

WELCOME



The Township of Esquimalt is within the traditional homelands of two First Nations, the Ləkʷəŋən-speaking people, the Songhees Nation and Esquimalt (Kosapsum) Nation. The Township honours their stewardship of these lands for millennia and is grateful that members of these Nations continue to live, work, play, and conduct business within and adjacent to the Township's north-western boundary.

The name Esquimalt reflects its maritime setting. In the language of the native Coast Salish peoples, Es-whoy-malth means “place of shoaling waters”.

**We want to hear
from you!**

Your input will help shape the future of
our community—join the conversation!



engagingesquimalt.ca/ocp2025



You can also scan this QR code which will send you to
the website.

We are updating our
Official Community Plan
(OCP) by December 31,
2025 and we welcome your
comments.

Please note that photos
may be taken of visitors
because this is a public
event.

WHY UPDATE THE OCP?

What is an Official Community Plan (OCP)?

Official Community Plans (OCPs) describe the long-term vision of communities. They are a statement of objectives and policies that guide decisions on local government planning and land use management.

Municipalities, regional districts and the Islands Trust have the authority to develop official community plans under the Local Government Act.

Why is the OCP being updated now?

In November 2023, the Province of British Columbia adopted Bill 44, Housing Statutes (Residential Development Act), requiring all municipalities to update their OCPs. The Township of Esquimalt is updating its OCP to meet a Provincial requirement that all local governments ensure their OCPs include enough land use capacity to accommodate 20 years of housing needs and incorporate statutory housing policies.

This update must be completed by the end of 2025.

What is the extent of the OCP 2025 Update?

The current OCP already provides sufficient land use capacity to meet the 20-year housing targets, so no changes to existing land use designations are anticipated. Instead, the Township is considering targeted amendments to align the plan with new Provincial requirements and improve clarity. This is not a major update, but a recalibration to reflect today's priorities.

A comprehensive review and full OCP update is planned to begin in 2026, with completion targeted for 2030.

How can you get involved in the OCP Update?

We invite you to share your thoughts as we update the OCP. To learn more about the project, explore the information material, and join us at one of our events:

Public Open House:

July 28, 2025, 3:00 pm - 8:00 pm
Esquimalt Recreation Centre

Virtual Open House:

July 28 - August 31, 2025
Online

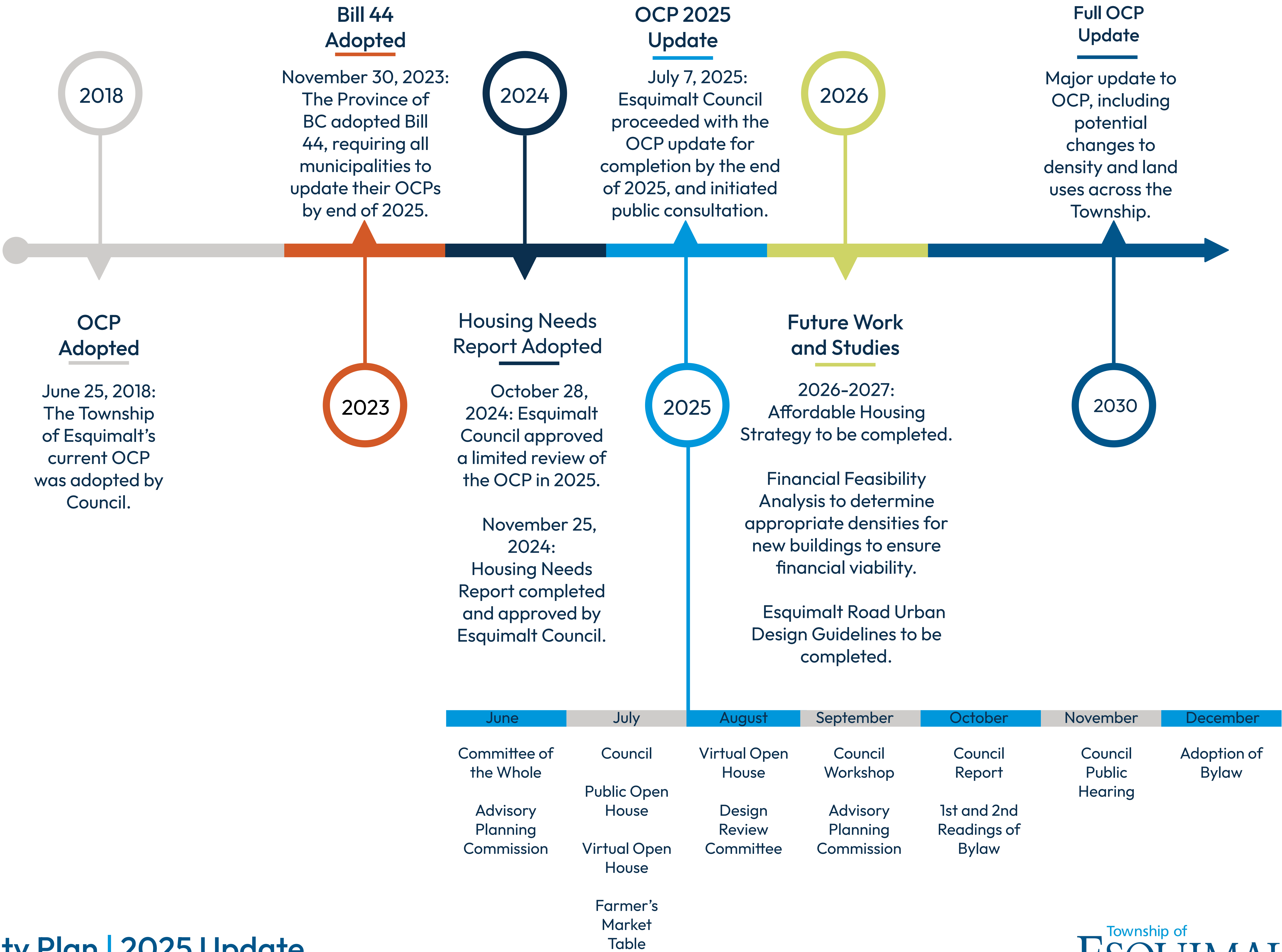
Farmer's Market Table:

July 31, 2025, 4:30 pm - 7:30 pm.
Memorial Park

OCP PROJECT TIMELINE

How did we get here and where are we going?

The Township of Esquimalt’s current Official Community Plan (OCP) was adopted in 2018 and has been amended periodically over the past seven years. In 2024, Council directed staff to undertake a focused update of the OCP, with the goal of completing it by the end of 2025. This limited review—referred to as the OCP 2025 Update—is now underway. The Province of British Columbia requires that Esquimalt update their OCP once again by the end of 2030.



