City of Yellowknife

Housing Needs Assessment

URBAN SYSTEMS

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CITY OF
YELLOWKNIFE

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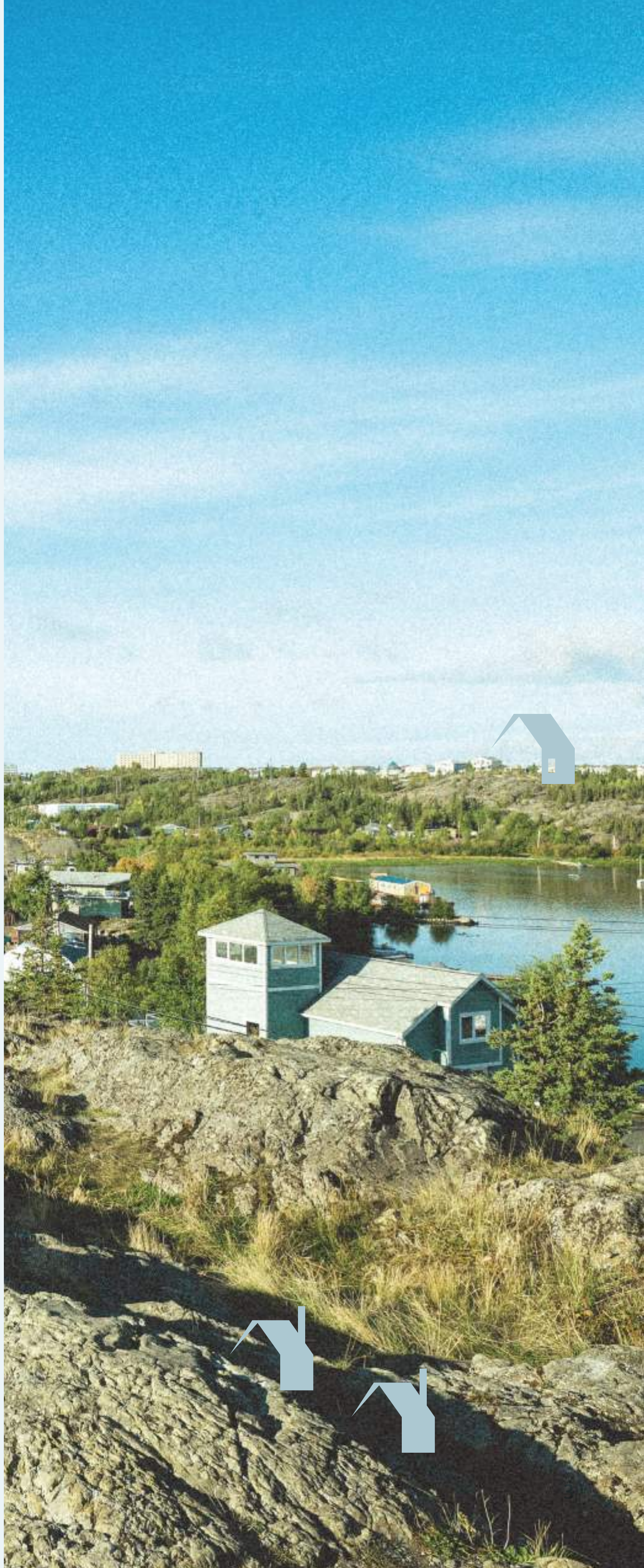

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Executive Summary

The City of Yellowknife is working to address its housing challenges to ensure safe, affordable, and suitable housing for its residents. As the Northwest Territories' capital, Yellowknife plays a crucial economic, cultural, and governmental role in Canada's North. This Housing Needs Assessment lays the groundwork for informed decisions and strategies tailored to Yellowknife's unique housing needs and to build on its successful application to the Housing Accelerator Fund.

Methodology

The report incorporates both quantitative and qualitative data, primarily using Statistics Canada Census data, CMHC rental market data, and local focus group insights. Comparisons with cities like Whitehorse and Iqaluit provide context for Yellowknife's housing challenges. Limitations include data collection gaps, such as incomplete public engagement and pandemic-related market disruptions.

Key Findings:

DEMOGRAPHICS AND COMMUNITY PROFILE

- In 2021, the population of Yellowknife was 20,340, with 7,520 households.
- The population in Yellowknife increased steadily over the 2016 to 2021 period, mostly due to natural increases and people moving from other territories and/or provinces.
- Yellowknife's population increased by 3.9% from 2016 to 2021. Indigenous residents make up 24% of the population, and seniors over 65 years have doubled in the last decade.
- Yellowknife boasts one of the highest average household incomes in Canada, at $165,400 before tax. This figure is significantly above the national average of $106,400.
- Despite high incomes, the cost of living, particularly for shelter, food, and transportation, is substantially higher than the Canadian average, placing financial pressure on many households.
- High shelter costs for both rental and ownership housing constrain economic mobility and exacerbate challenges for low- and moderate-income earners.
- Rising housing costs impact workforce retention and recruitment, particularly for essential sectors like healthcare and trades.
- The average household size in Yellowknife is 2.7 people.
- There remains a need for dwellings that can accommodate families of three or more, but single-person households have been increasing.

HOUSING STOCK AND AFFORDABILITY

- Yellowknife has a mixed housing stock with 44% single-detached homes and a growing number of apartments. However, 10.6% of housing units require major repairs, compared to 6.1% nationally.
- Apartments under five storeys make up 26% of the housing stock, while row houses account for 12%.
- Other types include movable dwellings (7%), semi-detached homes (3%), and apartments in duplexes (4%).
- A large portion of Yellowknife's housing was built between 1981 and 2000 (43% of total units), reflecting the city's development during a resource extraction boom.
- Between 2016 and 2021, 400 new units were added, primarily apartments and movable dwellings.
- The rate of new housing completions has slowed in recent years, with just 15 to 55 completions annually from 2018 to 2023 compared to 99 to 151 annually from 2012 to 2017.
- Redevelopment and infill of existing areas are becoming necessary due to limited land availability for new developments.
- Rental costs are among the highest in the country, with renters spending an average of $1,804 per month compared to $1,209 nationally.
    - Between 2016 and 2021, 400 new units were added, primarily apartments and movable dwellings.
    - The rate of new housing completions has slowed in recent years, with just 15 to 55 completions annually from 2018 to 2023 compared to 99 to 151 annually from 2012 to 2017.
    - Redevelopment and infill of existing areas are becoming necessary due to limited land availability for new developments.
    - A healthy vacancy rate is typically between 3% and 5%, but Yellowknife's overall rate is at the lower end, around 3.4% in 2023.
    - Bachelor and one-bedroom units have particularly low vacancy rates, increasing competition for smaller, more affordable rentals.
    - A shortage of rental units, especially affordable ones, persists. Nearly 24% of tenant households are in subsidized housing.
- The median value of owned private dwellings is $448,000 in 2024, slightly below the national median of $472,000 but rising faster than the national average.
    - Average home values have increased by 63% from 2006 to 2021, reaching $494,000.
    - A single-detached home in 2024 averages $624,000.
    - 10% of homeowners spend more than 30% of their income on housing, a threshold indicating affordability issues.
- 10% of households are in Core Housing Need, with renters (18%) disproportionately affected compared to homeowners (5%).
- Households in Core Housing Need face issues with affordability (80%), adequacy (24%), and suitability (23%).

HOMELESSNESS AND VULNERABLE POPULATIONS

- The 2021 Point-in-Time Count identified 312 homeless individuals, with 94% expressing a desire for permanent housing. Indigenous people are disproportionately affected, comprising 91% of the homeless population.
- Emergency shelters and transitional housing have a total capacity of 253 beds, far below current needs.
- The city's homeless population, disproportionately Indigenous, highlights an urgent need for supportive housing.
- Short-term emergency solutions (e.g., shelters) must be paired with long-term housing-first approaches that offer permanent housing and support services.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT INSIGHTS

- Eight focus groups were engaged to collect community insights into housing in Yellowknife, with a total of 20 participants.
- Key insights from engagement include:
    - Affordable Housing Shortage: Significant deficits across the housing spectrum, creating a barrier to population and economic growth, particularly when it comes to attracting and retaining younger professionals and families. Many employers reported difficulty recruiting for positions due to lack of suitable and affordable housing.
    - Development Barriers: High costs, limited developable land, and unresolved land claims hinder housing expansion. Many engaged also identified the clear connection between public transit and mixed-use developments as key to improving livability.
    - Vulnerable Populations: Limited accessibility and supportive housing options exacerbate issues for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and the homeless.
    - Need for Greater Collaboration: Improved coordination and collaboration between all levels of government, community organizations, and developers is seen as essential to addressing housing shortages. Partnerships with Indigenous communities may be a critical step for unlocking new land for housing development.

PROJECTED NEEDS

- By 2035, Yellowknife's population is expected to grow by 10%, reaching 22,403, resulting in an additional 1,059 households from 2021 counts (7,520).
- The number of households will increase from 7,520 in 2021 to 8,579 by 2035, an addition of 1,059 households. However, the average household size will decline from 2.71 to 2.61, reflecting trends such as an aging population, smaller family sizes, and more single-person households.
- Seniors (65+ years) represent the fastest-growing demographic, necessitating accessible, senior-friendly housing options.
- A significant proportion of the population (including young professionals, seniors, and single-parent families) will require smaller, more affordable units.
- Smaller average household sizes will require a higher number of units, with demand projected for 193 studio/one-bedroom, 263 two-bedroom, 431 three-bedroom, and 173 four-bedroom units.
  - Families with children will drive demand for an additional 431 three-bedroom units by 2035, underscoring the continued importance of family-sized housing.
  - Larger households and multigenerational families will necessitate 173 additional four-bedroom units.
- The proportion of households in Core Housing Need (10% of households) is expected to remain stable. However, as the total number of households grows, the absolute number in Core Housing Need will rise to 846 by 2035.
- Renters will continue to face higher housing challenges, with 18% of renter households expected to remain in Core Housing Need compared to 5% of owner households.
- There is a significant and growing deficit in affordable non-market housing. By 2035, at least 846 units of subsidized or affordable housing will be required, particularly for low-income and vulnerable populations.
- The projected increase in housing units will require overcoming significant barriers:
  - Land Development: Limited developable land due to geographical constraints and unresolved land claims.
  - Construction Costs: High costs for materials and labor challenge affordability.
  - Environmental Concerns: Rising climate risks and older housing stock requiring repair add complexity.

STRATEGIC HOUSING OPPORTUNITIES

The City of Yellowknife should adopt a multi-faceted approach to increase housing supply, address affordability, and meet the needs of vulnerable populations. These strategies are categorized into short-, medium-, and long-term opportunities.

Short-Term (Immediate to 1 Year)

- Operations and Maintenance (O&M): Enhance existing housing conditions.
- Office Conversions: Repurpose vacant office buildings for residential use.
- Engagement with At-Risk Populations: Ensure policies address the needs of vulnerable groups.
- Material Sourcing: Bulk purchasing to mitigate rising construction costs.

Medium-Term (1 to 3 Years)

- Accessible Senior Housing: Develop staircase-free, accessible units for an aging population.
- Cross-Government Collaboration: Streamline housing initiatives across governmental levels.
- Not-for-Profit Housing: Expand the presence of non-profit housing providers.
- Mixed-Use Developments: Promote sustainable, integrated developments.

Long-Term (3+ Years)

- Large-Scale Housing Developments: Address future needs in areas like Niven and Kam Lake.
- Comprehensive Planning: Develop a long-term vision for city growth, focusing on sustainability and inclusion.
- Supportive Housing Expansion: Address gaps in the housing spectrum, including transitional and long-term care units.

1.0

Introduction

The City of Yellowknife is committed to ensuring that residents have access to housing that is safe, affordable, and suitable to meet the broad and dynamic needs of residents. As the capital of the Northwest Territories, Yellowknife is an important economic, government, and cultural centre within Canada's North.

This report is about the current nature of housing in Yellowknife and what trends are most important to consider, especially over the next five to 10 years. Every community has unique housing opportunities and challenges, so detailed analysis is needed as the groundwork for a tailored, realistic, and effective housing strategy. Using this analysis and these strategies, this report sets the foundation for the City of Yellowknife's future housing plans and projects.

A Housing Needs Assessment report is a minimum requirement for local governments to apply for the Housing Accelerator Fund, overseen by the Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC).

1.1 What is a Housing Needs Assessment?

This Housing Needs Assessment uses various sources and data types to understand the physical, social, and economic dimensions of housing in Yellowknife. This report aims to find the most significant housing trends, gaps, needs, and assets and come to informative conclusions for decision-makers and community members' knowledge.

1.1.1 METHODOLOGY

This report uses quantitative (i.e., numbers-based) and qualitative (i.e., descriptive) data to establish a holistic picture of current and anticipated housing needs. Unless otherwise denoted, all statistics, tables, and graphs are based on Statistics Canada data.

Findings for Yellowknife have been compared against other jurisdictions in selective instances to help understand what makes Yellowknife different from, or the same as, other contexts. Comparing data from Yellowknife with Canada overall helps provide a general national average benchmark. It is also useful to compare a city against other relatively similar cities in size, geography, and economy. For this, the northern cities of Whitehorse and Iqaluit were chosen. Despite differences in population size, physical geography, and longitudes, Whitehorse and Iqaluit are the capital cities of the Yukon and Nunavut, respectively, which is significant for economic and population purposes. 'Region 6' is a large census area that surrounds Yellowknife; data for Region 6 was only used for comparative analysis in selective instances.

DATA SUMMARY

Quantitative Analysis

Statistics and graphs are a powerful way to understand many physical, economic, and social factors that can be described with numbers.

DATA SOURCES:

Statistics Canada (statcan.gc.ca)
- Census years: 2006, 2011, 2016, and 2021
- Data tables were downloaded, analyzed, and graphed

Canadian Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) (cmhc-schl.gc.ca)
- Rental market data from 2023
- Data tables were downloaded, analyzed, and graphed

Northwest Territories (NWT) Bureau of Statistics (statsnwt.ca)
- Statistics downloaded by applicable subjects
- Data tables were downloaded, analyzed, and graphed

Airbnb Inc. (airbnb.ca)
- Postings were searched, filtered, and analyzed

Yellowknife and Whitehorse Point-in-Time (PiT) Reports on Homelessness
- (Yellowknife.ca/en/living-here/resources/Homelessness)
- Report data was drawn from for 2015 to 2021

Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART; hart.ubc.ca)
- Data tables were downloaded, analyzed, and graphed

City of Yellowknife
- Data provided by City staff
- Development approval data was tabulated and graphed

Statistics Canada Proximity Measures Data Viewer
- Maps were searched and analyzed
- 150.statcan.gc.ca/n1/pub/71-607-x/71-607-x2020011-eng.htm

Data Limitations

Considerations should be applied when reviewing the data and findings of this report as follows:

1. Demographic data is sourced from published Statistics Canada Census of Population. Data is subject to random rounding and, at times, is a 25% representative sample.
2. The 2021 Statistics Canada Census Population was released in 2022 and reports on some 2020 data. Where available, updated data points on housing have been provided.
3. In March 2020, the World Health Organization announced that COVID-19 was characterized as a global pandemic. This had far-reaching societal impacts but most notably led to a complete shutdown of international travel, many restrictions on hospitality and accommodation industries, and many office-based work environments shifting to online or remote work arrangements.
4. Market conditions have changed considerably throughout the past three years. Interest rates have risen, and households have had to deal with the rising costs of shelter, food, and transportation.
5. The increasing severity and frequency of natural events associated with climate change, such as wildfires, have affected people, housing, and communities in increasingly complex, disruptive, and negative ways in recent years.

Qualitative Analysis

Qualitative analysis is crucial for understanding details that are not easily counted and for making better sense of the statistics.

Eight focus group discussions were held with targeted stakeholder groups in September and October 2024. Stakeholders included government representatives, community organizations, business groups, and developers. Regrettably, despite several attempts to reach out to the Yellowknives Dene First Nation and North Slave Métis Alliance (NSMA), we received no response, and neither had representation in these discussions.

Please review the 'What We Heard' report for further information about the engagement methods and details.

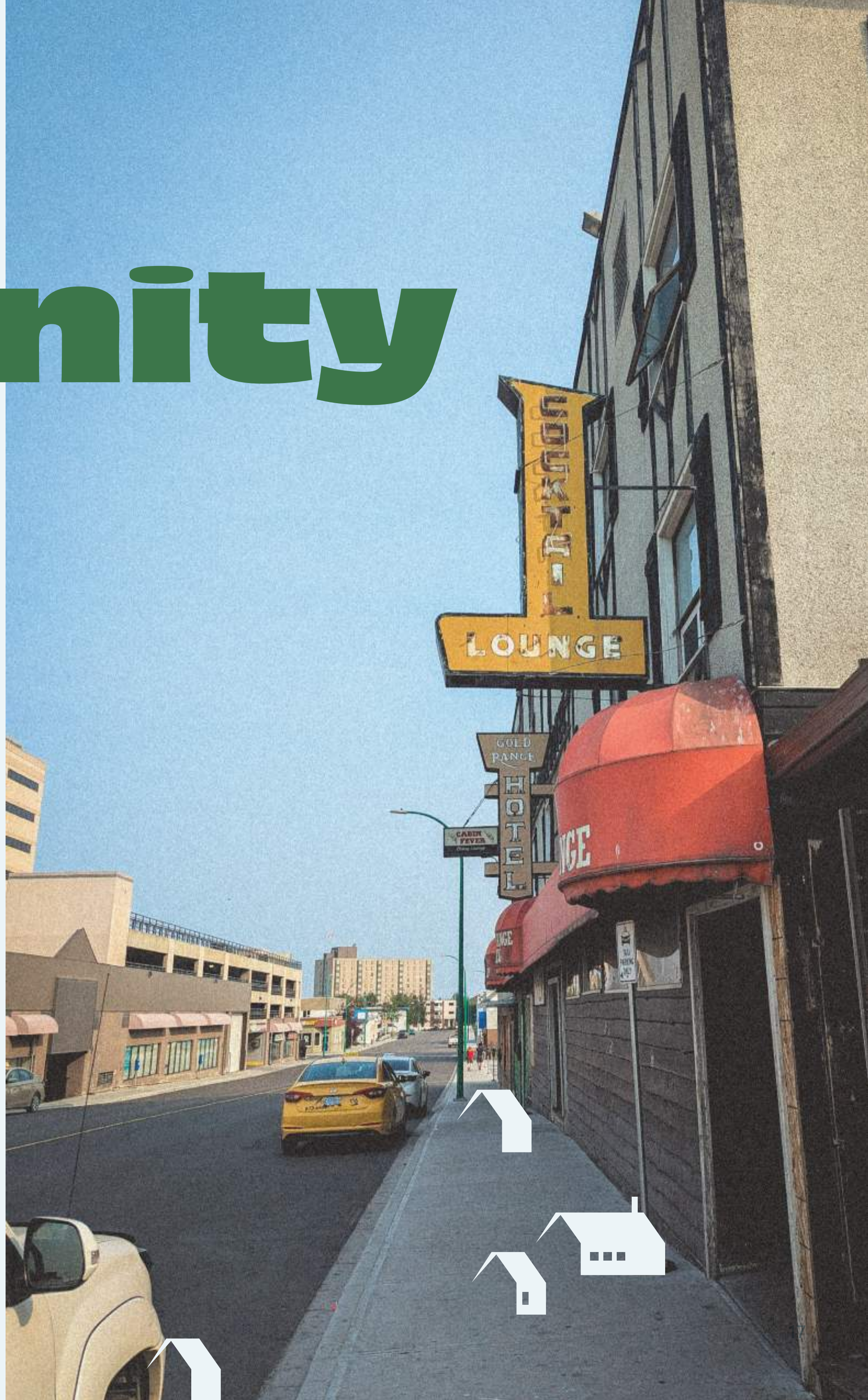
A limitation of the qualitative analysis conducted is that unaffiliated members of the public have not been engaged through surveys, open houses, or other tactics. Such methods may be considered to complement or add to this report.

1.1.2 DOCUMENT STRUCTURE

First, the housing context of Yellowknife is understood through demographic, economic, and household analysis. Then, past and current housing data on tenure, stock, affordability, and development trends are considered. The report also takes a specific look at homelessness in Yellowknife. From there, projections for future population and housing attributes are assessed. Highlights from the stakeholder engagement are then summarized before concluding with housing strategies based on the past, present, and projected needs for Yellowknife in particular.

2.0

Community Profile



This section is an overview of the demographic and household composition of Yellowknife and how these have changed through the Census periods from 2006 to 2021. From this, future implications for housing needs have been assessed.

2.1 Demographics

2.1.1 POPULATION

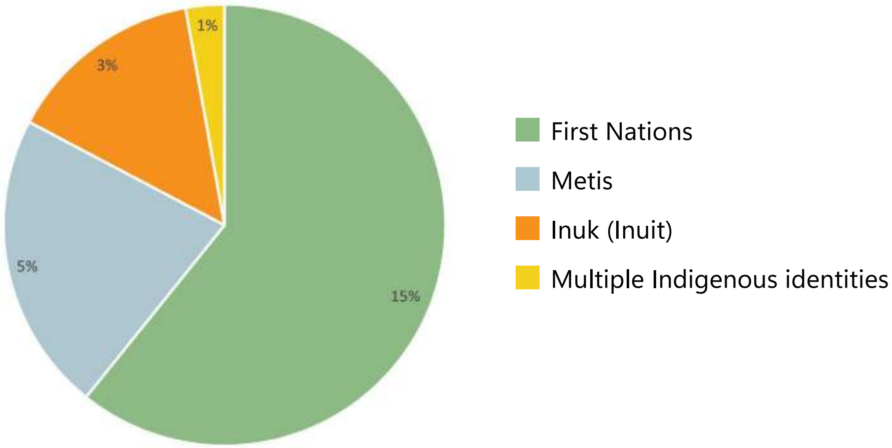
Trends in population have a significant impact on the type and quantity of housing that is needed.

The population in Yellowknife increased steadily over the 2016 to 2021 period, mostly due to natural increases and people moving from other territories and/or provinces. Population increases correlate with a need for more housing units.

DATA SUMMARY

- In 2021, the population of Yellowknife was 20,340.
    - This is a 3.9% increase from 2016 when Yellowknife's population was 19,569, a difference of 771 people.
    - Population percentage change from 2016 to 2021 for Whitehorse was 12.4%, and for Iqaluit was -4.0%.
- Population growth is primarily driven by natural increase and inter-territorial or inter-provincial migration; migration to Yellowknife from elsewhere in the Northwest Territories accounted for 200 residents between 2016 and 2021.
- Outside of Yellowknife, 465 people lived in Region 6 as of 2021, a decrease from 2016 when it was 521 people.
- As of 2021, 24% of Yellowknife's population identifies as Indigenous: 15% First Nations, 5% Métis, 3% Inuk (Inuit), and 1% multiple Indigenous identities.
- 16% of people were immigrants in 2021, 19% of whom moved to Yellowknife between 2016 and 2021.
- There are 1,005 one-parent families, representing 9.8% of the population, up from 8.6% in 2016. Over three-quarters of the single parents are women.

Figure 1:
Indigenous Identities (Being 24% of Total Population), Yellowknife 2021



2.1.2 AGE

Trends in age distribution impact the type of housing needed as people move through different stages of life and abilities. Housing, along a spectrum of types and sizes, should be available for people as needs change throughout life.

Yellowknife has a large working-age population and many people under 14 years old. Still, the senior population has increased significantly in the last decade and could increase even more in the next decade. This shift has implications for the size and type of housing needed to balance the needs of young families, workers living alone, and seniors.

DATA SUMMARY

- The average age in Yellowknife is 35.5 years, which is relatively young but older than Iqaluit.
  — Canada: 41.9 years
  — Whitehorse: 38.7 years
  — Iqaluit: 32.8 years
- In Yellowknife, 20% of the population was 0 to 14 years of age in 2021, higher than the Canadian national figure of 16%.
- The largest 10-year age category is for 30- to 39-year-olds, representing 18% of the population.
- Nearly 60% of people are between 25 and 64.
- Over 7% of Yellowknife's population is over the age of 65, which has more than doubled from 2011 (3.4%).
- In 2021, there were three times as many people in their 70s than their 80s (3% vs. 1%) and three times as many people in their 60s than their 70s (9% vs. 3%).
- Since 2011, the number of residents under 19 years of age has remained proportionately the same, but the number of people 20 to 64 years old has decreased from 69% to 66%.

Figure 2: Population Age Categories, Yellowknife 2021 (Statistics Canada)

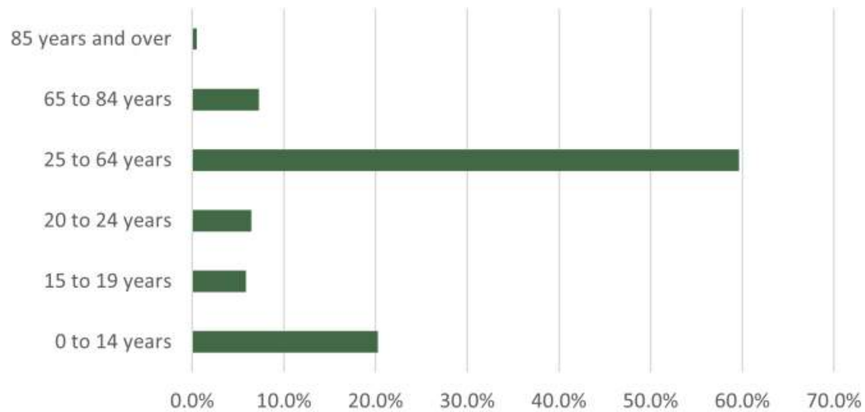


Figure 3: Population Age Breakdown by Decade, Yellowknife 2021 (Statistics Canada)

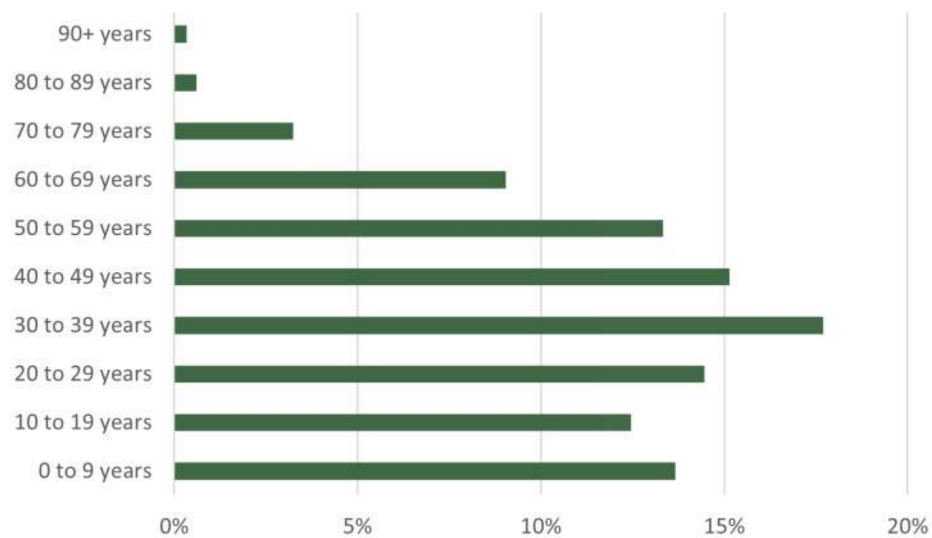
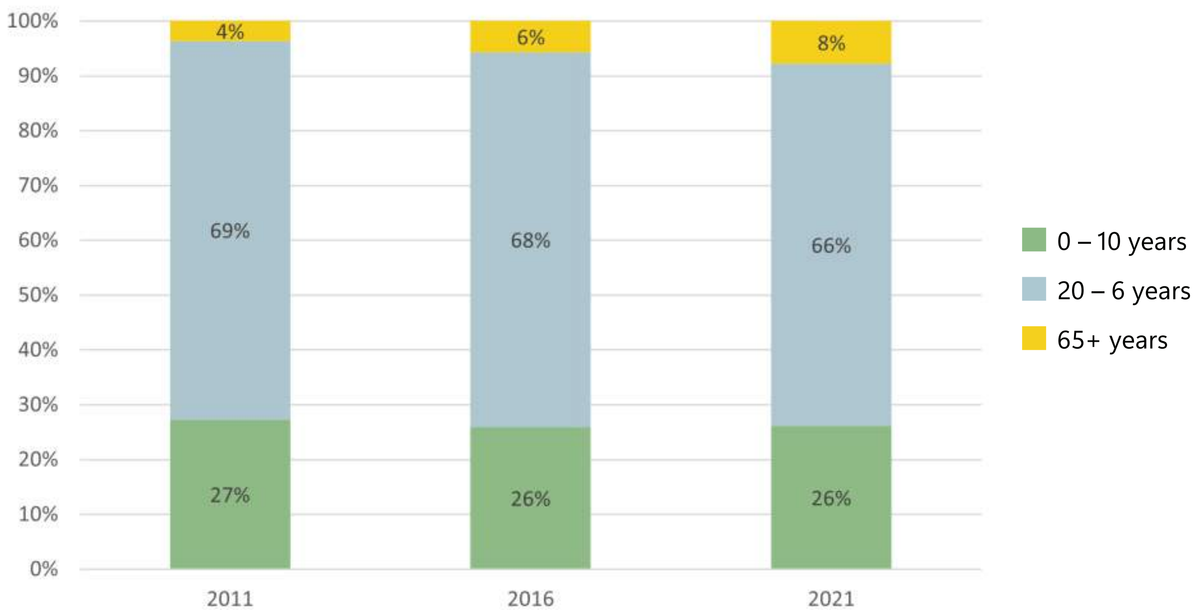


Figure 4: Mobility Status Per Census, Yellowknife (Statistics Canada)



2.1.3 MOBILITY

Mobility status refers to whether a person changed residences from the previous year (e.g., moved between 2020 and 2021). People change residences in the following ways:

- Internal migrants include migrants who lived in Canada one or 5 years ago. This includes persons who moved within Canada.
- External migrants include migrants who did not live in Canada 1 or 5 years ago.

