

Town of Mahone Bay

Municipal Housing Needs Report

2023

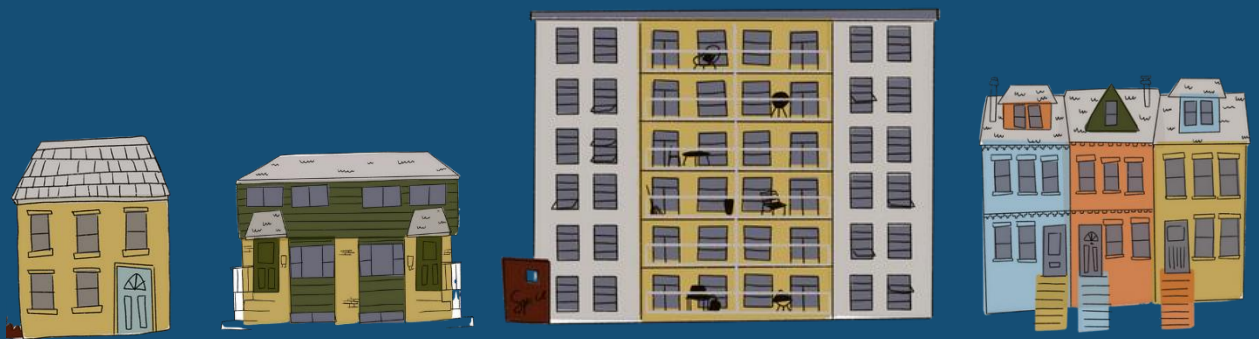


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1 Introduction

The purpose of a housing needs assessment is to understand the current and anticipated housing conditions across a given geography, in the case of this and accompanying reports, the conditions across the province of Nova Scotia and its municipalities. Generally, this work strengthens the ability of local stakeholders and governments to:

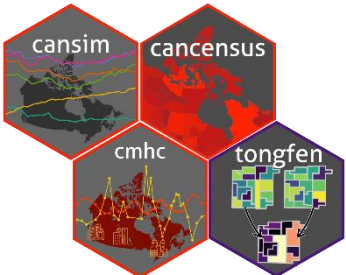
- Identify current and future housing needs and
- Identify existing and projected gaps in housing supply

Empowering municipalities and the province to become effective partners in housing provision requires reliable data to identify the stock necessary to meet current and future needs and how to drive related policy and investment. The insights generated by a needs assessment can help to inform ongoing land use and social planning initiatives at the local level, as well as provide hard evidence in support of advocacy to more senior levels of government.

The goal of this municipal report is to share appropriate, available, and accurate data to municipal governments so that they further understand their current housing situation and what they might anticipate. It is important to note that the same data methodologies and calculations are applied across each municipality, based on available data. This means that reports cannot consider all the nuanced conditions of individual communities that would be known best by municipal staff, stakeholders, and residents.

The report should be considered a form of base knowledge, intended for local review and discussion. Municipalities should use local information to provide additional context and information for discussion and decision-making as they see fit. For more details about methodologies, provincial trends, and definitions, please refer to the **Provincial Report**.

Note that all data references the municipality unless noted otherwise. There were fewer than 20 public survey respondents from the Town of Mahone Bay and cannot be included. Data for all municipalities with fewer than 20 respondents is not reported publicly, to ensure the confidentiality of individual identities as well as to avoid statistically unreliable results.



2 Key Findings

Housing shortage

As of the end of 2022, there was a gap between housing demand and available supply of about 25 units, including both market and non-market housing.

Projections suggest that to keep pace with population growth, the municipality will need 50 new units by 2027 (including the existing shortage of 25) and 70 by 2032. Assuming that future housing development matches recent construction trends, the current supply shortage could be addressed by 2027. Despite this, affordability has been impacted with an 82% increase in the median home price from 2019 to 2022.

Population

Between 2016 and 2021, the municipality's population increased by 3%, less than the provincial growth rate of 5%. The municipality grew across most non-senior age cohorts between 2016 and 2021, with noticeably strong growth among 25- to 44-year-old persons - likely due to the regional net-positive migration trends. There was a corresponding (though smaller) increase in youth and young adults.

Finance and Treasury Board (FTB) estimates suggest that the 2022 population was 1,085 (a 2% increase from 2021), with a projected increase of 8% between 2022 and 2027. Senior populations should continue to increase during that time. Decreases could only occur among 45- to 64-year-old cohort. The 25- to 44-year-old cohort may expand by another 3% over the next five years.

Households

Between 2016 and 2021, there was an overall 4% increase in households, with tenures split between 68% owners and 32% renters. Non-census households (i.e., single persons / roommates) make up the highest share of households and grew 7% between 2016 and 2021. Relatedly, the share of 1-person households rose by 15% between 2016 and 2021.

Estimates suggest that total households reached 500 in 2022, with a potential increase of 7% from 2022 to 2027 (35 total). Household losses should predominantly occur among older working professional-led households (45- to 64-year-olds). The greatest rate of growth should be among senior-led households.

Non-market housing

As of January 2023, the Town of Mahone Bay had a public-housing inventory of 25 units, of which all were for seniors.

Short-term rentals (STRs)

Nearly 5% of the municipality's housing inventory may have been used as a short-term commercial rental in 2021 (the last full year of data). This means that upwards of 35 units might have been removed from the long-term market in 2022, though it is uncertain exactly how many would have been long-term rentals or purchased for permanent occupancy if not used as a STR.

Shelter costs

Average rents reported by the Property Valuation Services Corporation (PVSC) increased 2% from 2020 to 2021, following a 6% increase between 2019 and 2020. The reduced increase reflects the consistency in vacancy among the rental market - the municipality has had an estimated overall vacancy rate of 7.0% since 2018 based on the combined markets of Lunenburg, Chester, and Mahone Bay, falling above the healthy vacancy range of 3% to 5% reported by PVSC across Nova Scotia.

Median Mahone Bay home prices increased 82% from 2019 to 2022, compared to 2% between 2016 and 2019. The rapid rise in prices is a combination of increased demand and low interest rates (until recently).

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Survey Respondents from the
Town of Mahone Bay

Top Housing Challenges:

1. Finding housing at a price I can afford
2. Finding housing that allows my pet(s)
3. I am not experiencing any challenges with finding affordable housing
4. Finding housing that is in good condition and not requiring repairs
5. Finding housing that meets my accessibility needs

If there were no limitation on housing, top choices would be:

1. House (single detached home, duplex, mobile home)
2. Apartment (rental)
3. Condominium
4. Government-owned Public Housing
5. Community Housing/Non-profit Housing

53%

of respondents have considered leaving
their community due to housing issues

29%

of respondents have faced discrimination
when trying to access housing

Municipality's public survey responses

Affordability

In the municipality, affordability has worsened. At least 85% of all couples, 93% of all lone-parent households, and 99% of all single person households earned below the estimated income required to afford the 2022 median sale price of a local dwelling. For rentals, at least 9% of **renting** couples, 40% of **renting** lone-parents, and 73% of **renting** single persons earned below the estimated income required to afford the 2021 average local rents.