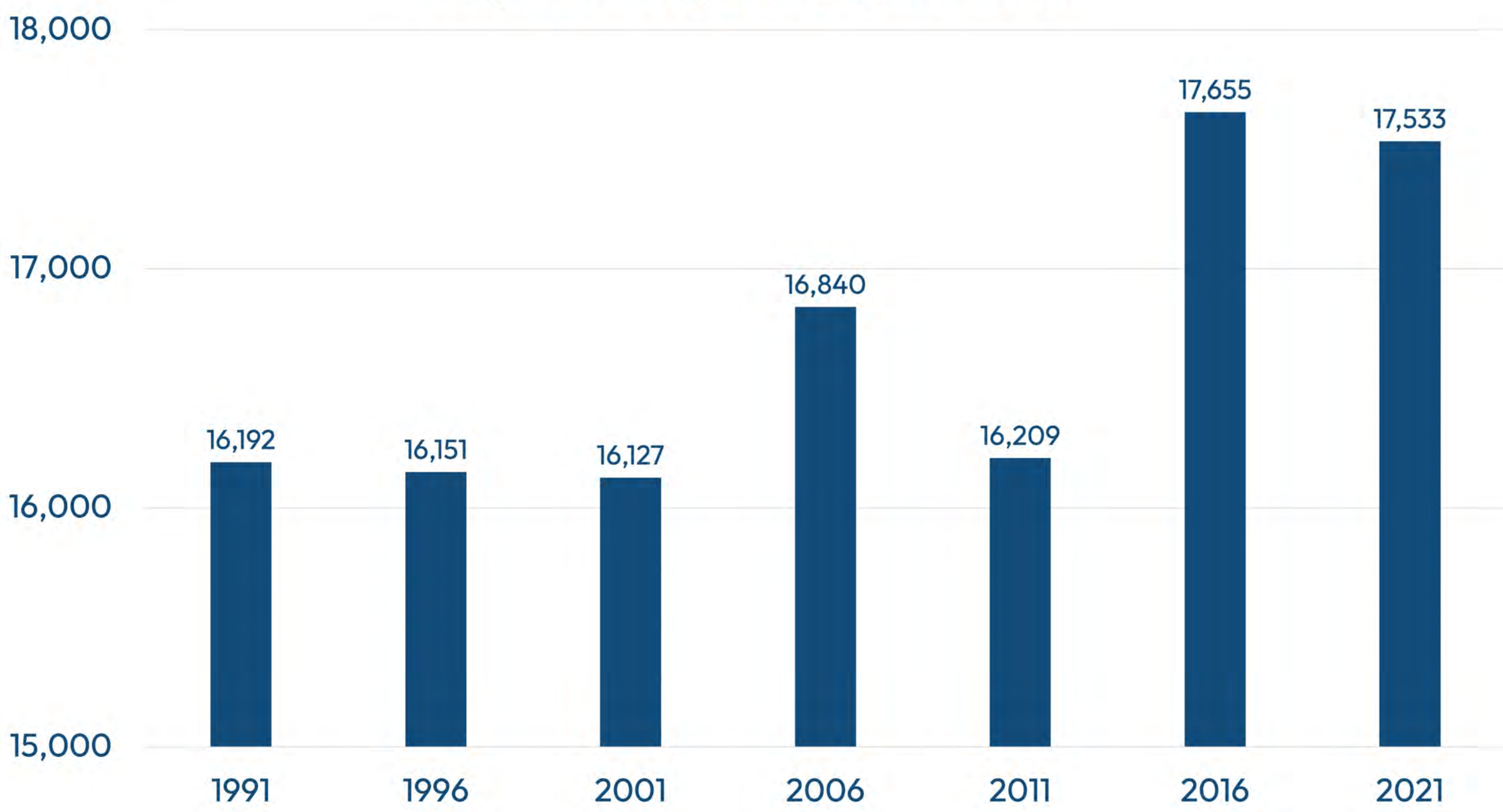
DEMOGRAPHICS

How is Esquimalt growing?

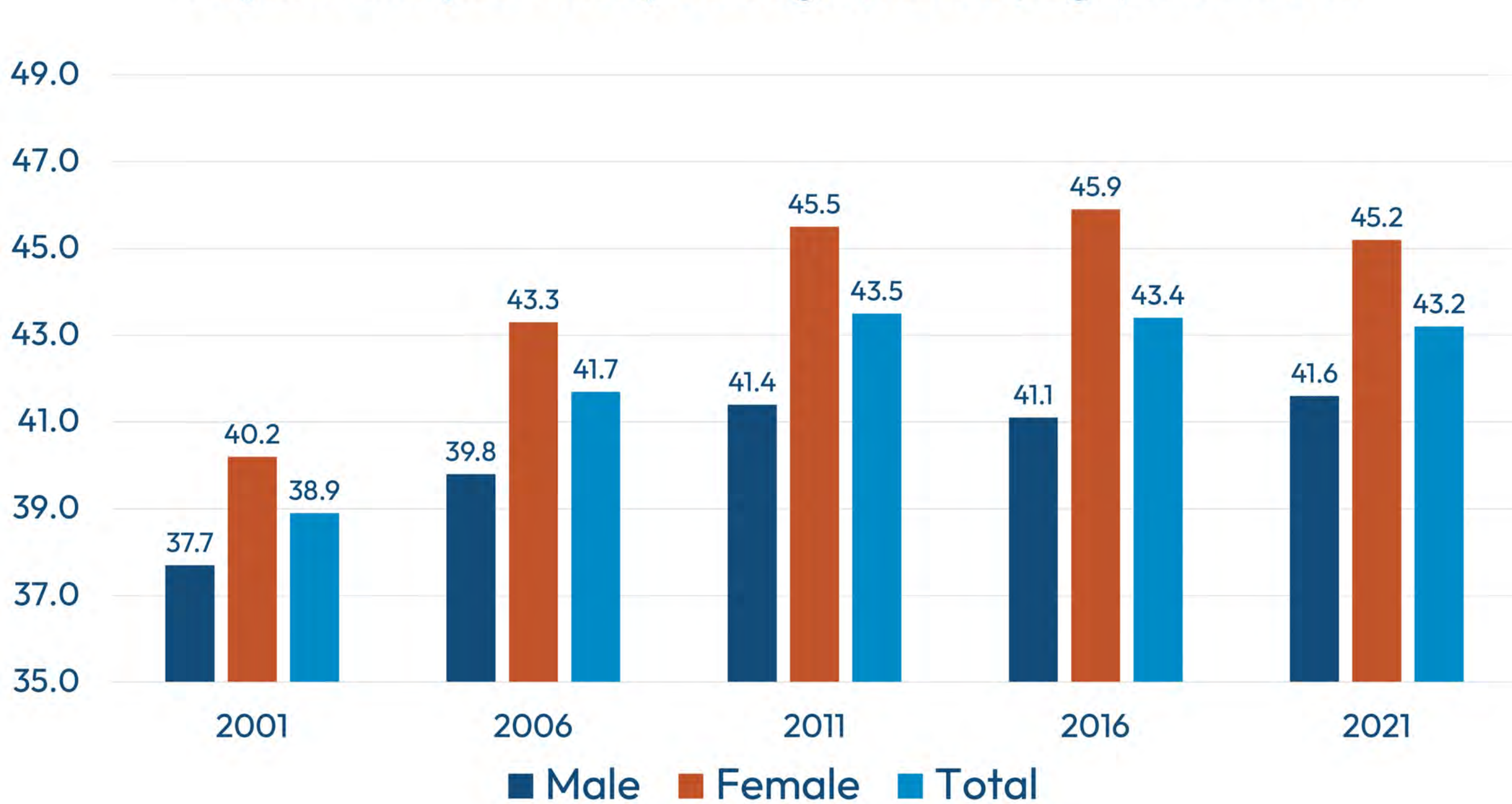
To meaningfully update the OCP, it's important to understand how Esquimalt is changing and growing over time.

While many surrounding communities have seen steady population increases, Esquimalt experienced a slight decline in population between the 2016 and 2021 Census periods. Understanding these trends helps ensure the updated OCP responds to current realities and supports a sustainable, inclusive future for the community.

