

ATTACHMENT B

KEY AREAS OF HOUSING NEED

The 2023 *Housing Needs Report* (HNR) identifies the population groups with the greatest barriers in accessing stable housing, and who struggle to access and retain affordable housing. These population groups include renters with low or moderate incomes, individuals with special needs, seniors, families, youth, Indigenous People, and people experiencing homelessness. Staff are recommending that, through the Request for Proposals or Expression of Interest process, the City ensure that OAP funds for rent supplements be aimed at the following population groups:

- *Renters* – the HNR shows that rental households grew from 10,955 in 2011 to 14,385 in 2021. According to the HNR, 24.2% of renter households are in core housing need, paying more than 30% of their income on housing costs. Renters in core housing need are more susceptible to housing loss due to personal or financial crisis. Recent engagement from the HNR revealed that renters are increasingly challenged to retain or find available and affordable units. In 2022, Nanaimo’s vacancy rate was 2.2% well below a healthy level of 3% to 5%. When there is a shortage of supply, rental costs often increase in price. Nanaimo’s median rent increased by 86% from \$725 to \$1,350 between 2011 and 2021.
- *Individuals with Special Needs* – for people living with a disability, it can be challenging to acquire, afford, and/or retain housing that meets their needs. People living with disabilities often receive provincial disability assistance and these funds are often entirely spent on housing leaving little room for other essential costs of living. For instance, a single person on disability assistance may receive up to a maximum amount of \$1,483.50 monthly. In addition, people with disabilities are often ineligible for additional rent supports because they are already receiving government benefits.
- *Seniors* – seniors on low and fixed incomes are vulnerable to rising rent rates. Seniors comprise the largest proportion of households on BC Housing’s Affordable Housing Registry. 343 seniors in Nanaimo are on the registry waiting for affordable housing placements.
- *Families* – there is a shortage of affordable family-friendly units with three or more bedrooms. Units that are adequate for larger families have some of the highest rental costs. In 2021, median rents for two bedroom units was \$1,600. Families with low or moderate incomes in need of three or more bedrooms often struggle to find anything affordable or adequate.
- *Youth* – housing affordability is a primary concern for low-income youth, youth transitioning out of foster care, and youth living on their own for the first time. With lower incomes and no references, youth struggle to find and retain affordable housing.
- *Indigenous People* – there is a lack of housing for Snuneymuxw People on reserve and very limited affordable housing options off reserve. With lower incomes and systemic discrimination it can be very challenging for Indigenous community members to find culturally appropriate affordable housing.
- *People Experiencing Homelessness* – the number of people experiencing homelessness in the city continues to increase. In 2020, 433 individuals were reported to be unsheltered in the Homeless Point in Time Count. Frontline service providers estimate there to be more than 600 individuals experiencing homelessness in the city. Due to the complexities and trauma involved with many individuals experiencing homelessness, there are many barriers for people to get stable housing. Intensive support services often need to accompany financial assistance to secure and retain housing for many people experiencing homelessness.