Housing need

When a household lives in a dwelling that requires more than 30% of its before-tax household income, is overcrowded, and needs major repairs - and no alternative exists - it is in Core Housing Need. In 2021, about 17% (85 total) of the Municipality's households lived in Core Housing Need. Need is particularly prevalent among renter households (35%, or 60 households)

Generally, the number of people in and rates of Core Housing Need across segments has decreased since 2016. However, comparing 2021 to 2016 rates (particularly for affordability) is difficult given the influence of the Canada Emergency Response Benefit (CERB) on incomes. Overall, the municipality reported a lower rate of core housing need than that of Nova Scotia overall (10%).

3 Housing Supply

3.1 Market Housing

As of the 2021 Census, there were 599 private dwellings across the Town of Mahone Bay, 87% of which were occupied by usual residents (those who live in the municipality permanently). The rest of the inventory may either be occupied solely by foreign residents and/or by temporarily present persons, unoccupied dwellings, or dwellings used as vacation homes (e.g., short-term rentals). For those dwellings occupied by usual residents, Table 3-1 summarizes the totals and distribution by structure type for the municipality. The greatest share of the current supply is held by single-detached homes at 61%, followed by apartments (fewer than five storeys) at 28%.

Table 3-1: Total & Share of Dwellings Occupied by a Usual Resident by Structure Type

Total	Single-detached	Semi-detached	Row house	Duplex apt	Apt (< 5 storeys)	Apt (5+ storeys)	Movable	Other
525	320	15	35	5	145	0	0	0
100%	61%	3%	7%	1%	28%	0%	0%	0%

Source: 2021 Census



Municipality’s public survey responses

"When we say heritage - we're really talking about settler heritage - so not all encompassing this sense of heritage is in conflict with a land acknowledgement in some ways, for instance. Not just nimbyism - it's called BANANA - Build Absolutely Nothing Anywhere Near Anything. How can we encourage people to think about community - not just 'me and my household'. Can we invest in that? Encouraging that conversation? How can we embrace housing in a different light?"

3.1.1 Construction Activity

The pace of construction is represented by the annual total units permitted, units started, and units completed - these are separate but related phases of the same unit construction process.

A permit signifies the anticipated future housing to be built, a start reflects how many permits led to a shovel in the ground, and a completion represents how many units were actually added to the occupiable supply. Construction takes time and its pace varies depending on building type. Consequently, the number of units permitted in one year cannot be directly linked to starts or completions in another. The **Provincial Report** offers a detailed explanation of each element.

Permit activity refers to the total units permitted by a municipality. Table 3-2 shows the number units permitted in the Town of Mahone Bay. Note that 2022 data reflects an extrapolated September 2022 total. Starts and completions data is not available.

Table 3-2: Construction Activity by Dwelling Type

Units permitted							
	2010	2017	2018	2019	2020	2021	2022*
Total	1	33	4	4	7	4	4
Single	1	2	3	0	1	2	4
Semi	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Row	0	0	0	0	0	0	0
Apartment	0	31	1	4	6	2	0
Other	0	0	0	0	0	0	0

* 2022 data extrapolated from September 2022 data to end of year 2022.

Source: Statistics Canada Custom CSD Tables 34-10-0001, 34-10-0066

"Nova Scotia needs to invest in public transit in rural areas immediately. There's a huge link between that and being about to provide housing. It will decongest our towns and cities and lead to a more robust economy."

Table 3-3 summarizes the change in unit size and tenure between the 2016 and 2021 Censuses. The distribution of new units shows what sizes are most occupied by renter and owner households. These Census results indicate that the long-term rental supply is decreasing while the owner-occupied supply has increased.

Table 3-3: Change in Units by Size & Tenure between Census Periods

	Total	Studio / 1-bedroom	2-bedroom	3+ bedroom
Owned dwellings				
Owned (2016) - 63% of total HHs	320	15	70	235
Owned (2021) - 68% of total HHs	350	20	105	230
Change in units	30	5	35	-5
Share of change	100%	11%	78%	11%
Rented dwellings				
Rented (2016) - 37% of total HHs	185	70	85	25
Rented (2021) - 32% of total HHs	170	70	70	20
Change in units	-15	0	-15	-5
Share of change	100%	0%	75%	25%

Source: Statistics Canada Tables 98-400-X2016220 & 98-10-0240

Between 2016 and 2021, total dwellings (not only occupied by a usual resident) increased from 571 to 599 - a 28-unit increase. This suggests that number of total dwellings increased faster than the pace of households over the last half-decade.

Table 3-4: Change in Total Dwellings versus Dwellings Occupied by Usual Residents

Dwellings	2016	2021	% change
Total dwellings (a)	571	599	5%
Dwelling occupied by a usual resident (b)	505	525	4%
Share (b / a)	88%	88%	

Source: Statistics Canada 2016 & 2021 Census

3.1.2 Housing Accelerator Fund Considerations

The Housing Accelerator Fund (HAF) is a program introduced by the Canada Mortgage & Housing Corporation (CMHC) with the objective to bolster the housing supply at an accelerated pace. Local governments within Canada - including First Nations, Métis and Inuit governments who have delegated authority over land use planning and development approvals - are eligible to apply to the HAF. Interested municipalities can find the HAF's pre-application reference material [here](#). Note that a Housing Needs Assessment (such as this one) is required as part of a complete application (though not needed immediately for the initial submission).

An applicant is required to provide two projections to CMHC. The applicant must calculate their own projections based on reasonable assumptions and data sources, including Statistics Canada and/or its own administrative data. There is no prescribed

formula; however, projections should be based on a three-year period ending September 1, 2026. The two projections are:

- The total permitted housing units projected without program funding.
- The total number of permitted housing units projected with program funding. This second projection is known as the “housing supply growth target.”

The data shared in this overall section (e.g., permits, starts, completions, and historical changes in dwelling sizes) can be used to inform local decisions related to projected permits by September 2026.

For additional guidance, Table 3-5 summarizes the growth by unit type (more closely defined by the HAF application requirements) and tenure between 2016 and 2021.