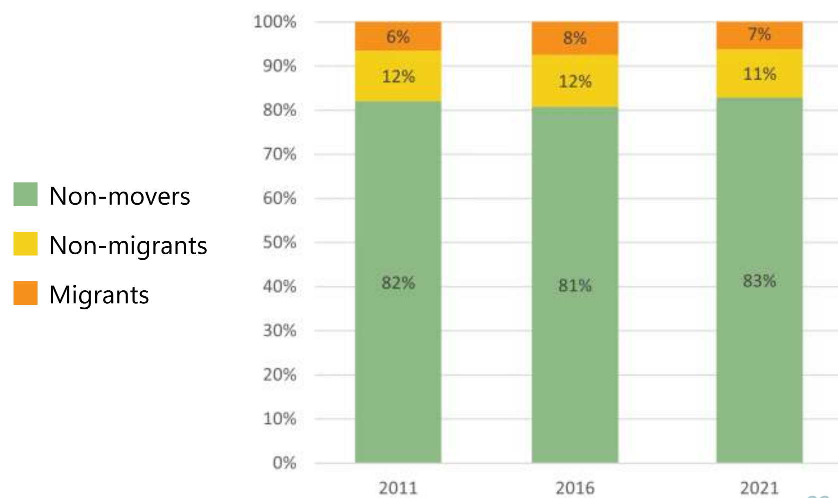
This is important as the number of residents who are moving to a municipality greatly impacts housing demand, and residents moving within a municipality demonstrate changes in housing needs.

Most people moving to Yellowknife are coming from other territories or provinces in Canada. Pull factors to Yellowknife could include access to services and employment opportunities. There is also a notable amount of movement of people within Yellowknife to different dwellings. For moving within a city, a key push factor is affordability; pull factors could include wanting a residence of a different type or number of bedrooms.

DATA SUMMARY

- In 2021, within the previous **one year**, 83% of Yellowknife's population were 'non-movers' who did not change residences.
  - 10% were 'non-migrants' who moved residences within Yellowknife.
  - 5% migrated from other territories or provinces, 1% from within the Northwest Territories, and 1% from outside Canada.
- In 2021, within the previous **five years**, 51% of Yellowknife's population were 'non-movers' who did not change residences.
  - 26% were 'non-migrants' who moved residences within Yellowknife.
  - 16% migrated from other territories or provinces, 4% from within the Northwest Territories, and 4% from outside Canada.
- Compared to the national figures within the previous five years, Yellowknife has fewer international migrants (3.6% nationally vs. 4.9% in Yellowknife), less migration within the territory (4.3% nationally vs. 14.7% in Yellowknife), more migration from other territories or provinces (15.6% nationally vs. 2.7% in Yellowknife), and fewer non-movers who did not change residences (51% nationally vs. 61% in Yellowknife).
- Proportionately, mobility statuses have not changed significantly since 2011 in Yellowknife.

Figure 5: Mobility Status Per Census (Statistics Canada)



2.2 Economy

It is important to understand Yellowknife's economic context regarding employment opportunities, household incomes, pull factors attracting potential residents to the city, and overall affordability.

2.2.1 HOUSEHOLD INCOME & PARTICIPATION

A 'household' refers to a person or group occupying the same dwelling. Household income is key to understanding affordability in a relative manner, as well as other important aspects of housing. 'Median income' is the amount that divides an income distribution into two halves. It is the income level at which half of the households have income above it and half below it.

Yellowknife has a high average household income but a high cost of living, and certain household types have a significantly lower average household income, such as single parents. Unemployment is low, and most of the population is of working age.

DATA SUMMARY

- In 2021, there were 7,520 households in Yellowknife, with an average household **before-tax** income of $165,400 and a median before-tax income of $148,000.
- The average household **after-tax** income is $120,500.
- Yellowknife's average total household income of $165,400 is greater than the Canadian average of $106,400 and the Whitehorse average of $130,800 but less than the Iqaluit average of $177,800.
  - Meanwhile, the median total income of one-parent economic families in 2020 was $98,000 in Yellowknife.
- Nearly 20% of households have a pre-tax average annual income of under $80,000, and 31% are between $80,000 and $150,000.
- According to the NWT Bureau of Statistics, as of 2022 in Yellowknife, the cost to meet the modest, basic standard of living for a family of four (i.e., clothing, food, shelter, transportation, and other) was $66,991; an income below this amount would be considered poverty. Although Yellowknife has lower costs in the NWT for the other categories, it has the highest shelter cost.
- In 2021, comparing Yellowknife to the Canadian average, household expenditures were higher for food by 28%, transportation by 29%, clothing by 40%, and household operation by 45% (according to the NWT Bureau of Statistics).
- As of 2021, Yellowknife has an unemployment rate of 5.8%, much lower than the Canadian average of 10.3%.
- The 'participation rate' is the percentage of the population at least 15 years old, comprising the 'labour force.'
  - The participation rate in Yellowknife is 79%, compared to the Canadian participation rate of 64%.
  - In Yellowknife, there are 15,795 people of labour force status.

Figure 6: Total Before-Tax Private Household Income 2020 (Statistics Canada, 2020)

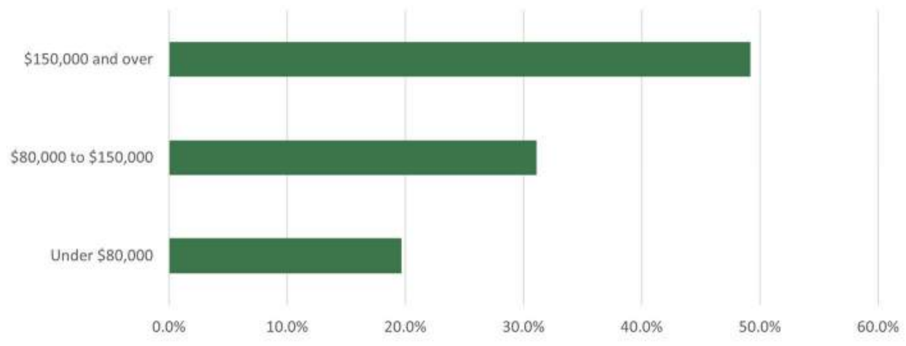
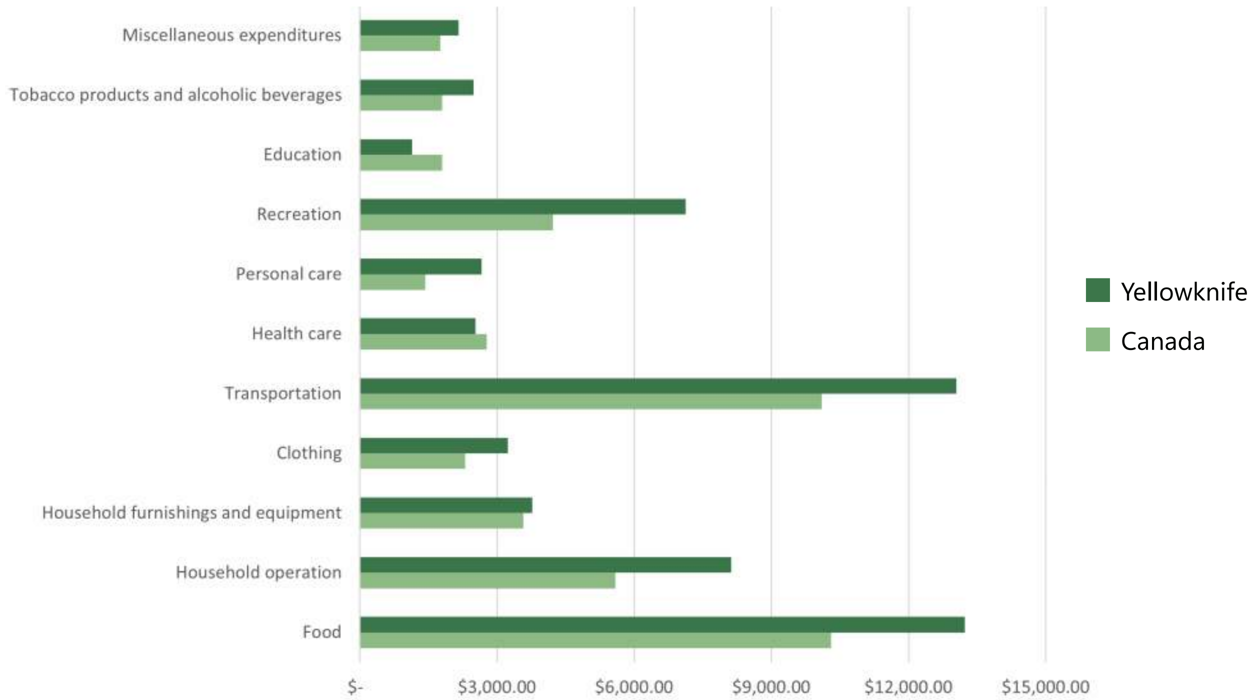


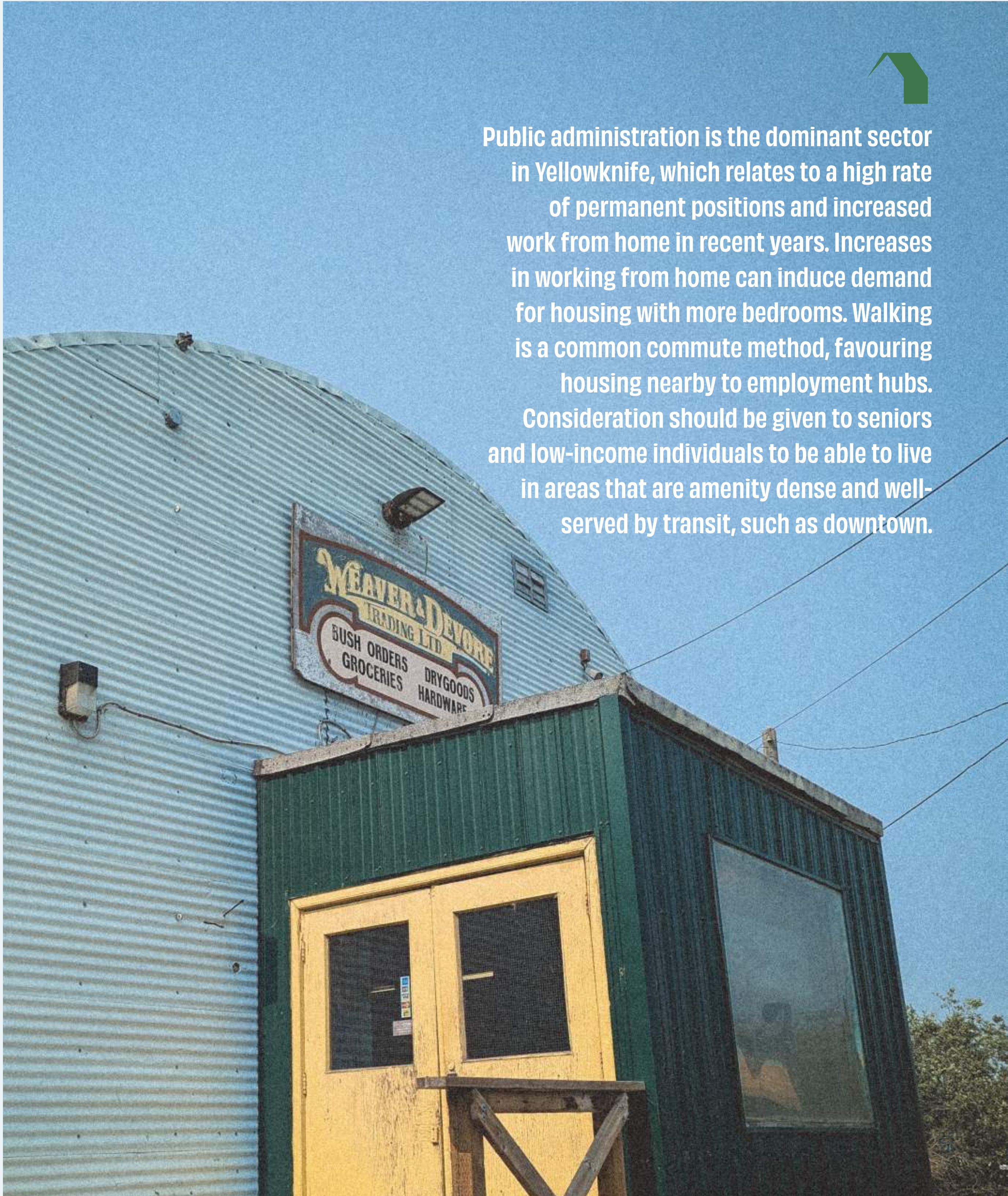
Figure 7: 2021 Average Household Expenditures by Component, Yellowknife vs Canada (NWT Bureau of Statistics)



2.2.2 ECONOMIC SECTORS & COMMUTING

Much of the land in what is now the City of Yellowknife was originally used for mining exploration and mine development. Two of the biggest gold mines within the municipal boundary, Giant Mine and Con Mine, operated until the early 2000s. These mine sites are still being remediated, and they are a significant limiting factor in the types of land use activities that will be permitted in these areas in the future. They also have some constraining impacts on adjacent lands. The objectives and policies for the land use designations for Giant Mine and Con Mine reflect this reality. Over time, mining and industries supporting mining activity have moved out of the city's core into the urban fringe as the city has grown. Other industrial activities such as warehousing, trucking, logistics, and construction yards have also moved to the edges of the city's built area. This change in land use is reflected in the designations for industrial areas such as Kam Lake and Engle Business District.

As categorized by Statistics Canada, the public administration sector includes activities of a governmental nature, including legislative activities, taxation, national defence, public order and safety, immigration services, foreign affairs and international assistance, and the administration of government programs.



Public administration is the dominant sector in Yellowknife, which relates to a high rate of permanent positions and increased work from home in recent years. Increases in working from home can induce demand for housing with more bedrooms. Walking is a common commute method, favouring housing nearby to employment hubs. Consideration should be given to seniors and low-income individuals to be able to live in areas that are amenity dense and well-served by transit, such as downtown.

DATA SUMMARY

- The top three industries in Yellowknife as of 2021 are public administration, representing 29% of workers; health care and social assistance, representing 10% of workers; and retail trade, representing 9% of workers.
- From 2011 to 2021, public administration increased from 24% to 29%, while mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction decreased from 8% to 5%.
- There are 12,475 workers in Yellowknife, predominantly in permanent positions.
  - — Workers are people over 15 who have been employed in the past year.
  - — Compared to the Canadian figures (69.6%), Yellowknife has more permanent positions (74.9%) and fewer self-employed workers (7.7% in Yellowknife vs. 14.1% in Canada).
- In 2021, 76% of workers had a usual place of work, 13% worked at home, and 10% had no fixed workplace address.
  - — In 2016, only 4% of workers worked at home; the significant increase to 13% in 2021 correlates with the COVID-19 pandemic and increases in working from home across Canada. One implication for housing is the increased desire of residents for more bedrooms to act as office spaces.
- As of 2021, 94% of Yellowknife workers commute within the city for work, whereas 6% commute out of the Yellowknife census subdivision, including to other territories or provinces.
- The main mode of commuting is driving. As of 2021, 73% of commuters use a car, while 18% walk. The remaining 9% is split between public transit, bicycling, and other methods.
  - — 93% of workers have a commute that is under 30 minutes.
- Downtown and Northlands are the two areas that have the best proximity to public transit.
  - — Most dwellings in Yellowknife are within 800 m of a bus stop, but a transit route does not serve some dwellings to the west.
- Downtown is the most amenity-dense. 'Amenity dense' describes neighbourhoods with access to basic needs for a family with minors (e.g., grocery store, pharmacy, childcare, etc.), with Franklin Ave as a key corridor.

Table 1: Top Ten Industry Sectors by Worker Count (Statistics Canada, 2021)

	TOP TEN INDUSTRIES	WORKERS	PERCENT
1	Public administration	3,675	29.50%
2	Health care and social assistance	1,290	10.30%
3	Retail trade	1,075	8.60%
4	Transportation and warehousing	870	7.00%
5	Educational services	805	6.50%
6	Accommodation and food services	715	5.70%
7	Professional, scientific and technical services	695	5.60%
8	Mining, quarrying, and oil and gas extraction	610	4.90%
9	Construction	565	4.50%
10	Administrative and support, waste management and remediation services	455	3.60%

Figure 8: Employment Type of Workers (Statistics Canada, 2021)

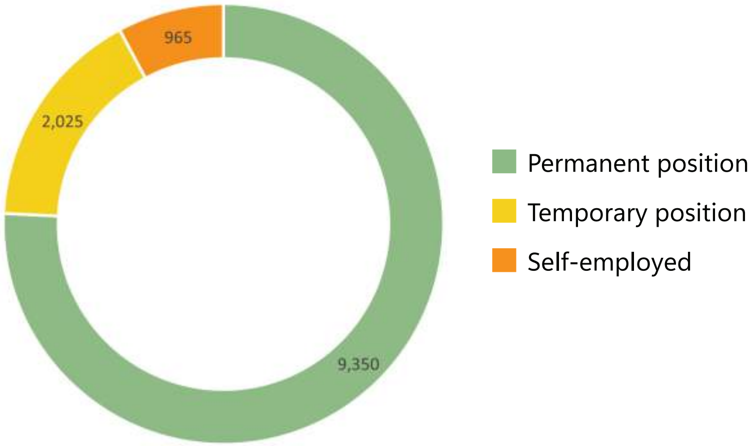


Figure 9: Commuting Destination of Workers (Statistics Canada, 2021)

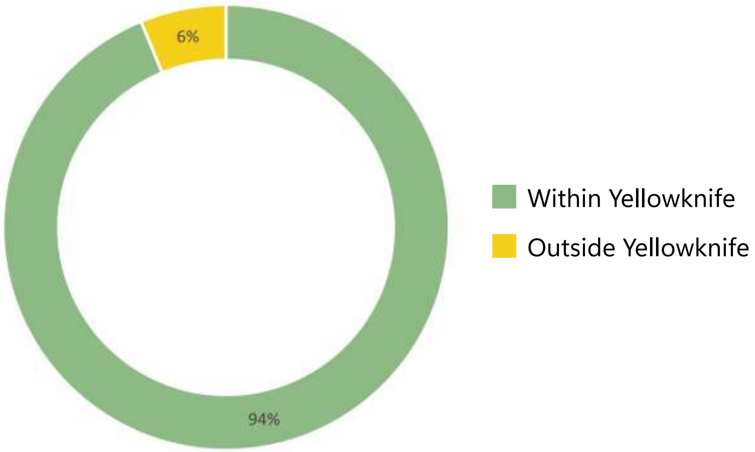


Figure 10: Main Mode of Commuting (Statistics Canada, 2021)

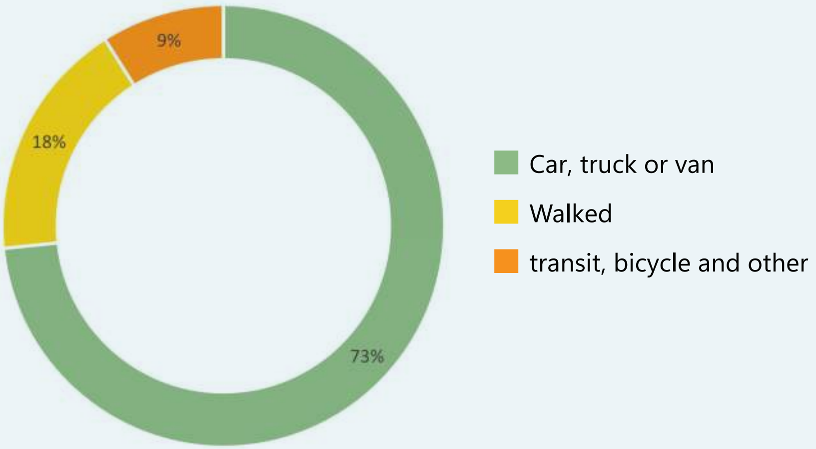
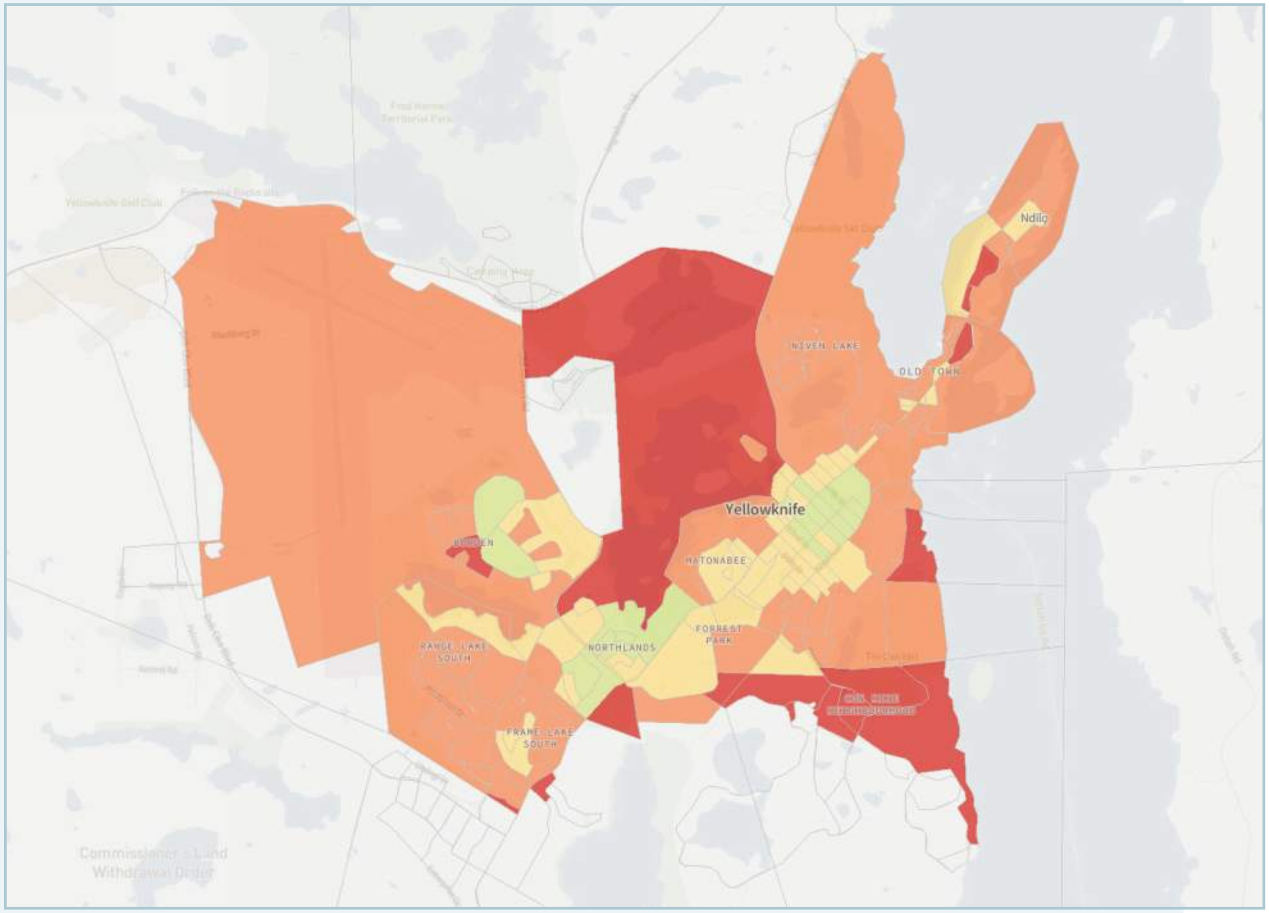


Figure 11: Proximity to Public Transit Map (Statistics Canada Proximity Measures Data Viewer)



Proximity to Public Transit:

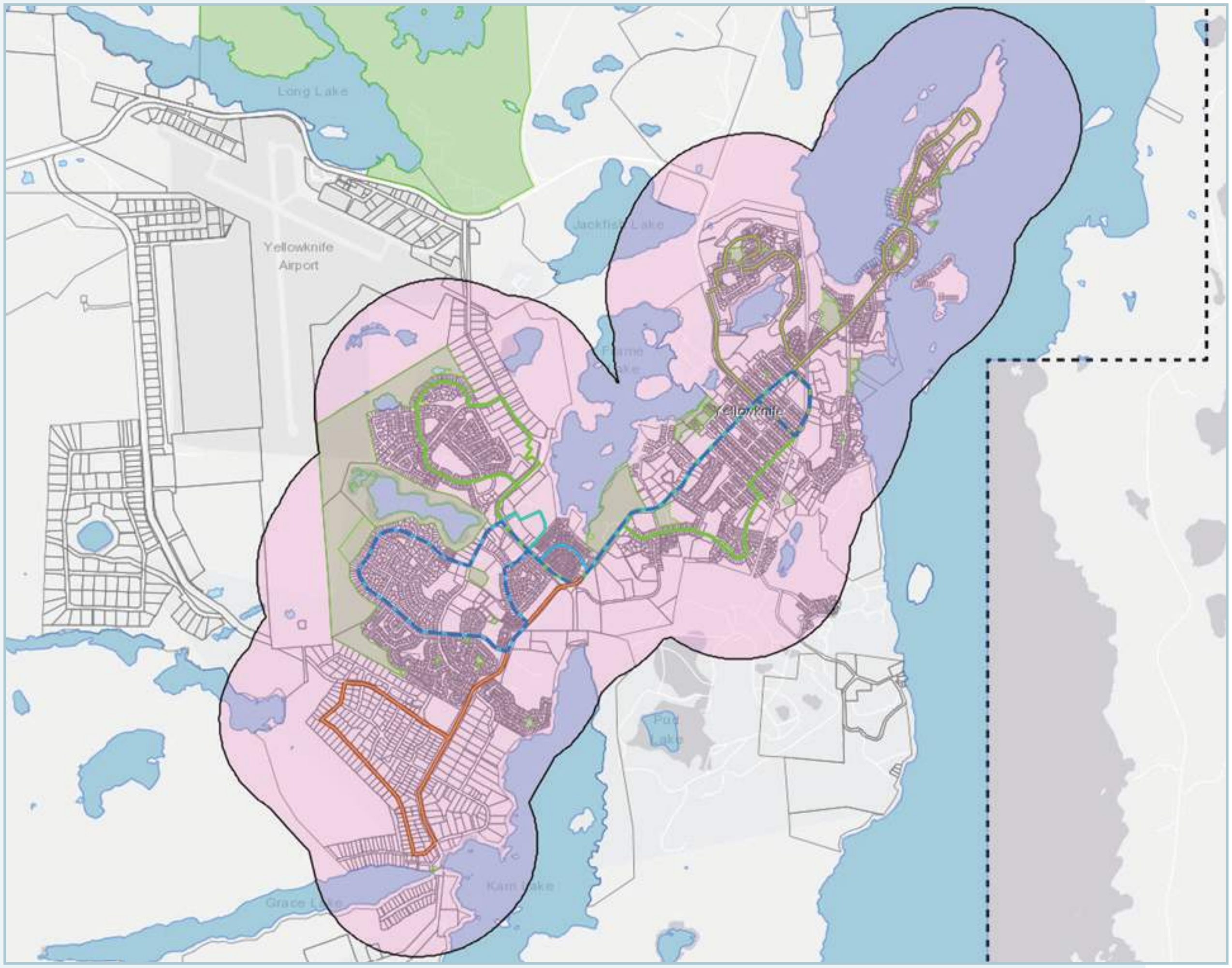
Measures the closeness of a dissemination block to any source of public transportation within a 1 km walking distance. This measure is derived from the number of all trips between 7:00 a.m. and 10:00 a.m. from a conglomeration of General Transit Feed Specification (GTFS) data sources. As illustrated in **Figure 12**, most residential properties in Yellowknife are within an 800 m buffer of a transit stop.