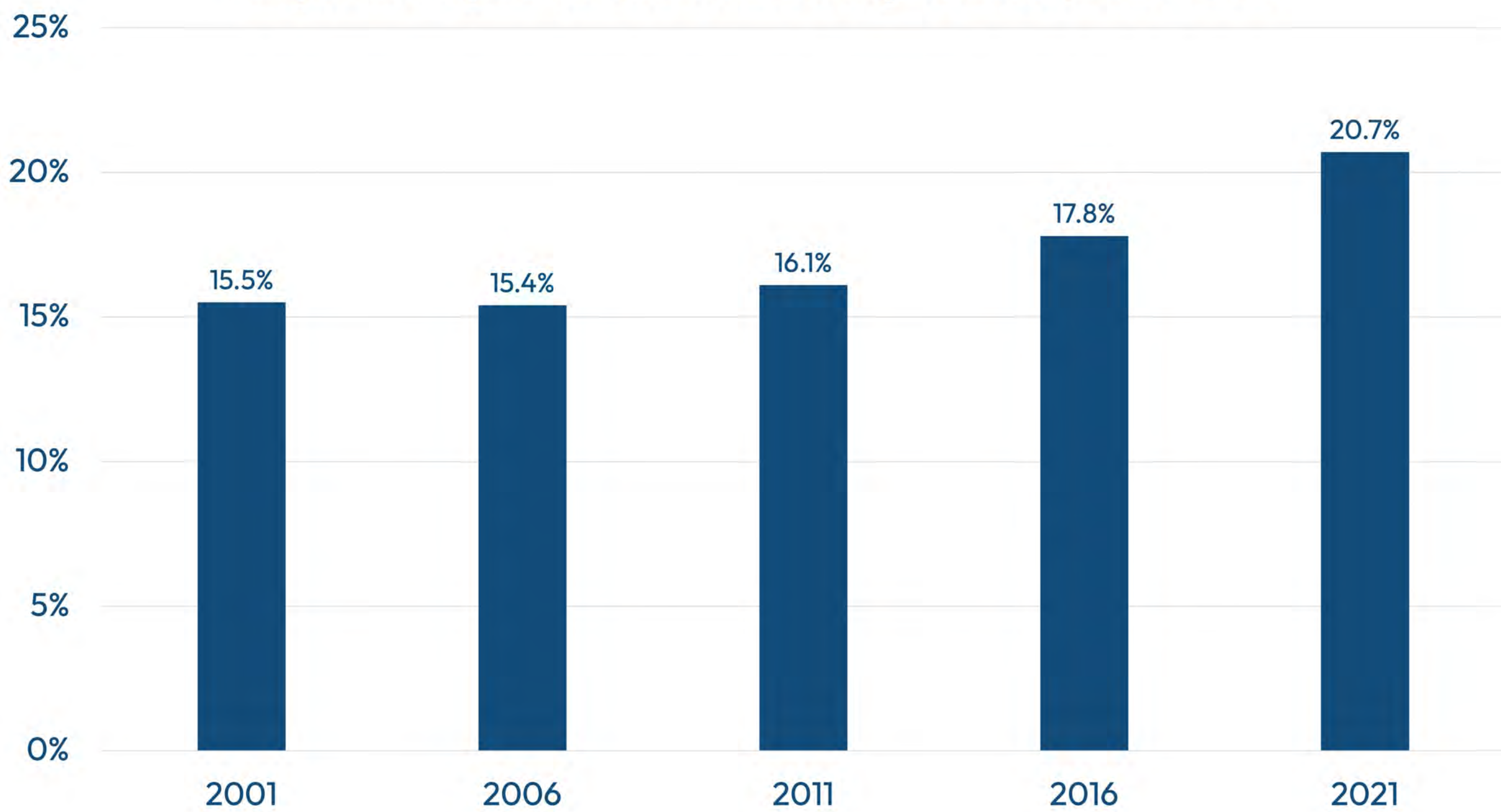
Esquimalt Population, 1991 - 2021



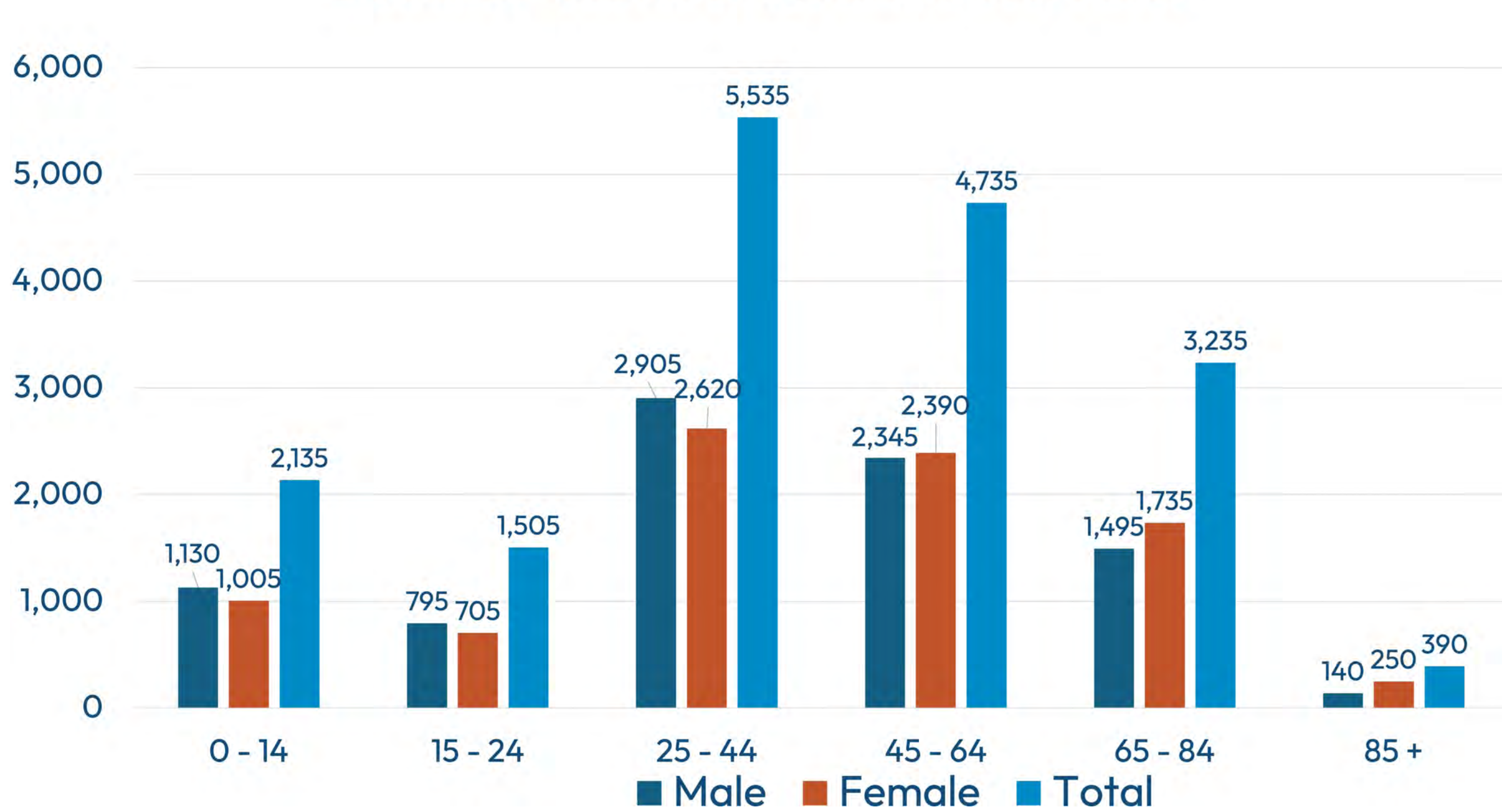
Esquimalt Population by Average (Median) Age, 1991 - 2021