Table 3-5: Unit Change by Estimated HAF Dwelling Type & Tenure, 2016 & 2021 Census

	Total	Single ^a	Missing middle ^b	Multi-unit ^c
Total dwellings				
Total (2016)	505	325	175	0
Total (2021)	520	325	205	0
Change in units	15	0	30	0
Share of change	100%	0%	100%	0%
Owned dwellings				
Owned (2016)	320	290	25	0
Owned (2021)	350	285	75	0
Change in units	30	-5	50	0
Share of change	100%	9%	91%	0%
Rented dwellings				
Rented (2016)	185	35	150	0
Rented (2021)	170	40	130	0
Change in units	-15	5	-20	0
Share of change	100%	20%	80%	0%

^a Single means single-detached homes, which are buildings containing 1 dwelling unit, which is completely separated on all sides from any other dwelling or structure.

^b Missing middle refers to ground-oriented housing types that exist between single-detached and mid-rise apartments. This includes garden suites, secondary suites, duplexes, triplexes, fourplexes, row houses, courtyard housing, low-rise apartments (less than 4 storeys). Note that this definition for low-rise does not match the Statistics Canada cut off less than 5 storeys.

^c Multi-unit refers to apartments that are 4-or-more storeys. The HAF further defines these by whether they are in close proximity to rapid transit or not, which is not possible to summarize based on the data available.

Source: Statistics Canada Tables 98-400-X2016220 & 98-10-0240

CMHC does not prescribe a formula for projections, leaving this decision up to the municipality who would know best about on-the-ground construction activity (not only by the numbers but also through discussions with local builders/developers).

A simple example includes using most recent permitting data (the average annual units permitted between 2017 and 2021), applying the historical shares of new construction between 2016 and 2021, and comparing the potential units permitted to the estimated total demand over the three years (based on Housing Shortage data - Section 4). The results, shown in Table 3-6, are for discussion purposes and not a prescribed logic - the municipality can form its own approach based on other data provided and internal resources.

Table 3-6: Example of Simple HAF Permit Projection

	Historical share of new housing	Possible annual units permitted	Estimated 3-year units permitted ^a	Estimated 3-year unit demand ^a	Gap that HAF can help reduce
Total	100%	10	30 (A)	40 (B)	10
Single	0%	0	0	0	0
Missing middle	100%	10	30	40	10
Multi-unit	0%	0	0	0	0

Relationship between units permitted and shortage	
C: Estimated September 2023 housing stock: ^b	605
Projected permitted unit growth over 3 years without HAF (A / C x 100):	5.0%
Projected permitted unit growth over 3 years needed to meet demand (B / C x 100):	6.6%
% increase in units permitted to meet shortage (B / A - 1) x 100:	33%

Relationship between units permitted and HAF requirements (rounded up to nearest 5)	
D: Estimated September 2023 housing stock: ^b	605
E: Projected annual units permitted (based on '16-'21 average - see Table 3-2)	10
Required units permitted over 3 years to meet minimum 1.1% average annual growth rate ^c (D x 1.1% x 3 years)	20
Required additional units permitted over 3 years to meet minimum 10% increase ^d over historical average (E x 10% x 3 years)	5

^a Units permitted between September 2023 and September 2026; 3-year unit demand includes 2022 shortage

^b 2021 Census (Statistics Canada) + 2021 units permitted + 2021 units permitted x 2/3 (September 2023 estimate)

Note that the final column provides the straight-lined shortage anticipated by the end of the HAF. This may not represent the total possible intervention by the HAF, as this depends on the choices made by the municipality. Rather, it highlights the total shortage the HAF can help reduce.

3.2 Non-Market Housing

3.2.1 Public Housing

Of the 11,200 total inventory of publicly owned dwelling units (as administered by the Nova Scotia Provincial Housing Authority), 25 are located in the Town of Mahone Bay - all of which are senior-specific and are 1-bedroom units.

About 48% of the Town’s public housing tenants have lived in public housing for more than 5 years - with most having lived there between 5 and 10 years.

Table 3-7: Public Housing Inventory, January 2023

		Total	Family	Senior
Total unit inventory		25	0	25
Inventory by unit size	Studio	0	0	0
	1-bedroom	25	0	25
	2-bedroom	0	0	0
	3+ bedroom	0	0	0
	Not reported	0	0	0
Inventory by dwelling type	Single family	0	0	0
	Row	0	0	0
	Apartment	25	0	25
	Not reported	0	0	0
Length of tenure in public housing	Less than 1 year	20%	-	20%
	1 to 5 years	28%	-	28%
	5 to 10 years	36%	-	36%
	10+ years	12%	-	12%
Household income	Median income (mth)	\$1,765	-	\$1,765
	Median income (ann)	\$21,180	-	\$21,180

Source: Derived from Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing data

3.2.2 Rent Supplements

As of March 2023, 213 households in **entire** Lunenburg Census Division (no data is specifically available for the Town of Mahone Bay) were receiving rent supplement

support, equivalent to 328 total people. About 25% were families, 49% were seniors, and 26% were classified as non-elderly households.

Table 3-8 further details the percentage share of rent supplements that served a specific vulnerable population.

Table 3-8: Rent Supplement Demographics, Lunenburg Census Division, March 2023

	Total	Family	Senior	Non-elderly
Total rent supplements	213	53	104	56
People benefiting	328	152	110	66
Average HH size	1.5	2.9	1.1	1.2
Average dependents	0.4	1.7	0.0	0.0
Share of supplements serving a vulnerable group:				
Indigenous person(s)	2%	4%	1%	2%
Person(s) w/ a disability	19%	26%	13%	25%
At risk of homelessness	13%	26%	6%	14%
Homeless	0%	0%	0%	0%
Newcomer(s)	0%	0%	0%	2%
Mental health / addictions	11%	15%	3%	23%
Racialized person(s)	1%	4%	0%	2%
Veteran(s)	1%	2%	1%	0%
Fleeing domestic violence	3%	9%	0%	2%
Young adults	3%	8%	0%	4%

Source: Derived from Ministry of Municipal Affairs & Housing data

3.2.3 Non-Profit & Co-operative Housing and Shelters

Formal datasets related to third-party affordable housing organizations and their unit inventories are limited. The **Provincial Report** offers some discussion about what shelters exist provincially, with some detail by Economic Region.

"Landlords are refusing tenants with rent subsidies."

"There's an issue around women fleeing abusive relationships or people with mental health issues aren't eligible for rental subsidies."

The South Shore Open Doors Association (SSODA)¹ performed a point-in-time count of persons and households experiencing homelessness across the South Shore in Fall 2022.² Statistics demonstrated that at least 230 households and 208 individuals (including 93 children) were living in situations of homelessness at that time. For those households who shared information:

- 49 were families
- 19 were senior-led
- 17 were youth-led
- 12 were Indigenous

The above demonstrates that homelessness is not solely an issue within large municipalities but is a challenge across Nova Scotia - particularly related to hidden homelessness which is difficult to identify or quantify.

3.3 Short-Term Rentals (STRs)

Between 2018 and 2022, there has been an increase of 17 unique dwellings used as an STR. In 2022, 75% were entire homes or apartments, of which 35 were potentially³ “commercial” units - meaning they were available/reserved more than half of the year.