Normalized index by quintile

Proximity to public transit

- .. not available for a specific reference period
- From 0.000 to 0.003
- From 0.003 to 0.007
- From 0.007 to 0.013
- From 0.013 to 0.028
- From 0.028 to 1.000

Figure 12: 800 m Radius of Bus Stops (2024)



Transit Routes

Route

- Route A
- Route B Express
- Route B
- Route B
- Route D

Transit Route 800m Buffer

Figure 13: Amenity Dense Neighbourhood Map (Statistics Canada Proximity Measures Data Viewer)

Amenity dense neighbourhood:

An aggregate measure was created to indicate neighbourhoods with access to basic needs for a family with minors. A dissemination block with access to a grocery store, pharmacy, health care facility, childcare facility, primary school, library, public transit stop, and source of employment is referred to as an amenity dense neighbourhood. A high amenity density neighbourhood is defined as an amenity dense neighbourhood with proximity measure values in the top third of the distribution for each of the eight proximity measures.

- Not available for a specific reference period
- High density
- Medium density
- Low density

2.3 Households

The household may consist of a family group, of two or more families sharing a dwelling, a group of unrelated persons, or a person living alone.

There remains a need for dwellings that can accommodate families of three or more, but single-person households have been increasing, which is relevant to housing needs in a community. Also, persons over 64 years old and the primary household maintainer will have special needs for housing type, tenure, condition, and accessibility.

DATA SUMMARY

- Yellowknife has increased from 6,630 households in 2006 to 7,520 households in 2021, an overall increase of 13%, with an average increase of 59.3 households per year.
- The average household size in Yellowknife is 2.7 people, the same in 2021 as in 2011.
- Within the 7,520 households as of 2021, 55% of households in Yellowknife are one- or two-person households, meaning that 45% have three or more persons; the proportion of each household size category has remained relatively constant since 2011, with a slight increase in 1-person households from 21.8% to 23.8%.
- A household maintainer is responsible for paying the rent/mortgage, or the taxes, or the utilities. At 84%, most of the primary household maintainers in Yellowknife are between 25-64 years old; however, 12%, representing approximately 930 households, are older than 64, which may affect housing affordability, accessibility, and maintenance.
- The most common household types are:
  - Couples with children – 30%
  - One-person households – 24%
  - Couples without children – 21%
- From 2011 to 2021, there has been a decrease in households of Couples with Children from 32% to 30% and an increase in one-person households from 22% to 24%; this signifies a decreased need for units with more bedrooms, and an increased need for units with fewer bedrooms.

Figure 14: Household Size (Statistics Canada, 2021)

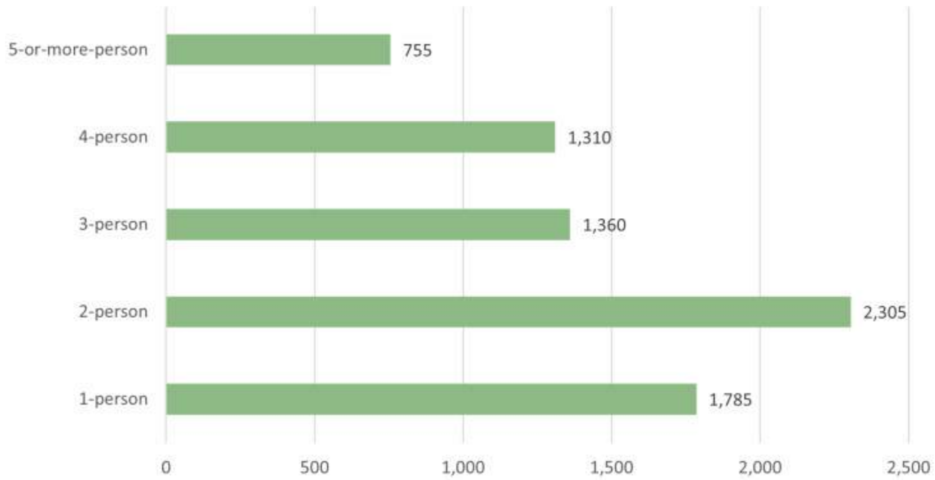


Figure 15: Number of Private Households Over Time (Statistics Canada, 2021)

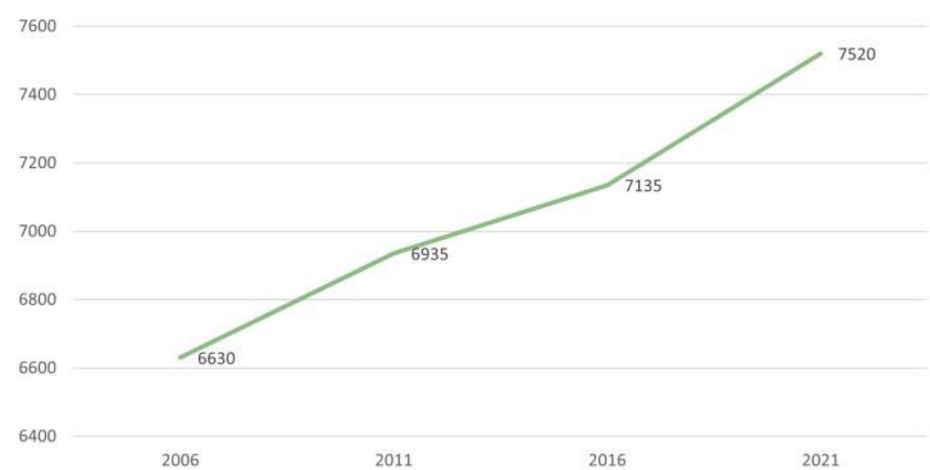
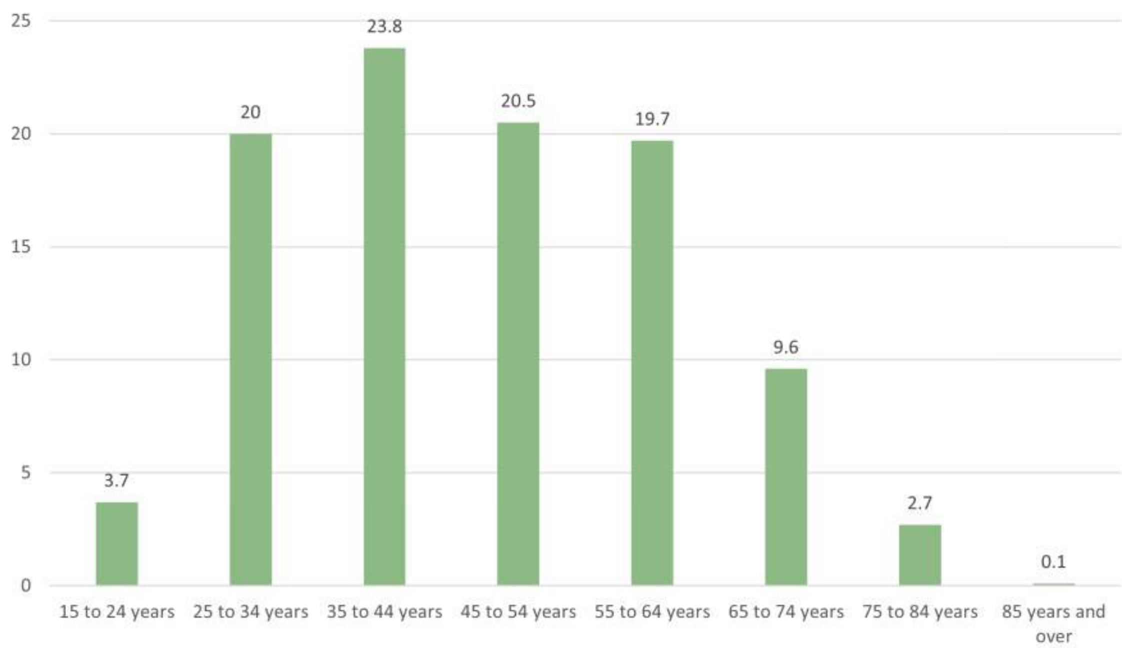


Figure 16: Private Households by Age of Primary Household Maintainers (Statistics Canada, 2021)

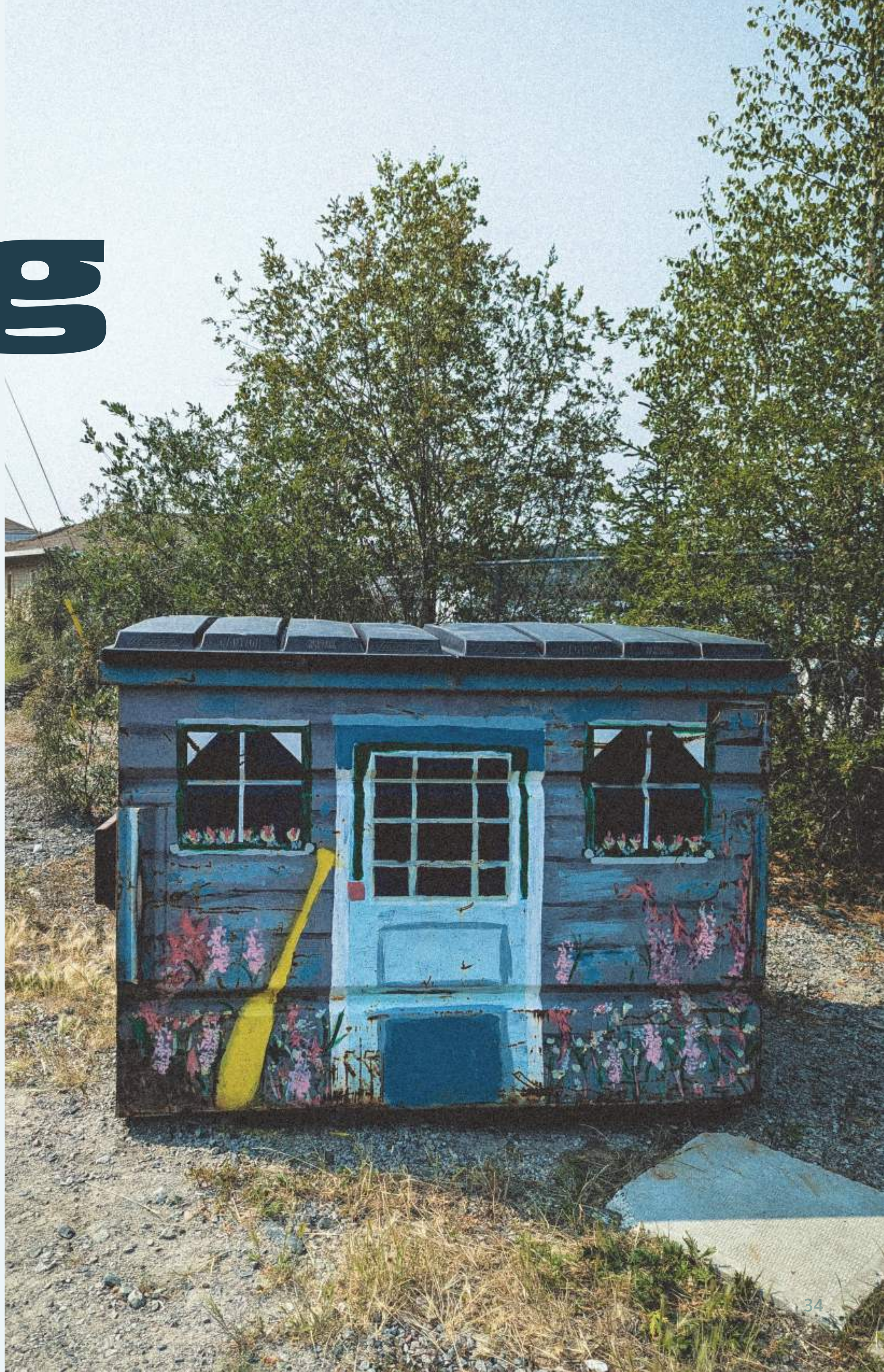


3.0

Housing Profile

The housing stock in a community includes the dwelling type (e.g., single-family dwellings, apartments, etc.), the tenure of homes (i.e., rental vs. ownership), the housing age, and the dwelling size. Understanding the mix of housing in Yellowknife enables the municipality to understand gaps, areas of risk, and potential strategic opportunities.

Within this section, a dwelling refers to a singular housing unit. This can include a single detached dwelling, duplex, apartment, etc. Statistics Canada (2011, 2016, and 2021) and 2023 Canada Mortgage and Housing Corporation (CMHC) were data sources used for analysis, comparison, and graphing.



3.1 Tenure

Yellowknife has more owners than renters but a high proportion of renters compared to the Canadian national average. The proportion of renters to owners did not change much from 2016 to 2021, but the cost of living and affordability issues may increase the need for rental housing in the future.

Tenure is correlated with household income, mobility, employment sector, housing type, and other factors. Changes in tenure are important indicators and critical to finding the right balance to meet community needs, remembering that variety is still possible among tenure types.

- In 2021, Yellowknife had 4,275 owned (57%) and 3,240 rented (43%) households, notably higher rates than Whitehorse and across Canada but much lower than in Iqaluit. Rental tenures for Canada and comparable cities are listed below:
  - Canada – 33%
  - Whitehorse – 32%
  - Iqaluit – 74%
- The proportion of renters in Yellowknife increased from 52.3% to 56.3% from 2011 to 2016 but remained fairly stable from 2016 to 2021.
- As of 2021, of tenant households:
  - 21.5%, or 175 units, are in subsidized housing
  - 23.6% spend 30% or more of household income on shelter costs
  - 18.2% are in Core Housing Need
- The total purpose-built rental housing stock in Yellowknife has fallen from 2,120 in 2010 to 2,067 in 2023, based on CMHC rental market data.
  - Two-bedroom units are the most common type at 42% or 874 units
  - Bachelor units are the least common type at 2% or 44 units
- Average monthly shelter costs for **rented** dwellings, 2021:
  - Yellowknife: $1,804
  - Canada: $1,209
  - Whitehorse: $1,474
  - Iqaluit: $1,500
- Average monthly shelter costs for **owned** dwellings, 2021:
  - Yellowknife: $2,358
  - Canada: $1,498
  - Whitehorse: $1,754
  - Iqaluit: $2,820

Figure 17: Tenure Proportionality 2006–2021 (Statistics Canada)

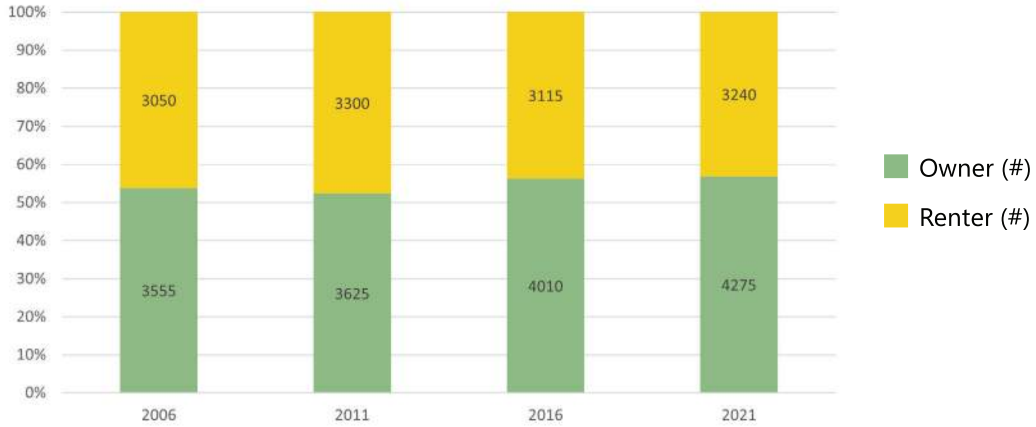


Figure 19: Purpose-Built Rental Units by Bedroom Count (CMHC Rental Market Data, 2023)

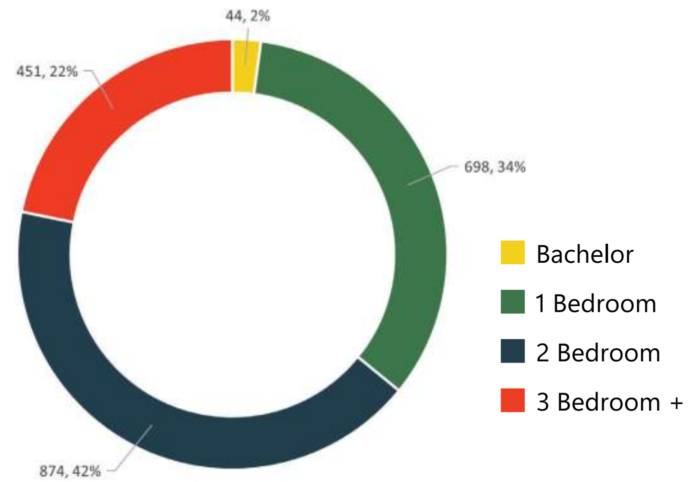
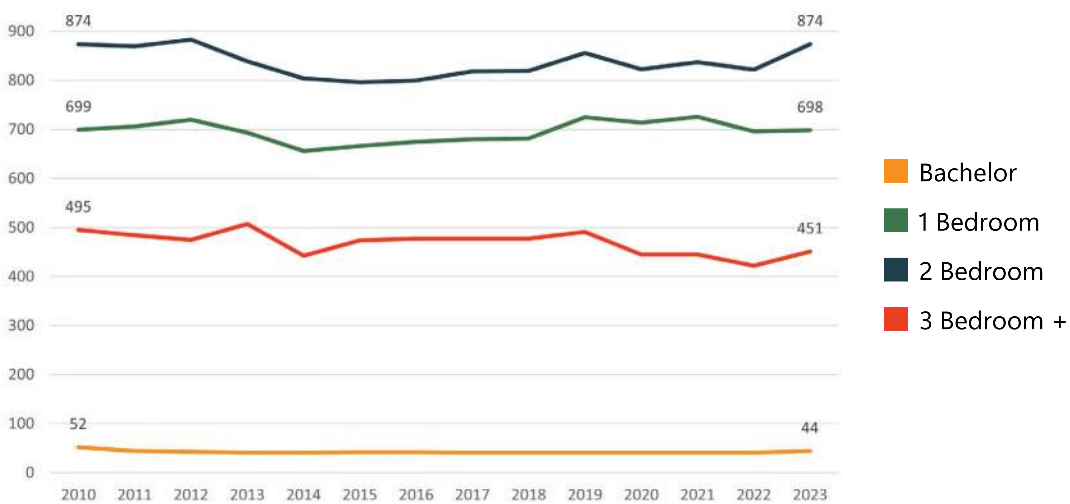


Figure 18: Purpose-Built Rental Units by Bedroom Count 2010–2023 (CMHC Rental Market Data)



3.2 Housing Stock

The age, type, and condition of the housing stock in a community are critical in understanding how well the community's needs are being met and how well those needs can be met in the future. The category of single-detached dwelling (i.e., single-detached house) does not include mobile homes or trailers; those are included under the category of movable dwelling.

3.2.1 DWELLING TYPE

Single-detached dwellings are the most common housing type in Yellowknife, representing 44% of the total, and apartment buildings also comprise a large proportion. From 2016 to 2021, 70 more apartment units under five storeys were constructed than single-detached dwellings (200 units vs. 130 units), and many movable dwellings were also added (75 units).

DATA SUMMARY

- Single-detached dwellings are the single most common housing type in Yellowknife, with 3335 dwelling units in 2021, or 44% of the total.
  - Canada: 53%
  - Whitehorse: 48%
  - Iqaluit: 25%
- Apartments under five storeys and row houses are the next most prevalent, at 26% and 12% of the housing stock, respectively.
- Between 2016 and 2021, the greatest increase in total units was in apartments under five storeys, with 200 units; single-detached dwellings, with 130 units; and movable dwellings, with 75 units.
- Semi-detached dwellings represent a small proportion of the total but increased by the fastest rate between 2016 and 2021, experiencing an increase of 30%. Movable dwellings increased by 16%, and apartments under five storeys increased by 11%. Notably, single-detached dwellings only increased by 4% over the same period.
- Considering the total number of occupied private dwellings, in 2021, the most common type is '3 bedroom,' with 3,280 units, which includes both owned and rented dwellings.
- When including all room types, the average number of rooms per dwelling in 2021 was 5.5.

Figure 20: Occupied Dwellings by Structural Type 2016–2021 (Statistics Canada)

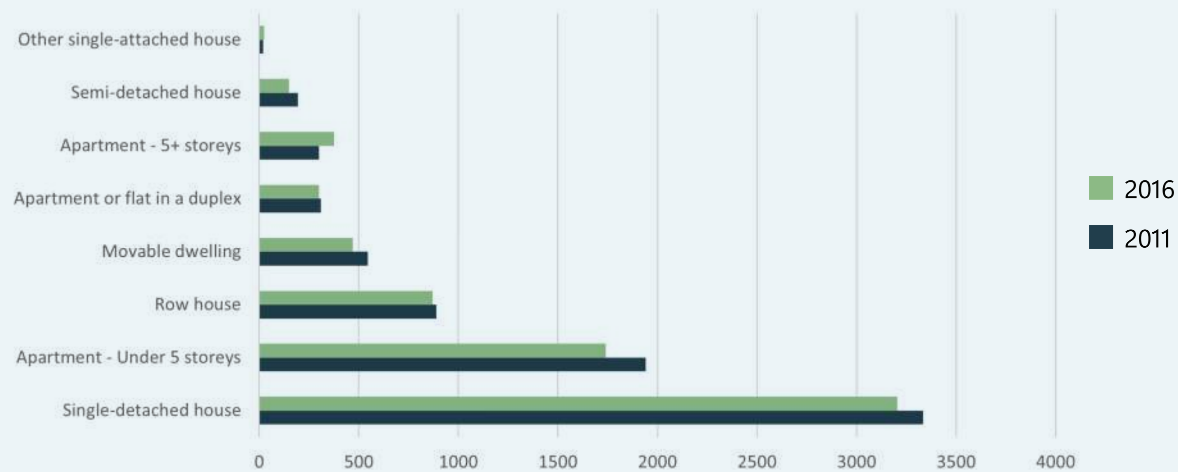
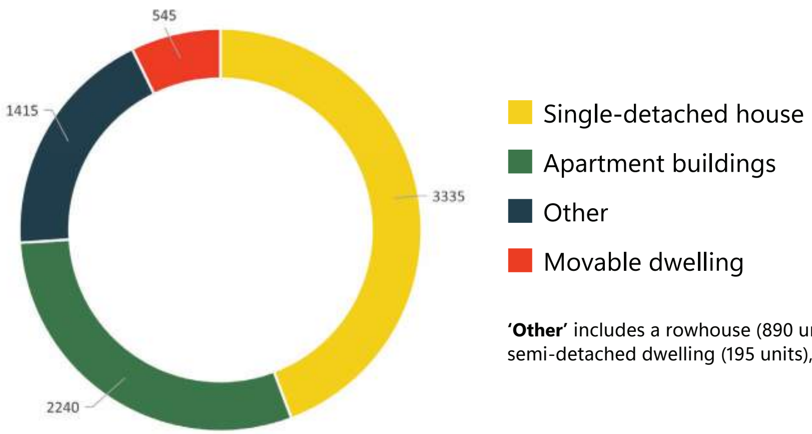


Table 2: Occupied Dwelling Units by Type 2016 & 2021 (Statistics Canada)

TOP TEN INDUSTRIES	2016	2021	DIFFERENCE	CHANGE
Single-detached dwelling	3205	3335	130	4%
Apartment - under five storeys	1740	1940	200	11%
Row house	870	890	20	2%
Movable dwelling	470	545	75	16%
Apartment or flat in a duplex	300	310	10	3%
Apartment - 5+ storeys[1]	375	300	-75	-20%
Semi-detached dwelling	150	195	45	30%
Other single-attached dwelling	25	20	-5	-20%
TOTAL	**7135**	**7535**	**400**	**5.60%**

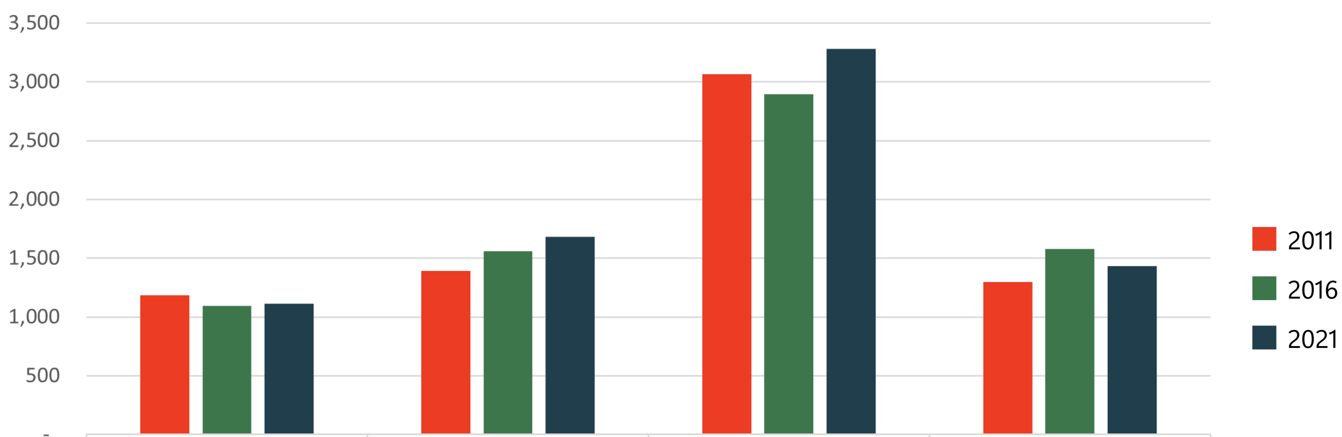
[1]The drop in this category from 2016 to 2021 is abnormal. Through discussions with the City of Yellowknife, their records do not show any such apartment units in such buildings being demolished or otherwise made unavailable.

