving forward.

Lessons Learned

Recognize housing issues are complex and cannot be solved alone.

Meeting the housing needs of vulnerable populations will likely require subsidies. Specifically, regarding the provision of non-market rental housing, below-market rents do not necessarily meet the level of affordability required for those in highest housing need. In order to develop solutions, partnerships are needed with the community (e.g., non-profit organizations), businesses and developers, and higher levels of government. Additionally, continued collaboration with Lílwat Nation and Squamish Nation is needed to provide housing opportunities for members of both Nations to live in Whistler.

Initiate data collection partnerships to support community-based solutions.

With vulnerable populations especially, it is difficult to quantify changing needs or capture data of those in crisis. It is necessary to create opportunities for continued and more detailed data collection to further inform the estimated current and future needs identified in this report. Partnerships and processes to collect the following data should be initiated as opportunities arise:

- Annual Point-in-Time Counts
 - These are guided by surveys and best practices established by BC Housing, the Ministry of Housing, and the Homelessness Services Association of BC. The count is conducted once per year over a 24-hour period and provides a snapshot of homelessness in the community. Data from the count provides critical information on the characteristics of people experiencing homelessness, and, when conducted regularly, show trends over time.
- Non-profit housing provider waitlists
- Unique number of clients seeking rent supplements/emergency housing
- Census surveys
 - It is important to encourage residents to complete Census forms when released as well as promote access to surveys, especially for those living in staff housing, shared rentals, or sublets. The next Canadian Census is scheduled to be released in 2026.
- Ongoing engagement sessions
 - Surveys, focus groups, public open houses and other forms of engagement with social service and housing providers and the public are important to collect qualitative data regarding housing needs.
- Other measurable forms of housing needs

Commit to continued monitoring and assessment.

Housing needs are in a constant state of fluctuation in response to unpredictable external variables. The projections identified in this report do not account for migration, social, or economic factors which are difficult to quantify and predict. Ongoing engagement and collaboration with residents and local service providers is needed to understand how housing issues are growing and changing, and to make informed

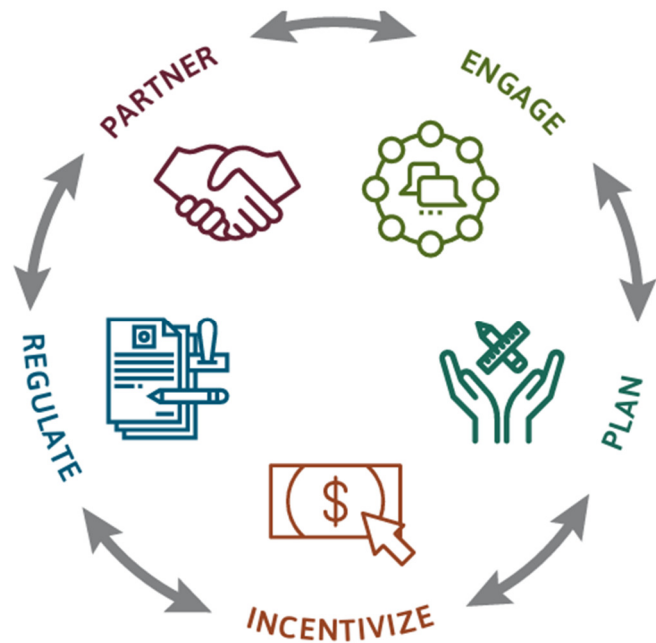
policy decisions. This assessment should be revisited in a maximum of five years. There is opportunity to combine this review with the provincially required update of the housing needs assessment.

Moving Forward

Housing options for people experiencing vulnerability are needed now. The RMOW can consider taking actions to address and plan for current and future housing needs for vulnerable populations by using a balanced mix of the following methods, which is further illustrated by the adjacent diagram:

- **Partner:** develop and maintain partnerships with community organizations that serve the needs of vulnerable populations to address the housing needs of these populations.
- **Engage:** collect data regarding housing needs and solutions, and share information with the public regarding housing plans, policies, and decisions.
- **Plan:** develop policies, plans, and strategies that consider the housing needs identified in this report.
- **Incentivize:** consider land use incentives (e.g., density bonusing), property tax incentives or fee waivers, or priority permitting to encourage the development of new housing.
- **Regulate:** regulate land uses through zoning and other bylaws.

Figure 23: Actions Local Governments Can Take



Source: Local Government Healthy Housing Guide, BC Healthy Communities, 2019.

Appendices



APPENDIX A: DEFINITIONS

Key Term	Definition	Source
Adequate Housing Standard	Housing not requiring any major repairs. Major repairs include defective plumbing or electrical wiring, or structural repairs to walls, floors, or ceilings.	CMHC, 2019
Affordable Housing	Housing is considered to be affordable when shelter cost is less than 30% of before-tax household income.	CMHC, 2019
Apartment or Flat in a Duplex	One of two dwellings, located one above the other, that may or may not be attached to other dwellings or buildings.	Statistics Canada, 2016
Assisted Living	A type of housing for older adults and people with disabilities that includes on-site hospitality and personal-care support services.	BC Housing, 2023
Below-Market Rental Housing	Housing with rents equal to, or lower than, average rates in private-market rental housing.	BC Housing, 2023
Co-Operative Housing	A type of housing that residents own and operate as part of a membership.	BC Housing, 2023
Core Housing Need	Refers to whether a private household's housing falls below at least one of the indicator thresholds for housing adequacy, affordability or suitability, and would have to spend 30% or more of its total before-tax income to pay the median rent of alternative local housing that is acceptable (attains all three housing indicator thresholds).	Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population
Disability	A severe and prolonged impairment in physical or mental functions.	BC Housing, 2023
Disability Pension	Financial assistance that the B.C. government offers to a person who is considered disabled for income tax purposes by the Government of Canada.	BC Housing, 2023
Emergency Shelter	Immediate, short-stay housing for people who are homeless or at risk of becoming homeless.	BC Housing, 2023
Group Homes	A type of housing with supports for people with special needs such as severe mental and physical disabilities.	BC Housing, 2023
Homeless, At Risk of Homelessness	An individual or family that does not have a permanent address or residence.	BC Housing, 2023
Housing Provider	An organization, society, developer or other BC Housing partner that operates places to live for renters with low incomes.	BC Housing, 2023
Housing with Supports	Housing that includes on-site services such as meals, housekeeping, health care, and counselling.	BC Housing, 2023
Income	Payments received from work, social assistance, pensions, interest, assets and other earnings.	BC Housing, 2023

Income Assistance	Social assistance, social security or another form of payment that the provincial or federal government provides to people in need who do not have any other resources.	BC Housing, 2023
LGTBQIA2S+	An evolving acronym for lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender, two-spirit, queer, and additional identities.	BC Housing, 2023
Market Rent	A rent amount that is generally similar to the rent of other units in the private (non-subsidized) housing market.	BC Housing, 2023
Movable Dwelling	Includes mobile homes and other movable dwellings such as houseboats, recreational vehicles and railroad cars.	Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population
National Occupancy Standard	<p>The National Occupancy Standard was created in the mid-1980s by the federal, provincial and territorial governments. It provides a common reference point for “suitable” housing, which is how many people a given dwelling unit might accommodate given the number of bedrooms. Under the Standard, suitable housing is based on the following criteria:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A maximum of two persons per bedroom. - Household members, of any age, living as part of a married or common-law couple share a bedroom with their spouse or common-law partner. - Lone parents, of any age, have a separate bedroom from their children. - Household members aged 18 or over have a separate bedroom, except those living as part of a married or common-law couple. - Household members under 18 years of age of the same sex may share a bedroom, except lone parents and those living as part of a married or common-law couple. - Household members under five years of age of the opposite sex may share a bedroom if doing so would reduce the number of required bedrooms. This situation would arise only in households with an odd number of males under 18, and odd number of females under 18 and at least one female and one male under the age of five. - An exception to the above is a household consisting of one individual living alone who may live in a studio apartment with no separate bedroom. 	CMHC, 2022
Non-Market Housing	Includes government-subsidized housing, non-profit housing that is below market, or rent assistance for private market rentals that are geared to low to moderate income households.	BC Housing, 2023
Non-Profit Housing	A housing development that a community-based, non-profit housing partner owns and operates.	BC Housing, 2023

Rent Geared to Income	A type of subsidized housing where the housing provider matches a person's rent to how much income they earn.	BC Housing, 2023
Row House	One of three or more dwellings joined side by side (or occasionally side to back), such as a townhouse or garden home, but not having any other dwellings either above or below. Townhouses attached to a high-rise building are also classified as row houses.	Statistics Canada, 2016
Safe Homes	A type of temporary housing for women and children fleeing violence, where a transition house is not available in the community.	BC Housing, 2023
Second-Stage Housing	Housing for women and children fleeing violence who have completed a stay in a transition house or safe home. Stays can be up to 18 months.	BC Housing, 2023
Semi-Detached House	One of two dwellings attached side by side (or back to back) to each other, but not attached to any other dwelling or structure (except its own garage or shed). A semi-detached dwelling has no dwellings either above it or below it, and the two units together have open space on all sides.	Statistics Canada, 2016
Senior	An adult aged 55 years or older. BC Housing programs, partners and housing providers may define a senior by a different age.	BC Housing, 2023
Seniors Supportive Housing	A type of housing for older adults and people with disabilities that includes on-site hospitality but not personal-care support services.	BC Housing, 2023
Service Provider	An individual, group or organization that helps with a person's needs related to health and housing.	BC Housing, 2023
Shelter Costs	Refers to the average monthly total of all shelter expenses paid by households. Shelter costs for owner households include, where applicable, mortgage payments, property taxes and condominium fees, along with the costs of electricity, heat, water and other municipal services. For renter households, shelter costs include, where applicable, the rent and the costs of electricity, heat, water and other municipal services. For households living in a dwelling provided by the local government, First Nation or Indian band, shelter costs include, where applicable, the monthly use or occupancy payment and the costs of electricity, heat, water and other municipal services.	Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population
Single-Detached House	A single dwelling not attached to any other dwelling or structure (except to its own garage or shed). A single-detached house has open space on all sides, and has no dwellings either above it or below it.	Statistics Canada, 2016
Social Housing	A housing development that the government or a non-profit housing partner owns and operates. Also called public housing.	BC Housing, 2023

Subsidized Housing	Refers to whether a renter household lives in a dwelling that is subsidized. Subsidized housing includes rent geared to income, social housing, public housing, government-assisted housing, non-profit housing, rent supplements and housing allowances.	Statistics Canada, 2021 Census of Population
Suitable Housing	Housing is considered suitable when there are enough bedrooms for the size and composition of the household according to the National Occupancy Standard requirements.	CMHC, 2019
Supportive Housing	A type of housing that provides on-site supports and services to residents who cannot live independently.	BC Housing, 2023
The Housing Registry	A database that gives access to subsidized housing for renters and housing providers in B.C.	BC Housing, 2023
Transition Houses	A type of temporary housing for women and children fleeing violence. A safe, anonymous place to stay with food, staff and services.	BC Housing, 2023
Transitional Housing	A type of housing for residents for between 30 days and three years. It aims to transition individuals to long-term, permanent housing.	BC Housing, 2023