Table 3-9: Short-Term Rental Activity & Inventory

	Data by year				Percent change		
	2018	2020	2021	2022	'18-'20	'20-'22	18-'22**
Total unique STRs	60	77	87	77	+28%	0%	+28%
Entire home/apt	43	62	68	58	+44%	-6%	+35%
Hotel room	0	5	5	5	n.a.	0%	n.a.
Private room	17	10	14	14	-41%	+40%	-18%
Shared room	0	0	0	0	n.a.	n.a.	n.a.
Avg annual revenue	\$6,612	\$6,985	\$9,448	\$12,144	+6%	+74%	+84%
Total market ('000s)	\$397	\$538	\$822	\$935	+36%	+74%	+136%
Commercial STRs*	30	37	35	35	+23%	-5%	+17%

* A commercial STR is one that was listed as available and/or has been reserved more than 50% of the days in a calendar year.

** 2022 data reflects as of September 2022. Commercial STRs use 9 months for their calculations versus a full year.

Source: derived from AirDNA data

¹ South Shore Open Doors Association. (2022). Current Statistics: As of Fall 2022. <https://www.ssoda.org/current-homeslessness-statistics>

² Results were mostly presented at a regional level; thus, this section will be similar across municipal reports within the South Shore area, with some variation where possible.

³Noted as “potentially” since 2022 data is only up to September.

"Short-term rentals are driving prices up, changing the character of neighborhoods, and reducing available stock."

If 2021 commercial units are compared to the 2021 dwelling stock (599 - as per the Census), nearly 6% of the municipality's housing inventory may have been used as a short-term commercial rental.

4 Housing Shortage

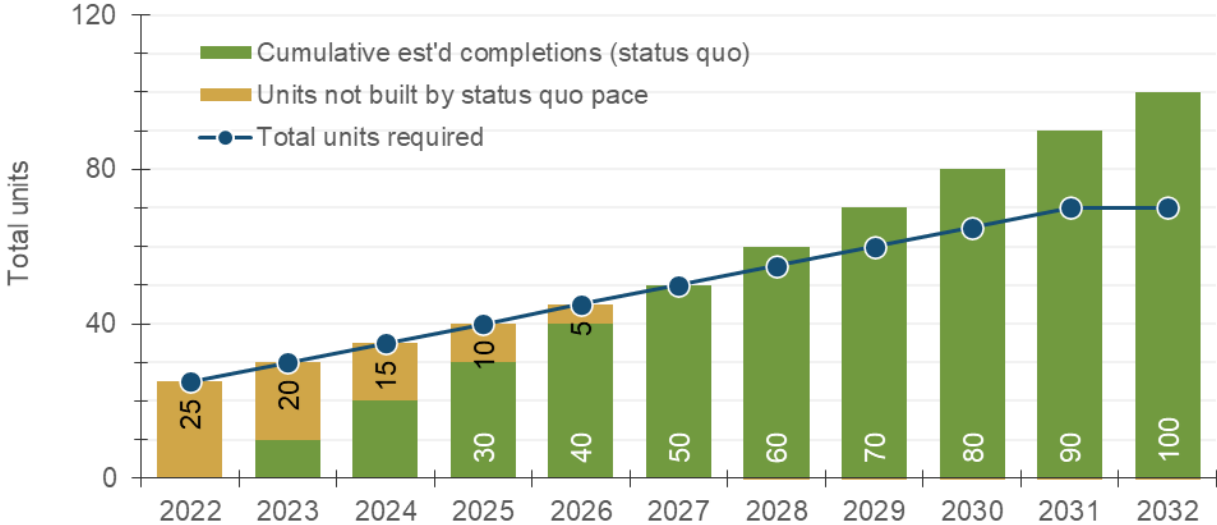
Based on demographic modeling results (see **Provincial Report** for details), the municipality’s potential housing shortage (as of the end of 2022) may be 25 units.⁴ Note that this estimate represents the sum of all units, be they rented or owned in terms of their tenure, or market or non-market housing.

Figure 4.1 offers a summary of the trajectory of the housing shortage over the next decade under a base population growth scenario provided by Nova Scotia’s Department of Finance and Treasury Board.

In five years, the municipality may have a total dwelling demand (existing shortfall plus anticipated demand) of about 50 units, which could grow to 70 by 2032.

Based on the recent pace of construction, about 10 new units could be completed annually over the next decade if recent trends continue. This would eliminate the gap by 2027. Note that status quo construction follows the method used in the provincial report, being average historical permits adjusted by 5% to account for permit withdrawals or cancellations. Results are rounded to the nearest 5.⁵

Figure 4.1: Anticipated Unit Gap based on Total Units Required and Estimated Completions, Demographic Model Results



⁴ The allocation of unit shortages is based on results for the Census Division, apportioned to its respective municipalities based on their share of local household change between 2016 and 2021.

⁵ All municipalities use the same approach for consistency. However, for smaller municipalities, the combination of fewer units permitted and rounding practices can under or over represent anticipated construction activity. As such, greater attention should be directed to the projected demand, instead of anticipated supply, which can be later cross-reference with internal municipal data.

Table 4-1 summarizes possible guides for constructing unit sizes over the next half-decade. As previously described, the municipality may need to build 50 new units to meet demand by 2027. Based on historical preferences,⁶ about 30% could be studio / 1-bedroom dwellings (15 units), 40% 2-bedroom dwellings (20), and 30% 3+ bedroom dwellings (15). This includes the existing unit shortfall.

Table 4-1: Estimated Current & Anticipated Unit Shortfall by Unit Size, 2022-2027

	Total	Studio + 1-bedroom	2-bedroom	3+ bedroom
A: Current shortfall (end of 2022)	25	10	10	5
B: Anticipated demand by 2027	25	10	10	5
C: Total units required by 2027 (A + B)	50	15	20	15
D: Anticipated 5-year supply (status quo pace*)	50	15	20	15

* The distribution of supply is based on household preferences, not actual anticipated build out.

⁶ In this case, unit sizes reflect the preference for unit size, not the historical distribution of unit sizes in the existing inventory. Briefly, historical distributions of household sizes by household family types are used to estimate require bedrooms. The estimated share of unit sizes is then distributed into forecasted demand calculations. More explanation about how preference distributes can be found in the Housing Shortage section of the Provincial report.

5 Housing Affordability



Municipality’s public survey responses

“Nova Scotia has historically been a low-wage economy. Perpetuated by a small number of families who pull the strings and benefit from low wages. We need to collectively push for a rise in minimum wage. Though that still doesn’t solve the problem for people on fixed income.”

“Mahone Bay is becoming a town for the rich.”