Figure 21: Housing Types, Categories Combined (Statistics Canada, 2021)



'Other' includes a rowhouse (890 units), apartment or flat in a duplex (310 units), semi-detached dwelling (195 units), and other single-attached dwelling (20 units).

Figure 22: Total Occupied Private Dwellings by Number of Bedrooms 2011–2021 (Statistics Canada)



	0-1 bedroom	2 bedrooms	3 bedrooms	4 or more bedrooms
2011	1,185	1,390	3,065	1,295
2016	1,095	1,560	2,895	1,580
2021	1,115	1,680	3,280	1,435

3.2.2 PERIOD OF CONSTRUCTION & MAINTENANCE CONDITION

It is important to understand the age and condition of the housing stock in a community because of the implications for maintenance cost, lifecycle, and livability.

The housing stock of Yellowknife is of a modest age, with about a third of housing units being constructed before 1980. Notably, a concerning proportion (10.6%) of housing units need major repairs. Mold, pests, and air quality are moderate issues.

DATA SUMMARY

- Of any 20-year period, most of the housing in Yellowknife was constructed between 1981 and 2000, at 3,250 units, or 43% of the total housing stock.
- 27% of the housing stock in Yellowknife was constructed between 1961 and 1980, a considerable amount of housing at an age that becomes susceptible to requiring major repairs or may have other challenges for livability.
- Relatively few units (only 4%) were built in Yellowknife before 1960, and a relatively large proportion (43%, compared to 25% across Canada) were constructed between 1981 and 2000.
- 75% of purpose-built rental units in the city were built before 2000; since 2000, 513 new purpose-built rental units have been constructed (CMHC Rental Market Survey).
- From 2016 to 2021, 455 dwelling units of any type were constructed.
- Of all occupied dwellings in Yellowknife, 795 units, or 10.6%, have major repairs needed, notably greater than the Canadian national figure of 6.1%.
- The NWT Bureau of Statistics has 2019 data for Yellowknife about whether specific housing problems have been experienced by a household within the last twelve months; in Yellowknife, 4.3% had mould, 4.8% had pests, and 10.6% had poor indoor air quality. Note that these rates in Yellowknife are lower than the rates of almost every region of NWT in most categories, often to a high degree.

Figure 23: Total Housing Stock by Period of Construction (20-Year Periods), Yellowknife vs Canada (Statistics Canada)

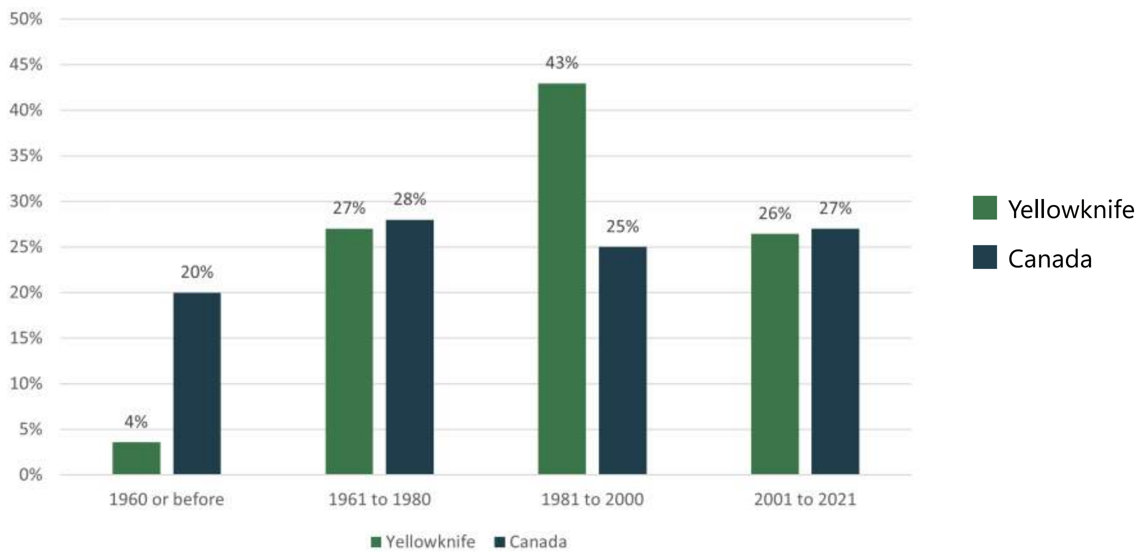
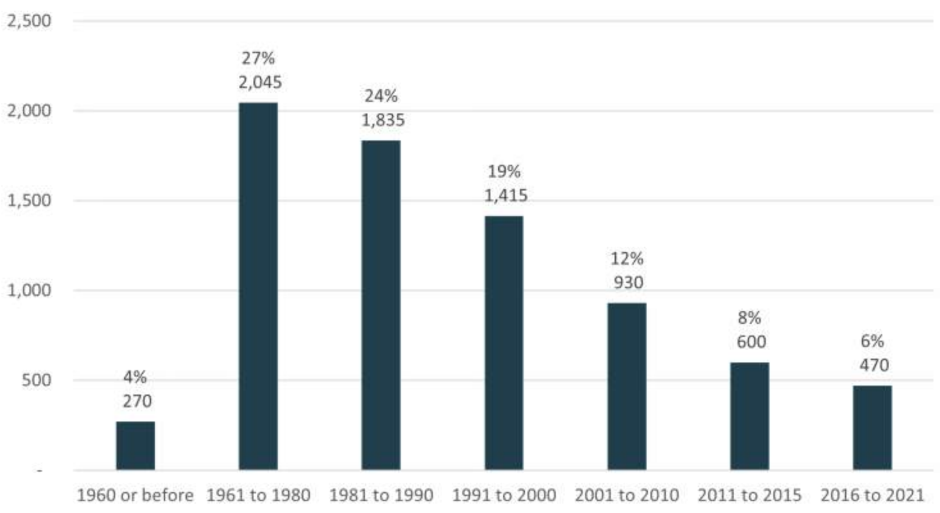


Figure 24: Total Housing Stock by Period of Construction, 5- to 20-Year Periods (Statistics Canada)



3.2.3 MARKET ANALYSIS AND VACANCY RATES

Healthy vacancy rates are generally considered to be between 3- and 5%.

Comparatively, the average price to buy a dwelling in Yellowknife is low but has increased substantially in the last 15 years. The cost to rent is high, with average vacancy rates currently on the low end of healthy, and the vacancy rates for bachelor and 1-bedroom units are under 3%.

DATA SUMMARY

BUYING/OWNING:

- Unless otherwise noted, real estate sales prices are sourced from the NWT Real Estate Association.
- As of 2021, the median value of an owned private dwelling was $448,000 (average value of $494,000), which is lower than the median dwelling values of Canada, Whitehorse, and Iqaluit at $472,000, $500,000, and $600,000, respectively.
- For a single-detached dwelling in 2024, the average sale price was $624,000, a slight decline from 2023.
- The average value of owned private dwellings in Yellowknife has risen from $302,750 in 2006 to $494,000 in 2021, an increase of 63%, or $12,750 a year.
- Between 2020 and 2024, there were an average of 274 sales per year, based on the Yellowknife real estate market data portal.
- As of August 2024, the average sale price for a 0 to 1-bedroom dwelling was $270,925, and for a 5+ bedroom dwelling was $717,991 (CMHC market data).

Table 3: Value of Private Owned Dwellings (Statistics Canada, 2021)

	YELLOWKNIFE	CANADA	WHITEHORSE	IQALUIT
Median	$448,000	$472,000	$500,000	$600,000
Average	$494,000	$618,500	$521,000	$604,000

Figure 25: Average Value of Owned Private Dwellings 2006–2021 (Statistics Canada)

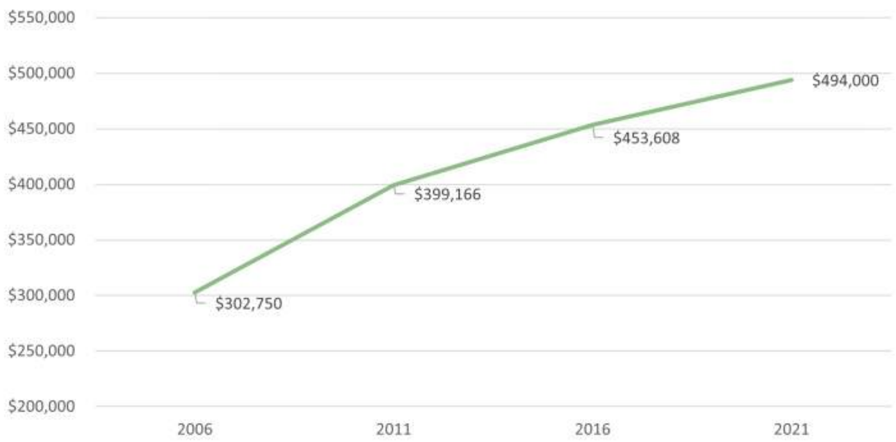


Figure 26: Average Sale Price of Dwellings Based on Number of Bedrooms 2021–2024 (CMHC Rental Market Data, 2023)

Renting:

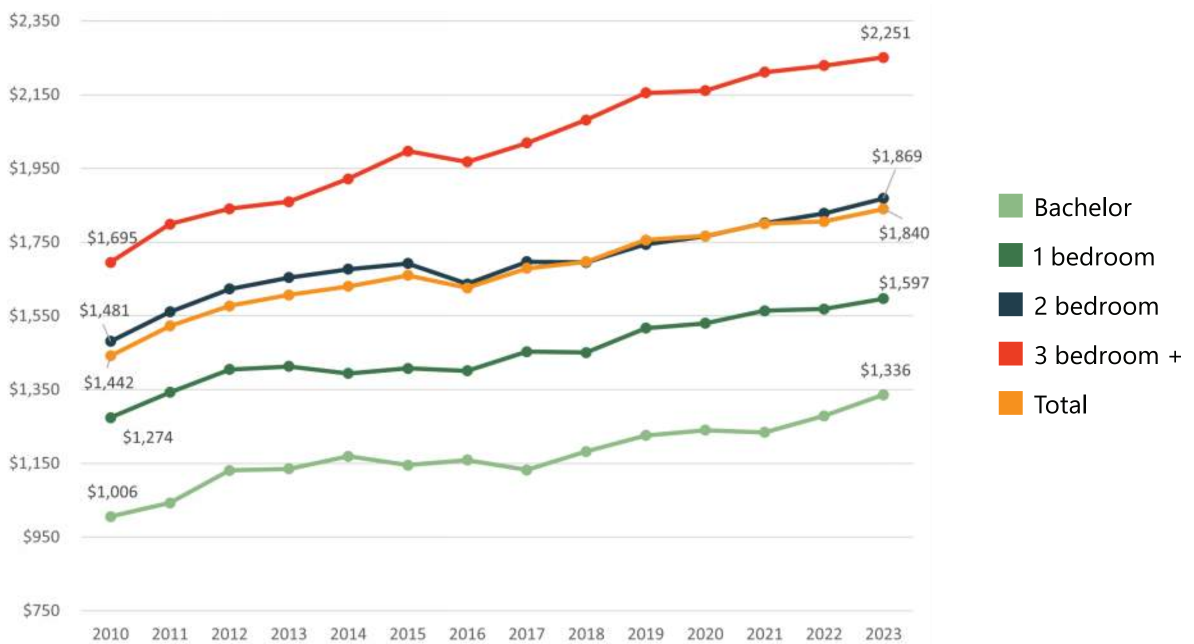
- The average monthly shelter costs (i.e., rent and utilities) for rented dwellings in Yellowknife was $1,804 in 2021, higher than in Canada, Whitehorse, and Iqaluit ($1,209, $1,474 and $1,550, respectively).
- Based on 2023 CMHC rental market data, the average cost of rent was:
  - Total: $1,840
  - Bachelor: $1,336
  - 3 bedrooms or more: $2,251
- From 2010 to 2023, rental vacancy rates fluctuated from 0.9% to 5.6%, 3.4% in 2023 (CMHC rental market data, 2023).
- As of 2023, there is the lowest rental vacancy in bachelor units (2.1%) and the highest in 3-bedroom units (3.7%) (CMHC rental market data).
- Short-term rental data has never been collected by Statistics Canada or the NWT Bureau of Statistics. Conducting a point-in-time desktop analysis of the postings by Airbnb Inc. in October 2024, the following was found:
  - There were 140 postings
    - 57 were for rooms
    - 78 were for the entire home
  - Prices ranged from $75–$756 per night
- The majority were priced $100–$300 per night

Table 4: Monthly Shelter Costs for Rented Dwellings (Statistics Canada, 2021)

	YELLOWKNIFE	CANADA	WHITEHORSE	IQALUIT
Median	$ 1,820	$ 1,070	$ 1,400	$ 1,500
Average	$ 1,804	$ 1,209	$ 1,474	$ 1,550

Figure 27: Rental Vacancy Rates 2010–2023 (CMHC Rental Market Data, 2023)

Figure 28: Average Monthly Rents of Purpose-Built Rentals 2010–2023 (CMHC Rental Market Data, 2023)



3.3 Development Trends

Housing completions from 2018 to 2023 have been significantly less than from 2012 to 2017. From 2017 to 2022, most development approvals were issued for single-detached dwellings. Note that approvals for multi-unit developments only count as one approval, even for multiple units. There were few housing starts or completions in 2023, but most housing units started, completed or under construction in 2024 are apartments or rowhouses.

Understanding the amount and type of new development occurring in a community is vital for understanding how the housing landscape will change in the short term and if those short-term changes are well-suited for the community's medium- and long-term needs.

DATA SUMMARY

- From January 2017 to August 2022, 272 residential development approvals have been issued by the City of Yellowknife, or approximately 48 approvals a year.
  - 55% were issued for single-detached dwellings
  - 22% were issued for expansions
  - 16% were issued for secondary suites
  - 8% were issued for duplexes or multi-unit dwellings
- Based on a 'New Housing Construction Activity' report by CMHC, there were only three housing starts and four housing completions in 2023, but year-to-date, there have been 93 housing unit starts—mostly apartment and row house units—and 47 housing unit completions in 2024 (all as apartment units).
- In the 2nd quarter of 2024, there are 104 units under construction (CMHC New Housing Construction Activity report):
  - Apartment: 60
  - Rowhouse: 31
  - Semi-detached: 2
  - Single-detached: 11
- A total of 1,108 dwelling units were constructed from 2010 to 2023.
- From 2012 to 2017, completions ranged from 99 to 151 units per year, compared to 2018 to 2023, when there have been only 15 to 55 housing completions a year.
  - The spike in completions in this time may be related to increases in mining activity during that time, such as the opening of the Gahcho Kué diamond mine in 2016; City of Yellowknife staff explain that the spike differs from typical development activities and completions.
- City of Yellowknife staff have further explained that current land availability for new development is critically low. New areas may be developed through land transfers in areas adjacent to existing municipal servicing. Otherwise, redevelopment and infill of existing areas will be expected as a development trend as the most feasible way to create new housing units.
- From 2017 to 2022, 42 demolition permits were received by the City of Yellowknife, for an average of seven per year.
- Excluding secondary suites and existing rental dwellings, as of late 2024:
  - 86 new apartment units have become available since 2023
  - 98 units in multi-family buildings are under construction
  - 247 units have been approved under development permits

Table 5: Yellowknife Residential Development Approvals January 2017 to August 2022

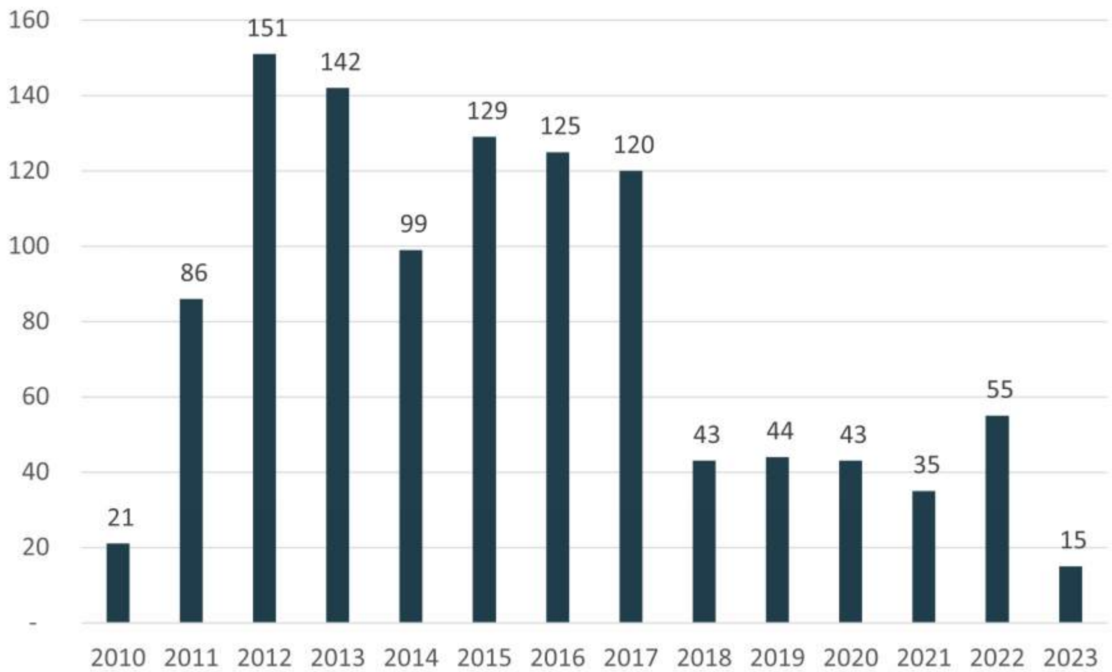
TYPE OF UNIT	APPROVALS ISSUED	PERCENTAGE
Single-detached dwelling	149	55%
Duplex dwelling	10	4%
Multi-unit dwelling	10	4%
Secondary suite (detached)	13	5%
Secondary suite (attached)	29	11%
Addition or expansion	61	22%
Total	**272**	**100%**

Source: City of Yellowknife (Analysis of Cityview entries)

Table 6: Demolition Permits Received Annually 2017–2022

YEAR	DEMOLITION PERMITS RECEIVED
2017	2
2018	2
2019	13
2020	8
2021	7
2022	10
Total	**42**

Figure 29: Housing Unit Completions 2010–2023 (CMHC Starts and Completions Survey, 2023)



3.4 Affordability and Housing Insecurity

3.4.1 CORE HOUSING NEED AND AFFORDABILITY

As per Statistics Canada, subsidized housing includes rent geared to income, social housing, public housing, government-assisted housing, non-profit housing, rent supplements and housing allowances. '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 the household 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 (i.e., attains all three housing indicator thresholds).

In other words, a household is in Core Housing Need if at least one of the following is true and the median rent in the community is unaffordable for that household (i.e., more than 30% of the household income before tax), connotating that the household could not easily solve their situation by moving within the community to a unit that is both affordable and acceptable:

- The housing is not affordable because the household is paying more than 30% of pre-tax income on shelter costs (Note: The CMHC uses the same definition for housing affordability).
- The housing is not suitable because it has too few bedrooms for those living there.
- The housing is not adequate because major repairs are needed.

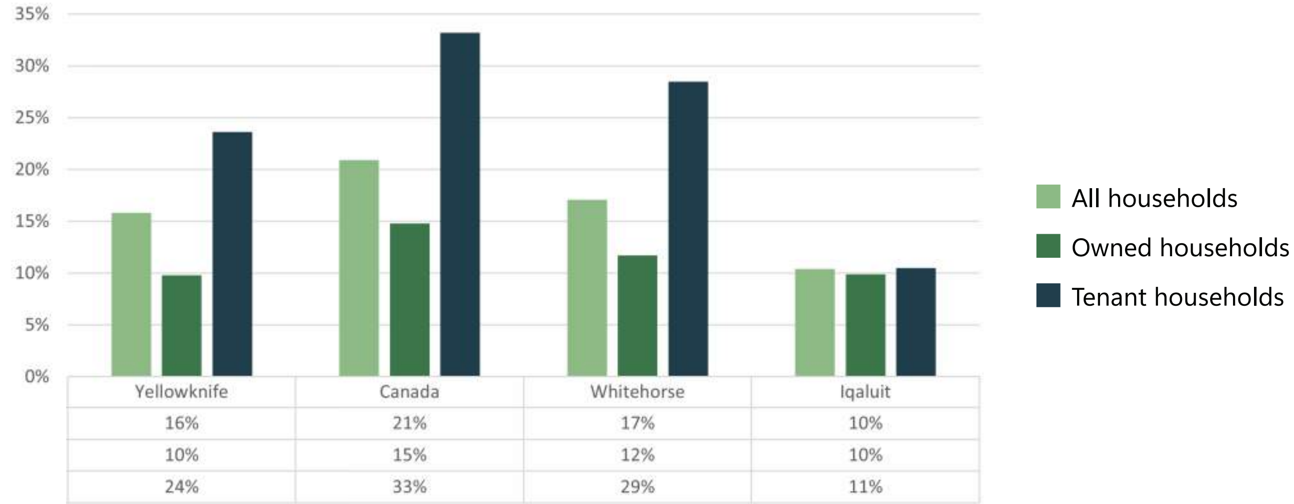
As is being experienced across Canada, Yellowknife has a concerning housing affordability issue. Renters in Yellowknife are nearly 2.5 times more likely to be facing housing affordability issues, and there is a significant deficit of affordable units for Indigenous households. Overall, 10% of Yellowknife households are in Core Housing Need, with disproportionate representation among lone-parent households and recent immigrants most critically.

DATA SUMMARY

Affordability

- As of 2021, 10% of owner households and 24% of tenant households in Yellowknife were spending more than 30% of their pre-tax household income on shelter costs.
  - These rates for Canada and Whitehorse were modestly higher in both categories.
  - Iqaluit had the same affordability rate of 10% for owners, but only 11% of renters spent over 30% of their income, notably less than in Yellowknife.
- For tenant and owner households combined, 1,185 households, or 16% of the total, are spending more than 30% of their pre-tax income on shelter costs.
- From 2011 to 2021 in Yellowknife, owners spending over 30% has decreased marginally, while renters spending over 30% has increased from 22% to 24%.
- As of 2021, 22% of tenant households in Yellowknife are in subsidized housing.
- This is similar to Whitehorse, which is higher than the Canadian figure of 12% but lower than Iqaluit, which has an exceptionally high figure of 80% of tenants in subsidized housing.
- Indigenous households in Yellowknife have a total affordable housing deficit of 295 units (2021 HART data).
- There is a total affordable housing deficit of 760 units in Yellowknife, mostly for rental units (2021 HART data).
- Tenure-based Core Housing Need data is not available prior to 2021; however, based on the timing of the Census and on the Canada Emergency Relief Benefit (CERB) being distributed over this period, it is likely that CERB payments artificially depressed Core Housing Need rates in 2021 rather than affordability improving overall.