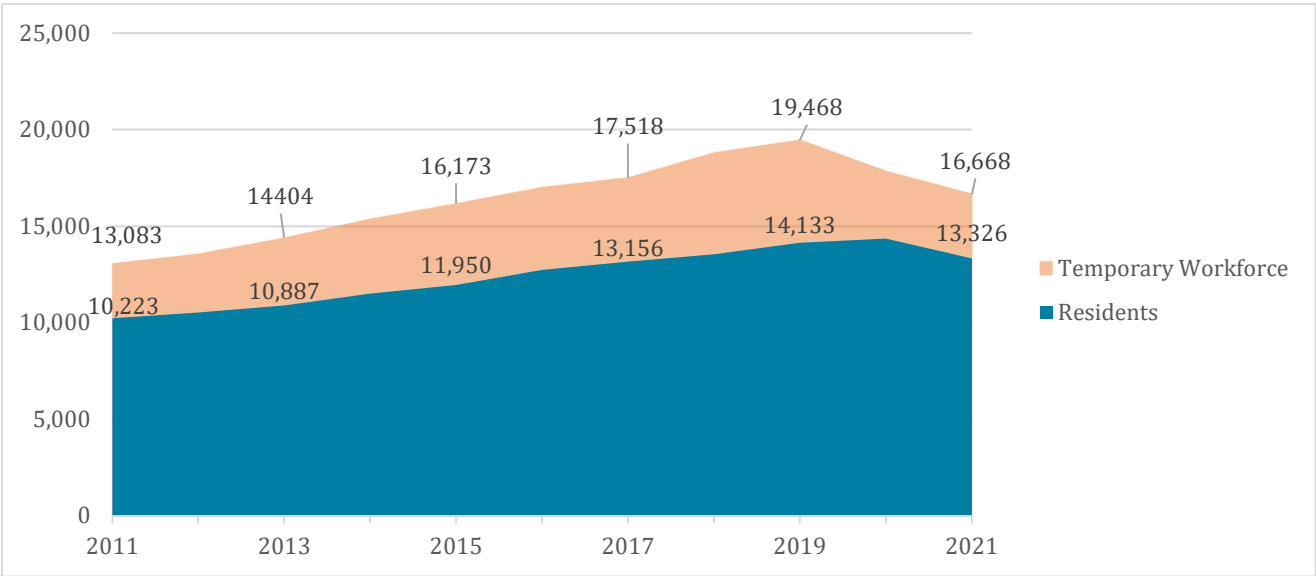
APPENDIX B: COMMUNITY OVERVIEW

This appendix provides an overview of demographic trends in Whistler to help understand the community's housing needs, especially as they relate to vulnerable populations. This overview is largely based on 2011, 2016, and 2021 Statistics Canada Census data.

1.1 Population

As illustrated in Figure B1, Whistler grew by 27% from an estimated 13,083 in 2011 to 16,668 in 2021, adding an additional 3,585 residents and temporary workers over this 10-year period. This growth is slower than the neighbouring communities of Pemberton (96%), Squamish (39%), and the Squamish-Lillooet Regional District (32%) over the same period (Statistics Canada, 2021).

Figure B1: Population Growth including Residents and Estimated Temporary Workforce, 2011-2021



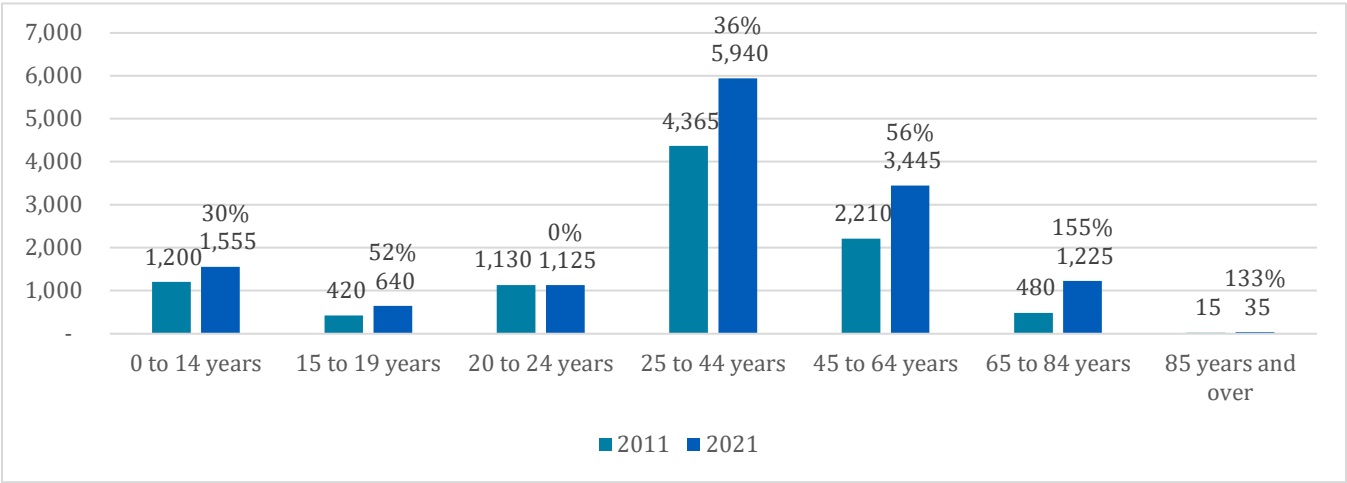
Resident Population source: BC Statistics, 2022.

Temporary Workforce Population source: Balance Model, uses BC Statistics population estimates + Taxfiler data (up to 2019) to estimate the temporary workforce.

1.2 Age

As an international, purpose-built resort, Whistler attracts a high proportion of young adults; the greatest proportion of Whistler's population is aged 25-44 (see Figure B2). However, the young adult population is not the fastest growing age group; in fact, it is one of the slowest growing demographics in terms of age. The fastest growing age groups between 2011 and 2021 are older adults over the age of 65, followed by individuals aged 45-64. In addition, the number of families with children is noticeably increasing; the number of children under 14 years old has grown at a rate of 30% and youth aged 15-19 are increasing at an even higher rate of 52% over the past 10 years.

Figure B2: Population by Age, including Growth Rate over 10-Year Period, 2011-2021

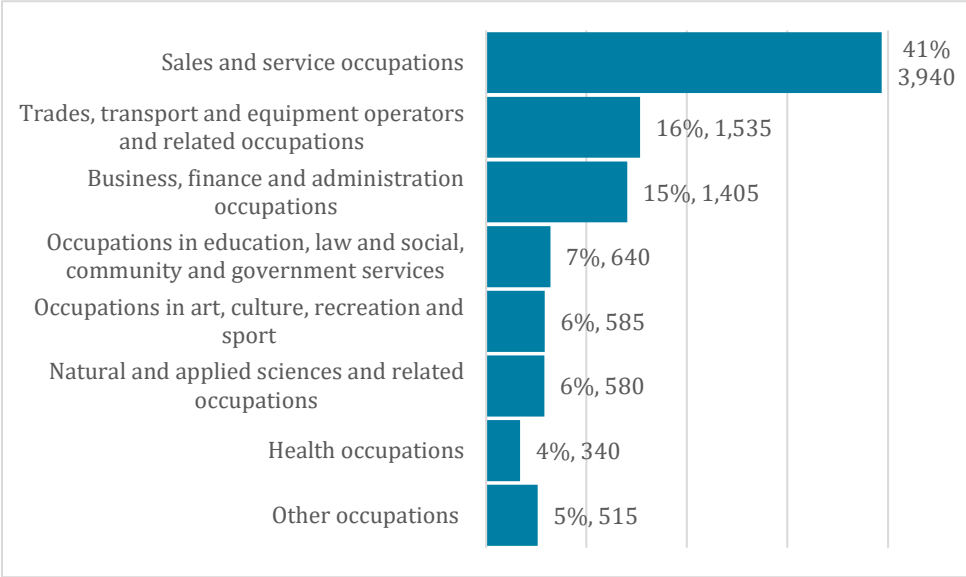


Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profiles 2011 & 2021.

1.3 Employment and Labour Force

As illustrated in Figure B3, Whistler’s resort economy is focused on the service industry; the greatest proportion of individuals (41%) work in sales and service occupations. Other key industries include trades (16%) and business and administration (15%). A proportion of the employed workforce are remote workers; 23% (1,795) of employed residents work from home (Statistics Canada, 2021).

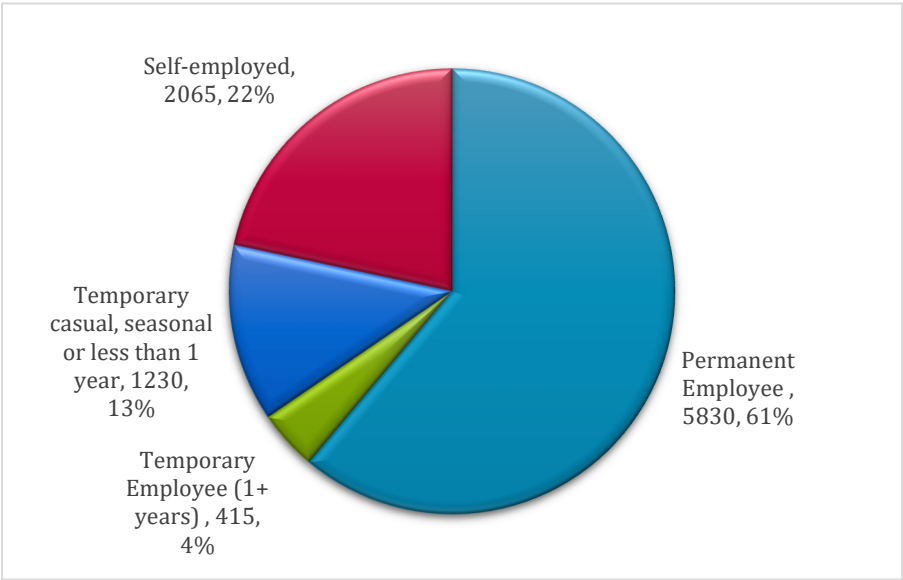
Figure B3: Occupation by Category based on the National Occupational Classification, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021.

As highlighted in Figure B4, of those who are employed, 61% have permanent jobs, 22% are self-employed, and 17% have temporary jobs (seasonal, casual, or have an end date). Temporary employment is less stable and individuals may experience fluctuating incomes or periods of unemployment.