5.1 Homeownership

Housing is becoming more expensive. This is not simply a claim observing the appreciation of property as a commodity but as an increase relative to other periods, levels of income, and availability.

5.1.1 Market Activity

Median sale prices across Nova Scotia have seen increases since 2016, with significant increases since 2019. Mahone Bay’s median sale price increased from \$251,500 to \$469,000 between 2016 and 2022. This represents a 86% rise in median sale price.

Table 5-1: Median Sale Prices by Dwelling Type & Select Years

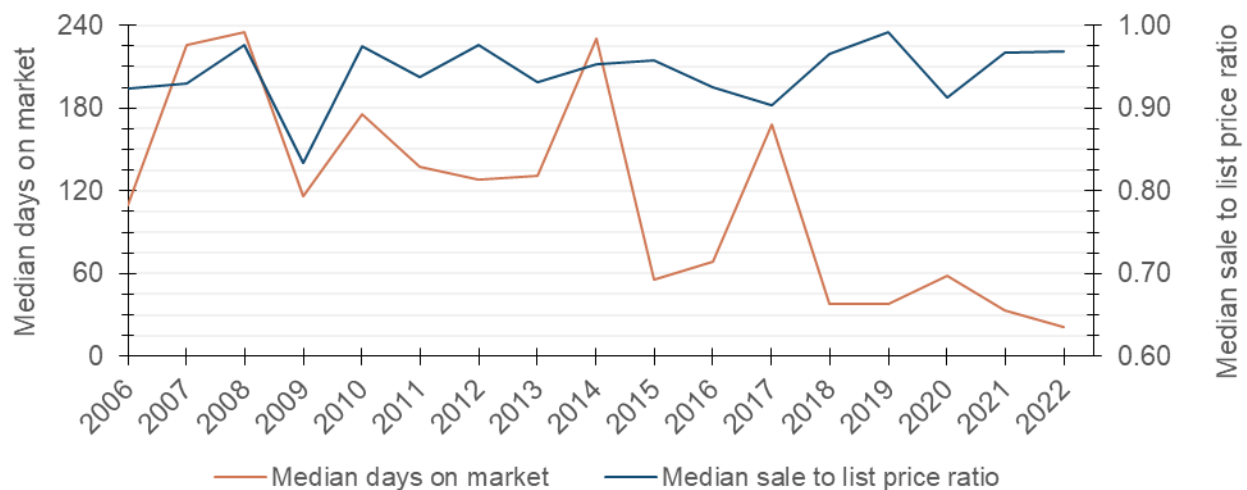
	Price				Percent Change		
	2010	2016	2019	2022	'10-'16	'16-'19	'19-'22
Total	\$243,500	\$251,750	\$257,000	\$469,000	+3%	+2%	+82%
Single	\$270,000	\$281,250	\$318,500	\$496,200	+4%	+13%	+56%
Semi	\$128,900	-	\$223,000	-	-	-	-
Row	\$187,000	-	\$224,750	\$435,000	-	-	+94%
Condo Apt	\$239,900	\$215,000	\$226,750	\$399,000	-10%	+5%	+76%

Source: NSAR MLS®

The increase in price can, at least in part, be attributed to an increase in demand. Figure 5.1 illustrates the sale-to-list-price ratio compared to the median days a dwelling was on the market. The number of days on market is a general indicator of market demand (fewer days means more interest and more days means less interest). As the number of days on market decreases, there is generally a rise in sale prices (and sale to list price ratios).

Over the last decade, the median sale to list price ratio has been gradually increasing with a corresponding decrease in the median days on market for a dwelling, demonstrating a continued increase in demand. In 2022, it took just over 20 days to sell a home in Mahone Bay and the median home was sold close to the asking price.

Figure 5.1: Historical Median Days on Market vs. Median Sales-List Price Ratio



Source: NSAR MLS®

5.1.2 Homeownership Affordability

Table 5-2 details the percentage share of households, separated by household types, that could afford a home based on their respective income levels versus the median sale prices from 2022. The affordability threshold is the same used by Statistics Canada and CMHC - 30% of before-tax household income spent on shelter costs. Shelter cost calculations include the direct and indirect costs related to shelter. More detail is provided in the **Provincial Report**. Note that income bracket distributions are based on Census Division data.⁷

Lone parents and single persons are least likely to have income levels necessary to afford to own a home. Condominiums were the most attainable types of dwellings based on value, but 92% of lone-parent households and 98% of single-person households fall below the income levels necessary to afford a single detached house.

⁷ Since Census Division data is used, readers will notice estimate similarities between municipalities belonging to the same Census Division.

Table 5-2: Estimate of Sales Affordability by Income Level (All Households)

		2022 median sale price:			\$496,200	\$435,000	\$399,000
		% of HHs below income level			Single Detached Dwelling	Row	Condo Apt
Income level	Attainable sales price	Couples	Lone parents	Single persons			
\$90,000	\$269,000	53%	81%	93%	no	no	no
\$95,000	\$284,000	57%	84%	94%	no	no	no
\$100,000	\$299,000	61%	87%	95%	no	no	no
\$105,000	\$314,000	64%	89%	96%	no	no	no
\$110,000	\$329,000	67%	89%	96%	no	no	no
\$115,000	\$344,000	70%	90%	97%	no	no	no
\$120,000	\$359,000	73%	90%	98%	no	no	no
\$125,000	\$373,500	76%	92%	98%	no	no	no
\$130,000	\$388,500	78%	92%	98%	no	no	no
\$135,000	\$403,500	79%	92%	98%	no	no	yes
\$140,000	\$418,500	81%	93%	98%	no	no	yes
\$145,000	\$433,500	83%	93%	98%	no	no	yes
\$150,000	\$448,500	85%	93%	99%	no	yes	yes

Homeownership	Total Dwelling	Single Detached Dwelling	Row	Condo Apt
Est'd income needed to buy median home	\$156,900	\$166,000	\$145,500	\$133,500
% of total households below income	90%	90%	89%	85%