Esquimalt Population % 65 Years of Age & Older, 2001 - 2021



Esquimalt Population by Age Cohort, 2021 Census

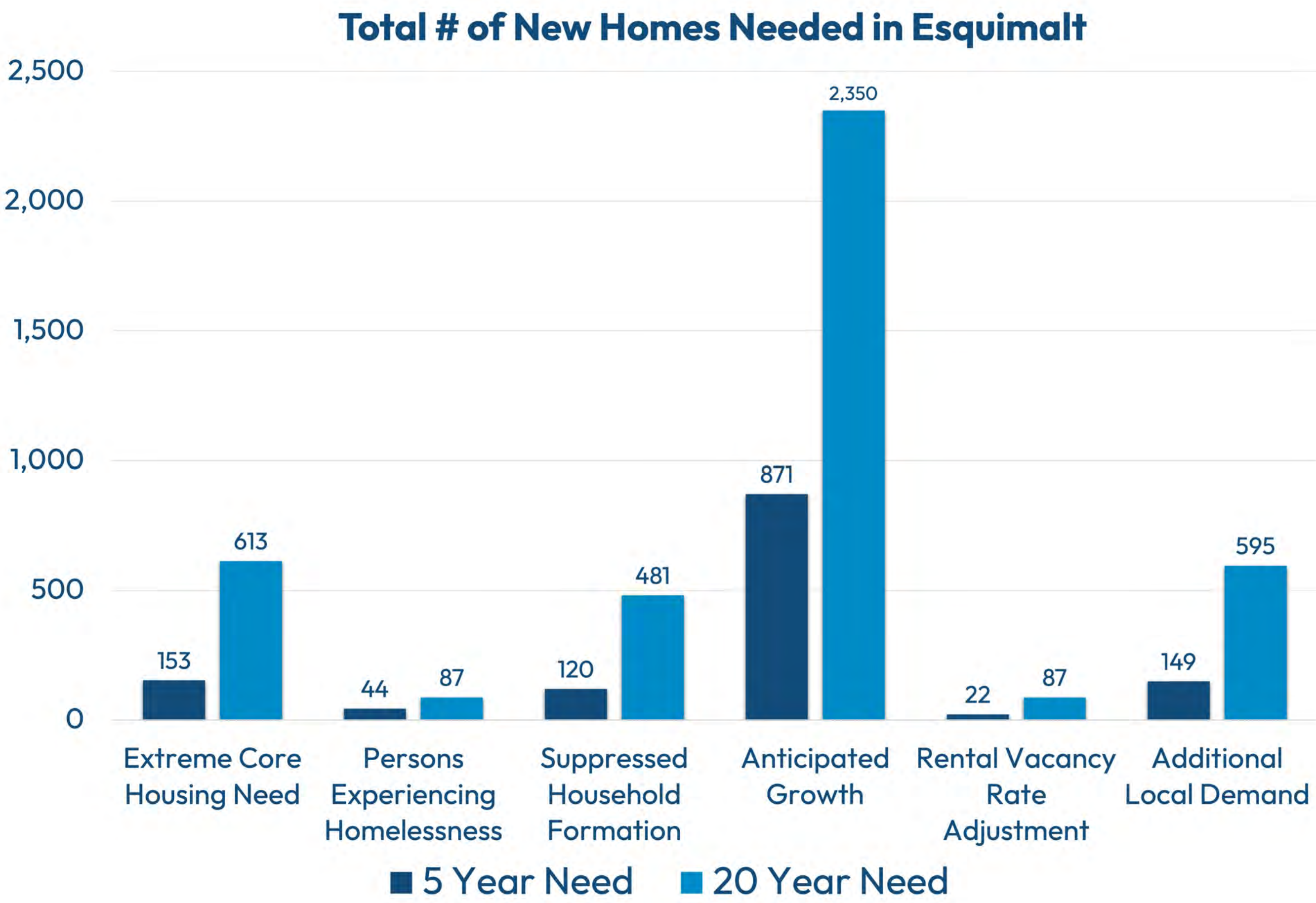


HOUSING NEEDS REPORT

How much new housing does Esquimalt need?

The Province of British Columbia requires all municipalities to prepare a Housing Needs Report to better understand and plan for current and future housing needs. Esquimalt completed its Housing Needs Report in November 2024, and it was formally approved by Council.

The report provides important insights into the Township’s housing challenges and opportunities, helping guide planning decisions over the next two decades. It identifies a need for 4,213 net new housing units over the next 20 years, with the majority of this demand driven by anticipated population growth. Importantly, Esquimalt’s current OCP already provides enough land use capacity to accommodate this projected housing need.



Township of Esquimalt’s 5 and 20 year housing need established by Province of British Columbia (Provincial legislation).