Figure B4: Class of Worker Based on Job Permanency, 2021

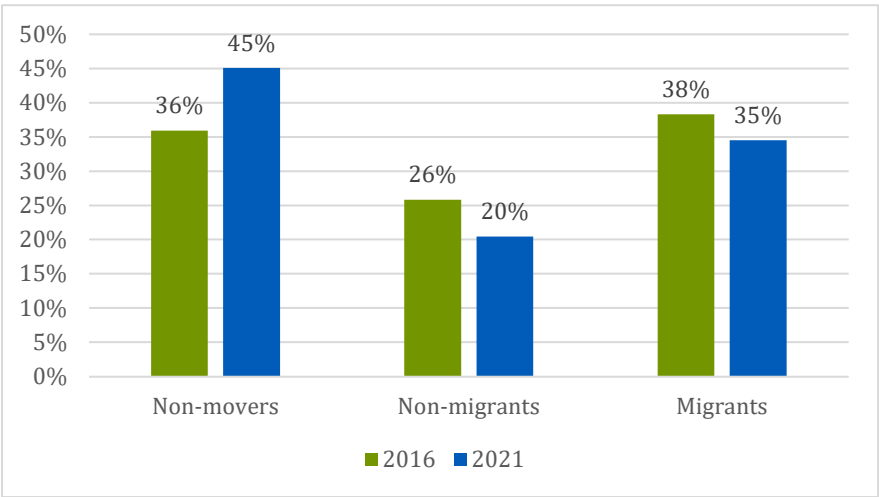


Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021.

1.4 Immigration and Newcomers

Whistler is home to a significant number of newcomers. In 2021, 25% of Whistler residents identified as an immigrant to Canada and 10% identified as a non-permanent resident with a work or study permit or refugee status. As per Figure B5, 35% of residents had moved to Whistler from outside the community within the previous five years.

Figure B5: Mobility Status Five Years Ago, 2016-2021

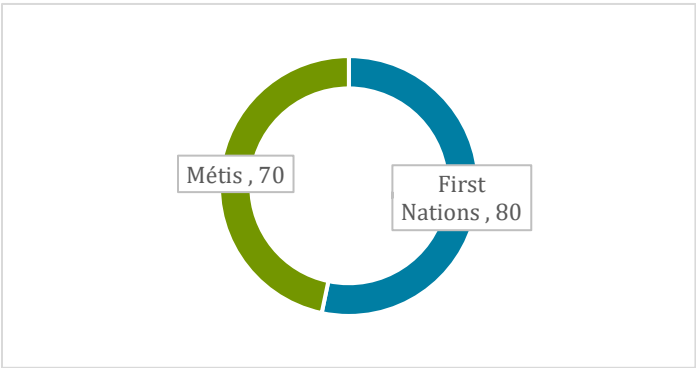


Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profiles 2016 & 2021.
Non-movers: At same place of residence as five years prior.
Non-migrants: People who moved but stayed in Whistler.
Migrants: People who moved to Whistler from outside Whistler.

1.5 Indigenous Residents

As of 2021, there were 145* Whistler residents who self-identify as having Indigenous ancestry.

Figure B6: Individuals Who Self-Identify as Having Indigenous Ancestry, 2021



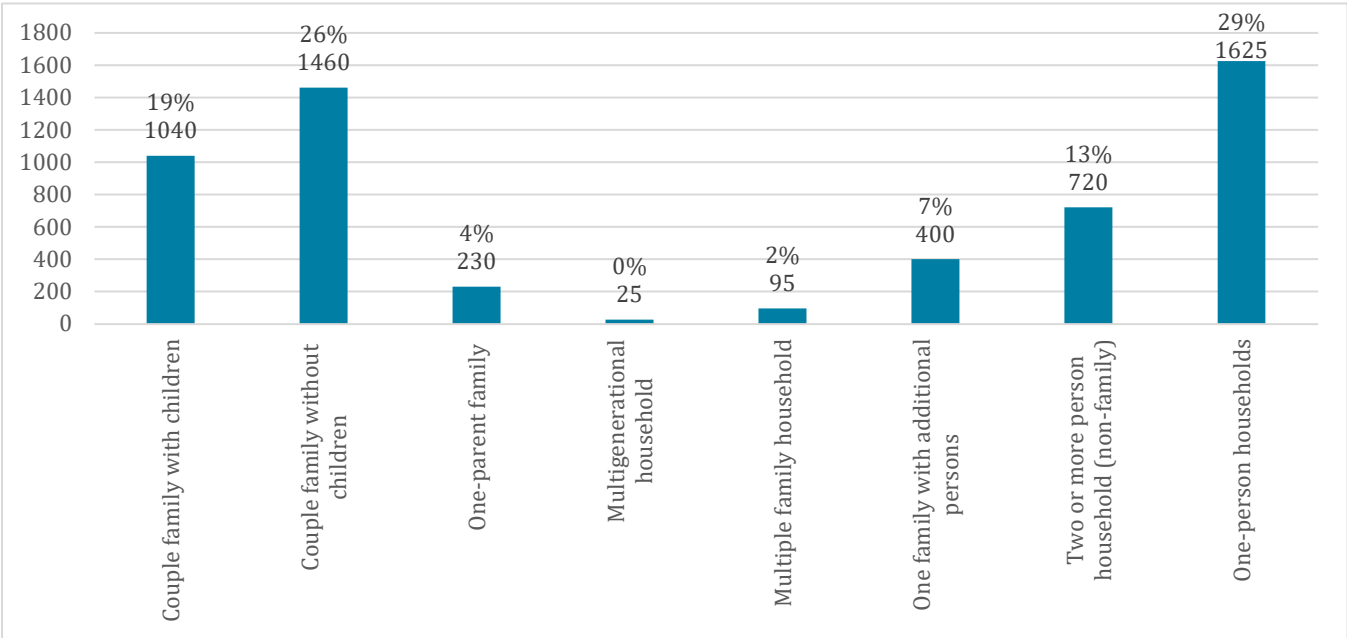
Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021.
*The total number of individuals shown above in Figure B6 is slightly higher due to Census rounding practices.

1.6 Household Size and Composition

In 2021, Whistler had 10,065 private dwellings of which 5,597 (56%) were occupied by usual residents (i.e., permanently residing as a homeowner or renter) (Statistics Canada, 2021). A large proportion of households are not occupied full-time. As per a 2021 RMOW Whistler Housing Survey, 47% of market residential properties are second homeowners who reserve their property for personal use and an additional 9% of properties are used for vacation rentals.

The highest proportion of households are single (i.e., one-person) households (29%), followed by couples (26%) as per Figure B7. Families with children make up 23% of households (and can be further broken down into 19% couple families with children and 4% one-parent families). Households with roommates make up 13%, which is especially high for a community of this size – much higher than the B.C. proportion of 4%. Other households include multiple family households (2%) and multigenerational households (<1%).

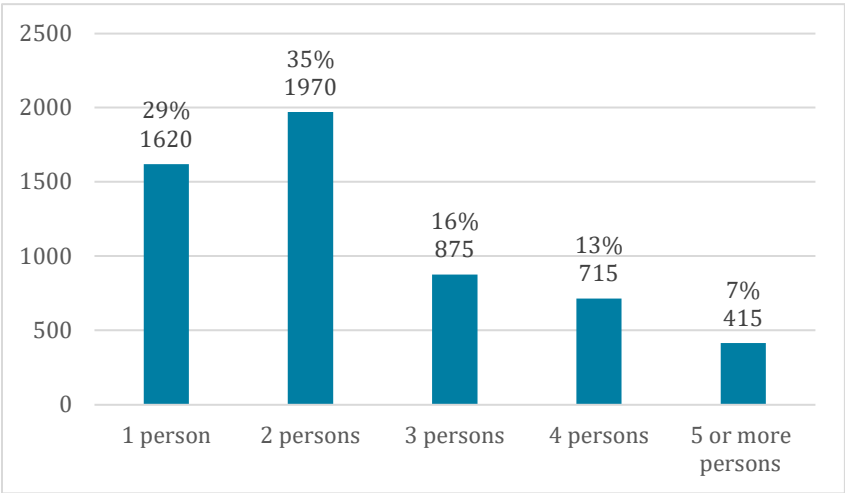
Figure B7: Households by Household Type, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021.

In 2021, Whistler’s average household size was 2.4 persons per private dwelling, which is the same as the provincial average. Figure B8 illustrates households by size.

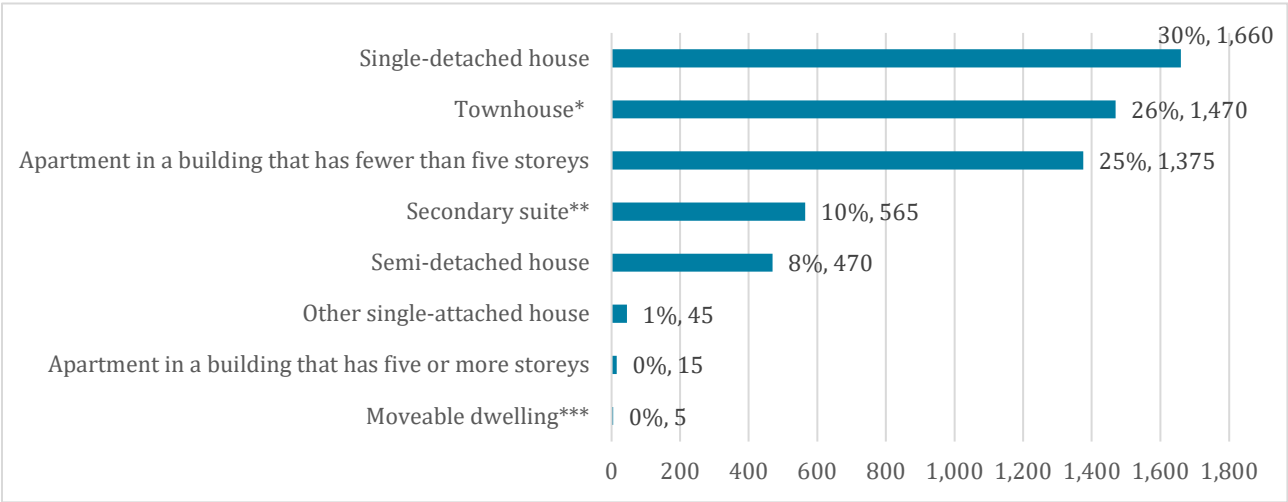
Figure B8: Households by Size, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021.

The greatest proportion of households live in single-detached houses (30%), followed by townhouses (26%), and apartments (25%). Other prominent household types include suites (10%) and semi-detached houses (i.e., duplexes) (8%).