Figure 30: Unaffordability—Households Spending Over 30% of Pre-Tax Income on Shelter Costs (Statistics Canada, 2021)



	Yellowknife	Canada	Whitehorse	Iqaluit
All households	16%	21%	17%	10%
Owned households	10%	15%	12%	10%
Tenant households	24%	33%	29%	11%

Figure 31: Percent of Tenant Households in Subsidized Housing (Statistics Canada, 2021)

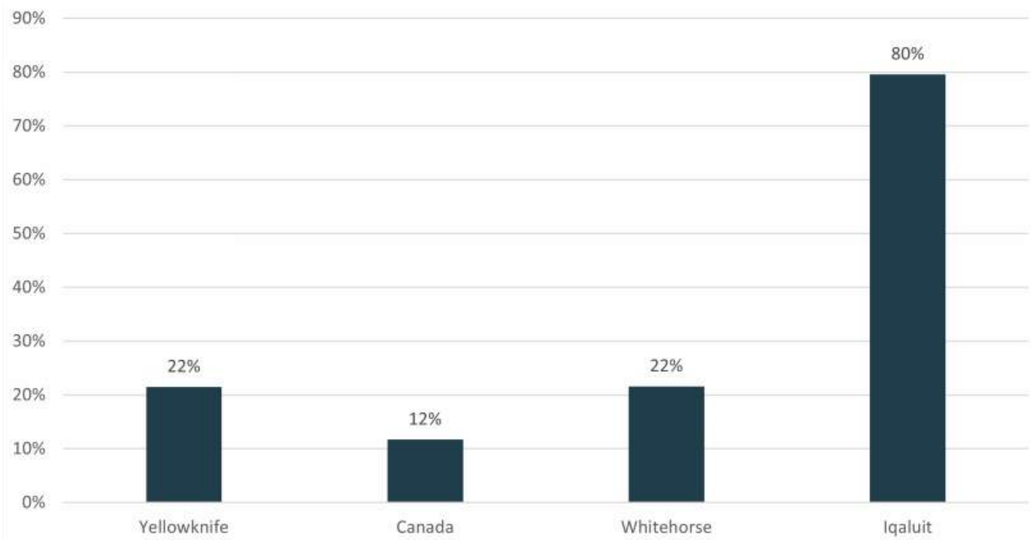


Table 7: Income Categories and Affordable Shelter Costs (HART Data, 2021)

INCOME CATEGORY HH = Household; AMHI = Area Median Household Income	% OF TOTAL HHS	ANNUAL HH INCOME	AFFORDABLE SHELTER COST (2020 CAD$)
Area Median Household Income		$147,000	$3,675
Very Low Income (20% or under of AMHI)	2.64%	<= $29,400	<= $735
Low Income (21% to 50% of AMHI)	14.94%	$29,400 - $73,500	$735 - $1,838
Moderate Income (51% to 80% of AMHI)	18.53%	$73,500 - $117,600	$1,838 - $2,940
Median Income (81% to 120% of AMHI)	24.48%	$117,600 - $176,400	$2,940 - $4,410
High Income (121% and more of AMHI)	39.42%	>= $176,401	>= $4,411

Table 8: Affordable Housing Deficit for Indigenous Households (HART Data, 2021)

INCOME CATEGORY (MAX AFFORDABLE SHELTER COST)	1 PERSON	2 PERSON	3 PERSON	4 PERSON	5+ PERSON	TOTAL
Very Low Income ($735)	60	0	0	0	0	60
Low Income ($1838)	55	45	55	30	30	215
Moderate Income ($2940)	0	0	0	0	20	20
Median Income ($4410)	0	0	0	0	0	0
High Income (>$4410)	0	0	0	0	0	0
Total	**115**	**45**	**55**	**30**	**50**	**295**

Table 9: Affordable Housing Deficit Based on Tenure (HART Data, 2021)

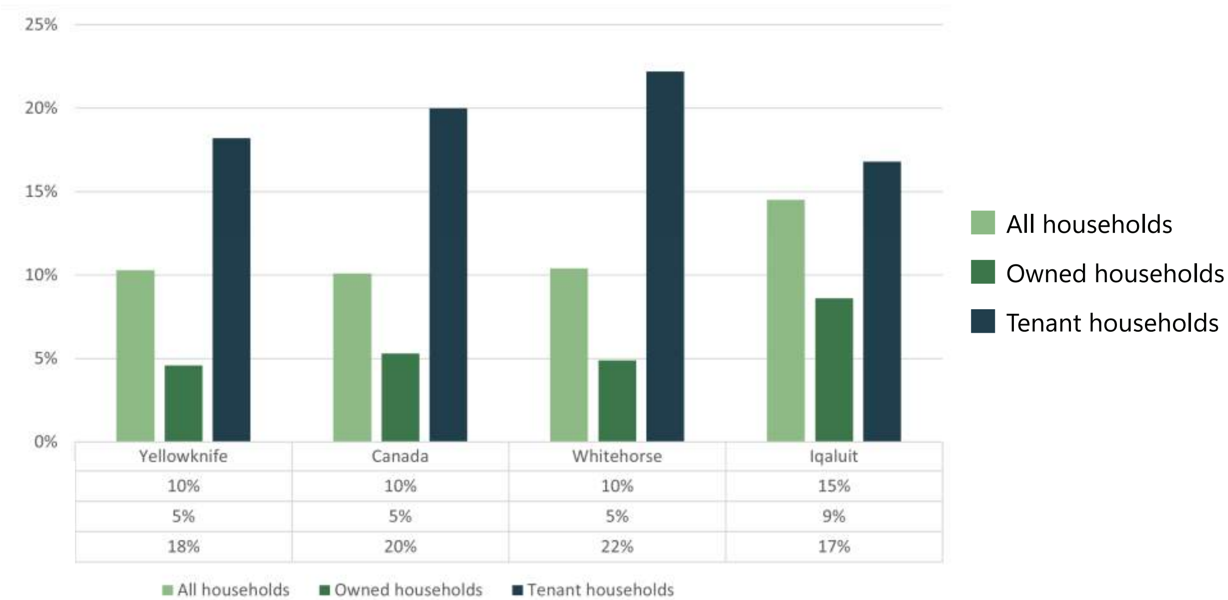
INCOME CATEGORY (MAX AFFORDABLE SHELTER COST)	OWNER HOUSEHOLDS	RENTER HOUSEHOLDS	TOTAL
Very Low Income ($735)	25	105	130
Low Income ($1838)	130	400	530
Moderate Income ($2940)	30	70	100
Median Income ($4410)	0	0	0
High Income (>$4410)	0	0	0
Total	**185**	**575**	**760**

Core Housing Need

- 10% of households in Yellowknife are in Core Housing Need. Comparably, Yellowknife is similar to Canada and Whitehorse and experiences less Core Housing Need than Iqaluit.
- Within Yellowknife, Core Housing Need is being experienced significantly more by tenants than owners at 18% of tenant households compared to 5% of owner households.
- Most households in Core Housing Need struggle with:
  - Affordability (80%) – over 30% of household income
  - Adequacy (24%) – major repairs needed
  - Suitability (23%) – too few bedrooms
- The Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART) from the University of British Columbia provides further data regarding Core Housing Need.

- Certain subsets of people are disproportionately in Core Housing Need. For example, 28% of lone-parent households are in Core Housing Need, which is higher than 10% of households being in Core Housing Need across the total population. Groups that are disproportionately in Core Housing Need by total percentage in Core Housing Need (out of 100% for that group) above the Yellowknife average (HART, 2021):
  - Lone-parent households (28%)
  - Recent immigrants (21%)
  - Renters (18%)
  - One-person households (18%)
  - Senior-led households (18%)
  - Indigenous people (16%)
  - Women (13%, compared to men: 8%)
- There were also 270 Yellowknife households experiencing Extreme Core Housing Need in 2021, meaning they are spending more than 50% of income on shelter costs. Of these 270 households, the majority are renters, at 78%.
- Most households in Core Housing Need with a very low income are 1- to 2-person households; most households in Core Housing Need with a moderate income are 4+ person households (HART, 2021).
- Of households in Core Housing Need, those led by people over 65 years old and Indigenous people have the highest portions of 'very low income', which is an annual household income below $29,000 as per HART's Area Median Household Income categorization (HART, 2021).

Figure 32: Core Housing Need by Tenure and Place (Statistics Canada, 2021)



	Yellowknife	Canada	Whitehorse	Iqaluit
All households	10%	10%	10%	15%
Owned households	5%	5%	5%	9%
Tenant households	18%	20%	22%	17%

Figure 33: Percentage of Households in Core Housing NeedCore Housing Need, by Income Category and Household Size, 2021, Yellowknife (HART Ddata, 2021)

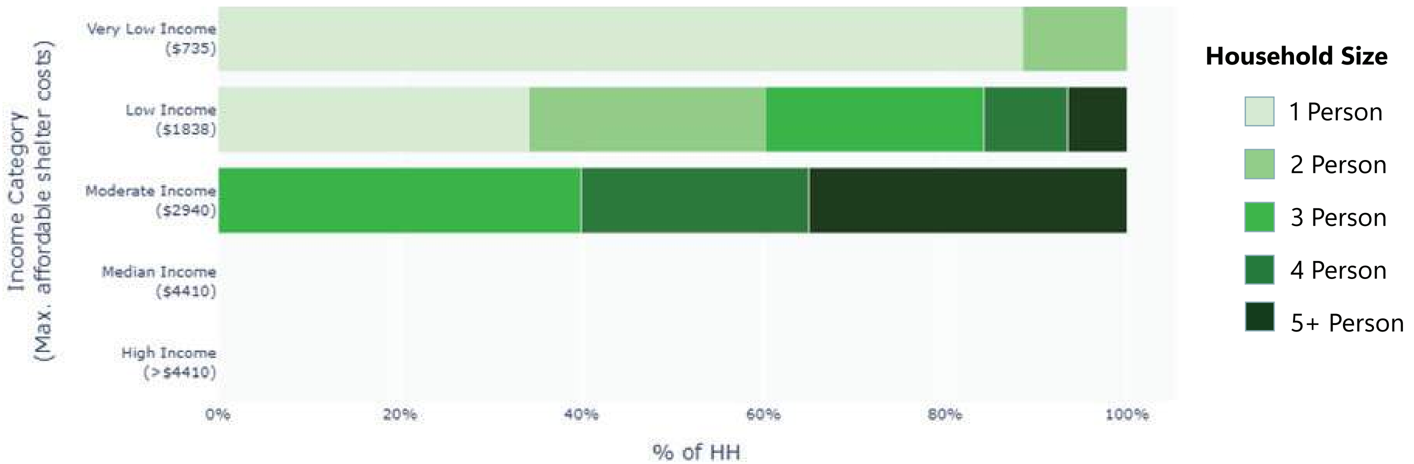
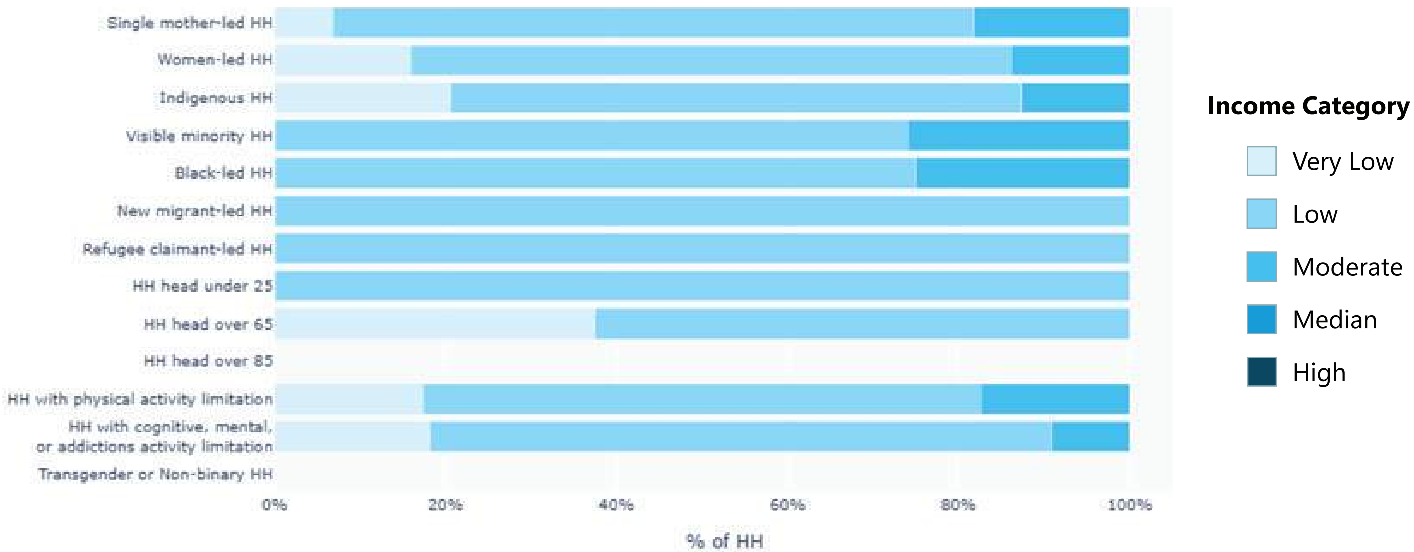


Figure 34: Percentage of Households in Core Housing Need by Priority Population and Income Category (HART Data, 2021)



3.4.2 HOMELESSNESS AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

In 2021, the City of Yellowknife, with the NWT Bureau of Statistics, conducted its third Point-in-Time (PiT) Homeless Count, subject to methodological limitations. The Canadian Observatory on Homelessness describes homelessness as the situation of an individual, family, or community without stable, safe, permanent, appropriate housing or the immediate prospect means and ability to acquire it. Along the continuum, there are four main categories of homelessness: unsheltered, emergency sheltered, provisionally accommodated, and at risk of homelessness.

There is serious concern for the many individuals experiencing homelessness in Yellowknife, virtually all of whom want permanent housing. Indigenous people are gravely overrepresented among the homeless population, and there are a concerning number of children/youth. Homeless people report needing services for addictions, medical conditions, and mental health to support them. Many organizations are having a positive impact, but barrier-free housing along the housing spectrum is in considerable need.

DATA SUMMARY

- Select findings of the 2021 Point-in-Time Homeless Count:
  - 312 individuals were experiencing homelessness, with 51% chronically so
  - 1 in 5 were children/youth or dependents
  - 94% said they want permanent housing
  - 62% said their parent(s) attended residential school
  - 91.5% reported having an Indigenous identity
  - 93% migrated to Yellowknife
    - Home community: 66% NWT, 11% Nunavut, 8% Alberta
  - Services respondents reported to need:
    - 38.5%: addiction and substance use
    - 17.5: ongoing medical conditions
    - 16%: mental health
  - The most common reasons reported for becoming homeless: low income, conflict with spouse for females and substance abuse for males

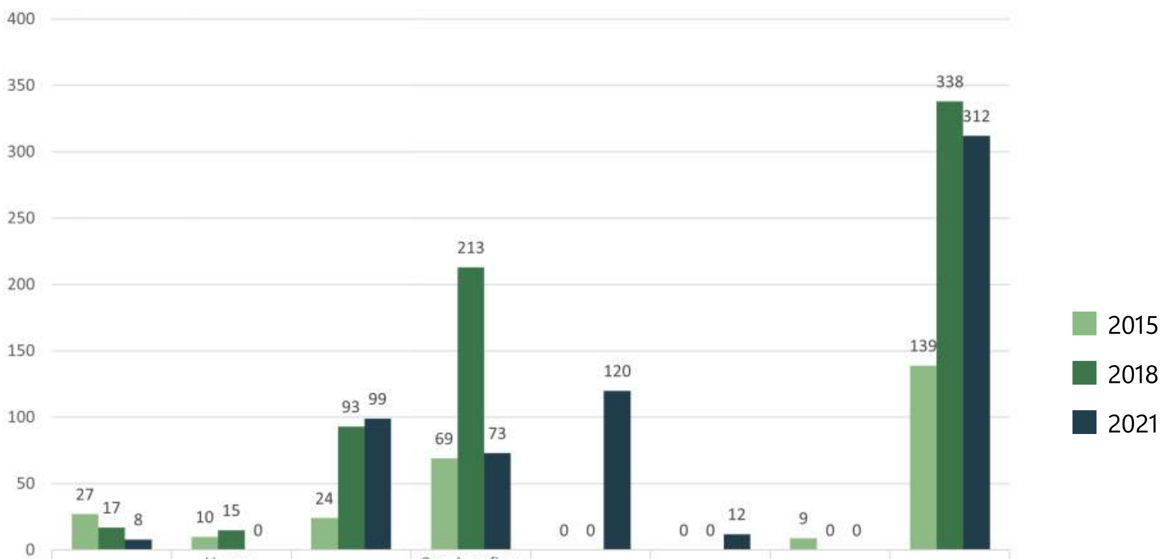
- The 2024 Point-in-Time Homeless Count report was not published at the time of this report being written, but the preliminary finding was that 334 homeless individuals were counted in 2024.
- Point-in-Time (PiT) counts from 2015 and 2018 found 139 and 338 homeless individuals, respectively.
- Yellowknife's total population of 20,340 in 2021 means that 1.5% were experiencing homelessness, based on the PiT count.
- For comparison, a PiT count in Whitehorse from 2023 counted 197 people experiencing homelessness.
- Many organizations are making efforts to support unhoused and vulnerable populations, including:
  - Salvation Army – transitional housing for individuals, emergency shelter for individuals
  - Home Base – youth housing, emergency shelter for individuals
  - Yellowknife Women's Society – women's shelter, housing first for individuals and families
  - YMCA – transitional and overnight shelter, women's housing
  - NWT Disabilities Council – day centre, sobering centre
  - Arctic Indigenous Wellness Foundation – counselling, meals, cultural supports
  - Street Outreach – providing basic items, connecting people with services
- During a 2024 PiT Count in Yellowknife, a total of 253 individual beds were counted, 92 of which are emergency shelter beds, and 161 are transitional housing beds. Note that additional beds for families may be available but were not reported in the data
- Home Base and Street Outreach, among others, are administered by the City of Yellowknife through the Yellowknife Community Advisory Board on Homelessness; funding is received from the Government of Canada's Reaching Home program.
- Highlights from the City of Yellowknife's Everyone is HOME: Yellowknife's 10-Year Plan to End Homelessness (2017):
  - Common reasons for people to relocate to Yellowknife from Indigenous communities include access to services, seeking to escape trauma in their home communities, and overall improvement in well-being for themselves and their children.
  - Most smaller NWT communities are seeing population decreases. While people leaving are moving to other territories and provinces, some also migrate into Yellowknife.
  - The link between urbanization and homelessness has been made globally and in Canada. In Yellowknife, this link is further suggested by the 91% of 2015 Homeless Point-In-Time Count respondents who were not originally from this community. The additional dynamics at play in the NWT involve the significant over-representation of Indigenous people, the flows from small rural communities with poor housing conditions and access to services or opportunities as one of the ongoing effects of colonialism.
  - Those who are visibly homeless are, however, the tip of the iceberg—research indicates that most people experiencing homelessness are in unsuitable housing, couch surfing, or in unsafe situations in 'hidden homelessness.'

Table 10: Organizations in Yellowknife Providing Transitional Housing or Emergency Shelters 2024

ORGANIZATION	PROGRAM/PLACE	TYPE	INDIVIDUALS OR FAMILIES	INDIVIDUALS ONLY: BEDS*
Yellowknife Women's Society	Housing First	Transitional housing	Individuals	45
Home Base	Youth shelter	Emergency shelter	Individuals	13
Home Base	Dorms and youth shelter	Transitional housing	Individuals	17
GNWT	Sobering centre	Emergency shelter	Individuals	44
YWCA	Allison McAteer House	Emergency shelter	Both	5
Yellowknife Women's Society	Women's centre	Transitional housing	Both	26
Salvation Army	Emergency shelter	Emergency shelter	Individuals	30
Yellowknife Women's Society	Spruce Bough	Transitional housing	Both	25
Salvation Army	Bailey House	Transitional housing	Individuals	32
Salvation Army	Withdrawal Management Services	Transitional housing	Individuals	11
YWCA	Violence Against Women Shelter	Transitional housing	Families	5
			TOTAL	**253**

*Capacity on the night of the Point-in-Time Count Data provided by City of Yellowknife staff

Figure 35: Yellowknife Point-in-Time Homelessness Counts
(City of Yellowknife and NWT Bureau of Statistics, 2015, 2018, 2021)



Unsheltered	Unsure (Multiple Responses)	Emergency Shelter	Couchsurfing, Supported Living or Hotel	Transitional Housing	Other	No Answer	Total
27	10	24	69	0	0	9	139
17	15	93	213	0	0	0	338
8	0	99	73	120	12	0	312

Seniors Supportive Housing:

The proportion of seniors age 65 and up living in Yellowknife has more than doubled between 2016 and 2021. There were close to 1,600 residents above the age of 65 living in the city as of 2021. With a growing senior population, it is important to understand the current provision of supportive senior housing and other supports available.

DATA SUMMARY

- The City of Yellowknife provides property owners 65 or older with property tax relief of up to $2,000 per year on their primary residences.
  - As of 2021, approximately 930 households were being maintained by someone over 65. If each of these households were to qualify for the full property tax relief offered by the City of Yellowknife, it would reduce property taxes collected by $1.86 million.
- The Government of NWT supports senior-led households through the Seniors Aging in Place Funding, available to residents 60 years of age and older to complete home repairs, offset energy costs, and support seniors to live independently at home for as long as possible. This program provides forgivable one-year loans of up to $15,000.
  - An additional $50,000 forgivable loan is also available to seniors in the NWT to complete necessary health and safety-related home repairs, subject to income qualifications.
  - Finally, funding is also available to residents of all ages to improve the accessibility of homes for people with a disability to support continued independent living, providing a forgivable loan of up to $50,000 to complete modifications.
- AVENS is a 10-acre care campus located proximal to downtown Yellowknife that provides a range of services for seniors, including long-term and dementia care. There are currently 29 long-term care beds, 28 dementia care beds, and 32 independent housing units available.
  - The current mix of independent housing units is 24 1-bedroom units (AVEN Court) and eight 2-bedroom units (AVEN Ridge).
  - AVEN Court units are rented at a subsidized rate due to a partnership with NWT Housing Corporation, with a Core Net Income Threshold set at $60,400.
  - AVEN Ridge units are not subsidized, and rent is set at market rates.
- AVENS notes that applicants can be on waitlists for several years before a unit becomes available due to limited unit numbers, with no guarantees on when units may become available.

- AVENS is currently completing a significant expansion of its facility, adding 102 units offering both independent housing and supportive living services. This expansion will feature 92 1-bedroom units and ten 2-bedroom units that include kitchen, dining, laundry and communal spaces.
  — This project received $33.7 million in funding from CMHC and an additional $5.1 million from the Government of the Northwest Territories.
- An additional twelve extended care beds are available at Stanton Territorial Hospital, the only Level Five Long Term Care facility in the Territory. This level of facility provides support to individuals with medically complex diagnoses, physical frailty, and/or cognitive deficits or require 24/7 nursing care.
- With growth in the City's senior population expected to continue, additional investment and effort will be needed to increase the availability of supportive and semi-independent living options.

4.0 Housing Projections

Population and housing projections are an important planning tool. Even though the future is unpredictable and projections have limitations, forecasting is an important way to plan for the future and achieve the best possible outcomes.

4.1 Methodology

- The most recent population projection released by the NWT Bureau of Statistics is adopted to derive the future population growth in the City of Yellowknife. Population projected by age group based on the historical age cohort change ratio for the 5-year age group (e.g., 0 to 4, 5 to 9, etc.) is also derived to provide a more refined picture of demographic structure, which is an important factor in determining household formation of different age groups in the future. The population by age cohort is projected up to 2035 using the Hamilton-Perry approach by applying the age-cohort change ratios. The age cohort change ratios of the most recent Census period (2016 to 2021) are adopted to reflect the more recent population trend. Then, the population by age cohort is standardized according to the NWT Bureau of Statistics projection.
- Household projection is then derived using 2021 household maintainer rates by age group household types. Tenure distribution was held constant in 2021. Note the reason for choosing the 2021 tenure distribution is that the proportion of rental tenure in 2006 is higher, therefore not factoring in the increasing trend in rental tenure.
- Number of bedrooms by household type projections are then derived based on Census 2021 figures on the distribution of households by household types and number of bedrooms.
- Anticipated households in Core Housing Need (CHN) are derived by historical averages of the proportion of households in CHN by tenure over the last four Census periods.

4.2 Population Projections

The population of Yellowknife is projected to continue to grow, albeit at a slower rate after 2024 than since 2021.

DATA SUMMARY

- Starting with 20,345 people in 2021, the population of Yellowknife is projected to be:
  - 21,597 by 2025
  - 22,095 by 2030
  - 22,403 by 2035
- Across the 14-year timeframe of 2021 to 2035, this represents a population increase of 10%.
  - Growth is projected to be greater between 2021 and 2025 than from 2025 to 2035.

Figure 36: Yellowknife Population Projection 2021–2035

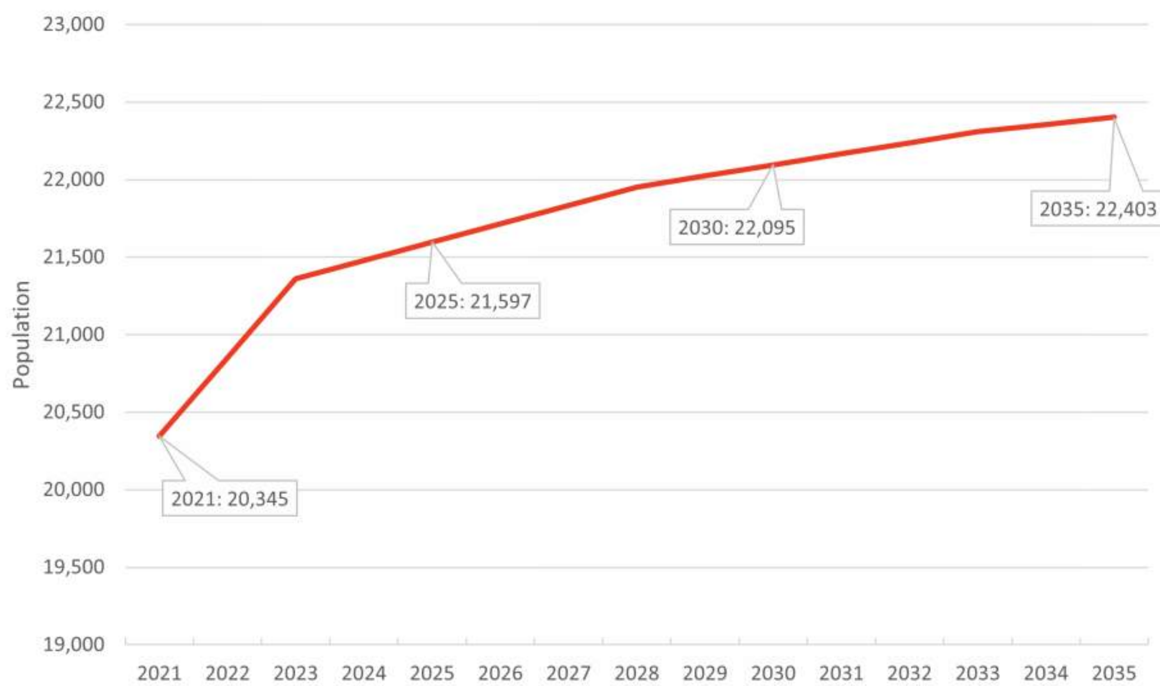
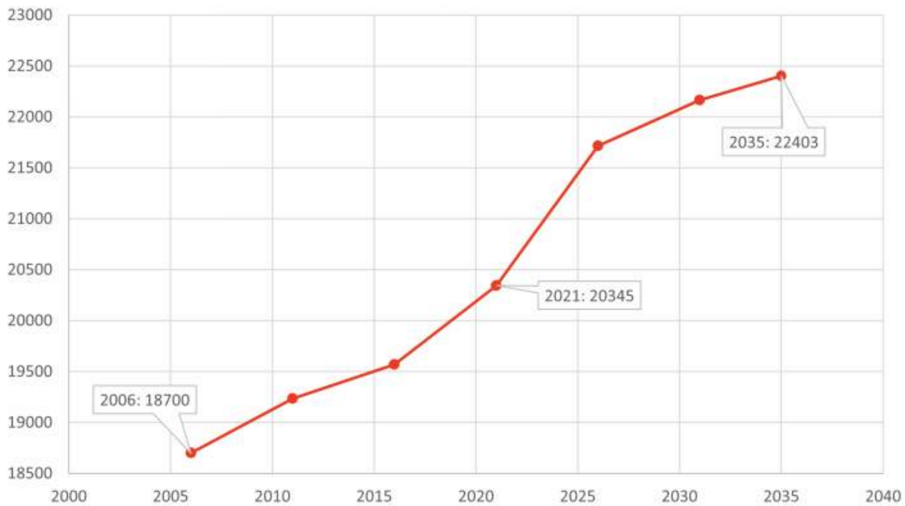


Table 11: Population Projection from Last Census Year 2021–2035

2021	10	**2026**	21,716	**2031**	22,166
2022	10	**2027**	21,834	**2032**	22,238
2023	13	**2028**	21,952	**2033**	22,309
2024	29	**2029**	22,023	**2034**	22,356
2025	61	**2030**	22,095	**2035**	22,403

Figure 37: Population: Past Census Data and Future Projection



4.3 Tenure & Household Characteristics

A 'household' refers to a person or group occupying the same dwelling. As per Statistics Canada, a 'census family' is defined as a married couple and the children, if any, of either and/or both spouses; a couple living common law and the children, if any, of either and/or both partners; or a parent of any marital status in a one-parent family with at least one child living in the same dwelling and that child or those children. All members of a particular census family live in the same dwelling. Children may be biological or adopted regardless of age or marital status as long as they live in the dwelling and do not have their married spouse, common-law partner or child living in the dwelling. Grandchildren living with their grandparent(s) but with no parents present also constitute a census family.

The number of households is projected to increase at a slower rate than the population, meaning a decrease in average household size. However, a smaller average household size means more units are required to house the same number of people. The proportion of renters to owners is projected to remain the same, and only minimal changes to the proportion of census families are expected.

DATA SUMMARY

- It is projected that the total number of households will increase from 7,520 in 2021 to 8,579 by 2035, representing an increase of 1,059 households, or 76 households a year, over that timeframe.
- The proportion of renters to owners is projected to remain the same from 2021 to 2035.
- The proportion of census family household types is expected to remain relatively similar from 2021 to 2035, but there is projected to be a slight proportional decrease among couples with children from 31% to 29%, and an increase among non-census families from 31% to 32%.
- The average household size is projected to decrease from 2.71 people per household in 2021 to 2.61 by 2035.