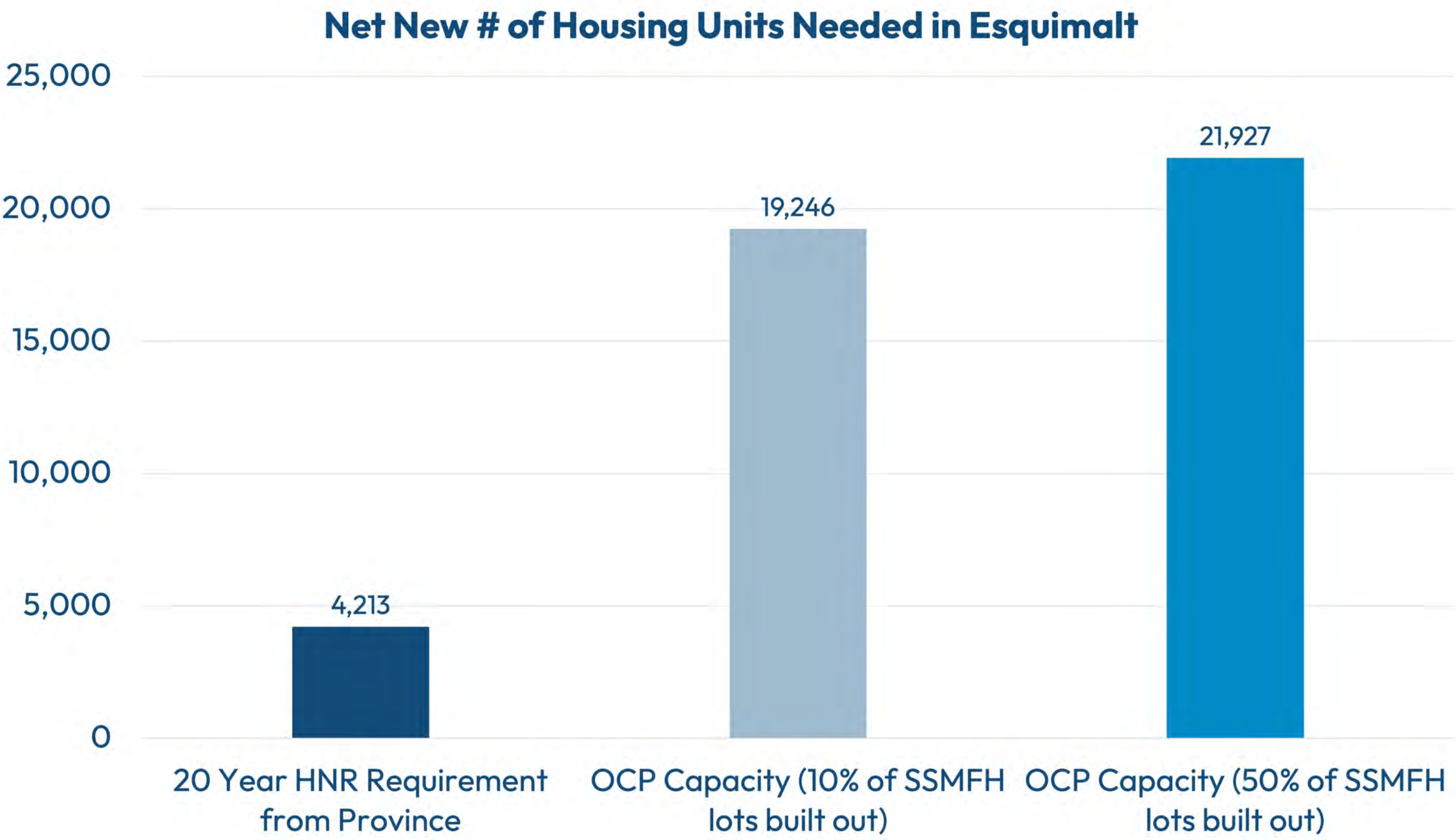


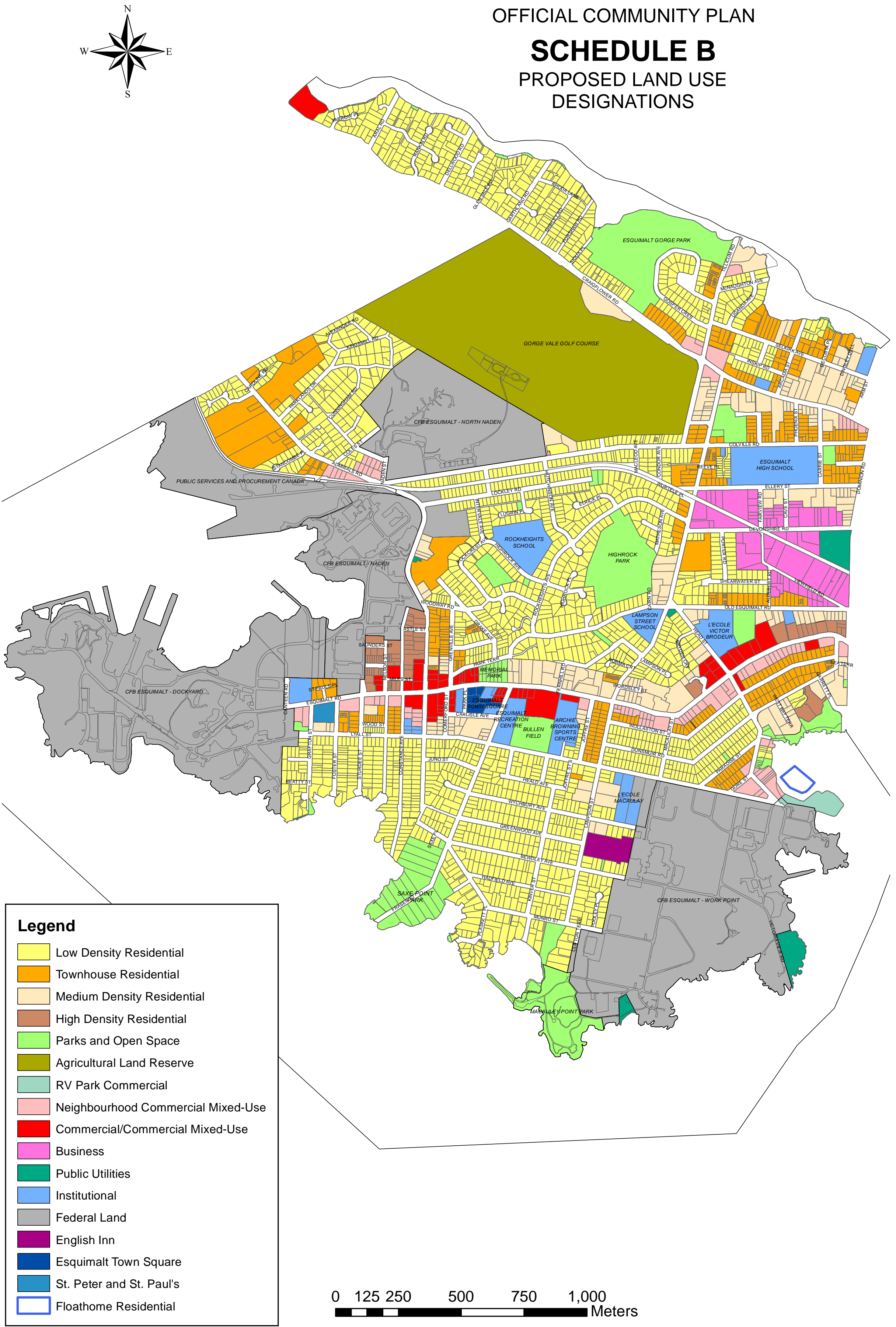
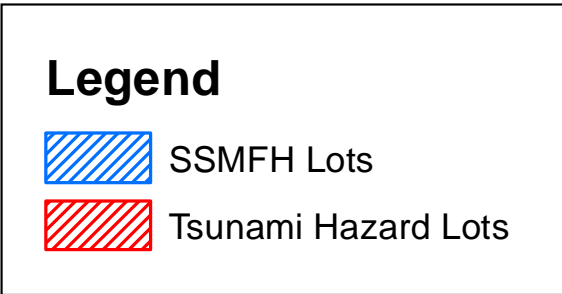
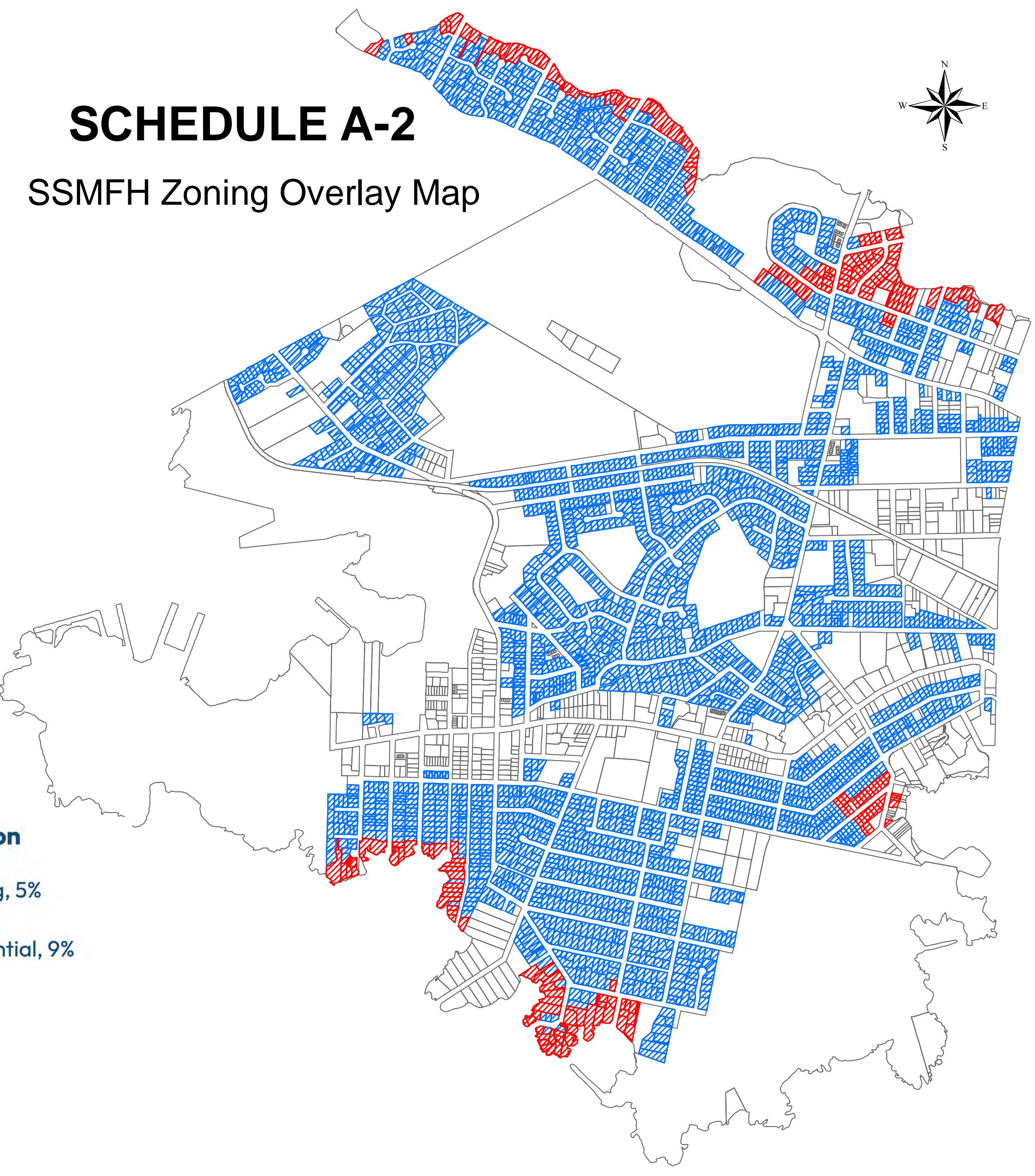
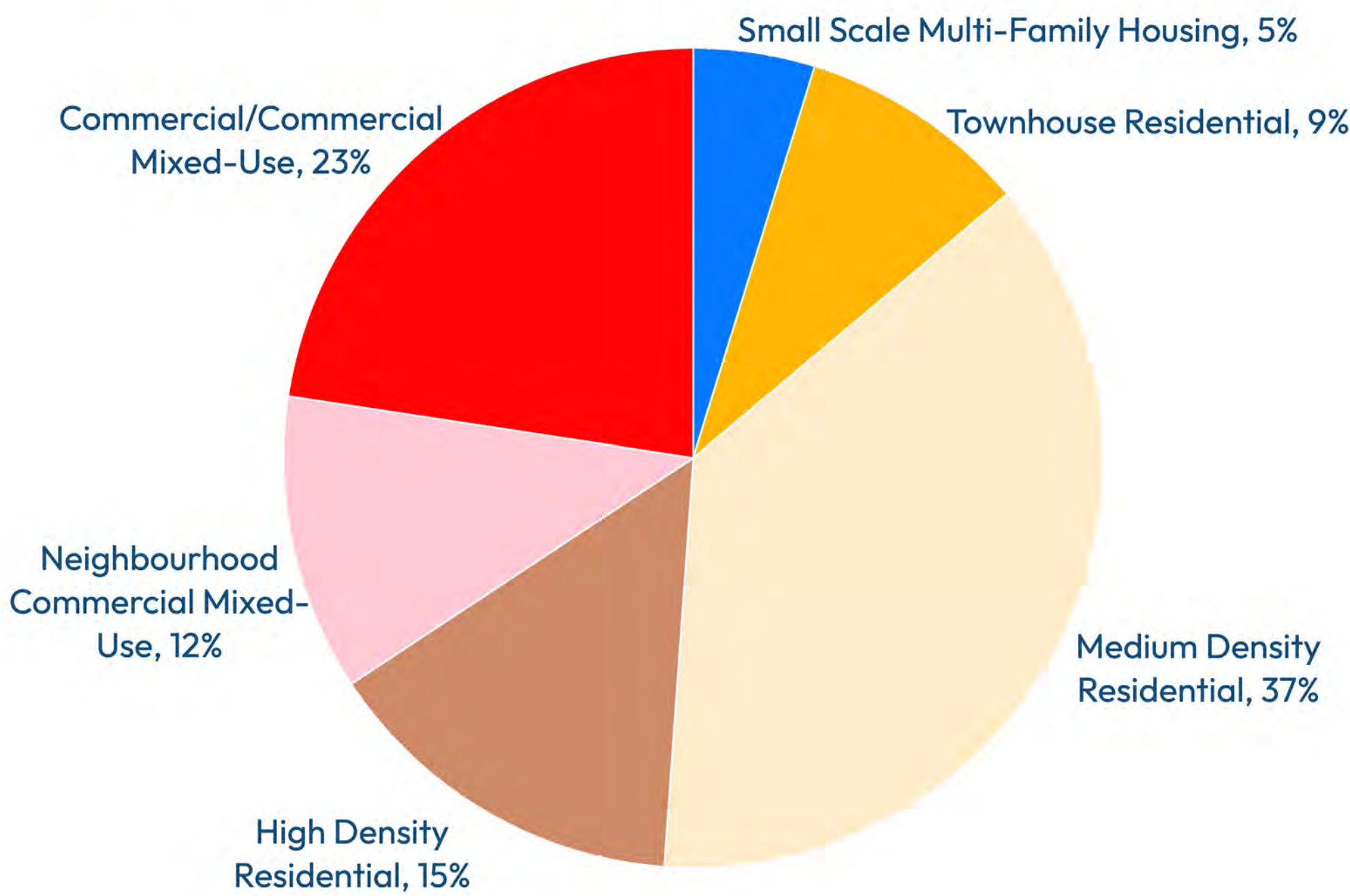
Chart showing land use capacity of the OCP vs. Provincial 20 year requirement.

OCP CAPACITY

How does the OCP accommodate housing needs?

The current OCP, including the proposed land use designations, shown on Schedule B and the Small Scale Multi-Family Housing Overlay on Schedule A-2, provides sufficient capacity to accommodate Esquimalt’s projected 20-year housing need.

OCP Capacity for Net New Housing Units by Land Use Designation



NEW HOUSING TERMS

What new housing policies are being considered?




The Province of British Columbia requires Esquimalt to update its Official Community Plan (OCP) with new housing definitions and policies to address a range of specific housing needs. In response, the Township has drafted updated OCP policies to meet these requirements.

Extreme core housing need, and Persons experiencing homelessness:

Definition of Extreme core housing need:

- Households that spend more than 50% of their income on housing or experience issues with adequacy or suitability.

 **Draft OCP Policy:**

- Encourage the provision of affordable housing by the private market and the non-profit housing sector.

Suppressed household formation, and Additional local demand:

Definition of Suppressed household formation:

- People who remain in unwanted shared living situations.

Definition of Additional local demand:

- The amount of housing needed to create a “healthy” housing market.


 **Draft OCP Policy:**

Support the development of a variety of housing types and designs to meet the anticipated housing needs of residents.

Rental vacancy rate adjustment:

Definition of Rental vacancy rate adjustment:

- Number of rental units needed to restore a healthy 3% rental vacancy rate.