Figure B9: Occupied Private Dwellings by Structural Type of Dwelling, 2021

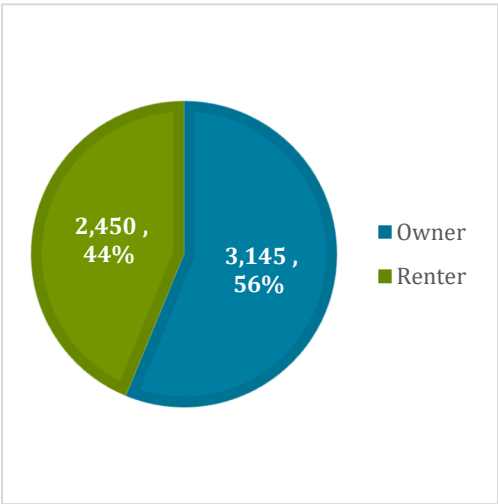


Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021.
*Statistics Canada uses the term “row house” to describe a townhouse. See Appendix A for the definition.
**Statistics Canada uses the term “apartment or flat in a duplex” to describe a secondary suite. See Appendix A for the definition.
***“Movable dwelling” includes mobile homes and other movable dwellings such as houseboats, recreational vehicles and railroad cars.

1.7 Tenure

Whistler has a higher proportion of owner households (56%) compared to renter households (44%).

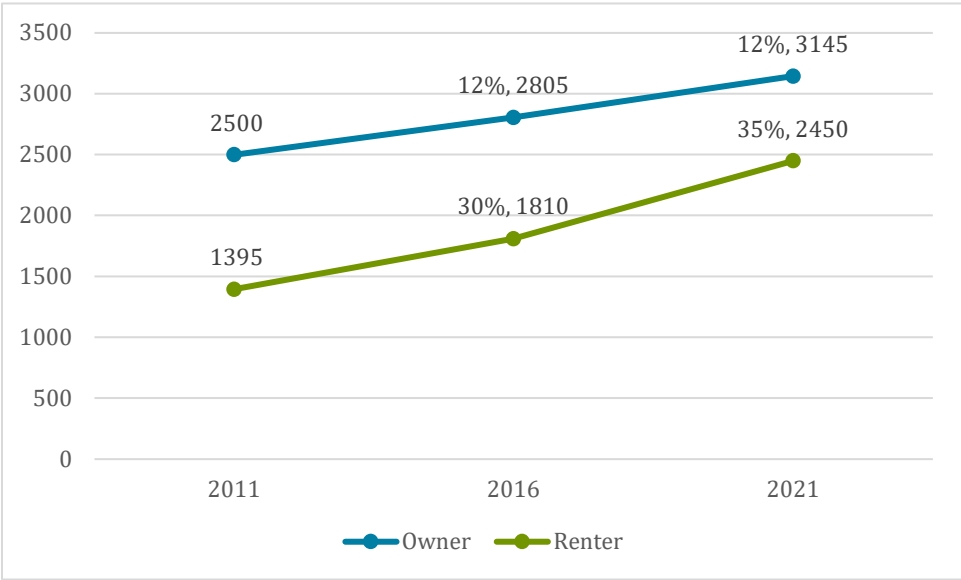
Figure B10: Number and Percent of Households by Tenure, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021.

The number of renter households has significantly grown year over year. As illustrated in Figure B11, between 2016 and 2021, renter households increased by 35%.

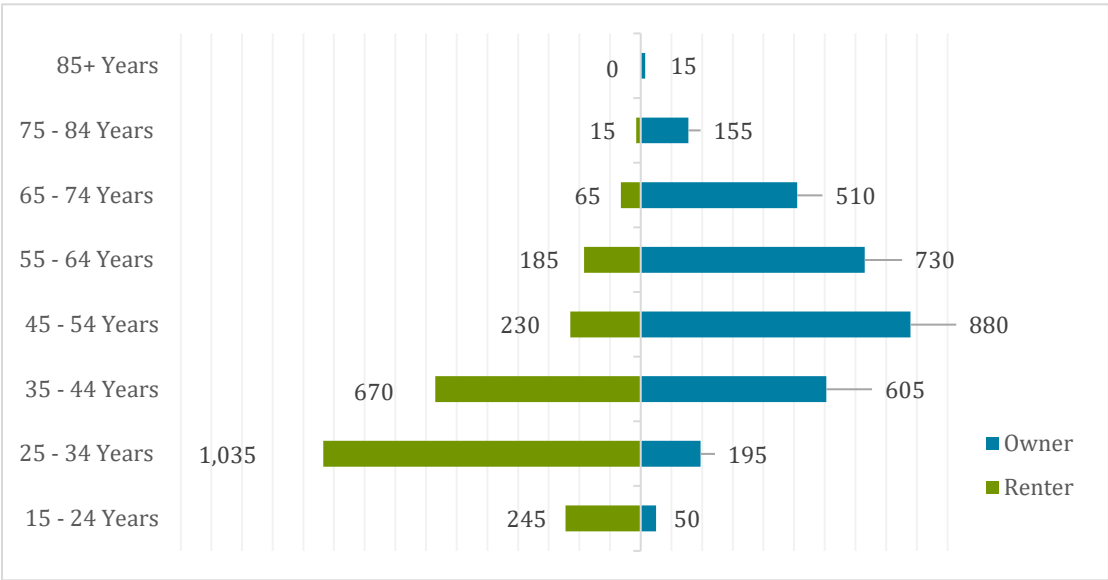
Figure B11: Households by Tenure, 2011-2021



Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profiles 2011, 2016 & 2021.

Figure B12 shows the number of renter and owner households by age group. The highest proportion of renter households are young adults, aged 25-34 years old.

Figure B12: Number of Households by Age of Primary Household Maintainer, by Tenure, 2021

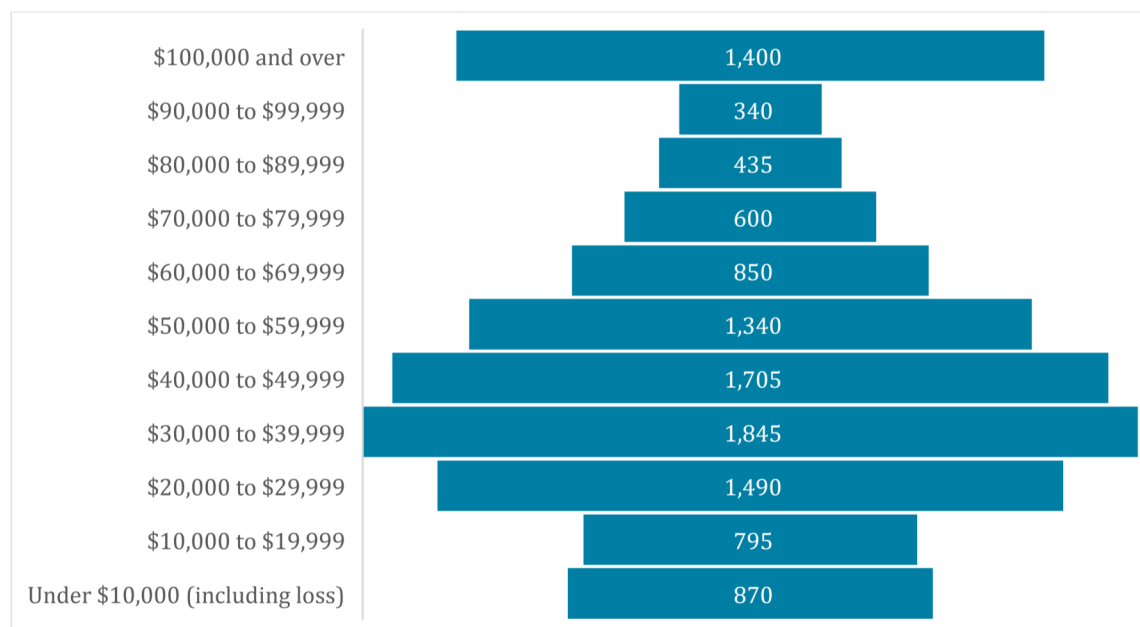


Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021.

1.8 Individual and Household Income

In 2021, the median income for all individuals was \$44,800. Figure B13 identifies the number of individuals by income group.

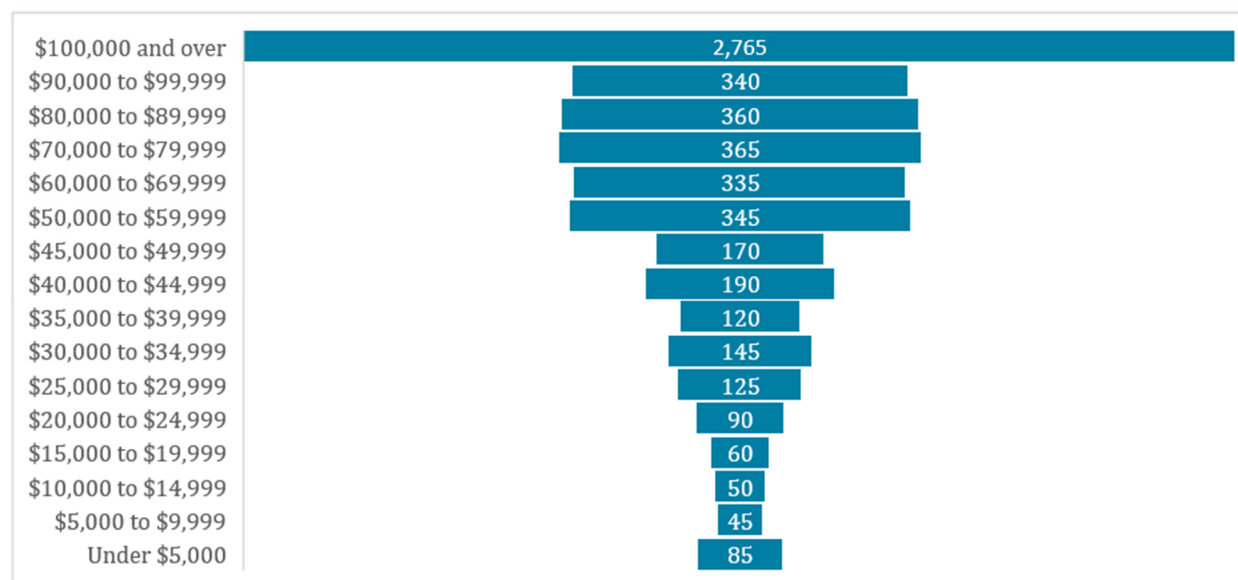
Figure B13: Number of Individual Incomes by Income Group, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021.

In 2021, the median household income was \$99,000. Figure B14 identifies the number of households by income group.