Figure 38: Total Households Projection 2021–2035

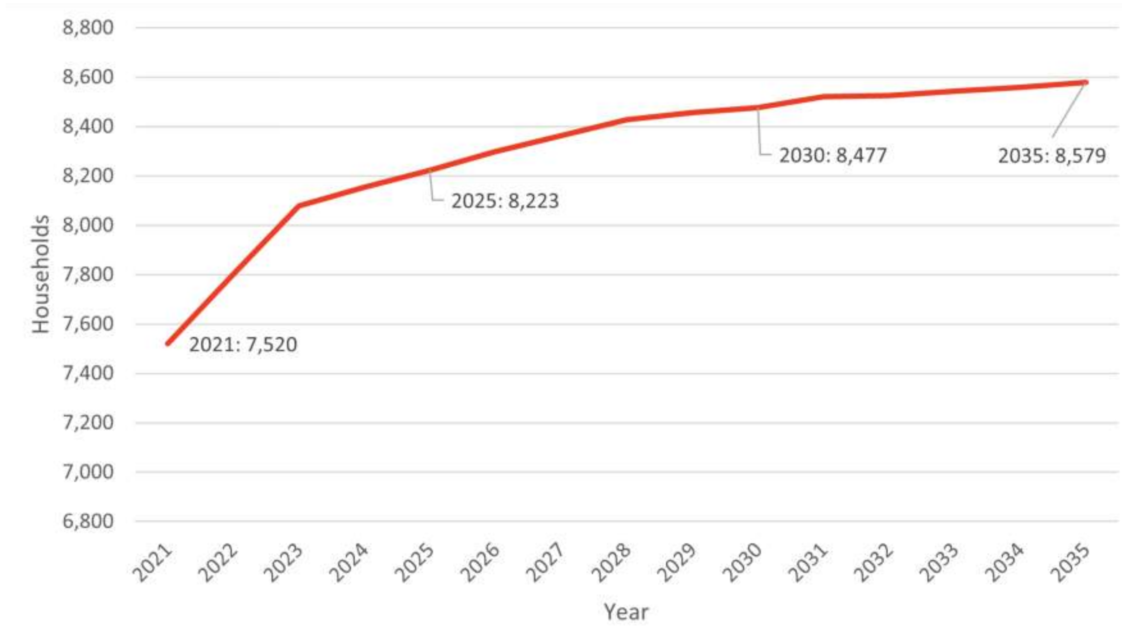


Figure 39: Household Tenure Projection 2021–2035

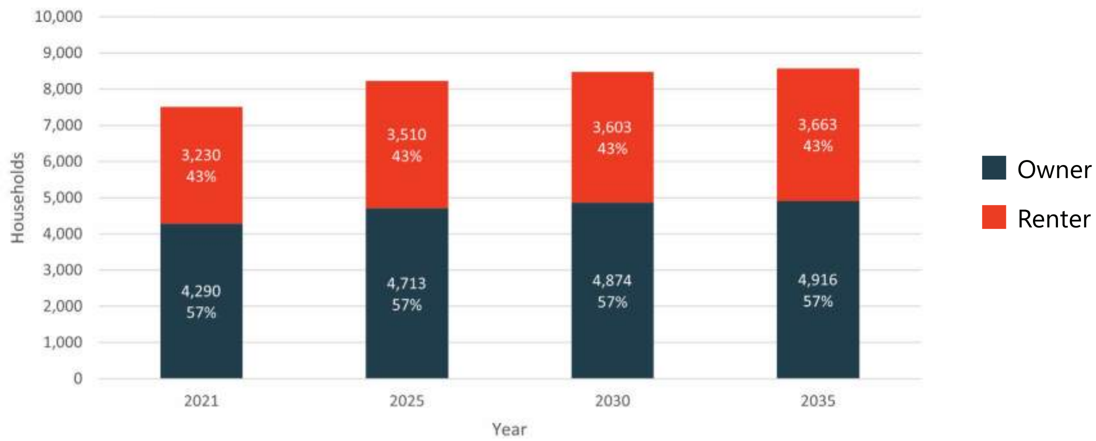


Figure 40: Household Type Projection 2021–2035

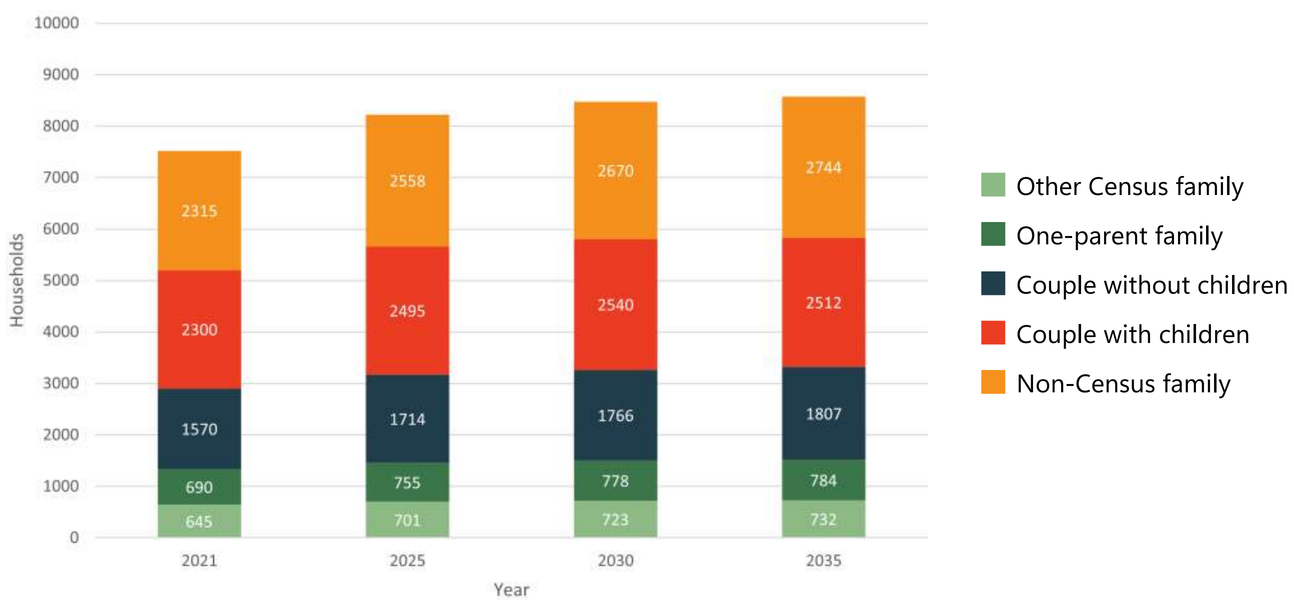
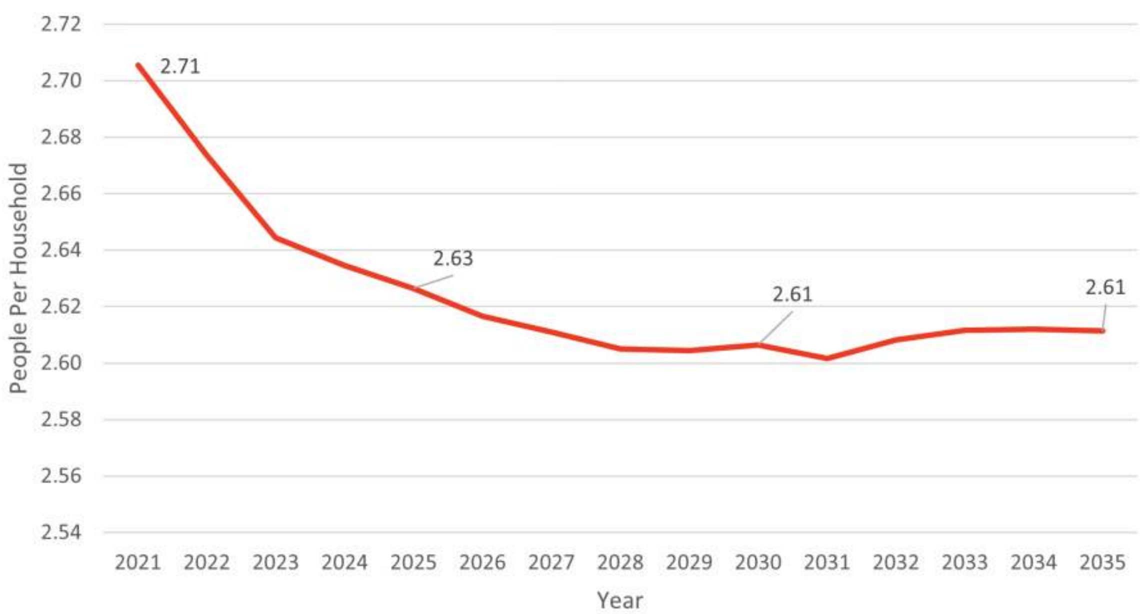


Table 12: Household Type Projection Percentages 2021–2035

HOUSEHOLD TYPE	2021	2025	2030	2035
Single-detached dwelling	9%	9%	9%	9%
Duplex dwelling	9%	9%	9%	9%
Multi-unit dwelling	21%	21%	21%	21%
Secondary suite (detached)	31%	30%	30%	29%
Secondary suite (attached)	31%	31%	31%	32%

Figure 41: Projected Average Household Size 2021–2035



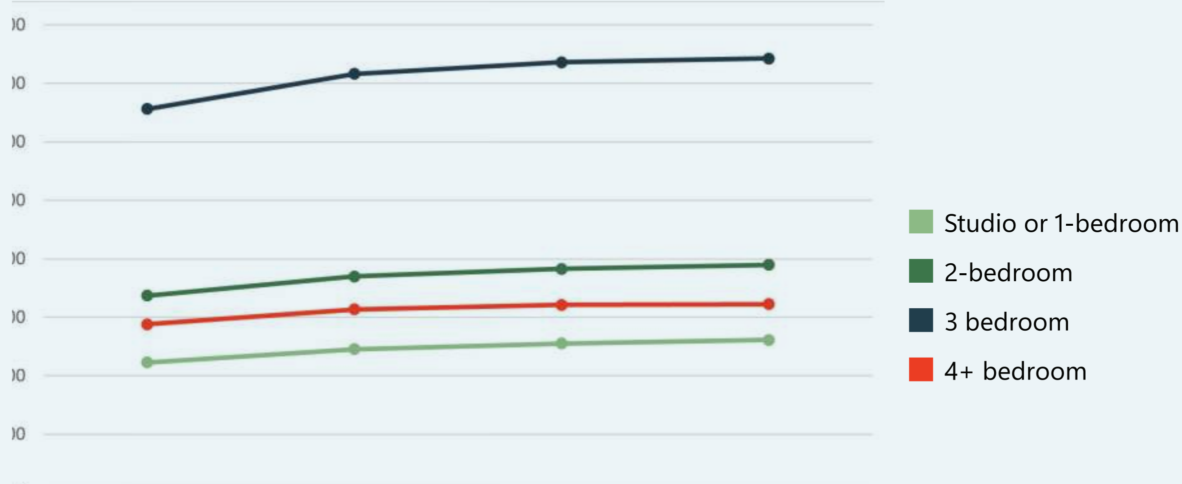
4.4 Projections by Bedroom Count

The 3-bedroom dwelling is expected to remain the most prevalent.

DATA SUMMARY

- Dwellings with three bedrooms are expected to remain the most common type of dwelling from 2021 to 2035, which considers rented and owned dwellings.
  - The number of 3-bedroom dwellings is projected to increase from 3,281 in 2021 to 3,712 in 2035.
- The ratio of dwellings with 1-, 2-, 3-, or 4+ bedrooms is expected to remain consistent over time.
- To accommodate projected growth by 2035, Yellowknife will require an additional:
  - 193 studio or one-bedroom units
  - 263 two-bedroom units
  - 431 three-bedroom units
  - 173 four-or-more bedroom units

Figure 42: Bedroom Type Projection 2021–2035



2021	2025	2030	2035
1114	1226	1275	1307
1686	1849	1914	1948
3281	3580	3681	3712
1439	1567	1607	1612

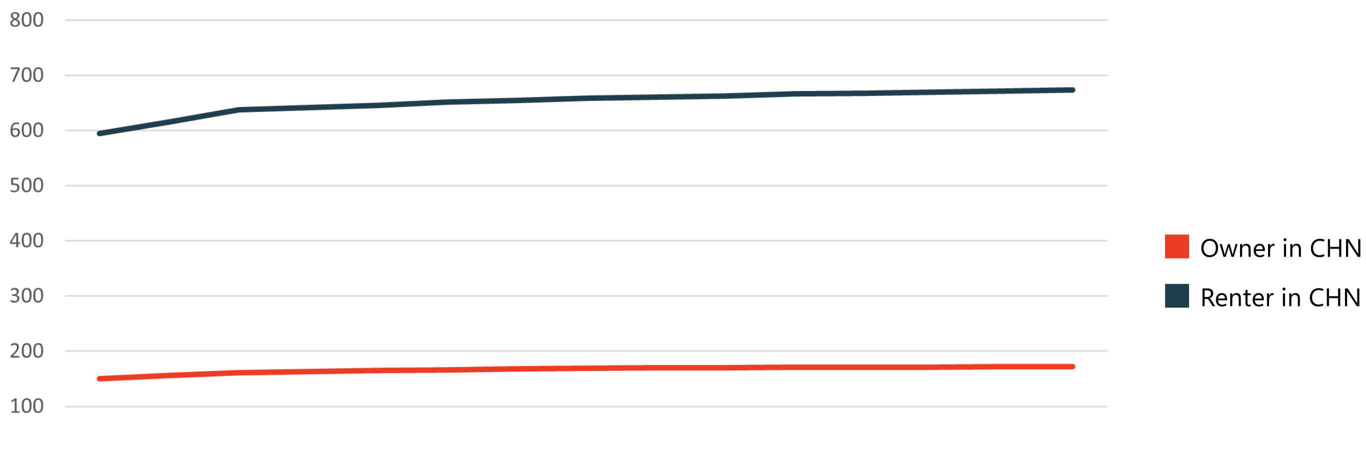
4.5 Core Housing Need and Non-Market Housing Need Projection

It is expected that renters will continue to be disproportionately in Core Housing Need, but the total proportion of households in Core Housing Need is projected to remain constant.

DATA SUMMARY

- As of 2021, there are 744 households in Core Housing Need based on Statistics Canada data.
  - This includes 594 tenant households and 150 owned households.
- By 2035, it is projected that there will be 846 households in Core Housing Need, an increase of 102 households from 2021.
  - This includes 674 tenant households and 172 owned households.
- Considering all household types, the percentage of households in Core Housing Need is expected to remain at approximately 10% over time.
- Core Housing Need can be used as an approximation for the number of non-market housing units needed. HART data says there is an affordable housing deficit of 760 units, slightly higher than the Statistics Canada figure of households in Core Housing Need. So, depending on the data source and methodology, there is a need for 744 to 760 non-market units as of 2021. Note: non-market housing is a general term that includes various subsidy levels.
- Based on the projections above, the deficit of non-market housing units could reach 846 units by 2035. However, more data would be needed to estimate the number of units required under the umbrella of non-market housing.
  - Recalling that there could be 8,579 households in total by 2035, 10% of households will need to be in non-market housing, above the 22% of households currently in subsidized housing as of 2021.

Figure 43: Projected Number of Households in Core Housing Need (CHN) by Tenure Type 2021–2035



2021	2022	2023	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	2030	2031	2032	2033	2034	2035
150	156	161	163	165	166	168	169	170	170	171	171	171	172	172
594	616	637	642	646	651	655	659	661	663	666	667	670	671	674

5.0 Community Engagement

This section includes highlights from the 'What We Heard' report that has been prepared, and can be found in Appendix B.

Yellowknife is grappling with complex housing challenges, including a severe shortage of affordable homes, high construction costs, and limited developable land. These issues are compounded by geographical constraints, rising costs of living, and a lack of accessible housing for seniors and people with disabilities. The city's housing crisis also affects its ability to attract and retain skilled workers, while the unhoused and at-risk populations continue to face a shortage of supportive housing. Additionally, strained relationships with Yellowknife's Indigenous neighbours, particularly the Yellowknives Dene First Nations, have hampered efforts to collaboratively address land development and housing issues.

5.1 Overview of Engagement

A comprehensive Engagement Strategy was developed in partnership with the City in August 2024. In the process of creating the strategy, the following guiding objectives were identified:

1. To educate and inform the public and stakeholders about the project and overarching housing concepts/ definitions.
2. To gather perspectives on Yellowknife's housing needs, gaps, barriers, and opportunities from the public and stakeholders.
3. To provide meaningful engagement opportunities for stakeholders to influence and shape the development of the City's Housing Strategy.
4. To use housing data and public input to inform relevant, feasible, and realistic implementation actions tailored to the City's needs.

In total, 20 stakeholders were engaged. Conversations were primarily guided by participant dialogue, with a list of prepared questions and a factsheet to prompt and encourage discussion.

Table 13: Stakeholders Engaged in Focus Groups 2024

Rotary Club	Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce	Crown-Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs
NWT Senior's Society	Yellowknife Co-Op	Century 21 Real Estate
Yellowknife Education District No.1	City of Yellowknife Homelessness Specialist	Midwest Property Management
NWT Community Services Corp	Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce	Visiting Civilian/Drop-in – City Engineer, Port Alberni
Home Base Youth Shelter	Housing NWT	Commercial NDS
Government of NWT – Economic Development Department, Giant Mine Remediation	Government of the NWT – Environment and Climate Change Department, Giant Mine Remediation	Government of NWT – Mental Wellness and Addictions Recovery Division
Colliers Project Leaders	Habitat for Humanity	

5.2 Key Themes and Knowledge

Table 14: Key Themes from Focus Group Engagement

Affordable Housing Shortage and Limited Supply	The overarching theme is the significant lack of affordable housing options spanning the entire housing continuum. This shortage is worsened by land development restrictions, delayed maintenance of rental units, and insufficient uptake of secondary housing initiatives. The limited availability of affordable housing is a central issue affecting all residents and preventing those most in need from accessing shelter.
High Cost of Living and Development Challenges	The northern location and geographical constraints of Yellowknife lead to a high cost of living, affecting housing and everyday expenses. Coupled with challenging land and development conditions (e.g., contamination, blasting, and bedrock issues), these factors make it difficult to expand housing stock and create affordable options. The cost of utilities, materials, and transportation further exacerbates this problem.
Labour Shortages and Housing-Driven Workforce Issues	Labour shortages are intertwined with housing availability. Employers struggle to recruit and retain skilled workers due to the lack of housing options, which limits economic growth. In turn, businesses face challenges filling critical positions in healthcare, education, and trades, which hampers the city's ability to function efficiently.
Vulnerable Populations and Accessibility Concerns	There is a significant gap in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations, including unhoused individuals, those requiring supportive housing, and residents with accessibility needs. The city's aging population and lack of supportive infrastructure create further strain, with inadequate treatment facilities and emergency shelters compounding the issue.
Land and Development Barriers, including Relationships with Indigenous Communities	A significant barrier is the shortage of developable land, compounded by unresolved land claims and the time required to build trusting and lasting relationships with surrounding Indigenous communities. Productive partnerships with the Yellowknives Dene Nation are essential for resolving land-use disputes, and fostering these relationships is critical for unlocking further development and addressing housing needs.

6.0 Potential Housing Strategies

Based on this report's findings, this section includes housing strategies that the City of Yellowknife can consider. Updating and revising this Housing Needs Assessment after five years is recommended.

For the best realistic outcomes, various strategies need to be applied simultaneously, with cooperation between governments, community organizations, and residents. Above all else, Yellowknife needs to increase the housing supply, paying special attention to the needs of low-income and marginalized groups.

Short-Term Opportunities

(Immediate to 1 Year)

	OPPORTUNITY	PRIORITY	REASON
1	**Operations and Maintenance (O&M) of Developed Housing**	HIGH	Improving the condition of existing housing is a quick, impactful way to ensure more livable spaces, especially for tenants in deteriorating units.
2	**Office Building Conversions into Residential Units**	HIGH	This can create additional housing quickly by repurposing existing infrastructure and alleviating the housing shortage with minimal construction needs.
3	**Engagement with Unhoused and At-Risk Populations**	HIGH	Engagement is critical for gathering insights to inform policy decisions and can guide immediate actions for providing supportive housing to those most in need.
4	**Average Monthly Shelter Cost Survey**	HIGH	There are concerns that the average monthly shelter/rent cost data is inadequately accurate, current, and detailed enough. Conducting a rigorous study will help adjust or affirm the figures included in this report and guide future decisions and strategies.
5	**Bulk Purchasing and Material Sourcing Strategies**	HIGH	Helps address rising construction costs, benefiting housing affordability in the short term. Bulk purchasing is logistically easier to set up than structural changes.
6	**Strategic Allocation of Housing First Funding**	HIGH	Effective use of existing federal funds can have an immediate impact on homelessness, particularly if focused on the Housing First approach, which provides stable, long-term housing.
7	**Support for First-Time Homebuyers**	MEDIUM	Educating and supporting first-time homebuyers can help residents access housing, easing pressure on affordable units and providing housing mobility.
8	**Education Around Secondary Suites**	MEDIUM	Promoting secondary suites can quickly expand affordable housing options, especially for students, seniors, or first-time renters. Immediate public awareness campaigns can encourage homeowners to build them.
9	**Increased Collaboration Among NGOs**	MEDIUM	Strengthening partnerships between NGOs can help pool resources, share expertise, and provide support in managing and developing affordable housing.
10	**Improvements to the Transit System**	MEDIUM	Improvements in transit service, particularly for workers and vulnerable populations, can support housing by connecting people to affordable housing farther from the city center.

Medium-Term Opportunities

(1 to 3 Years)

	OPPORTUNITY	PRIORITY	REASON
1	**Accessible Housing for Seniors**	HIGH	As the aging population grows, accessible, staircase-free housing will become increasingly necessary. Focusing on this in the medium term ensures that seniors can age in place comfortably.
2	**Cross-Government Collaboration**	HIGH	Improving communication between government departments is crucial for streamlining housing policy and reducing delays in implementing housing initiatives.
3	**Establishing More Not-For-Profit Housing Providers**	HIGH	Non-profit providers often focus on affordable and accessible housing. Establishing more providers within this timeframe can lead to a significant increase in housing options.
4	**Mental Health and Disability Considerations in Housing Plans**	HIGH	Incorporating these considerations into all new developments can ensure that housing meets the needs of vulnerable groups. This should be integrated into all medium-term housing projects.
5	**Exploration of Tiny Homes**	MEDIUM	Tiny homes are a potential affordable solution, especially for smaller households. Regulatory approvals and design standards may require some time, but this model could provide affordable, space-efficient housing.
6	**Mixed-Use Developments and Commuter Trails**	MEDIUM	These developments can address accessibility, affordability, and livability sustainably, though they require more planning and collaboration.
7	**More Affordable Housing Partners**	MEDIUM	Attracting and working with new partners could increase the volume of affordable housing but requires coordination and resource-sharing.

Long-Term Opportunities
(3+ Years)

	OPPORTUNITY	PRIORITY	REASON
1	**Development of Long-Term Planning Strategies for Housing**	HIGH	Establishing a clear, long-term vision for areas like Niven and Kam Lake is vital for addressing future housing needs. These plans will provide stability, guide future growth, and ensure housing availability for years.
2	**Establishing a Long-Term Vision for Large-Scale Housing Developments**	HIGH	Large-scale projects take years to plan and build, but having a strategic long-term vision ensures that Yellowknife is prepared to meet the growing demand for housing, especially as large-scale industry projects (like the Giant Mine Remediation) evolve.
3	**Converting Office Buildings for Accessibility and Long-Term Use**	MEDIUM	While office building conversions can start quickly, incorporating long-term accessible and sustainable design into these buildings will take time and should be integrated into future planning.
4	**Mixed-Use Developments and Commuter Trails**	MEDIUM	While some mixed-use developments can begin earlier, large-scale, city-wide projects will take time to plan and execute, particularly when integrated with public infrastructure like trails.
5	**Establishing More Not-For-Profit Housing Providers**	MEDIUM	As it takes time to develop capacity, providing operational support to new housing providers will be critical to long-term affordable housing development.

This organization reflects the different levels of complexity and resource demands for each initiative, allowing decision-makers to prioritize more immediate, impactful actions while planning for longer-term solutions; prioritization within each time horizon ensures that Yellowknife can address its most urgent needs while also building a foundation for future, sustainable housing solutions.

Appendix A

CITY OF
YELLOWKNIFE

HOUSING NEEDS ASSESSMENT

What We Heard Report

October 15, 2024

URBAN
SYSTEMS

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PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of Yellowknife (the City) is committed to ensuring that residents have access to housing that is safe, affordable, and suitable to fit the broad and dynamic needs of its current and future residents.

The City engaged Urban Systems to support its Planning and Development Department to undertake a comprehensive Housing Needs Assessment in early March 2024 in support of the City's planned revision to its Comprehensive Community Plan, which will be getting underway in Fall 2024. The purpose of the project was to conduct research and engagement to help identify and respond to housing needs and issues that have emerged in the community.

This What We Heard Report presents a synopsis of the public survey responses and themes that emerged through other engagement efforts pertaining to the Housing Needs Assessment.

As a key starting point, it is valuable to note that the total population of Yellowknife is 20,340, as of 2021 census data.

ENGAGEMENT AT A GLANCE

Highlights

A series of eight focus group discussions with targeted stakeholders were held, with five in-person sessions hosted in the City's Council Chambers in mid-September, and two virtual sessions hosted by Urban over Teams in the first week of October. The City's Manager of Planning and Environment, Tatsuyuki Setta, was present for all in-person and virtual engagement sessions. Over the course of the sessions, the stakeholder list was expanded as participants suggested others who may provide additional valuable insight.

Conversations with Builders & Developers, Yellowknife Business Organizations, and Yellowknife Community Organizations were primarily guided by participant dialogue, however a list of proposed guiding questions was prepared and provided a starting point for the conversations. Additionally, a one-page summary fact sheet (Appendix B) was prepared and distributed to invited participants as a prompt to encourage attendees to consider the current and future state of housing in Yellowknife.

Focus Group Discussion Insights

It became clear over the delivery of the engagement sessions that although each participant represented a slightly different perspective, all reported experiencing some or all of the somewhat universal challenges faced by Yellowknife when it comes to addressing housing needs within the city. Participants were also united in their love for the city they call home, and optimistic – although also realistic – in their belief and expectation that the City can and will play an active role in helping to address challenges directly where possible, and be an advocate to external organizations and all levels of government as necessary.

	Key Themes from Focus Group Engagement
Affordable Housing Shortage and Limited Supply	The overarching theme is the significant lack of affordable housing options, spanning the entire housing continuum. This shortage is worsened by land development restrictions, delayed maintenance of rental units, and insufficient uptake of secondary housing initiatives.