 **Draft OCP Policy:**

Encourage the development of rental accommodation designed for a variety of demographic household types, including young families.

SMALL-SCALE MULTI-FAMILY HOUSING (SSMFH)

What is Small-Scale Multi-Family Housing (SSMFH)?



Images: BC Ministry of Housing, Standardized Housing Designs Catalogue, September 2024

The OCP is being updated to align with the 2024 Zoning Bylaw amendments that introduced Small-Scale Multi-Family Housing (SSMFH) zones. To support this alignment, new OCP policies and Development Permit Area (DPA) Guidelines will be drafted.

Key features of SSMFH zoning:

- Permits 3 housing units on lots 280 m² or smaller
- Allows 3 or 4 housing units on lots larger than 280 m²
- Permits 1 or 2 buildings per lot
- Includes triplexes, fourplexes, townhouses, and some duplexes—only if they incorporate secondary suites or accessory dwelling units (ADUs) (e.g., garden suites or laneway homes)
- Does not apply in Tsunami Hazard areas
- Single family dwellings and duplexes are still permitted, but are not considered SSMFH

Small-Scale Multi-Family Housing (SSMFH):



Draft OCP Policy:

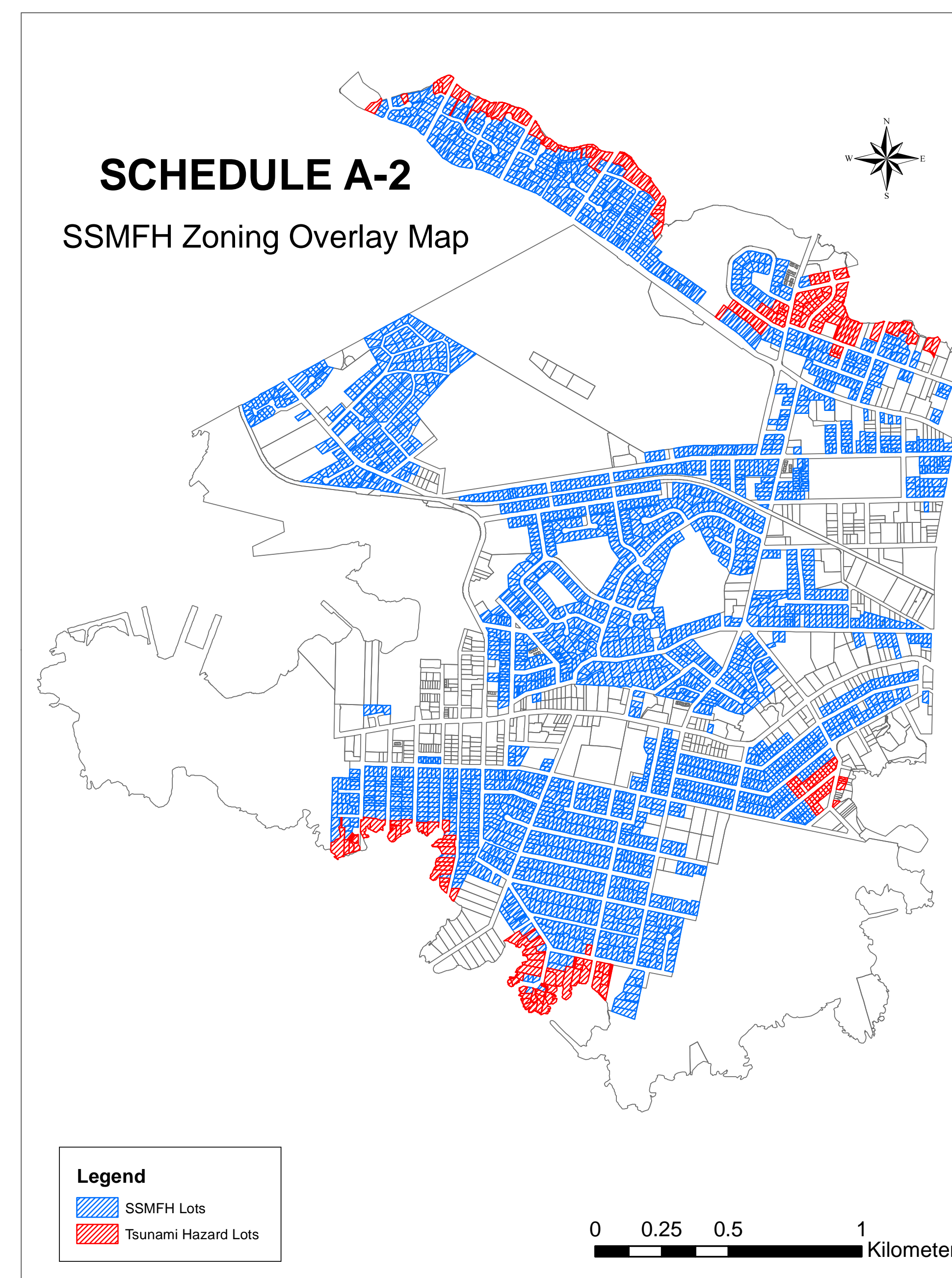
Small-Scale Multi-Family Housing developments should mitigate neighbourhood impacts.



Draft DPA Guidelines:

Small-Scale Multi-Family Housing should be designed to:

- protect the privacy of neighbouring homes,
- incorporate attractive building architecture, materials, and designs, and,
- ensure liveability of dwelling units.



HIGHER DENSITY HOUSING

What is density and how is it measured?



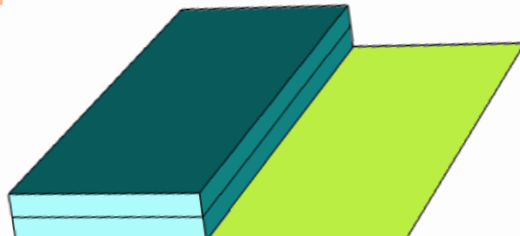
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) is a measurement of the amount of building area allowed on a parcel, or the ‘density’, and it is equal to the total building area divided by the parcel area.

What is Floor Area Ratio (FAR)?

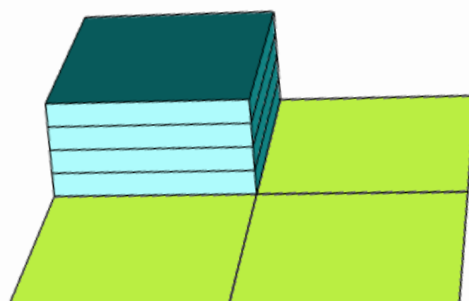
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) = 1



1 floor covers whole lot (100% lot coverage)

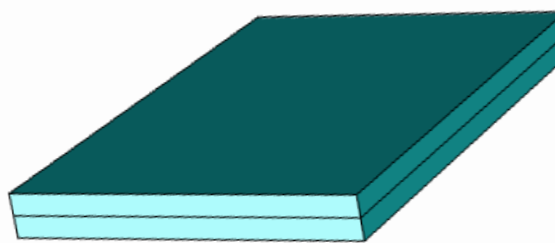


2 floors covers half of lot (50% lot coverage)

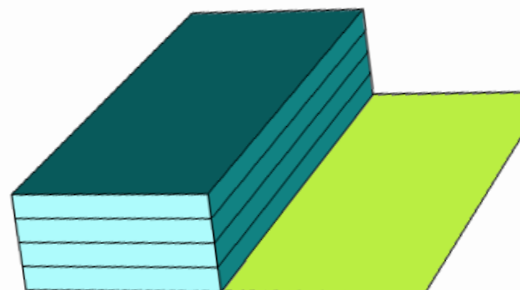


4 floors cover quarter of lot (25% lot coverage)