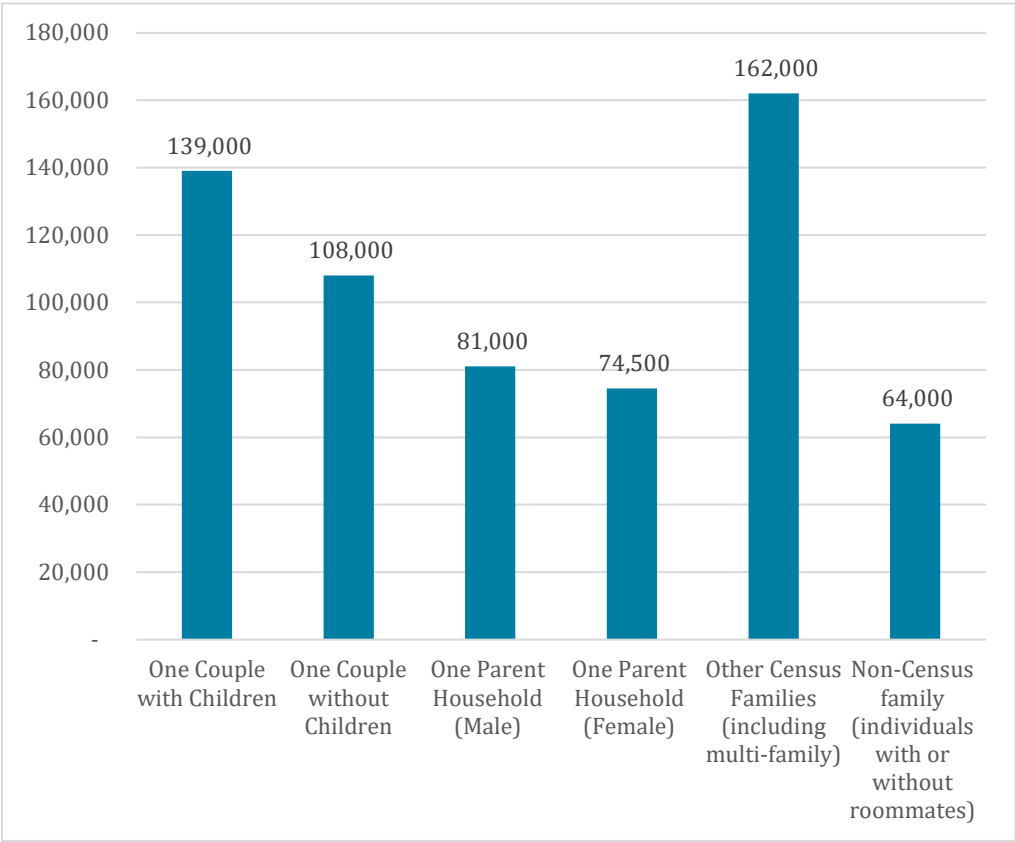
Figure B14: Number of Household Incomes by Income Group, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021.

Individuals that live alone or with roommates have the lowest household median income at \$64,000 per year, followed by one-parent households with a female lead at \$74,500 and one-parent households with a male lead at \$81,000 per year. Figure B15 provides further information on median income by household type.

Figure B15: Median Income by Household Type, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021.

Minimum Wage

The minimum wage in B.C. is currently \$16.75/hour (as of June 1, 2023). A person working full-time (40 hours/week) earns \$34,840 annually and can afford a maximum of \$871 per month on shelter costs. Shelter costs for renters include rent and any payments for electricity, fuel, water, and other municipal services. Appendix A provides further information on included costs in “shelter costs” for renters and homeowners.

Income and Disability Assistance

In 2023, 768 individuals (including 157 children) were receiving income or disability assistance in the Sea to Sky region, including Squamish, Whistler, and Pemberton (Source: Ministry of Social Development and Poverty Reduction, received May 18, 2023). Due to confidentiality requirements, the number of cases in Whistler were too small to publish. Those on income or disability assistance require very low rents that generally are found only in non-market subsidized housing. Notably, in July 2023, shelter rates increased by \$125; this was the first increase to the provincial shelter rate since 2007. Current rates are shown in Figure B16.

Figure B16: Income and Disability Assistance Shelter Rates, British Columbia, 2022

Household Size	Shelter Maximum
1	\$500
2	\$695
3	\$790
4	\$840
5	\$890
6	\$940
7	\$990

Source: Ministry of Social Development and Poverty and Reduction, B.C. Government, 2023.

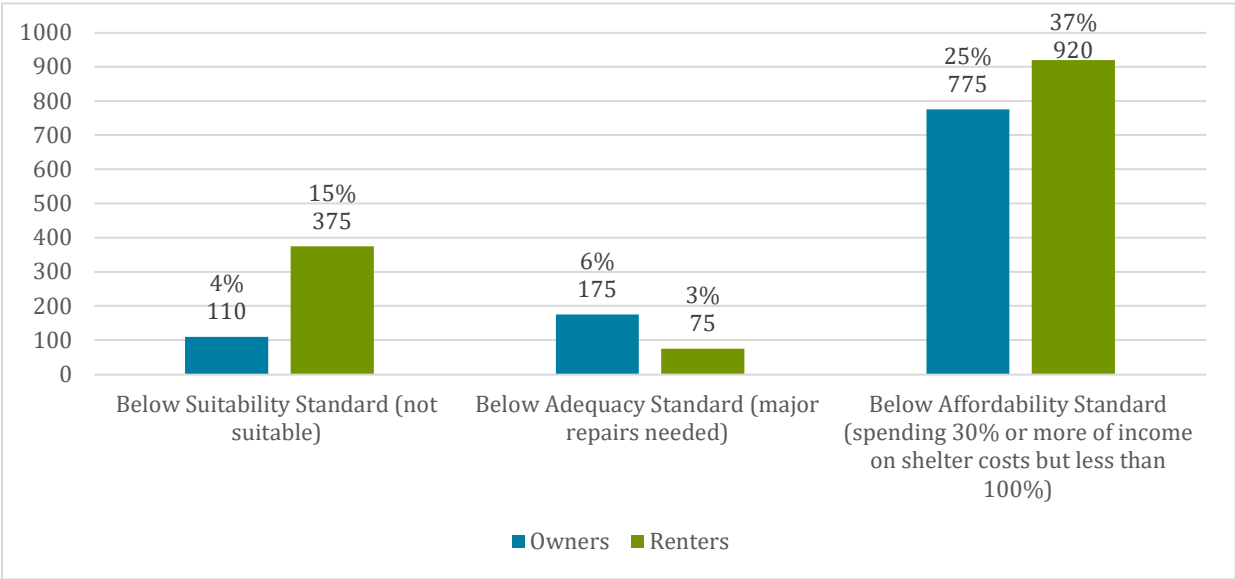
1.9 Housing Indicators

According to Census Canada and [CMHC](#), housing need is defined across three dimensions:

- **Affordability** – the household spends less than 30% of its gross income on shelter costs;
- **Suitability** – there are enough bedrooms for the size and make-up of the household (according to the National Occupancy Standard); and
- **Adequacy** – the housing is not in need of major repairs.

Figure B17 breaks down housing indicators by tenure. Whistler renter households have a high rate (15%) of unsuitable (i.e., overcrowded) housing. Renters have a low rate (3%) of inadequate housing, which means most housing is well-maintained. In 2021, 37% of Whistler’s renter households were living in unaffordable housing.

Figure B17: Housing Indicators by Number and Percent of Households by Tenure Type, 2021

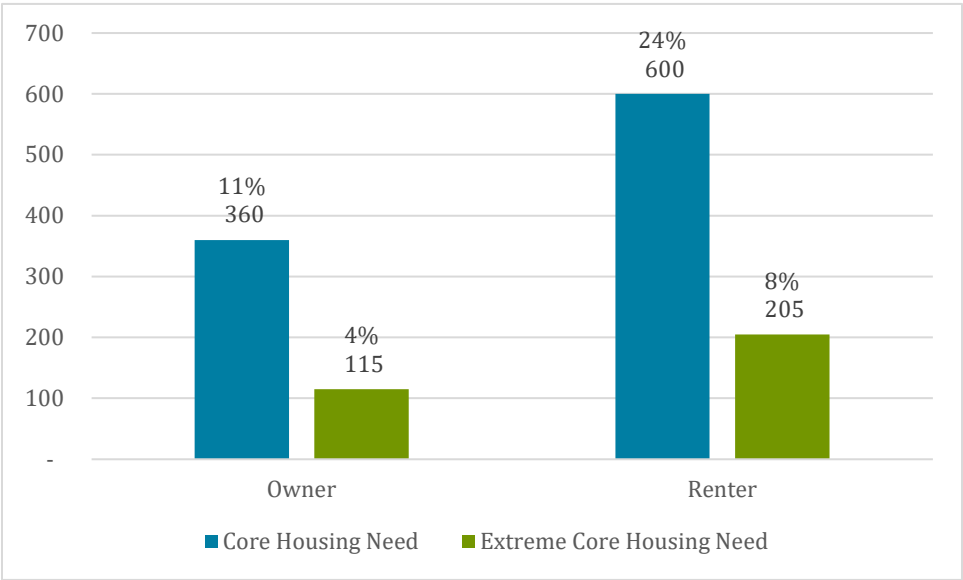


Source: Statistics Canada Census Program, Census Profile 2021.

If a household experiences need in any one of the above dimensions, and would have to spend 30% or more of its gross income to afford the rent for an alternative suitable and adequate unit in the local market, then the household is in **core housing need**. If the household is in core housing need and has a shelter-cost-to-

income ratio of 50% or more, then it is in **extreme core housing need**. In 2021, 24% of Whistler’s renter households were in core housing need, and 8% were in extreme core housing need.

Figure B18: Number of Households in Core and Extreme Core Housing Need, 2021



Source: Statistics Canada Table 98-10-0247-01.

APPENDIX C: COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT WHAT WE HEARD SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION AND KEY RESPONSE THEMES

This document summarizes the engagement process and engagement findings for the Resort Municipality of Whistler's (RMOW) Vulnerable Populations Housing Needs Assessment Report (the report). The engagement process was developed based on the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) planning methodology and best practices. This engagement summary was prepared by Jessie Abraham Planning & Development, a neutral third party who supported engagement planning, implementation, and the analysis of engagement findings. The engagement process ran from May 2023 to July 2023. The two methods used in the engagement process were focus groups and interviews. Between the two methods, 37 people participated in the engagement process, and 22 organizations were represented. The purpose of engagement was to collect qualitative data about the housing needs, gaps, and opportunities for vulnerable populations residing in Whistler so that feedback can help to inform the report. This summary document reflects the insights and perceptions of those who participated in the engagement process.

Key Response Themes

Overall, participants expressed overwhelming support for more housing options in Whistler, and communicated the increasing need for emergency, transitional, supportive, and subsidized rental housing.

The main themes regarding **barriers to accessing housing** and what Whistler residents are experiencing are as noted below.