	Limited availability of affordable housing is a central issue affecting all residents and preventing those most in need from accessing shelter.
High Cost of Living and Development Challenges	The northern location and geographical constraints of Yellowknife lead to a high cost of living, affecting housing and everyday expenses. Coupled with challenging land and development conditions (contamination, blasting, and bedrock issues), these factors make it difficult to expand housing stock and create affordable options. The cost of utilities, materials, and transportation further exacerbates this problem.
Labour Shortages and Housing-Driven Workforce Issues	Labour shortages are intertwined with housing availability. Employers struggle to recruit and retain skilled workers due to the lack of housing options, which limits economic growth. In turn, businesses face challenges filling critical positions in healthcare, education, and trades, which hampers the city's ability to function efficiently.
Vulnerable Populations and Accessibility Concerns	There is a significant gap in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations, including unhoused individuals, those requiring supportive housing, and residents with accessibility needs. The city's aging population and lack of supportive infrastructure create further strain, with inadequate treatment facilities and emergency shelters compounding the issue.
Land and Development Barriers, including Relationships with Indigenous Communities	The shortage of developable land, compounded by unresolved land claims and the time required to build trusting and lasting relationships with surrounding Indigenous communities, is a significant barrier. Productive partnerships with the Yellowknives Dene Nation are essential for resolving land-use disputes, and fostering these relationships is critical for unlocking further development and addressing housing needs.

ENGAGEMENT APPROACH

HOW WE ENGAGED

A comprehensive Engagement Strategy was developed in partnership with the City in August 2024. In the process of creating the strategy, the following guiding objectives were identified:

1. To educate and inform the public and stakeholders about the project and overarching housing concepts/definitions.
2. To gather perspectives on Yellowknife's housing needs, gaps, barriers, and opportunities from the public and stakeholders.
3. To provide meaningful engagement opportunities for stakeholders to influence and shape the development of the City's Housing Strategy.
4. To use housing data and public input to inform relevant, feasible, and realistic implementation actions that are tailored to the City's needs.

Further to the objectives above, engagement activities have been delivered in alignment with the City of Yellowknife's commitment to upholding the participation principles outlined by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and will be guided by the tenets of Council's Strategic Direction. In collaboration with City staff, the levels of engagement primarily identified for this work are *Inform*, *Consult, Involve* and *Collaborate.*

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

International Association for Public Participation

Increasing Level of Public Impact →

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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 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 look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example techniques	▪ Fact sheets ▪ Web sites ▪ Open houses	▪ Public comment ▪ Focus groups ▪ Surveys ▪ Public meetings	▪ Workshops ▪ Deliberative polling	▪ Citizen advisory committees ▪ Consensus-building ▪ Participatory decision-making	▪ Citizen juries ▪ Ballots ▪ Delegated decision

In addition to these alignments, engagement incorporated the following guiding principles:

1. Impactful and meaningful: The public is involved in decisions that directly impact them and input is considered by the City as part of the decision-making process.
2. Inclusive and accessible: Opportunities to participate in public engagement are accessible and welcome diverse ideas, perspectives, and input.
3. Transparent: Public engagement opportunities are communicated clearly, openly, and in a timely way.
4. Well-planned and intentional: Public engagement opportunities reflect careful planning and preparation that supports the engagement purpose(s).
5. Accountable: Public engagement is reported on and evaluated to support continuous improvement.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

A series of eight focus group discussions with targeted stakeholder groups were held, with five in-person sessions hosted in the City's Council Chambers between Monday, September 16th and Thursday, September 19th, and two virtual sessions hosted by Urban over Teams on Tuesday, October 1st and Wednesday, October 2nd. The City's Manager of Planning and Environment, Tatsuyuki Setta, was present for all in-person and virtual engagement sessions. Over the course of the sessions, the stakeholder list was expanded as participants suggested others who may provide additional valuable insight.

Conversations with Builders & Developers, Yellowknife Business Organizations, and Yellowknife Community Organizations were primarily guided by participant dialogue. A one-page summary fact sheet (Appendix B) was prepared and distributed to invited participants as a prompt to encourage attendees to consider the current and future state of housing in Yellowknife.

WHO WE ENGAGED

The project Engagement Strategy outlined Target Stakeholder groups for each type of proposed engagement, which will be expanded on in following section.

The stakeholders engaged in the focus group discussion sessions were as follows:

Date	Time	Location	Represented Organization(s)
Monday, September 16th	3:30 pm – 5:00 pm	Yellowknife City Council Chambers	• Rotary Club • NWT Senior's Society • Yellowknife Education District No.1 • NWT Community Services Corp • Home Base Youth Shelter
Tuesday, September 17th	9:30 am – 11:00 am	Yellowknife City Council Chambers	• Century 21 Real Estate • Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce
	3:30 pm – 5:00 pm	Yellowknife City Council Chambers	• Yellowknife Co-Op • City of Yellowknife Homelessness Specialist • Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce • Government of the Northwest Territories –Mental Wellness and Addictions Recovery Division
	6:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Yellowknife City Council Chambers	*Note: This session was cancelled due to lack of registration and a conflicting City Managers Meeting.*
Wednesday, September 18th	9:30 am – 11:00 am	Yellowknife City Council Chambers	• No-Show(s): o Northwest Territories Chamber of Commerce o Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada o Legacy Stanton Development and Continuing Care Service *Note: This session was cancelled due to no-shows. One registered participant attended a virtual session at a later date.*
	1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	Yellowknife City Council Chambers	• Government of the Northwest Territories – Environment and Climate Change Department, Giant Mine Remediation • Crown Indigenous Relations and Northern Affairs Canada • Government of the Northwest Territories – Economic Development Department, Giant Mine Remediation • Midwest Property Management • Visiting Civilian/Drop-in – City Engineer, Port Alberny • No-Show(s): o Salvation Army Men's Emergency Shelter o NWT Disabilities Council o Northwest Territories Chamber of Commerce
Thursday, September 19th	9:30 am – 11:00 am	Yellowknife City Council Chambers	• Commercial NDS • No-Show(s): o Yellowknife Senior's Society
	1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	Yellowknife City Council Chambers	*Note: This session was cancelled due to lack of registration.*
	6:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Yellowknife City Council Chambers	*Note: This session was cancelled due to lack of registration.*
Tuesday, October 1st	1:30 pm – 3:00 pm	Virtual – Microsoft Teams	• Housing NWT • Colliers Project Leaders • Habitat for Humanity

			• Lawson Lundell • Legacy Stanton Development, NTHSSA Health Authority
	6:30 pm – 8:00 pm	Virtual – Microsoft Teams	• McCOR Management • NWT Tourism • Yellowknife Chamber • Northwest Territories Chamber of Commerce • Det'on Cho Management

Wednesday, October 2nd	9:00 am – 10:30 am	Virtual – Microsoft Teams	• Hovat Construction
			• Continuing Care, Department of Health & Social Services
			• No-Show(s):
			  ○ Habitat for Humanity*
			  ○ CW Property Management
			
			**Note: Habitat for Humanity was unable to attend due to a scheduling conflict and a one-on-one meeting was held on October 15th in Yellowknife to accommodate their participation.*

Regrettably, despite several attempts by the consultant to reach out to both Chief Ernest Betsina and Chief Fred Sangris of the Dettah and Ndilo Yellowknives Dene communities, we did not receive any response and neither Nation had representation in these discussions. We have received feedback and recognize that invitations via phone or email are not preferred, or even perhaps appropriate, in these situations. Additional effort is needed to ensure that the voices of neighbouring First Nations communities are included in these important conversations about housing need in Yellowknife.

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION FINDINGS

DESIGN

A comprehensive list of questions and discussion topics around the current and desired states of housing in Yellowknife were prepared for the sessions and used to prompt facilitators; the resulting conversations were fluid and largely driven by the responses of the session attendees, and not all topics were addressed in every session.

GENERAL

These questions cover accessibility, affordability, zoning, development, and other factors influenced by Yellowknife's unique geographic and climate-related challenges.

Affordability

1. What are your main concerns about the affordability of housing in Yellowknife, both for renters and homeowners?
2. Are there enough affordable housing options for low- and middle-income families? If not, what type of housing do you think is lacking?

Accessibility

1. How accessible are housing options in Yellowknife for people with disabilities or mobility issues? Are there enough barrier-free housing units?
2. Do you feel there is enough public transportation or alternative transit infrastructure connecting residential areas to essential services like healthcare, schools, and grocery stores?

Zoning & Land Use

1. Do you think current zoning regulations in Yellowknife effectively balance housing development with environmental sustainability? Are there areas where zoning needs to be changed to support growth or preservation?
2. How would you feel about rezoning certain areas to allow for more mixed-use developments, combining residential and commercial spaces? What would be the benefits or challenges?

Development & Construction

1. What kind of housing development do you think would most benefit Yellowknife over the next 10-20 years (e.g., high-density apartments, single-family homes, townhouses)?
2. How do you think the city should prioritize housing developments, especially regarding energy-efficient building materials and designs?

Geography

1. How does Yellowknife's location affect the housing market, particularly with regard to materials, construction timelines, and availability of labour? What solutions do you see for overcoming these challenges?
2. What types of infrastructure investments do you think are necessary to support future housing development, particularly given the challenges of Yellowknife's location?

Social Issues & Inclusivity

1. Are there specific communities (Indigenous populations, newcomers, etc.) that face particular housing challenges in Yellowknife? How should the city address these challenges?
2. What role do you think the city government should play in addressing homelessness in Yellowknife? Are there enough shelters or transitional housing services available?

Community Well-being

1. How do you feel current housing developments contribute to or detract from community well-being and quality of life in Yellowknife?
2. Are there concerns about overcrowding or underutilized housing in certain parts of the city? How should the city respond to these challenges?

STAKEHOLDER GROUPS

Stakeholder representatives from government, community organizations, businesses, and developers should focus on policy, partnerships, investments, and long-term strategic goals. These stakeholders can provide insights on regulatory frameworks, financial viability, and resource allocation.

Government Representatives:

1. What current policies or initiatives are in place to address the housing shortage in Yellowknife? Are there any upcoming changes to zoning or building codes to facilitate new developments?
2. How is the city ensuring that Indigenous rights and land claims are being respected in housing developments? Are there collaborative initiatives between the city and Indigenous communities?
3. What role do you see public-private partnerships playing in addressing housing affordability and development challenges? What are the biggest barriers to such collaborations?
4. How does the city plan to address infrastructure limitations (e.g., roads, water, power) that may be impeding housing developments, particularly in more remote or undeveloped areas?

Community Organizations:

1. What are the primary housing-related challenges faced by vulnerable groups (e.g., low-income families, seniors, Indigenous communities) that you serve, and what resources or services are lacking?
2. What partnerships with government or developers would help your organization better serve communities struggling with housing issues? Are there successful models from other regions that could be applied in Yellowknife?
3. Do you see any gaps in current government or private sector initiatives to provide housing for those experiencing homelessness or housing insecurity in Yellowknife?

Businesses & Employers:

1. How does the current housing situation impact your ability to recruit and retain employees? Are there specific types of housing that would improve employee satisfaction and retention?
2. Would your company be willing to invest in or support employer-subsidized housing programs for employees, especially given the cost of living in Yellowknife?

Developers:

1. What are the biggest challenges you face when developing housing in Yellowknife? Are there regulatory, financial, or logistical barriers that make it difficult to build affordable or sustainable housing?
2. What incentives or supports from the government would encourage more private-sector investment in affordable and sustainable housing developments?
3. How do you approach energy-efficient building practices in Yellowknife, given the harsh climate? What role do you think sustainable development should play in future housing projects?
4. What strategies do you employ to manage the higher cost of materials and labour in Yellowknife? Are there ways to lower costs without sacrificing quality?

Cross-Sectoral Collaboration:

1. How can the private sector, government, and community organizations better collaborate to address housing needs in Yellowknife? Are there existing models or frameworks that could be expanded or improved?
2. What role do you think land availability and the cost of land in Yellowknife play in the housing shortage? How should land be allocated or priced to promote more housing development?
3. What long-term strategies do you think should be in place to ensure that Yellowknife's housing market is resilient in the face of economic and climate changes?

YELLOWKNIFE LIFESTYLE

Focusing on what people enjoy about living, working, and recreating in Yellowknife can provide valuable insights into the City's strengths and appeal. These questions can help highlight the community's positive aspects and what makes the city a desirable place to live, despite challenges related to its northern location.

Living in Yellowknife:

1. What do you enjoy most about living in Yellowknife? Are there specific aspects of the community or environment that make it feel like home to you?
2. How do you feel about the balance between urban amenities and the natural environment in Yellowknife? Does the city offer the right mix of both?
3. What neighbourhood or area in Yellowknife do you feel offers the best quality of life, and why?
4. What role does Yellowknife's strong sense of community play in your enjoyment of living here?

Working in Yellowknife:

1. What do you enjoy most about working in Yellowknife? Are there particular industries or professional opportunities that make this a rewarding place for your career?
2. Do you find that work-life balance is easier to achieve in Yellowknife compared to other places? How does the community or lifestyle contribute to that balance?
3. What types of professional networks or communities do you find most valuable in Yellowknife?

Recreation and Lifestyle:

1. What are your favourite outdoor activities to do in and around Yellowknife, and how does the natural environment influence your lifestyle?
2. How do you feel about the recreational and cultural facilities available in Yellowknife (e.g., parks, sports arenas, libraries, arts venues)? Are they sufficient to meet your needs?
3. Do you think Yellowknife's long summers and cold, dark winters enhance or detract from your enjoyment of the area? How do you and your family adapt to the changing seasons?
4. What do you think makes Yellowknife a unique place to raise a family? How do local schools, parks, and community activities enhance family life?
5. How important is access to Yellowknife's natural surroundings (Great Slave Lake, national parks, etc.) in your daily or weekend activities? What role does nature play in your life here?
6. What seasonal events or festivals do you most enjoy in Yellowknife, and how do they contribute to the community's spirit?

Community Engagement:

1. How do you feel about the level of community involvement in local decision-making? Do you feel that being involved in Yellowknife's governance or initiatives enhances your connection to the city?

2. What aspects of Yellowknife's multicultural makeup or Indigenous heritage do you find most enriching, and how do they influence your experience of living here?

KEY THEMES

In the roundtable discussions, participants were encouraged to identify the challenges and opportunities of current and future housing in Yellowknife. Key themes emerged from each of the discussions, which help to provide insight into industry-specific barriers and solutions regarding housing in Yellowknife.

> *"If I were to describe the housing situation in Yellowknife in one word, I would say **'strained'**."*

CHALLENGES

Yellowknife is facing significant challenges in addressing housing needs, which affect various groups in the community and limit opportunities for growth. While vacancy rates will fluctuate over time and based on season, participants reported a current vacancy rate of about 0.8%; by contrast, CMHC considers a vacancy rate of about 3% to be healthy. CMHC also reports a vacancy rate of around 3.4% as of late-2023; another rental market survey is set to be completed in October 2024, which may more accurately reflect participant sentiment regarding current sense of low vacancy rates.

Below is a summary of the key issues that contribute to housing need in Yellowknife.

Affordable Housing Shortage

Yellowknife's urgent need for affordable housing spans all points of the housing continuum. Residents who are financially capable of moving up to more expensive housing are stuck in more affordable homes, preventing those who need affordable housing from accessing it. This issue is compounded by young adults who cannot find housing and therefore continue to live with their families. Overcrowding is common, with some instances reported of multiple families sharing single-family homes. Affordable housing managed by NGOs and Housing NWT is in short supply, with hundreds on waiting lists.

Land and Development Limitations

The City faces a shortage of land that can be readily developed, as much of the surrounding area is controlled by the Government of the Northwest Territories or tied up in unresolved land claims. Yellowknife's challenging geography also makes infrastructure development and maintenance, as well as the construction of new housing, more difficult. New developments often require some amount of blasting or anchoring to bedrock, which can lead to expenses related to engineering that would not be typical in developments further south. The City's approval process for development is also seen as prohibitive, causing some investors to seek opportunities elsewhere. Finally, contamination from historic gold mines further limits the City's overall developable areas due to long-term remediation.

High Cost of Living

The northern location of Yellowknife significantly increases the cost of living. Utilities, services, labour, groceries, and materials all come at a premium, which puts additional pressure on residents' housing budgets.

As the City is not fully serviced by natural gas for heating, homes and buildings are often heated through the winters by a combination of propane, oil heaters or wood or pellet stoves. Regular transportation and delivery of various fuels and other household goods add additional strain on the cost of living faced by those in Northern communities that is not seen further south.

Labour Shortages and Housing Availability

Recruitment has been difficult, leading to a shortage of skilled workers, including tradespeople, healthcare professionals, and educators. The lack of housing inventory is a significant barrier for employers trying to attract and retain workers. Some businesses offer housing but still struggle to meet the demand for skilled labour.

Low Uptake on Secondary Suite Initiatives

Despite recent bylaw changes allowing for laneway housing and secondary suites, uptake has been low. The perception is that property owners are not familiar with the permitting process, and there is limited understanding of the benefits of energy-efficient upgrades such as window replacements or building envelope sealing measures, which have also seen poor adoption.

Poor Maintenance of Rental Properties

Most of Yellowknife's more affordable rental units are owned by large developers like Northview and Midwest, some of whom are delaying repairs and maintenance due to low vacancy rates. This has led to deteriorating living conditions in some properties, as landlords are not incentivized to improve them.

Accessibility and Aging Population

There is a growing concern about housing accessibility, particularly for individuals with disabilities or mobility issues. The city's aging population also lacks suitable infrastructure to age in place. Although new developments, such as the AVENS project, aim to address some of these needs, they are not expected to have a significant impact.

Tourism Industry Struggles

Yellowknife is perched amongst and surrounded by some of the most beautiful landscapes in Canada and is among the best places to view the Aurora Borealis, with peak tourist visits in late summer and early fall. Despite this, tourism in Yellowknife has been slow to recover after COVID-19, and many short-term vacation rentals have reverted to long-term rentals to meet housing demands. Hotels are also often booked with temporary worker housing, further limiting accommodations for visitors. While participants representing developers did indicate that there are organizations with interest, development constraints have led interested parties to look elsewhere.

Large-Scale Projects and Housing Strain

The Giant Mine Remediation Project is expected to create housing pressures as the number of workers exceeds early projections. With a total of FTE workers that is already well above what was anticipated by the GNWT (just over 3x the anticipated low-season FTE of 82 workers) and the peak workforce still to come in 2026, the demand for housing could increase significantly, further straining the market.

Desire to Attract Newcomers

The City's efforts to attract newcomers have been stymied by a lack of housing. The federal government has indicated that the city cannot support an influx of new residents without addressing its housing shortages.

Temporary Worker Camps

The City has restrictions on temporary worker housing camps, but some unpermitted camps are in operation. This has caused frustration among local developers who are following the regulations but see others bypassing them.

Safety and Supportive Housing for Vulnerable Populations

Yellowknife has a growing concern for the safety and needs of unhoused and at-risk populations. The City lacks in-patient treatment facilities and supportive housing, and there is also no housing available for staff to operate such facilities. Additionally, while the creation of emergency shelters would meet an immediate need, it is recognized that without further housing development, it would not aid residents in moving along the housing continuum.

Challenges in Building Relationships with Indigenous Communities

There are ongoing difficulties in fostering productive relationships with the Yellowknives Dene Nation. Despite outreach efforts, there has been limited response, signalling a need for more focused and intentional engagement with the goals of building and maintaining a trusting relationship that encourages partnership between the Nations and the City.

ANALYSIS OF CHALLENGES

The housing challenges in Yellowknife are interconnected and mutually reinforcing, creating a complex web of issues that compound the difficulty of addressing housing needs for both current and future residents. Here's how these factors reinforce and frustrate one another:

Lack of Affordable Housing and Land Availability

The urgent need for affordable housing is aggravated by the limited availability of developable land. As residents who can afford to move up the housing ladder are unable to do so, they continue to occupy affordable units that could otherwise be available to lower-income residents or first-time homebuyers. This bottleneck affects both affordable and market-rate housing, trapping residents at all points of the continuum. The lack of land for development makes it nearly impossible to increase the housing supply, further intensifying the problem.

The geography and infrastructure limitations around Yellowknife (bedrock, short construction seasons, etc.) add to the development challenges. Without more available land and a streamlined process for its development, there is no straightforward solution to increase housing stock and relieve the pressure on the lower end of the market.

High Cost of Living and Infrastructure Limitations

The high cost of living, combined with aging infrastructure, creates a financial strain for both residents and developers. The high costs of utilities, heating, and materials are pushing the limits of residents' budgets, reducing their ability to afford housing or move into better-quality homes. At the same time, the cost of servicing new lots or upgrading old infrastructure is so high that developers are less inclined to invest in building new housing or making needed repairs. This worsens the shortage of affordable and safe housing, further compounding the affordability crisis.

The combination of expensive land development and high living costs discourages both developers and skilled labourers from coming to or staying in Yellowknife, reinforcing the housing scarcity.

Shortage of Skilled Workers and Housing Supply

The lack of skilled workers directly affects housing development. Tradespeople are essential for building and maintaining homes, but they are difficult to attract due to the very housing shortages they could help alleviate. Businesses offering housing to workers have faced their own difficulties securing property, creating a circular problem where the lack of available housing drives away the workers needed to create it. Further, healthcare workers, teachers, and other professionals who may be interested in living and working in Yellowknife face delays and barriers in securing housing that would see them remain in the City.

The overall housing scarcity, particularly for rental units, has caused a maintenance backlog as developers and landlords delay essential repairs due to the low vacancy rate. This creates a situation where housing conditions deteriorate, making it even harder to retain skilled labour and professionals, many of whom demand better living conditions.

Limited Uptake of Housing Initiatives and Misinformation

Efforts to address the housing shortage through secondary suites and energy-efficiency retrofits have seen low adoption, potentially due to a lack of understanding about these programs. This limits the ability to expand the housing supply incrementally, especially in a way that could improve affordability and sustainability. The low uptake in these initiatives reflects a broader communication issue—residents and property owners are not aware of or do not trust the benefits of these programs, which stymies efforts to address the crisis through smaller-scale interventions.

The misunderstanding or underutilization of such programs also links back to the broader challenges of affordability, as potential developers or property owners may not feel financially secure enough to undertake additional projects, even when long-term benefits are clear.

Accessibility and Aging Population

The growing accessibility needs of an aging population further frustrate housing dynamics. As this demographic seeks to downsize or modify their homes to accommodate mobility needs, the lack of suitable housing options keeps them in larger homes that could otherwise be made available to younger families or those on the housing waiting lists. This exacerbates the shortage across multiple housing types.

Simultaneously, the cost to modify or create accessible housing is high, and limited land availability and development constraints make it difficult to build new age-friendly housing. This reinforces the pressure on existing housing stock, contributing to over-occupancy and limiting turnover in the market.

Large-Scale Projects and Temporary Worker Housing

The Giant Mine Remediation Project and other large-scale initiatives bring an influx of temporary workers, further straining housing capacity. While these projects generate jobs and economic activity, they exacerbate housing shortages by increasing demand for short-term rentals and worker accommodations. This pulls housing resources away from long-term residents, who are already struggling to find affordable options.

Furthermore, restrictions on temporary worker camps frustrate local developers who are adhering to regulations but find themselves competing with unpermitted operations. This dynamic creates tension within the development community and makes coordinated responses to housing challenges more difficult to implement.

Housing for Vulnerable Populations and Lack of Supportive Services

The lack of affordable and supportive housing for vulnerable populations, such as the unhoused or those with substance abuse issues, intersects with broader housing pressures, deepening the crisis. As there are no in-patient treatment facilities or housing for staff to operate them, the need for comprehensive services is unmet. This creates safety concerns for both the at-risk population and the broader community, placing additional strain on public resources and services, including emergency housing and healthcare.

This dynamic also underscores the lack of collaboration between housing initiatives and healthcare services, which is critical in addressing the needs of vulnerable populations. Without adequate housing, social support systems struggle to function effectively.

Relationship Building with Indigenous Communities

The relative lack of engagement with Indigenous communities, such as the Yellowknives Dene Nation, reflects a broader issue of collaboration and trust-building. Meaningful relationships and input from these communities are essential for resolving land use issues and navigating cultural and social challenges in housing development. Without these partnerships, opportunities for creating holistic, inclusive housing solutions are missed, further frustrating efforts to address the broader housing crisis in Yellowknife.

These factors do not exist in silos—as stated previously, they reinforce and frustrate each other in ways that compound the housing challenges in Yellowknife. Limited land and high development costs constrain the creation of new housing. The shortage of skilled workers further limits development while the lack of housing discourages laborers from staying in the city. High living costs and delayed maintenance cause existing housing stock to deteriorate, while efforts to attract newcomers and workers are undermined by the very lack of housing. Without targeted, collaborative solutions that address these interconnected challenges, the cycle will persist, continuing to affect current and future residents alike.

"Northerners are resilient. There are a lot of people working really hard to build a better future for the Northwest Territories and for Yellowknife. But I also think people are very concerned right now."

OPPORTUNITIES

The opportunities and potential next steps suggested by focus group participants offer several promising avenues to address Yellowknife's housing challenges. However, the effectiveness of these strategies depends on how well they align with and overcome the identified obstacles. Here's an analysis of how these proposals relate to the key challenges and could provide solutions:

Strategic Housing Planning

Developing short- and long-term housing plans would provide much-needed predictability in the housing market. A clear strategy could help prevent housing bottlenecks by forecasting needs and proactively planning developments. This would also help align large-scale projects like Niven and Kam Lake with community needs, avoiding future housing shortages as the city grows. A coordinated plan would also reduce investor hesitancy and encourage private sector involvement in housing development.

More Affordable and Not-For-Profit Housing Partners

Bringing in more affordable housing partners beyond Housing NWT could diversify housing development efforts and bring new solutions to the table. This could help address the current shortage of affordable housing and reduce reliance on a single organization to manage the city's housing needs. Collaboration with private developers, community groups, and not-for-profits could create a more dynamic, responsive housing market.

The creation of additional not-for-profit housing providers could increase the availability of affordable housing and provide more specialized management for different types of housing. This would reduce the burden on Housing NWT and allow for more tailored support, such as housing for seniors, individuals with disabilities, and at-risk populations. However, these new organizations would need adequate funding, training, and support to effectively manage properties and address housing shortages in the long term.

Focus on Operations and Maintenance

Investing in the operation and maintenance (O&M) of existing housing stock is crucial to ensuring that current homes remain livable and safe. Many of Yellowknife's rental properties have fallen into disrepair due to low vacancy rates and a lack of incentive for landlords to invest in maintenance. Focusing on O&M would improve the quality of the existing housing supply and reduce safety concerns, which are particularly pressing for lower-income renters.

Cross-Government Collaboration

Improved communication and collaboration across government departments is essential to addressing housing challenges in a coordinated and efficient manner. Better alignment between municipal, territorial, and federal bodies could streamline the development process, improve funding allocation, and ensure that housing initiatives are aligned with broader economic and social goals.

Strategic Allocation of Federal Housing First Funding

The Housing First approach, which prioritizes providing stable housing for those experiencing homelessness, could make a significant impact if federal funds are strategically allocated. Given the lack of supportive housing in Yellowknife, careful investment in this area could help reduce homelessness and improve outcomes for at-risk populations. Housing First funding could be used to build or convert properties into supportive housing units, creating a sustainable model for addressing homelessness.

Support for First-Time Homebuyers

Providing education and financial support for first-time homebuyers could help young adults and families move into homeownership, relieving pressure on the rental market. This would free up affordable rental units for those who need them most. However, this strategy depends on the availability of suitable housing for purchase and the broader affordability issues in the market, which may still limit options for first-time buyers unless new inventory is developed.

Exploring Alternative Housing Models like Tiny Homes

Tiny homes represent a flexible, lower-cost housing model that could be a solution for both affordability and land use challenges. These homes require less land and fewer resources to build, making them a potential fit for Yellowknife's constraints. Tiny homes could also offer opportunities for seniors or young adults looking for more affordable, accessible, and independent living options. However, the adoption of this model would need clear regulatory support, including zoning changes, to ensure that tiny homes can be developed within the city.