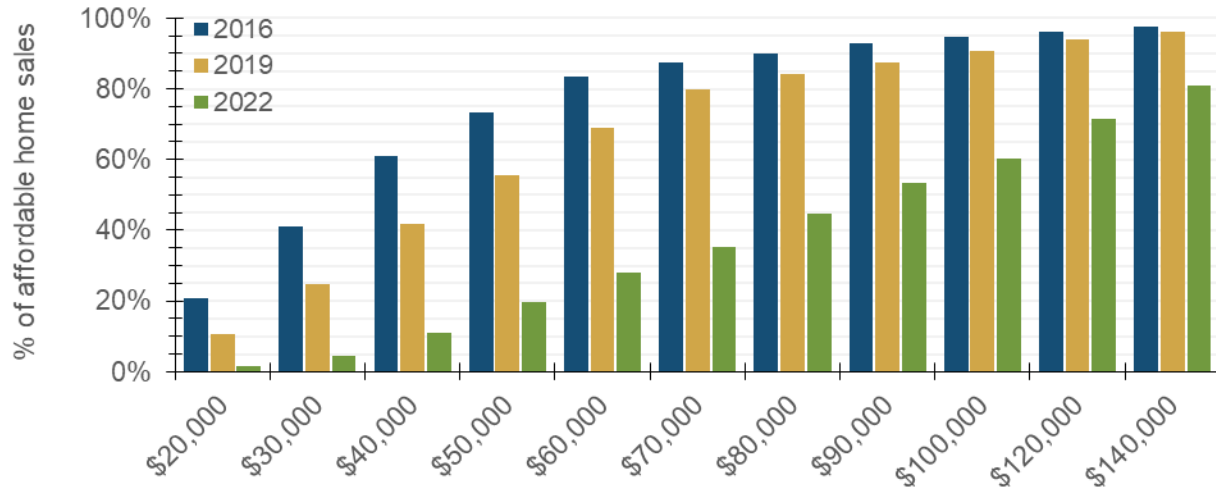
Source: derived from Statistics Canada tables (see Provincial Report), Bank of Canada, NSAR MLS®

About 90% of all local households earned an income below what would be needed (around \$156,900) to purchase the median home in 2022. This highlights the importance of housing interventions to address the shortage identified above in order to reduce typical housing prices to reasonably affordable levels.

Figure 5.2 presents the levels of affordability for respective household income levels for 2016, 2019, and 2022 for Lunenburg Census Division (no data is specifically available for the Town of Mahone Bay). It illustrates the percentage of home sales in each year that would be affordable (30% of household income) at a given income level.

While there were already signs of decreasing affordability from 2016 to 2019, the municipality suffered a significant shock from 2019 to 2022. For instance, a \$70,000 income could afford 80% of home sales in 2019. In 2022, this fell to 35%.

Figure 5.2: Estimated % of Households that Can / Cannot Afford Typical Sale Prices, Lunenburg Census Division



Source: Derived from Statistics Canada Custom Census 2021 Tables, Bank of Canada, NSAR MLS®

5.2 Rental Market

5.2.1 Market Activity

Table 5-3 reports the rental data for the Town of Mahone Bay (based on aggregate data of Lunenburg, Mahone Bay, and Chester from PVSC). The overall average rent in 2021, per PVSC data, was \$706. This is an increase of 10% from 2018. There has been a 3% decrease in studio units, a 10% increase in 1-bedroom units, a 7.5% increase in 2-bedroom units, and a 6% increase in 3-bedroom units.

Table 5-3: Average Rents by Unit Size and Select Years

	Price				Percent Change		
	2018	2019	2020	2021	'18-'19	19-'20	20-'21
Total	\$640	\$650	\$689	\$706	+2%	+6%	+2%
Studio	\$568	\$568	\$547	\$549	0%	-4%	+0%
1-bed	\$621	\$621	\$665	\$682	0%	+7%	+3%
2-bed	\$706	\$706	\$742	\$759	0%	+5%	+2%
3-bed	\$796	\$796	\$793	\$841	0%	0%	+6%
Vacancy	7.0%	7.0%	7.0%	7.0%			

Source: PVSC custom tables

The municipality's estimated vacancy rate has remained constant at 7% between 2018 and 2021. While Nova Scotia has seen province-wide declines in vacancy, the municipality has not followed the same trend according to PVSC data. This falls above the healthy vacancy range of 3% to 5%, based on PVSC data.

5.2.2 Rental Affordability

Table 5-4 details the percentage share of **renter** households, divided by household type and income levels, that can afford 2021 average rent for various unit types. As with ownership, lone-parent and single person households face the highest income barrier to affordability. About 19% of lone-parent households and 57% of single person households fall below the income level required to afford the average rent for a studio apartment in 2021.

Table 5-4: Estimated Rent Affordability by Income Level (Renter Households)

		2021 average rent:			\$549	\$682	\$759	\$841
		% of HHs below income level			Studio	1-bed	2-bed	3+ bed
Income level	Attainable rent	Couples	Lone parents	Single persons				
\$20,000	\$330	2%	4%	19%	no	no	no	no
\$25,000	\$420	2%	10%	45%	no	no	no	no
\$30,000	\$500	2%	19%	57%	no	no	no	no
\$35,000	\$590	5%	27%	66%	yes	no	no	no
\$40,000	\$670	9%	40%	73%	yes	no	no	no
\$45,000	\$750	16%	50%	79%	yes	yes	no	no
\$50,000	\$840	21%	63%	84%	yes	yes	yes	no
\$55,000	\$920	27%	68%	87%	yes	yes	yes	yes
\$60,000	\$1,000	34%	74%	89%	yes	yes	yes	yes
\$65,000	\$1,090	40%	79%	91%	yes	yes	yes	yes
\$70,000	\$1,170	49%	83%	92%	yes	yes	yes	yes
\$75,000	\$1,260	53%	83%	93%	yes	yes	yes	yes
\$80,000	\$1,340	59%	88%	95%	yes	yes	yes	yes

Renting	Average	Studio	1-bed	2-bed	3+ bed
Est'd income needed to rent average unit	\$42,100	\$32,800	\$40,700	\$45,300	\$50,200
% of renter households below income	46%	33%	46%	54%	59%

Source: Derived from Statistics Canada Custom Census 2021 tables, PVSC

It should be noted that the affordability is reported based on the ability to afford the rent for the entire unit, not split between tenants. Furthermore, the affordability threshold is the same used by Statistics Canada and CMHC - 30% of before-tax household income spent on shelter costs. Shelter cost calculations include the direct and indirect costs related to shelter. More detail is provided in the **Provincial Report**.

Approximately 46% of local renter households earned an income below what would be needed (about \$42,100) to afford the average rental unit. Readers will notice that the financial barriers to own appear to be significantly higher than to rent. While this may be the case, it is important to recognize the data source impacts to this discussion.

Sales data for homeownership only considers asking prices, not the existing mortgages held by homeowners at the same time. Rental data includes both asking and occupied rents, meaning that the rents reported underrepresent what households would pay changing units.

6 Housing Need

Three housing indicators are used to evaluate housing need: adequacy (housing condition), suitability (enough space), and affordability. Core housing need is a specific condition of housing where a household falls under one of the aforementioned indicators and cannot find reasonable housing without spending 30% or more of their before-tax income. Deep unaffordability (also known as “severe” unaffordability) is when a household is spending 50% or more of their before-tax income on housing.

Generally, housing indicators and Core Housing Need data demonstrate the number and share of households particularly impacted by precarious living conditions. These are the households that increased supply or non-market interventions would positively impact most, as many might not have the means or supports to escape these conditions without intervention.