- **There is a lack of housing options.** Residents are struggling to find affordable housing options, housing inventory is very limited, and there are no or limited emergency, transitional, or supportive housing options available. Existing housing inventory seems to be underutilized, with many empty homes, suites, and bedrooms in the community. Pressures from population growth and lack of available options drives up housing costs, creates a highly competitive market, and results in overcrowding and illegal housing situations.
- **Rising costs-of-living means increased financial pressure.** Households are feeling financial pressures from increasing rental rates, inflation, rising costs of food, and increased costs in childcare. Individuals and families have less disposable income, and are resorting to social service and community supports, such as the foodbank, to help alleviate financial pressure.
- **Residents experience stigma to accessing social and housing supports.** Whistler's reputation as an international resort destination creates barriers and builds stigma around accessing housing and support services. There are residents working and living in Whistler who are experiencing vulnerabilities behind the image of the tourist destination. While some think "Whistler is a choice" and people can move to another community to receive services and support, many vulnerable people have support networks and ties to Whistler and would face even greater struggles if they chose to leave. Community members feel there is no opportunity to express the real housing issues they are facing.

The main themes regarding **housing needs** are as noted below.

- **There is a critical need for more diverse non-market housing options.** The following housing needs and gaps were identified through engagement:
 - Housing for people experiencing homelessness;

- Supportive housing for people who cannot live independently;
 - Accessible housing for seniors and people with special needs;
 - Subsidized rental housing for low to middle income households;
 - Emergency housing and supports for people in crisis; and
 - Transitional housing for people fleeing violence or in need of immediate and temporary accommodation.
- **People experience vulnerability in different ways and at different stages of their life.** People experience life changes that make them more vulnerable. Examples include a sudden change in employment (including unemployment), housing (e.g., eviction, fleeing violence), family structure (e.g., divorce or separation, widowed), or health (e.g., critical illness or life-changing injury). By identifying the housing gaps and delivering new types of housing (i.e., emergency, transitional, supportive housing), people experiencing vulnerability have housing options.
 - **Staffing challenges are tied to housing.** Employers, including the social service and public sectors, are experiencing staffing challenges. Businesses and the local economy are growing, but do not offer or increase staff housing options. In addition to staffing challenges, the social service and public sectors are experiencing funding challenges; the combined challenges mean it is difficult to not only grow much-needed housing programs and supports, but to also meet the current demands for social and community services.
 - **Housing is needed now.** Whistler, like many communities in B.C., is experiencing a housing crisis. Action is needed to get people into housing. Development approvals and permitting should be streamlined to allow for faster delivery of new housing.

The main themes regarding **opportunities** are as noted below.

- **Housing issues are complex and cannot be solved alone.** The RMOW must identify housing needs and commit to partnerships with the community (e.g., non-profit organizations), businesses and developers, and higher levels of government to develop solutions together.
- **Supporting community-based solutions is key.** It is necessary to create opportunities for data collection about vulnerable populations to better understand housing needs and gaps. Ongoing engagement and collaboration with residents and local service providers is needed to understand how housing issues are growing and changing, and to make informed policy decisions.
- **There is a need for policies that deliver more housing faster.** It is important to develop new policies, procedures, and plans that allow for expedited non-market housing development. Consideration should be given to greater densification and infill of existing neighbourhoods, more mixed-use developments, improved transportation connections, and incentives to use and capitalize on existing housing inventory.
- **The RMOW has a role as an advocate.** Housing is a critical issue for all levels of government. The RMOW needs to advocate for funding at the provincial and federal levels, and explore and support grant applications for housing. The RMOW needs to advocate at the regional level for regional transit and housing solutions. In the community, the RMOW needs to bring public awareness to housing issues, including the challenges and barriers to housing.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

As a purpose-built, internationally known resort town, Whistler has unique housing challenges. As a desirable location for many different groups (resort workers, lifestyle residents, retirees, second homeowners), there is high competition for a limited supply of available housing, and the rent-income gap has increased significantly since the COVID pandemic.

In May 2022, the RMOW completed a Housing Needs Report, which identified housing challenges and gaps to be addressed in the community. In particular, the 2022 needs report revealed how the COVID pandemic has exemplified the number and scale of vulnerable people in the community. Fluctuating business activity meant unstable incomes for many households. Market forces have driven renters out of their housing due to home sales and renovations. Social service providers experienced increased demand in foodbank, mental health, employment, and housing resources. Domestic violence increased, leaving residents in unstable and unsafe housing situations. With limited housing options, the number of vulnerable people in the resort community has increased. The 2022 needs report called for further assessment of housing needs for vulnerable populations, calling the work “a very high priority” for the RMOW.

In response to the 2022 needs report, the RMOW is completing this report on housing and vulnerable populations. The report’s key purpose is to identify the existing supply of and community need for:

- Emergency housing;
- Transitional housing;
- Supportive housing;
- Non-market rental housing; and
- Other housing targeting the needs of vulnerable populations.

This report will be a key tool to contribute to the development of housing options across the housing continuum and to support municipal partners in pursuing grant opportunities. It will also inform the development of the RMOW’s long-term housing strategy.

ENGAGEMENT AND COMMUNICATIONS GOALS AND OBJECTIVES

The engagement goal is the overarching purpose for the engagement and identifies the intention of the RMOW in its engagement efforts with interested and affected parties. The engagement goal for this project is as follows:

Engagement goal: To collect qualitative data about the housing needs, gaps, and opportunities for vulnerable populations residing in Whistler so that feedback can help to inform the report.

The communications goal is the overarching communications purpose associated with this process and stage of the project. The communications goal for this project is as follows:

Communications goal: To collect information and build a common understanding about vulnerable populations and associated housing needs.

The following **engagement and communications objectives** were developed based on the IAP2 Spectrum for Engagement (please see Attachment A for the IAP2 spectrum).

Engagement objectives

1. **Involve** | To listen and learn from interested and affected parties to understand and document their feedback regarding needs, gaps, challenges, and opportunities.
2. **Involve** | To listen and learn from residents with lived experience to understand and document their preferences for housing needs and gaps.
3. **Inform** | To share information with the public about the project purpose, plan, and timeline.

Communications objectives

1. To **collect information** from interested and affected parties about housing needs and gaps, key project considerations and objectives, and overall project purpose and timeline.
2. To **build common understanding** about who vulnerable populations are and their housing needs.
3. To **share information** about the project purpose, progress, and outcomes with the public.

ENGAGEMENT OVERVIEW

The engagement consisted of two focus groups and five experience interviews with a total of 37 participants and 22 organizations represented. One focus group included social service and housing providers, and a second focus group included public sector organizations. Participants for experience interviews were referred by social service and housing providers and interviews were conducted by phone or in-person.

Engagement Method	Format	Participants	Timing
Social Service & Housing Provider Focus Group	In-person	13 organizations; 20 participants	May 24, 2023
Public Sector Focus Group	In-person	9 organizations; 12 participants	May 24, 2023
Experience Interviews	Phone	5 community members	June & July 2023

ENGAGEMENT METHOD: FOCUS GROUPS

Organizations were invited via email to one of two focus groups held in Whistler as an interactive in-person event. It was an opportunity for social service and housing providers and the public sector to come together to provide information and feedback on housing needs, gaps, challenges, and opportunities. The focus group included a brief presentation on the project purpose and timeline, as well as preliminary housing data collected to date. This was followed by a series of open-ended questions. Participants discussed and documented responses in small groups.

The following is a list of participant organizations in each focus group. In an effort to involve all key interest groups, those organizations who could not attend the focus groups were offered an alternative interview at a day and time that was convenient for the organization. Of note, Sea to Sky Community Services Society was unable to attend, so the organization's responses were collected via an interview. Interview questions aligned with the focus group questions in order to collect consistent feedback.

Focus Group 1: Social Service and Housing Provider Participant Organizations

PearlSpace (formerly Howe Sound Women's Centre Society)
Sea to Sky Community Services Society*
Squamish Lil'wat Cultural Centre
Whistler & Pemberton Newcomer Services
Whistler Blackcomb Foundation
Whistler Community Foundation
Whistler Community Services Society (WCSS)
Whistler Housing Authority (WHA)
Whistler Mature Action Community
Whistler Multicultural Society
Whistler Valley Housing Society
WISH Society
Zero Ceiling

**Not in attendance at the focus group; responses collected via interview.*

Focus Group 2: Public Service Sector Participant Organizations

Ministry of Children & Family Development
RCMP
RMOW Bylaw Department
RMOW Emergency Social Services
RMOW Fire Department
Sea to Sky School District No. 48
Vancouver Coastal Health
Whistler Public Library

Focus Groups: Response Summary

The following section is a collective engagement summary of responses from the participating organizations, as listed above. Responses from both focus groups and one interview have been collated to provide one comprehensive engagement summary.

Specific to the focus groups, there were five general topics of engagement: who is struggling and why, community strengths, gaps in service delivery, challenges, and opportunities. A closing question asked participants: "what is one thing you want the RMOW to know when it comes to housing needs". The information below is organized into these key topic areas.

1. Who is Struggling and Why

When asked who is struggling and why, participants were prompted to respond to the following key questions:

- *When it comes to housing and homelessness, who is experiencing the greatest challenges?*
- *Has this changed over time? Think last 5-10 years.*
- *What are some of the key reasons individuals and families are struggling to find appropriate housing and supports?*
- *Does Whistler experience unique challenges compared to other communities?*

What We Heard:

The following demographic groups were noted as experiencing barriers to housing or struggling to find and maintain affordable and appropriate housing:

- Seniors, specifically those receiving fixed incomes and those needing supports
- People who recently experienced a change in employment (including unemployment), housing (e.g., eviction), family structure (e.g., divorce or separation, widowed), or financial situation
- People who lack a social network or experience language barriers, including newcomers (e.g., immigrants, refugees, or seasonal workers)
- Individuals living with intellectual or physical disabilities, or undiagnosed people experiencing social disabilities, and specifically those who receive fixed incomes
- Families, including low to medium income households, large households with multiple children or multi-generational living situations, or families struggling to find childcare
- Women and/or children fleeing violence or an unsafe living or rental situation
- Survivors of human trafficking
- Households that do not meet the eligibility requirements for WHA housing programs
- Young adults (aged 19-35)
- Workers who have housing that is conditional on employment
- Members of the LGBTQIA2S+ community
- Single racialized men
- People living in overcrowded housing conditions
- People who have been injured or experienced a major illness or medical issue
- Individuals struggling with addiction or mental health issues
- People experiencing homelessness

When asked how housing and homelessness has changed over the last decade, we heard the following trends:

- Demand for housing is growing and costs are increasing:
 - There is increased demand for housing in Whistler due to population growth, increased remote work options that allow workers in other communities to live in Whistler, and an increased number of newcomers, all of which are combined with limited growth in housing stock and options
 - Households are experiencing increased financial pressures from the rising cost of living, meaning there is less income available for housing costs
 - Existing housing stock is increasingly under-occupied, as an increasing number of landlords are leaving homes empty or opt for short-term vacation rentals instead of renting to long-term tenants
 - Enforcement of employee or resident restricted units continues to be inconsistent
- Demand for community services and housing supports is increasing:
 - There is increased demand for social services and housing supports, including increased rates of women and families fleeing violence, increased foodbank use, and increased requests for rent supplements
 - There is an increasing need for supportive housing and long-term non-profit housing
 - Childcare availability is limited, and the cost of childcare is increasing
 - There is a continued lack of transit options, including a regional public transit system
- Unsafe housing situations are increasing:
 - Overcrowded housing situations are more prevalent
 - More women are in unsafe rental arrangements

- Residents are choosing to leave the region:
 - An increasing number of long-term residents are moving away from Whistler
 - Housing in neighbouring communities (Pemberton and Squamish) is increasingly unaffordable, which was previously relied on to supplement the Whistler housing market
- Employers are experiencing increased staffing issues due to housing challenges

2. Community Strengths

When asked about existing community strengths, participants were prompted to respond to the following key questions:

- *What housing and support services are currently available in Whistler?*
- *What strengths exist for responding to the needs for those who are experiencing housing challenges?*

What We Heard:

Whistler's greatest community strengths are noted below:

- There are well-established social service and housing resources that exist in the community:
 - The range of service provisions include:
 - Foodbank
 - Legal advocacy
 - Social and outreach services
 - Financial supports (e.g., rent supplements, emergency housing supports)
 - Settlement services
 - Cold weather shelter program
 - Youth services
 - Healthcare services (e.g., Whistler 360 Health Collaborative Society)
 - There is strong collaboration among service providers; referrals between providers are smooth and efficient, and providers can easily access services from other organizations
 - Staff and clients are experiencing less stigma regarding the use of social services and supports
 - The WHA operates reputable rental and ownership programs that provide housing options for long-term residents
 - There is a mix of staff housing (operated by employers) and employee-restricted housing options for workers
- Whistler has community members that care:
 - Whistler has a strong network of action-oriented and dedicated community advocates
 - There are local philanthropists that invest wealth and resources back into the community
 - There is an increased community awareness of the issues and the need for more diverse and affordable housing options
- The RMOW has policies and plans in place that are working:
 - The trail network and transit options allow for more housing options in all neighbourhoods
 - The RMOW has developed progressive policies that commit to employee housing targets
 - Housing developments are being approved and built (e.g., Cheakamus Crossing Phase II, 4500 Northlands)

3. Gaps in Services

When asked about what gaps exist in service delivery, participants were prompted to respond to the following key questions:

- *What gaps do you see when it comes to housing and support services for people experiencing housing challenges?*
- *Are there particular demographics that you feel are underserved when it comes to non-market housing in Whistler?*
- *Do residents seek services or housing outside of Whistler?*
- *How have housing and related service needs and gaps in Whistler changed over the past five or 10 years?*

What We Heard:

When asked what gaps exist when it comes to housing options, we heard that Whistler currently lacks the following housing types:

- Subsidized rental housing
- Supportive housing
- Permanent facility or housing units for emergency or short-term shelter
- Extreme hot weather shelter program
- Women's transition house or safe home
- Suitable and accessible housing for people with disabilities

When asked about housing supports and service delivery, we heard the following areas can be improved:

- Resources to expand and grow social services and housing support programs to meet demand
- Funding to provide appropriate financial rent support or ongoing rent supplements
- Mechanisms or assessment tools in place to prioritize residents for housing who are in high housing need
- Policies or regulations in place to protect renters from unlawful evictions (e.g., "renovictions")
- Regional coordination in the Sea to Sky corridor to collaborate on housing, transit, and social service solutions
- Opportunities for community members and organizations to engage on housing policies and strategic plans
- Municipal enforcement on resident- and employee-restricted housing units and short-term rentals
- Incentives to address housing vacancies and encourage long-term rentals of empty homes
- Parking options for vehicle dwellers
- Support from Vail Resorts to provide housing solutions
- Knowledge among renters regarding tenancy rights

When asked which demographics are currently underserved, we heard the following responses:

- Seniors
- Families, specifically single parent families
- Individuals in abusive, violent, or unsafe households
- Households spending 50% or more of monthly income on housing costs
- Individuals with disabilities
- Newcomers and those lacking knowledge/awareness of services in the community

4. Challenges in Service Delivery

When asked what challenges exist when it comes to providing housing solutions, participants were prompted to respond to the following key questions:

- *What challenges do local organizations experience when it comes to providing needed housing and support services in Whistler?*
- *What non-market housing types and housing-related supports are you experiencing demand for that are not being fulfilled?*
- *Are there any challenges related to municipal policy?*

What We Heard:

When asked what challenges local organizations face when it comes to providing needed housing and support services, participants noted the following:

- Whistler's reputation as an international resort destination creates barriers and builds stigma around accessing housing and support services
- The financialization of Whistler's housing market (i.e., treating housing as a commodity) creates a barrier when trying to access or leverage existing housing stock for long-term rentals
- There are opinions within the community that "Whistler is a choice" and you can choose to stay or move, which creates barriers to offering much needed services
- Service providers are experiencing staffing and funding challenges, which means it is difficult to not only grow much needed housing programs and supports but to meet the current demand
- People in high or critical housing need cannot access WHA housing right away due to long waitlist times; there is no mechanism in place to prioritize residents in high housing need
- Employers are pressured to maximize occupancy in employer-owned housing, which leads to overcrowding and non-compliant housing
- Tenants that are evicted from WHA housing or ineligible for WHA housing programs have no other non-market housing options
- Some non-profit service providers consider the development and management of housing to be too high risk from a financial and liability perspective and need support to resolve their concerns

When asked what challenges exist related to municipal policy, we heard:

- Social service and housing providers want to build trust with the RMOW and want more opportunities for organizations and people experiencing homelessness or barriers to housing to engage and provide feedback on municipal policy
- The bed unit cap is perceived as an outdated metric to manage growth and is believed to be central to the housing challenge
- The qualifications required for employee-restricted housing pose challenges for service providers and are too restrictive, with no mechanisms in place to support housing options for vulnerable populations that do not meet the requirements
- Existing plans and policies do not address diverse forms of non-market housing (e.g., transitional, supportive, subsidized rental)
- Some housing agreement covenants are outdated and require a rigorous process to change, thereby creating barriers for some existing employee housing units to be occupied
- Policies are not aligned and coordinated throughout the Sea to Sky region
- Development approvals and permits take too much time and create barriers to delivering much-needed housing now
- Policies, regulations, and enforcement should allow for vehicle-living in some context
- The term "vulnerable populations" used in conjunction with housing needs complicates the problem; the project outcome should focus on housing needs and delivering housing options
- The RMOW should communicate to the public how municipal funds are, and can be, spent

- Community members want to know if the RMOW is making progress on existing housing goals and plans (e.g., the mayor's task force on resident housing)

5. Opportunity Areas

When asked what opportunities exist when it comes to providing housing solutions, participants were prompted to respond to the following key questions:

- *What opportunities are there to address gaps in Whistler when it comes to housing vulnerable populations?*
- *Are there certain housing forms and locations that would be most appropriate for different populations or demographics? (e.g., group homes, congregate living, family-style housing)*
- *In the Whistler context, to what extent should we aim to integrate housing units for vulnerable populations within employee housing rental buildings and other residential developments?*
- *Which populations or demographics would require staff or support services on site?*
- *What types of housing solutions would you like to see implemented?*

What We Heard:

When asked what types of housing solutions participants would like to see implemented, we heard the following:

- Deliver new housing options:
 - Deliver new non-market housing options as identified as “housing gaps”, including year-round emergency, transitional, supportive, accessible, and subsidized rental housing options
 - Create partnerships between the RMOW and non-profit organizations to fill the housing gaps
 - Incentivize employers to develop more employer-owned staff housing units
 - Explore partnerships with developers and explore how community amenity contributions can be allocated to help provide housing solutions
- Develop new policies and procedures:
 - Develop policies or other tools to incentivize the use of existing housing inventory (e.g., empty homes, suites, rooms)
 - Incentivize densification and infill housing
 - Incentivize more long-term rentals in place of short-term vacation rentals through land use policies or zoning
 - Prioritize affordable housing project permits to get housing units built faster
 - Align housing solutions with climate change objectives (e.g., encourage densification, mixed-use development, sustainable building practices)
 - Amend WHA tenancing process to prioritize residents in higher housing need
 - Develop policies and regulations that allow for long-term vehicle “van life” parking (including a user-pay option)
- Advocate for housing and community solutions:
 - Advocate for funding at the provincial and federal levels; explore and support grant applications for affordable housing
 - Advocate for a regional transit network
 - Bring public awareness to housing issues, including people who are experiencing homelessness or barriers to housing
- Support community-based solutions:
 - Support data collection about vulnerable populations to better understand housing needs and gaps

- Support a coordinated access system (i.e., the “situation table”) in which trained agencies collaborate and triage an individual or family’s housing situation
- Provide ongoing community engagement opportunities to generate ideas, identify new barriers and challenges, and update housing policies in alignment with feedback
- Support innovative housing solutions including co-housing and shared or co-operative housing models

When asked what types of housing forms or locations would be most appropriate for new housing options, we heard the following:

- Affordable housing should exist and be integrated into all neighbourhoods throughout Whistler
- Neighbourhoods need more mixed-use developments to integrate residential with other uses including commercial, childcare, healthcare or social services
- There is a need for new housing forms and rental options for multi-generational households
- Neighbourhoods need to be walkable with good transportation connections (including transit and trails) to allow for less vehicle-reliance
- Whistler needs to densify existing single-family neighbourhoods, including infill housing, in order to provide more diverse housing options
- Supportive and emergency housing options should be centrally located in Whistler

6. What the RMOW Needs to Know

The closing question for the focus groups asked each participant to share the one thing they want the RMOW to know when it comes to housing needs. The responses are summarized below:

- Action is needed now to address the increasing housing issues
- There is a desperate need for: housing for people experiencing homelessness, emergency or transitional housing for people in crisis, supportive housing, special needs housing, and housing for low to moderate income households including families with children
- Community engagement and collaboration is key to realizing housing solutions
- Employers need to be part of the housing solution and provide safe and adequate housing and supports for their staff
- Whistler needs to capitalize on existing housing inventory (i.e., empty homes), either through tax or occupancy incentives
- WHA rental requirements are too restrictive; low to moderate income households who cannot meet eligibility have no other non-market housing options
- The community needs more comprehensive data collection about vulnerable populations and housing needs in order to reflect the real issues; Census data does not reflect reality
- A regional housing and transportation plan is key to open up housing solutions in the Sea to Sky corridor
- The RMOW needs to advocate for funding to build more affordable housing
- A strong economy requires employees that have housing options
- The WHA is a strong housing program, but is not suitable for everyone; there is a need to deliver on other non-market housing options and allow for housing choice
- It is important to acknowledge the value of social capital, and support residents that choose to stay in Whistler long-term
- The housing crisis is complex; while building more homes is needed, housing solutions should be complemented by social services and other supports

ENGAGEMENT METHOD: EXPERIENCE INTERVIEWS

The following section includes five housing stories that were collected through experience interviews. The purpose of the experience interviews was to engage with community members and to capture snapshots and housing stories of vulnerable populations with lived experience. Participants were referred by non-profit housing and social service providers who are familiar with the residents and their housing stories. Interviews were conducted via phone or in-person. All personal information has been removed or changed so that participants are not identifiable.