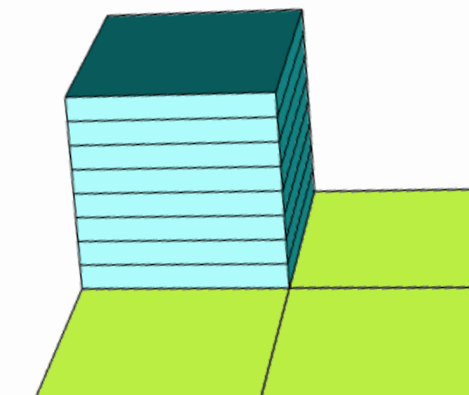
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) = 2



2 floors covers whole lot (100% lot coverage)

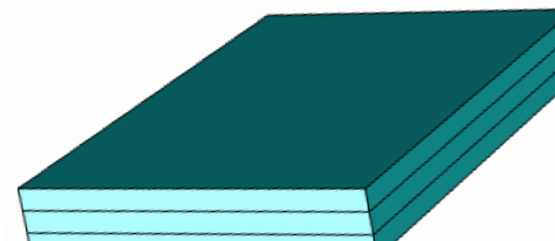


4 floors covers half of lot (50% lot coverage)

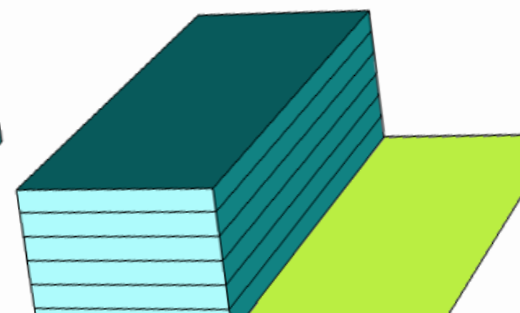


8 floors cover quarter of lot (25% lot coverage)

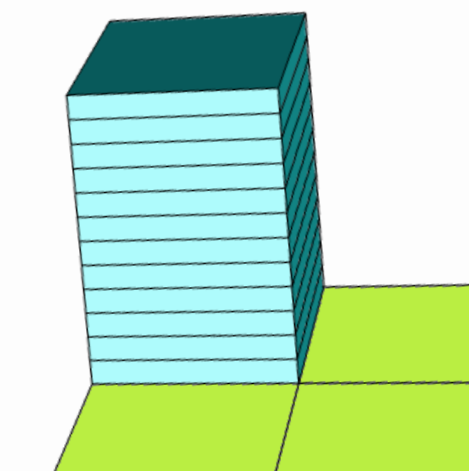
Floor Area Ratio (FAR) = 3



3 floors covers whole lot (100% lot coverage)



6 floors covers half of lot (50% lot coverage)



12 floors cover quarter of lot (25% lot coverage)

Floor Area Ratio (FAR) includes the internal parts of a building where people live, work, or visit. FAR = the Floor Area of all floors in all Buildings on a Parcel divided by the Area of the Parcel.

What is not included in FAR?

- Balconies, decks, and unenclosed porches
- Stairs, elevators, and shared hallways
- Accessory buildings such as sheds
- Areas for parked vehicles and bicycles, including garages
- Service rooms located underground in apartment or office buildings

Note: For a detailed description of FAR, consult Esquimalt Zoning Bylaw 2050, Part 4, Section 14

Townhouse Buildings:

New policies that enable efficient development of townhouses and enhance the liveability of neighbourhoods and the community as a whole.



Draft OCP Policies:

- Establish a maximum density for townhouses of 0.70 Floor Area Ratio and up to 3 floors.
- Encourage townhouses as family-friendly alternatives to detached dwellings (houses).
- Support density bonuses in exchange for amenities such as parks, open space, and affordable housing.



Draft DPA Guidelines:

- Townhouse buildings should not exceed 40 metres in length.
- Townhouse buildings should be separated to provide daylight between buildings.
- Encourage the use of rich and varied architectural details.
- Provide landscaped front and rear yards.
- Parking should not be visible from streets.
- Townhouse buildings beside streets should have entrances that face the street.

HIGHER DENSITY HOUSING


What types of medium and high density housing are in the plan?




The OCP includes land use designations for both medium- and high-density residential development. To provide greater clarity, new policies have been drafted to better distinguish between these categories. In addition, updated Development Permit Area (DPA) Guidelines will be prepared to help ensure that new development reflects and complements Esquimalt's unique community character.

Multi-Unit Buildings:

New policies that enable efficient development of multi-unit buildings and enhance the liveability of neighbourhoods and the community as a whole.

- 

Draft OCP Policies:


 - Encourage multi-unit buildings to be designed for families with children, including ground level units with private outdoor spaces.
- 

Draft DPA Guidelines:


 - Design to support livability.
 - Ensure security and privacy of residents.
 - Locate parking behind buildings or underground.
 - Provide screening of garbage and recycling areas and outdoor storage.
 - Building entrances should face the sidewalk.
 - Provide ground-floor housing units that are accessible by wheelchairs.
 - Encourage building orientations that overlook parks, open spaces, walkways, and streets.
 - Provide landscaped areas between buildings and sidewalks.
 - Provide a minimum building separation of 24 metres between tall buildings (over 6 floors in height).
 - Establish a maximum floor plate size of 750 m2 for tall buildings (over 12 floors in height) to maximize light and ventilation for residents.

Commercial and Commercial Mixed-Use Buildings:

New policies that enable efficient development of commercial and commercial mixed-use buildings and enhance the liveability of neighbourhoods and the community as a whole.

- 

Draft OCP Policy:

 - Limit the height of commercial and commercial mixed-use buildings to 12 floors.
 - Create a vibrant gateway and commercial mixed-use area centred around the intersection of Esquimalt Road and Head Street.
- 

Draft DPA Guidelines:

 - Create attractive pedestrian streets with transparent windows and frequent commercial entrances.

ENVIRONMENTAL STEWARDSHIP

What new policies are being considered?



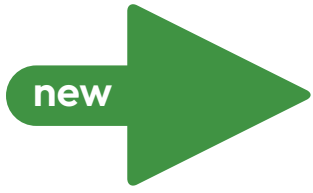
The current OCP provides direction to protect the natural environment, conserve energy and water, and reduce greenhouse gas emissions. These commitments are being strengthened through updated and expanded Development Permit Area (DPA) Guidelines that further support climate action and environmental stewardship.

Natural Environment

New policies that protect the natural environment.



- Updated DPA Guidelines:**
- Simplifying guidelines by removing duplicated language.



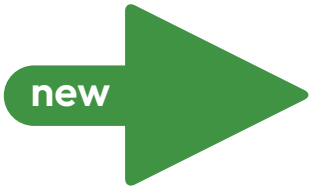
- New DPA Guidelines:**
- Protect, restore and enhance local shorelines (Green Shores for Homes).
 - Protect birds from collisions with windows by improving building design.

Energy and Water Conservation and Greenhouse Gas Reduction

New policies that support energy and water conservation and greenhouse gas reduction.



- Updated DPA Guidelines:**
- Simplifying guidelines by removing duplicated language.



- New DPA Guidelines:**
- Allow space for large trees when building underground parking.
 - Allow space for large trees beside roads, sidewalks, parking areas to enhance the pedestrian experience.
 - Plant a variety of landscaping in front yards, beside sidewalks.