Given the size of Mahone Bay, there is limited opportunity to disaggregate Core Housing Need by household characteristics, as illustrated by the several blank cells in the following tables.

6.1 Housing Need by Tenure

Table 6-1 shows the share of households currently living in conditions that meet the three housing criteria, separated by tenure. Note that there is not enough data to report suitability.

In Mahone Bay, overall households living in unaffordable dwellings decreased by 23% between 2016 and 2021. Those living in inadequate dwellings decreased 38% between 2016 and 2021. Notwithstanding an 18% decrease between census periods, 41% of all renter households lived in unaffordable dwellings as of 2021.

Table 6-1: Housing Need Criteria by Tenure, 2021

		Total	Owner	Renter
Total Households:		515	345	170
Households living in inadequate conditions	Total households	25	-	-
	<i>Change since 2016</i>	-38%	-	-
	Share of households	5%	-	-
Households living in unaffordable conditions	Total households	115	50	70
	<i>Change since 2016</i>	-23%	-29%	-18%
	Share of households	22%	14%	41%

Source: Statistics Canada Custom Census 2016 & 2021 Tables

Table 6-2 shows the municipality's households currently meeting the conditions of Core Housing Need and those in deep unaffordability, as well as the changes in those categories between 2016 and 2021. Since 2016, there has been a 23% decrease in overall Core Housing Need, with decreases among both owner and renter household tenures. Notwithstanding, 17% of all households faced core need in 2021.

Since 2016 there has been an overall decrease of 77% to households living in deep unaffordability, leading to a 3% share of household living in said circumstances.

Table 6-2: Core Housing Need & Deep Unaffordability by Tenure, 2021

		Total	Owner	Renter
Total Households:		515	345	170
Households living in Core Housing Need	Total households	85	25	60
	<i>Change since 2016</i>	-23%	-44%	-8%
	Share of households	17%	7%	35%
Households living in deep unaffordability	Total households	15	-	-
	<i>Change since 2016</i>	-77%	-	-
	Share of households	3%	-	-

Source: Statistics Canada Custom Census 2016 & 2021 Tables

6.2 Housing Need by Household Type

Table 6-3 and Table 6-4 present information related to housing indicators and Core Housing Need, respectively, by household type. Note that no data was available for adequacy or suitability, nor for couples with children or lone parents.

Generally, renter and single person / roommate households experience parallel issues when it comes to housing. About 38% of said households faced financial challenges related to shelter in 2021. About 15% of couples without children also faced financial challenges.

Table 6-3: Housing Need Criteria by Household Type, 2021

		Couple w/o child(ren)	Single / roommates
Total Households:		170	225
Households living in unaffordable conditions	Total households	25	85
	<i>Change since 2016</i>	-17%	-15%
	Share of households	15%	38%

Source: Statistics Canada Custom Census 2016 & 2021 Tables

Since 2016, single persons / roommate households living in Core Housing Need decreased 31%, reaching a 24% share of all related households in 2021. About 9% of couples without children lived in Core Housing Need.

Table 6-4: Core Housing Need by Household Type, 2021

		Couple w/o child(ren)	Single / roommates
Total Households:		170	225
Households living in Core Housing Need	Total households	15	55
	<i>Change since 2016</i>	-	-31%
	Share of households	9%	24%

Source: Statistics Canada Custom Census 2016 & 2021 Tables

7 Demographic Profile

7.1 Population

7.1.1 Current Population

Between 2016 and 2021, the population of Mahone Bay increased by 3%, compared to the provincial growth rate of 5%. Table 7-1 below illustrates the municipality's population change compared to provincial changes.

The municipality grew across most non-senior age cohorts between 2016 and 2021, with particularly strong growth among 25- to 44-year-old persons - likely due to the regional net positive migration trends. There was a corresponding (though smaller) increase in youth and young adults.

Table 7-1: Total Population by Age Cohort (2021) & Five-Year Percentage Change

		0 to 14	15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 to 84	85+	Total
Nova Scotia	Total	136,710	106,185	234,180	276,990	192,285	23,035	969,380
	Share	14%	11%	24%	29%	20%	2%	100%
	5yr %Δ	+2%	-1%	+9%	-2%	+19%	+6%	+5%

		0 to 14	15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 to 84	85+	Total
Town of Mahone Bay	Total	115	75	150	295	355	80	1,065
	Share	11%	7%	14%	28%	33%	8%	100%
	5yr %Δ	+5%	+7%	+11%	-12%	+15%	0%	+3%

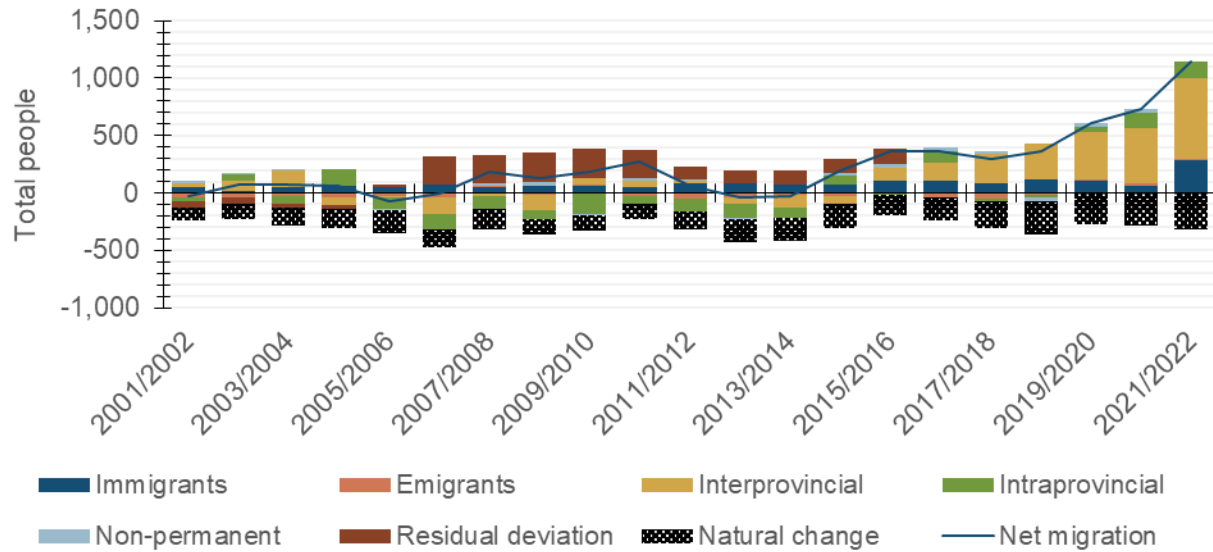
Source: Statistics Canada Census 2016 and 2021

7.1.2 Migration

Shown in Table 7-1 is the net-migration for the **entire** Lunenburg Census Division (data is not available at the municipal level - the entire Census Division includes all related urban and rural municipalities) between 2001/02 and 2021/22, inclusive of totals for intra-provincial and international migration, as well as emigration.