Experience Spotlight: Omar

Omar is 32 years old, works at a local non-profit society and lives month-to-month in shared bedrooms. He currently lives in a shared bedroom in a house that he will need to vacate at the end of the month. Omar found this rental through someone he knew; unfortunately, the shared bedroom was only available for a one-month sublet. Omar paid \$900 in rent and shares the bedroom with another working adult. He will have to find somewhere else to live before next month.

Omar moved to Whistler from Northern Africa in 2019 to work as a chef. Since his arrival, he has moved from shared bedroom to shared bedroom. He first lived in staff housing but has since moved into private market rentals. Omar used to be on the WHA rental waitlist. During his time in Whistler, Omar enrolled in an employment and career training program to help diversify his employment skills. Due to the time commitment required for the employment program, Omar was only able to work 20-22 hours per week. Omar was disappointed when he learned he was no longer eligible for a WHA rental, which requires applicants to work a minimum 30 hours per week; consequently, Omar was removed from the waitlist. Even though he is working full-time again, re-applying means he would be at the bottom of the waitlist, so he continues to look for a private market rental.

Omar thinks he will move to Pemberton after this month, as he heard there is a shared bedroom in an apartment available. He does not want to leave, but there are no options for him in Whistler. In addition, Omar is uncertain where he will live long-term because his household is about to change. Omar has a wife in Northern Africa who applied to come to Canada 14 months ago; they are waiting for her visa application to be processed. Omar is concerned about what he will do when his wife arrives, as it will be even more difficult to find housing for a couple.

Omar believes there is not enough housing in Whistler for all the people that are looking. He believes if you are lucky to find something in Whistler it will be unaffordable. Omar feels fortunate that he can rent shared bedrooms, and that there are more options for people who are single or by themselves. Omar hopes he can stay in Whistler with his wife, but the rental market is forcing him to look outside of the community.

Experience Spotlight: Brian

Brian is a single father of two teenage sons, works full-time as a bus driver, and is living in a WHA rental. Brian waited seven years to get into a two-bedroom rental unit and is thankful to have safe and stable housing for his family. Prior to living in his current unit, Brian was living in his van without his children, in the freezing cold in a wooded area outside Whistler.

Brian has lived in Whistler for over 30 years and used to own a home with his wife. When his family went through a divorce, he had to find rental housing for him and his sons. He looked for rentals in the private market while he waited for a WHA rental to become available. For a few years he lived in a two-bedroom carriage house for \$1,700/month; he liked it there. It was enough room for him and his children and in a good location. Brian was unfortunately “renovicted” from the unit, and suddenly without housing. Finding a two-bedroom in Whistler at a manageable cost was incredibly challenging; all the available units were one-

bedroom units, which is not suitable for a family. Brian had nowhere to go and resorted to living in his van. Because he could not maintain stable housing, he lost custody of his children. Brian investigated moving to Pemberton or Squamish, but his children and support network were in Whistler – it would have been more challenging to leave. Brian felt discriminated against when applying for market rentals in Whistler; landlords were suspicious why he was living in his vehicle, which made finding housing even more difficult.

Brian lived in his van, during the cold winter season, for six months before he was offered a rental with the WHA. At the time of the rental offer, he was working three jobs to ensure he would meet the eligibility requirements of the WHA rental program. He is thankful to have stable housing and custody of his children again, although he feels \$2,000/month for rent is higher than he can afford on a single income with two teenage sons. Brian believes Whistler needs options for single parent families; they should not have to struggle like he did. He says even if a family qualifies for rent supplements, they are not enough to bridge the rent-income gap. There should be subsidized rental options for single parent families and less eligibility requirements to ensure families have safe and stable housing.

Experience Spotlight: James

James is a young adult living in Mount Currie on Lílwat Nation reserve lands and works in the retail sales industry in Whistler. He commutes forty-five minutes every day into Whistler Village from his home. James lives in a two-storey house with his grandma. She suffered an injury several years ago, so she needs someone to live with her to provide extra care and support. James has a separate living space in the house with his own entrance. He feels lucky to have his own personal space for him and his dog and still be close to family that need his support. For two months, before COVID hit Whistler, James was employed by Vail Resorts and lived in staff housing. He had a good experience there and liked being close to work, but there was no personal space – staff shared a bunk bed in a bedroom.

James has looked for housing in Whistler and Pemberton. He wants to live closer to work, but everything is too expensive. He feels that \$1,000/month would be an affordable amount to rent a shared home. He enjoys sharing space with family and friends, but he wants his own bedroom and bathroom and personal space. Unfortunately, James could not find anything in the rental market that could meet his needs or affordability level, so he continues to commute from Mount Currie. He is not aware of any supports that the Nation office can provide in terms of housing off-reserve; they offer on-reserve housing and services, which have a very long waitlist. James believes there just isn't enough housing.

James thinks there should be more affordable housing options in Whistler so people can live closer to where they work. He also thinks there should be more family-style, multi-generational housing forms that offer privacy for individuals, but also allow household members to share space and help one another.

Experience Spotlight: Anita

Anita is a single mother of two young daughters and works full-time in the retail industry. She moved to Whistler from Europe 15 years ago on a working holiday visa and decided to stay. She got married, had two children, and owned a house. Several years ago, due to domestic abuse, it was no longer safe to live with her husband and Anita fled her home. She moved in with a generous coworker. She was grateful to have a room to stay in, but she could not live with her children there. She sought help from local non-profit service providers, who were able to book emergency accommodation at a local hotel for Anita and her children so she could spend one or two nights with them every few weeks.

Anita felt desperate to find housing for her and her children – she responded to hundreds of rental postings. She went to at least five showings. She told landlords she had stable employment, worked full-time, and had great references; however, as soon as she mentioned she had two children they lost interest. She felt discriminated against for being a single mother of two young girls. Anita was offered a placement in a transition house in Squamish, but she did not have a vehicle and would not be able to return to Whistler.

every day. She was offered another non-profit housing option in Pemberton, but she could not commit to commuting by two buses each day if she had to take her children to daycare and work full-time. Feeling very desperate, she applied for a rental with the WHA. Within nine months, Anita was offered a rental unit. She knows this was very fast, because most applicants wait five or six years, but for someone in an emergency this was a long time. Over those nine months, Anita moved eight times staying with friends and coworkers.

Anita believes there are no options for women or men who are trying to flee domestic abuse. Anita, like other women she knows, does not have family nearby, or in Canada at all. She feels that for people who were not born in the area, it is even more difficult. Whistler needs housing options and emergency supports to help those who do not have family nearby. Whistler needs a safe house or transition housing, or somewhere for people to go when in crisis. She knows more and more moms in the exact same situation she was in.

Anita also believes that there needs to be long-term affordable housing options for single parents. Anita is incredibly grateful for her housing with the WHA, but the rent is still too high. She spends almost 90% of her income on housing costs. There are no affordable options for a single parent who needs a two-bedroom unit. Anita says people tell her to go to a cheaper town or province, but she cannot leave. Her ex-husband is in Whistler, where her children will continue to live, and she cannot leave them. Even though she has stable housing, she continues to look for a more affordable option.

Experience Spotlight: Gloria


Gloria is a single mother of two adult children and works full-time in the retail industry. Gloria lives with her daughter who has special needs and will need full-time support for the rest of her life. Gloria moved to Whistler during the Olympics with her children; she was married and lived in a house. Several years ago, she experienced a relationship breakdown, and she reached out to a local non-profit who helped her move out and find temporary housing for her and her two children.

Gloria feels lucky that when she left her marriage, she was already on the WHA waitlist for rental housing. She lived in temporary non-profit housing in Pemberton while waiting for a WHA rental. During that time, she looked online for immediate housing. Gloria felt discriminated against because she had children; landlords would tell her the rental was only suitable for one person. After one year in temporary housing, and six years in total on the waitlist, she was offered a WHA rental and immediately accepted.

Gloria is thankful for WHA housing; she lives in a two-bedroom and knows she can stay there as long as needed, but she feels the rent rate is unaffordable for a single parent. Gloria, like many others that she knows, is living pay cheque to pay cheque. Gloria wishes she could work two or three jobs to make ends meet, but her daughter needs constant care and attention. Even with support workers, Gloria cannot leave her at home for very many hours at a time. Gloria considered living with a roommate to help bring down housing costs, but her daughter would not be comfortable with that. Gloria is considering moving. She is looking at Vancouver Island or Alberta where housing is more affordable, she has friends, and can find work.

Gloria believes there are no options in Whistler for single parents like herself that live on a single income. She feels that rental housing is run like a business. Gloria believes there should be housing with rent geared to what a family or single parent can afford. She wishes rent rates could be on a case-to-case basis, rather than a flat rate. In addition, Gloria believes there is a housing shortage; she believes more housing is needed for all the employees who are looking. She said employees are shopping for employers that offer housing – she has never experienced a greater need for rental housing in Whistler before.

ATTACHMENT A: IAP2 SPECTRUM OF ENGAGEMENT

INCREASING IMPACT ON THE DECISION 					
	INFORM	CONSULT	INVOLVE	COLLABORATE	EMPPOWER
PUBLIC PARTICIPATION GOAL	To provide the public with balanced and objective information to assist them in understanding the problem, alternatives, opportunities, and/or solutions.	To obtain public feedback on analysis, alternatives, and/or decisions.	To work directly with the public throughout the process to ensure that public concerns and aspirations are consistently understood and considered.	To partner with the public in each aspect of the decision including the development of alternatives and the identification of the preferred solution.	To place final decision making in the hands of the public.
PROMISE TO THE PUBLIC	We will keep you informed.	We will keep you informed, listen to and acknowledge concerns and aspirations, and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision. We will seek your feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work with you to ensure that your concerns and aspirations are directly reflected in the alternatives developed and provide feedback on how public input influenced the decision.	We will work together with you to formulate solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendation into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.