Engagement with Unhoused and At-Risk Populations

Focused engagement with unhoused and at-risk populations is crucial to developing supportive housing and services that meet their needs. This aligns with the challenge of providing affordable and supportive housing for vulnerable groups. By involving these populations in the planning process, the city can design more effective, targeted interventions, such as Housing First and Reaching Home initiatives, which aim to provide immediate, stable housing paired with necessary support services.

Accessible Housing for Seniors

Developing accessible housing with features like no stairs is critical for the city's aging population. This aligns with the identified need for seniors to downsize and move into age-appropriate housing, freeing up larger homes for younger families. By focusing on accessibility, Yellowknife can also ensure that its housing stock evolves to meet the needs of its growing population of residents with disabilities.

Incorporating Mental Health and Disability Considerations in Housing Plans

By integrating mental health and disability considerations into housing plans, the city can create more inclusive housing that supports a wider range of residents. This approach aligns with the need for supportive housing for vulnerable populations and could also address the challenges related to accessibility. Prioritizing mental health services within housing initiatives could also help reduce homelessness and improve overall well-being in the community.

Bulk Purchasing and Material Sourcing Strategies

Bulk purchasing or sourcing materials could help mitigate the high costs of construction and renovations, which are major barriers to increasing housing supply. Reducing material costs would make housing development more affordable for developers, enabling them to invest in new housing or maintain existing properties. Additionally, this could make housing improvements, such as energy retrofits and accessibility upgrades, more feasible for homeowners and developers.

Office Building Conversions into Residential Units

Converting underutilized office buildings into residential spaces could help alleviate the housing shortage, especially since developing new land is a significant challenge in Yellowknife. This approach would make use of existing infrastructure, reducing the costs and complications associated with new construction in a geographically challenging environment. However, the success of this strategy depends on whether these buildings are suitable for conversion and can meet accessibility and safety standards, particularly for families, seniors, and individuals with disabilities.

Transit System Improvements

Improving the transit system, particularly during late hours, could expand access to housing in more affordable or less centrally located areas of

Yellowknife. For workers who might live farther from their jobs, better transit options would make those housing opportunities more viable. This could also support mixed-use developments and commuter trails, which encourage more sustainable and flexible land use while connecting residents to employment hubs and services.

Education Around Secondary Suites

Encouraging and educating residents about building secondary suites could increase the housing supply relatively quickly and affordably. Secondary suites allow homeowners to create additional rental units within existing properties, providing more affordable options for renters. If effectively promoted, this could help ease the pressure on the housing market, although the city would need to streamline the permitting process and provide resources to help homeowners navigate it.

Mixed-Use Developments and Commuter Trail Networks

Encouraging mixed-use developments and expanding commuter trail networks could promote a more efficient and connected city. Mixed-use areas would integrate housing with commercial spaces, reducing the need for long commutes and supporting local businesses. Commuter trails could provide alternative transportation options, making the city more accessible and reducing the strain on the transit system.

These opportunities offer a range of practical and innovative solutions that could help address Yellowknife's housing crisis. However, success will require a coordinated approach that considers the interconnectedness of these challenges. By aligning resources, promoting collaboration, and focusing on long-term planning, Yellowknife can create a more sustainable, accessible, and affordable housing market for its residents.

CONCLUSIONS

Yellowknife is grappling with complex housing challenges, including a severe shortage of affordable homes, high construction costs, and limited developable land. These issues are compounded by geographical constraints, rising costs of living, and a lack of accessible housing for seniors and people with disabilities. The city's housing crisis also affects its ability to attract and retain skilled workers, while the unhoused and at-risk populations continue to face a shortage of supportive housing. Additionally, strained relationships with Yellowknife's Indigenous neighbours, particularly the Yellowknives Dene First Nation, have hampered efforts to collaboratively address land development and housing issues.

However, there are numerous opportunities to address these challenges and shape a more hopeful future. In the short term, initiatives like converting office spaces into residential units, promoting secondary suites, and sourcing construction materials through bulk purchasing can provide some immediate relief. Engaging unhoused and at-risk populations is crucial to creating targeted and inclusive housing solutions. Educating first-time homebuyers and developers on the City's permitting processes and increasing support for homeowners can also create more mobility in the housing market.

Medium-term strategies, such as developing accessible housing for seniors and exploring innovative models like tiny homes, can help diversify housing options. Establishing more not-for-profit housing providers and expanding mixed-use developments will further support a sustainable housing future. Improving cross-government collaboration and transit services will enhance housing access and address affordability.

One of the most urgent needs, however, is building trust and fostering meaningful engagement with Yellowknife's Indigenous neighbours. Collaborative partnerships and respectful dialogue are critical to unlocking access to developable land and creating mutually beneficial housing solutions. Strengthening these relationships will not only benefit housing development but also promote reconciliation and long-term cooperation.

In the long term, strategic planning for large-scale developments like those discussed at Niven and Kam Lake will ensure Yellowknife can meet future housing demands. A comprehensive housing strategy that prioritizes accessibility, affordability, and sustainability, combined with ongoing partnerships with Indigenous communities, will pave the way for a more inclusive and prosperous future.

Overall, while the challenges are complex, Yellowknife has the potential to tackle them through community engagement, innovative housing solutions, and strong partnerships. With coordinated efforts and long-term vision, the city can transform its housing landscape, making it more affordable, accessible, and sustainable for both current and future generations.

APPENDIX A –
ENGAGEMENT STRATEGY

CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE

URBAN SYSTEMS

Engagement Strategy

City of Yellowknife Housing Strategy

1.0 PROJECT OVERVIEW

The City of Yellowknife (the City, Yellowknife) is developing a Housing Needs Assessment (HNS) to identify core housing needs in the community to direct policy decision making and plan for future housing initiatives. The City is currently facing a housing shortage that negatively affects both the availability and affordability of housing.

Engagement is an important element in developing the Housing Strategy. Engaging with the public and key stakeholders is crucial to understanding housing needs and opportunities in Yellowknife, as well as in identifying potential for partnerships and shared investment. Insights gathered through engagement will also help to understand housing data through the lens of lived experiences with the housing system in Yellowknife. Engagement input collected through this process will be used to inform the development of the Housing Strategy and ensure strong alignment between identified housing gaps, data, community sentiment, and proposed implementation actions.

This engagement strategy presents the overall objectives of engagement activities, our approach to engagement, and engagement tactics.

1.1 OBJECTIVES

The engagement objectives that underpin this strategy are as follows:

1. To educate and inform stakeholders about the project and overarching housing concepts.
2. To gather perspectives on Yellowknife's housing needs, gaps, barriers, and opportunities..
3. To provide meaningful engagement opportunities for stakeholders to influence and shape the development of the City's Housing Strategy.
4. To use housing data and public input to inform relevant, feasible, and realistic implementation actions that are tailored to the City's needs.

1.2 PRINCIPLES OF ENGAGEMENT

Engagement will align with City of Yellowknife's commitment to upholding the participation principles outlined by the International Association for Public Participation (IAP2) and will be guided by the tenets of Council's Strategic Direction.

In addition to these alignments, engagement will incorporate the following guiding principles:

1. **Impactful and meaningful:** The public is involved in decisions that directly impact them and input is considered by the City as part of the decision-making process.
2. **Inclusive and accessible:** Opportunities to participate in public engagement are accessible and welcome diverse ideas, perspectives, and input.
3. **Transparent:** Public engagement **opportunities** are communicated clearly, openly, and in a timely way.
4. **Well-planned and intentional:** Public **engagement** opportunities reflect careful planning and preparation that supports the engagement purpose(s).
5. **Accountable:** Public engagement is **reported** on and evaluated to support continuous improvement.

CITY OF YELLOWKNIFE
URBAN SYSTEMS

1.3 IAP2 SPECTRUM AND LEVELS OF ENGAGEMENT

The City of Yellowknife adheres to IAP2's Spectrum of Public Engagement which will guide our approach to engagement on this project. In collaboration with City staff, the levels of engagement primarily identified for this work are ***Inform***, ***Consult, Involve*** and ***Collaborate***.

IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation

iap2 International Association for Public Participation

Increasing Level of Public Impact →

	Inform	Consult	Involve	Collaborate	Empower
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 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 look to you for advice and innovation in formulating solutions and incorporate your advice and recommendations into the decisions to the maximum extent possible.	We will implement what you decide.
Example techniques	▪ Fact sheets ▪ Web sites ▪ Open houses	▪ Public comment ▪ Focus groups ▪ Surveys ▪ Public meetings	▪ Workshops ▪ Deliberative polling	▪ Citizen advisory committees ▪ Consensus-building ▪ Participatory decision-making	▪ Citizen juries ▪ Ballots ▪ Delegated decision

2.0 STAKEHOLDER MAPPING

We will engage several stakeholder groups throughout this project, each being provided with thoughtful engagement opportunities that are tailored to their specific needs. A high-level engagement mapping table is presented below.

<table>
<tr><th>Stakeholder Group</th><th>Stakeholders</th><th>Level of Engagement</th></tr>
<tr><td>Internal Stakeholders</td><td>City Administration / Executive Team
City Council
Community Services
Economic Development and Strategy
Planning and Development
Public Safety
Community Advisory Board on Homelessness
Homelessness Commission
Accessibility Advisory Committee</td><td>Involve / Consult / Collaborate</td></tr>
<tr><td>Government Stakeholders</td><td>Northwest Territories
• NWT Housing Corporation
  o Canada-NWT Housing Benefit Program
  o Home Purchase Program
  o Homelessness Assistance Financing
  o NWT Disabilities Council
  o NWT Health and Social Services Authority
  o Department of Health and Social Services

Federal Government
• RCMP
• Government of Canada/Canada Forces</td><td>Consult / Collaborate</td></tr>
<tr><td>Community, Business and Development Stakeholders</td><td>Community Organizations, Service Providers, and Organizations Working with Individuals with Lived Experiences
• Yellowknife Food Bank
• NWT Community Services Corporation
• NWT Health and Social Services Authority
• YWCA
• Tree of Peace Friendship Centre
• Salvation Army Men’s Shelter
• Yellowknife Woman’s Society Women’s Shelter
• Home Base Emergency Youth Shelter
• Salvation Army
• YWCA
• Habitat for Humanity</td><td>Consult / Involve</td></tr>
</table>

- Black Advocacy Coalition up North
- Inclusion NWT
- AVENS (senior homes)
- Alternatives North
- NWT Disabilities Council
- NWT Senior's Society
- Yellowknife Senior's Society
- Rotary Club of Yellowknife

Business Community

- Yellowknife Chamber of Commerce
- NWT Chamber of Commerce
- Local Hotel Providers
- Yellowknife Airport

Inform / Consult

Development Community

- Polar Developments Ltd.
- GUY Architects
- Homes North Inc.
- North West Builders Inc.
- Northview Residential REIT
- Midwest Property Management

Inform / Consult

Yellowknife Residents

Household level (owners and renters)

Inform / Consult

3.0 TACTICS

3.1 STAKEHOLDER FOCUS GROUPS

DESCRIPTION

We anticipate focus groups will involve designing and facilitating up to four (4) one-and-a-half to two (1.5 - 2) hour virtual stakeholder focus groups. Additional focus groups may be possible if City staff are available to co-facilitate with our team members. The final approach and number of sessions will be determined through discussion with the City, availability of stakeholders, and timing. We recognize that additional virtual sessions may be necessary to reach all identified stakeholder groups.

We anticipate taking an adaptable approach for the sessions based on the respective stakeholder groups. For example, for the community organization and service providers, we intend to explore housing needs and gaps, barriers, required resources and partnership opportunities, expectations, and assumptions from the perspective of both their organizations and the clients that they serve. In contrast, conversations with the business community may focus more on the role that housing plays in employee recruitment and retention, anticipated hiring forecasts, whether employers communicate information to workers on housing options, and potential business opportunities related to housing that may be of interest.

With development industry stakeholders, we may seek to understand experiences related to planning and development, regulation, land availability and servicing requirements, and market forecasts. We may also use this opportunity with developers to better understand future forecasted mix of housing development. We would also like to explore their understanding / experience with the land development process in Yellowknife to clarify expectations and assumptions, including to learn more about what partnerships and resources may be needed to develop, manage and/or operate non-market housing.

Indigenous consultation will align with direction from the City of Yellowknife's Reconciliation Framework and will seek to build positive, respectful relationships with Indigenous peoples. To encourage this approach, we will coordinate with Nation representatives and/or Indigenous housing service organizations/departments to establish a preliminary meeting to get direction on the most effective ways to engage these groups, informed directly from the groups being engaged. This could take the form of focus groups or interviews, sharing circles, or a community meal.

TIMING

- Mid-September (week of September 16-20th)

AUDIENCE

- Community and service provider organizations
- Business community
- Development community
- Indigenous communities and organizations

FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSION AGENDA

Timing	Description
5-10 min	**Introductions** • Icebreaker • Description of organization/sector, time in role
5-10 min	**Project Overview** • Housing Needs Assessment Process • Housing Continuum • Engagement Efforts to Date
45 min	**Housing in Yellowknife – Current State** • Current State • Challenges • Gaps • Tensions • Identification of Vulnerable Groups
5 min	**Housing in Yellowknife – Desired/Future State** • What the Strategy Should Address
0 Min	**Thank You/Next Steps**

Organization	Responsibility
City of Yellowknife	• Provide input on communications and engagement practices and logistics for stakeholder focus groups • Collaborate on a stakeholder contact list, and where possible, e-introductions to ensure strong buy-in • Identify and book accessible meeting locations • Review and input on draft engagement materials • Print engagement materials • Attend/co-facilitate focus group sessions
Urban Systems	• Prepare focus group questions and circulate for review • Draft a stakeholder contact list for review from the City • Coordinate participant invitations and event logistics • Attend/co-facilitate focus group sessions • Record engagement feedback • Summarize engagement input in What We Learned Report

3.2 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

DESCRIPTION

The purpose of stakeholder interviews is to be able to meaningfully connect with identified stakeholders whose voices are essential due to their unique housing knowledge. This may also include occasions where individuals could not attend a focus group, or where meaningful feedback cannot be obtained in a group setting. We anticipate facilitating four to six (4-6) one (1) hour in-person interviews. We recognize that additional virtual sessions may be necessary to reach all identified stakeholder groups.

TIMING

- Mid-September (week of September 16-20th)

AUDIENCE

- Territorial housing, health, and social service authorities
- Community leadership
- Housing non-profits

GENERAL INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

What are the current housing challenges in Yellowknife?
Are there any strengths the Yellowknife community has in addressing housing challenges?
Are there specific populations (e.g., seniors, low-income families, single parents) particularly affected by housing issues?
When thinking about housing options as presented on the Housing Continuum, do you see any gaps in housing types that should be a focus in future strategy work?
Are there any barriers to housing development (e.g., zoning laws, infrastructure)? How have these barriers impacted the housing ecosystem in Yellowknife?
Who are the key contributors that would improve the housing ecosystem? What would their roles be in addressing these challenges?

Organization	Responsibility
City of Yellowknife	• Promote engagement sessions via direct contact/email, social media, City website etc. • Identify and book accessible meeting locations • Review and input on draft engagement materials • Print engagement materials • Attend/co-facilitate interview sessions

Urban Systems	• Prepare interview questions and circulate for review • Coordinate participant invitations and event logistics • Attend/co-facilitate focus group sessions • Record engagement feedback • Summarize engagement input in What We Learned Report

3.3 LIVED EXPERIENCE INTERVIEWS

DESCRIPTION

Interviews will be conducted with individuals with lived and living experiences, who have accessed housing across the housing continuum. Interviews could be conducted through partnerships with housing organizations identified through the stakeholder interview process. Interviews could be held in person at a neutral community space or a location that is familiar and comfortable to the interviewee and could be supervised by support workers if required. The format of the interview will be flexible to accommodate the individual needs of each participant. Interviews are expected to take 1-1.5 hours to complete.

Compensation will be awarded to interview participants in the form of a cash honorarium at a rate of $25/hour.

TIMING

Mid-September (week of September 16-20th)

AUDIENCE

- Individuals with lived and living experience with emergency shelters, supportive housing (short or long term), non-market housing, and market rentals.

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

In reference to housing services and supports, what is working well today?

What needs improvement?

Have you experienced barriers or challenges accessing housing or wellbeing services?

What made your experience challenging?

What would you like to see changed in the future to make accessing services easier?

If housing was a top priority in Yellowknife, what would that future look like to you?

What change would you like to see to make that future a reality?

Organization	Responsibility

City of Yellowknife	• Promote engagement sessions via direct contact/email, social media, City website etc. • Identify and book accessible meeting locations • Review and input on draft engagement materials • Print engagement materials • Attend/co-facilitate interview sessions
Urban Systems	• Prepare engagement materials • Attend/co-facilitate interview sessions • Record engagement feedback • Summarize in What We Learned Report

3.4 (OPTIONAL) INTERNAL STAFF DISCUSSION

DESCRIPTION

To engage City of Yellowknife staff within Planning, Economic Development, and Community and Social Development on housing topics, we are proposing an optional one-hour focused interview with City of Yellowknife staff involved in housing, economic development, and social development to understand internal perspectives on Yellowknife's housing needs, gaps, and opportunities, as well as to learn more about past and future engagements, strategies, and initiatives related to the provision of housing in Yellowknife. We propose that this discussion occur virtually for ease of participation.

This focused interview will aim to create a baseline understanding of internal efforts taken to expand Yellowknife's housing stock along the continuum, as well as explore challenges and opportunities from the perspective of the City. We will also discuss regulatory incentives or levers that may be available to incentivize development of affordable housing options, in particular.

FORMATS

Organization	Responsibility
City of Yellowknife	• Identify staff in Planning, Economic Development, and Community and Social Development to attend the session • Attend the sessions
Urban Systems	• Coordinate participant invitations and event logistics • Prepare engagement materials • Attend/co-facilitate interview sessions • Record engagement feedback • Summarize in What We Learned Report

3.5 (OPTIONAL) PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT

DESCRIPTION

Public engagement could be conducted to obtain a well-rounded and inclusive dataset of engagement feedback, where members of the public would be encouraged to participate in informing the Housing Needs Assessment through their personal experiences living in and accessing housing in Yellowknife.

FORMATS

The formats presented below are a selection of different engagement approaches that could obtain feedback from the general public. They can be conducted independently or can be combined to encourage more broad participation.

1. **Online Survey**

   An online survey could be conducted to determine the housing priorities of the general public and could help to define housing challenges faced in the community. The survey could include up to 20 questions (maximum of 3 open-ended questions). The survey draft will be circulated with the City project team for a maximum of 2 rounds of review.

Organization	Responsibility
City of Yellowknife	• Maximum 2 rounds of review • Update project page with survey link
Urban Systems	• Draft survey questions • Format survey questions in online survey program • Monitor survey • Summarize in What We Learned Report

2. **Pop-Up Booth**

   A community pop-up booth could be facilitated to provide an opportunity for face-to-face interaction with community members and could include informational posters and activities designed to generate engagement feedback from the public. The pop-up could be hosted at a regular community event like the Farmers Market, or at a community space like a recreation centre or arts centre.

Organization	Responsibility
City of Yellowknife	• Review of engagement materials • Host or co-host pop-up event • Collect engagement feedback
Urban Systems	• Draft pop-up booth boards, activities, and supporting documents • Host or co-host pop-up event • Collect engagement feedback

	• Summarize in What We Learned Report

3. Mail Out

A mail out could be delivered to residential properties in the City of Yellowknife to provide a background on the project, and an opportunity to provide feedback through a pre-paid mail slip with key housing related questions.

Organization	Responsibility
City of Yellowknife	• Review of engagement materials • Collection of engagement materials • Scan engagement materials and submit to Urban Matters
Urban Systems	• Draft mail out content and graphic design • Summarize in What We Learned Report

4. Website Update & Social Media Campaign

The project could be posted on the City's PlaceSpeak webpage to inform community members about the purpose of the project, timelines, and project updates. The webpage could include interactive elements like monitored feedback forums or question boxes.

A social media campaign could be used to generate excitement about the project and could incorporate poll and multiple-choice features for an educational and participatory element. Social media posts could feature links back to the City's PlaceSpeak platform where community members can learn more about the project and monitor for updates.

Organization	Responsibility
City of Yellowknife	• Review of engagement materials • Updating and monitoring PlaceSpeak project page • Exporting user reports containing community feedback and page visits
Urban Systems	• Draft webpage content • Draft social media assets, copy, and graphic design • Draft social media schedule • Summarize in What We Learned Report

4.0 REPORTING

A What We Learned Report will be created upon the completion of all engagement activities and will summarize the engagement activities and feedback collected and identify community priorities that will ultimately be considered in the development of the Housing Needs Assessment.

APPENDIX B –

ONE-PAGE FACT SHEET

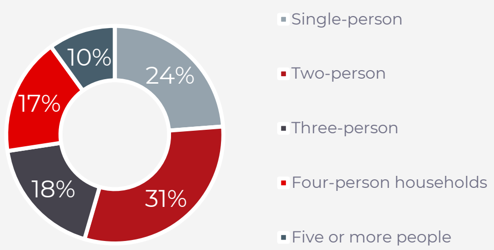
INTRODUCTION

The City of Yellowknife is currently facing a housing shortage, a situation that has significantly affected the availability and affordability of housing. To guide policy decisions and plan future housing initiatives, the City of Yellowknife is conducting a Housing Needs Assessment (HNA) to identify the community's current and future housing needs. As a part of this process, public and stakeholder engagement is essential. Your role in this engagement is not just to provide insights into housing needs and opportunities, but also to identify potential partnerships and collaborative investments. Your influence in this process is significant, and this session is a part of the engagement process, offering you an opportunity to discuss housing in Yellowknife.

Several key factors contributing to housing challenges currently faced by the City include:

- **Geography** – The City of Yellowknife is the most populous centre in the Northwest Territories (NWT), with approximately half the territory's population residing in the City. As the capital, Yellowknife serves as the primary service and connection hub; however, the remoteness of the City also results in higher transportation costs for materials and goods.
- **Migration Trends** – Yellowknife's population growth rate is declining. Interprovincial migration has decreased between 2016 and 2021, (i.e., from other provinces or territories). However, there is a growing trend in intraprovincial migration, as individuals and families from other communities in the NWT move to Yellowknife in search of employment, housing, and service opportunities.
- **Demographic Shifts** – Evolving family structures in Yellowknife are driving demand for a more diverse range of housing options to meet changing household sizes and needs. These housing needs are closely tied to demographic trends, including an aging population that has grown since 2016, even as the average household size has remained consistent at 2.7 people during the same period.

Household Composition (2021)

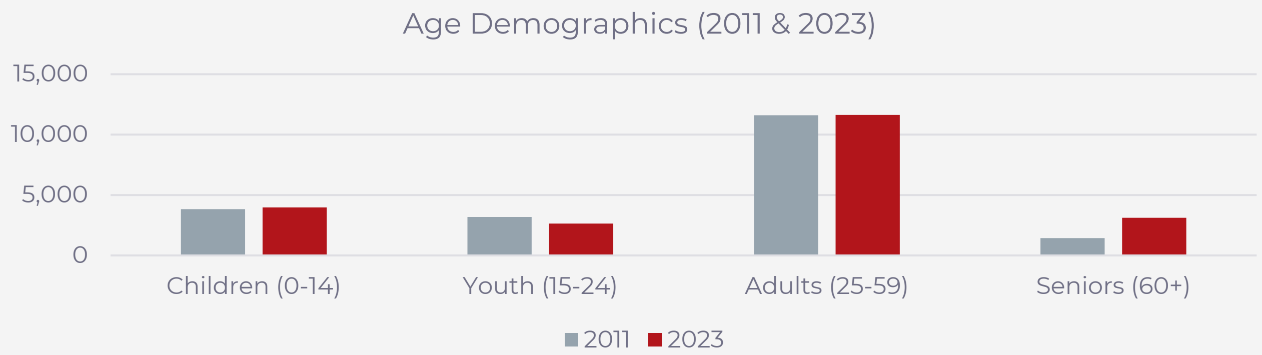


- **Cost of Living** – The overall cost of living in Yellowknife is high, driven by expensive goods, services, and fuel. A significant number of households spend more than 30% of their income on shelter, while high real estate prices, coupled with limited access to affordable financing options, make homeownership difficult for many residents.
- **Labour Market Dynamics** – Yellowknife's economy attracts workers from other parts of Canada and internationally, particularly for mining and government jobs. However, economic dependence on natural resource extraction, particularly mining, makes the housing market vulnerable to booms and busts. Seasonal and temporary workforces also contribute to fluctuating housing demand, particularly for rental units and short-term accommodations.
- **Available Housing Stock** – A significant portion of Yellowknife's housing stock is aging, and the need for renovation and maintenance increases the costs for both owners and renters. Additionally, Yellowknife has experienced low rental vacancy rates, reducing the availability of affordable housing and rental units. Single-detached dwellings built for homeownership continue to be the most constructed and available option in the City.
- **Government Policies and Incentives** – Federal and territorial governments, along with the city, have introduced some programs aimed at supporting affordable housing, such as tax breaks for developers or subsidies for low-income renters. However, limited subsidies, incentives, and investment in social housing impact the type and supply of residential developments.

COMMUNITY PROFILE

The City of Yellowknife experienced a population increase of 3.9% from 2016 to 2021, growing from 19,569 in 2016 to 20,340 in 2021. **Yellowknife accounts for 98% of the region's population and around half of the total population of the NWT.** However, the rate of population growth is slowing, despite continued overall growth.

- The number of **children (aged 14 years and younger) increased** slightly from 3,834 (19.1% of the total population in 2011) to 3,979 (18.6% in 2023), even as their proportion of the total population decreased.
- **Young adults (aged 15-24) declined** from 3,185 (15.9% in 2011) to 2,631 (12.3% in 2023).
- **Adults aged 25-59 rose marginally** from 11,598 (57.8% in 2011) to 11,632 (54.5% in 2023), though their share of the population decreased.
- The **senior population (aged 60 and over) nearly doubled**, increasing from 1,437 (7.2% in 2011) to 3,120 (14.6% in 2023).



Yellowknife has a significant Indigenous population, with 4,815 individuals making up 24.2% of the city's total population.

In Yellowknife, 15.6% of residents are interprovincial migrants, 3.6% are external migrants, 4.3% are intraprovincial migrants, and 50.6% are non-movers. Additionally, 25.9% of the population are non-migrants.

Yellowknife's economy is driven by public administration, health care, retail, and transportation, with a labour force of 15,795 and an unemployment rate of 5.8% (2021). The median income reached $148,000, up 3.8% since 2016. The city had 7,515 households in 2021, with single- and two-person homes increasing, while larger households declined. Homeownership rose slightly to 56.9%, and rental rates dropped marginally.

Housing stock trends show a rise in apartments and semi-detached homes, while single-detached houses declined. From 2021 to 2023, 1,108 housing units were constructed. The housing affordability challenge persists, with average home prices at $494,000 and rents at $1,840. Core Housing Needs (households that are living in housing that are unaffordable and/or fall below acceptable housing standards) affect 14.2% of renters, while affordability remains a significant barrier for unhoused individuals. Yellowknife's population is projected to reach 22,059 by 2035, with rising needs for rental housing and continued pressure on affordability.

Thank you for participating in the focus group for Yellowknife's Housing Needs Assessment. Your insights and feedback are invaluable in helping us understand the unique housing challenges and opportunities in our community. Your engagement ensures that the voices of Yellowknife residents are heard and considered as we work together to develop effective housing solutions. We deeply appreciate your time, effort, and contributions to this important initiative.