Between 2016 and 2021, the Lunenburg Census Division's net-migration steadily increased to a two-decade high in 2021/2022 with a total of 1,147 newcomers. Not all newcomers will move to one place and could distribute across the region.

Figure 7.1: Historical Components of Migration, Lunenburg Census Division



Source: Statistics Canada Table 17-10-0140

7.1.3 Anticipated Population

The municipality’s anticipated population is derived from applying the historical share of local total populations by age cohort to the regional projections by age cohort produced by the Department of Finance & Treasury Board (FTB) in February 2023. In other words, results assume that the municipality will represent the same share of the region’s population over the projection horizon.⁸ This does not consider nuanced population changes by community.

FTB estimates suggest that the 2022 population was 1,085, with a projected increase of 8% between 2022 and 2027. Senior populations should continue to increase during that time. Decreases could only occur among 45- to 64-year-olds cohort. The 25- to 44-year-olds cohort may expand another 3% over the next five years.

⁸ Since a municipality represents the same share of its region (i.e., Census Division) over time for projections (population and households), similar rates of growth will exist for each of the municipalities within the region. Therefore, readers reviewing multiple reports may notice a likeness between them.

Table 7-2: Anticipated Total Population by Age Cohort and Five-Year Percent Change

		0 to 14	15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 to 84	85+	Total
2027	Total	120	75	160	280	430	105	1,170
	Share	10%	6%	14%	24%	37%	9%	100%
	5yr %Δ	+4%	+0%	+3%	-3%	+18%	+24%	+8%

		0 to 14	15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 to 84	85+	Total
2032	Total	125	70	155	275	470	140	1,235
	Share	10%	6%	13%	22%	38%	11%	100%
	5yr %Δ	+4%	-7%	-3%	-2%	+9%	+33%	+6%

Source: derived from Department of Finance & Treasury Board February 2023

Growth from 2027 to 2032 may be of a slightly lesser magnitude (6%) compared to the five years prior, with growth largely coming from senior populations yet again. Total 25- to 44-year-old person may change trajectory and decline over the five-year period, even while there is a corresponding slight increase in youth (0- to 14-year-olds) population. Senior cohorts should continue to be the main contributor to growth. This demonstrates a short-term need to house families, but a long-term need to meet the needs of an expanding senior cohort.

7.2 Households

7.2.1 Current Households

Table 7-3 illustrates the various characteristics of households in Municipality. The tables show tenure splits for maintainer by age cohort, household types, and household sizes respectively, as well as the 5-year percent change in those populations. The primary household maintainer is the person within a household who pays the rent, mortgage, taxes, or other major expenses for the dwelling. For households in which multiple incomes are present, the first name listed on a census questionnaire is taken to be the primary maintainer.

Between 2016 and 2021, there was an overall 4% increase in households, with tenures split into 68% owners and 32% renters.

Non-census households (i.e., single persons or roommates) make up the highest share of households and grew 7% between 2016 and 2021. Relatedly, total 1-person households grew 15% during the same time.

Table 7-3: Households by Tenure & Characteristics (2021) & Five-Year Percentage Change

		15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 to 84	85+	Total
Household Maintainer Age	Total	0	60	170	230	30	520
	Owner	-	67%	70%	72%	100%	68%
	Renter	-	33%	30%	28%	0%	32%
	5yr %Δ	-	-14%	-13%	+31%	-45%	+4%

		Couple w/o Child	Couple w/ Child	Lone Parent	Non-census*	Other**	Total
Household Type	Total	175	75	20	230	20	520
	Owner	88%	100%	-	48%	-	68%
	Renter	12%	0%	-	52%	-	32%
	5yr %Δ	0%	-6%	-20%	+7%	+33%	+4%

		1-person	2-person	3-person	4-person	5+ person	Total
Household Size	Total	225	190	50	45	0	520
	Owner	48%	79%	100%	100%	-	68%
	Renter	52%	21%	0%	0%	-	32%
	5yr %Δ	+15%	-5%	0%	+29%	-	+4%

* Non-census means single persons or persons living with a roommate

** Other households are one-census-family households with additional persons or multiple-family households

Source: Statistics Canada Custom Census 2016 & 2021 Tables

Note that the percent change of households can increase faster than population (or even if there is population decline). As residents age, their likelihood of forming or leading a household increase. For instance, a child growing up and moving out of their family home turns one household into two. This can also occur if there is notable growth among smaller household sizes.

7.2.2 Anticipated Households

A similar apportionment as for the anticipated population is performed for anticipated households. Note that anticipated households are a major input to housing demand calculations, but do not equate exactly to demand. Housing demand projections incorporated adjustments to reflect total dwellings (not only those occupied by a usual resident which projections would solely consider).

Estimates suggest that total households reached 500 in 2022, with a potential increase of 7% from 2022 to 2027 (35 total). Household losses should predominantly occur

among older working professional led households (45- to 64-year-olds). The greatest rate of growth should be among senior-led households.

Table 7-4: Anticipated Households by Maintainer Age and Five-Year Percent Change

		15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 to 84	85+	Total
2027	Total	0	65	160	270	40	535
	Share	0%	12%	30%	50%	7%	100%
	5yr %Δ	-	+8%	-6%	+13%	+33%	+7%

		15 to 24	25 to 44	45 to 64	65 to 84	85+	Total
2032	Total	0	65	155	290	60	570
	Share	0%	11%	27%	51%	11%	100%
	5yr %Δ	-	+0%	-3%	+7%	+50%	+7%

Source: derived from Statistics Canada 2016 Census, Department of Finance & Treasury Board February 2023

Similar magnitudes of growth may continue from 2027 to 2032. Senior-led households (particularly those with a maintainer aged 85+) should remain the cohort with greatest relative growth.

From 2022 to 2032, about 80 new senior-led households might choose to live in the municipality, again reinforcing the need for senior appropriate or generally accessible housing over the foreseeable future.

8 Conclusion

The above information provides context for the Town of Mahone Bay's housing conditions. Increased demand - brought on by a surge of in-migration to Nova Scotia that is expected to continue only somewhat abated - has resulted in higher-than-expected local housing prices, for both rental and ownership markets across the region.

The current estimated unit shortage for the municipality is 25. Demand, including the shortage, is estimated to increase to 50 by 2027. Using current construction trends, 10 new units are estimated to be introduced into the market annually over the next 5 years. If current trends continue, the housing market may be balanced in the Town of Mahone Bay by 2027.