

Tofino Ratepayers Association



February 21, 2024

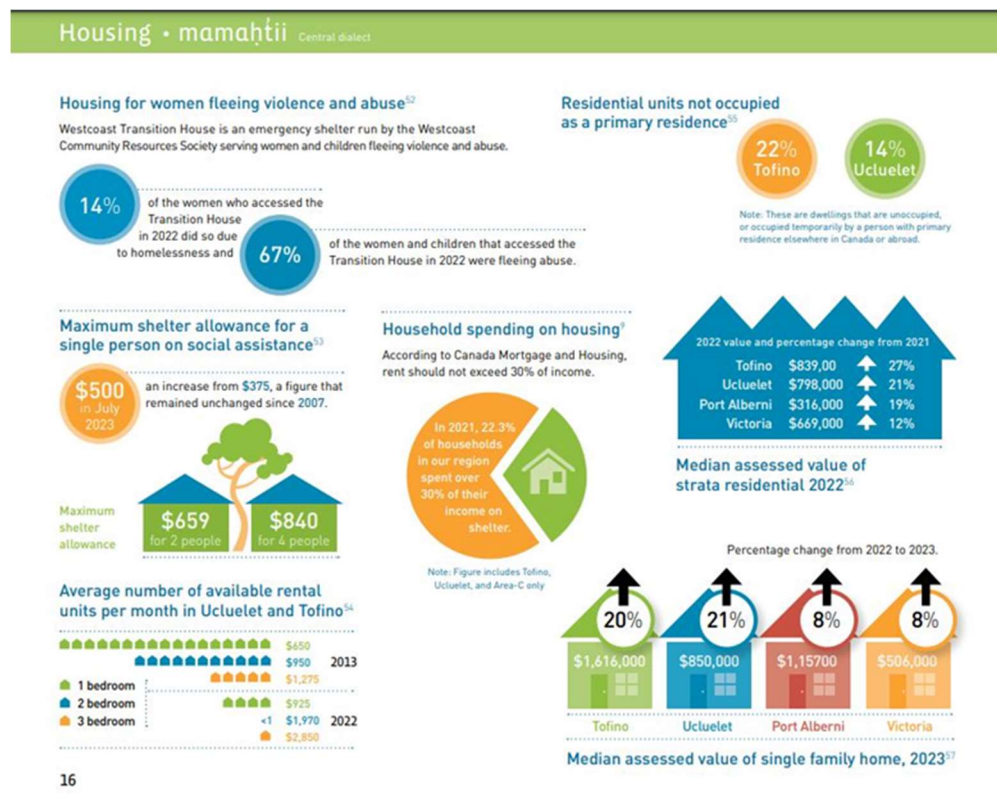
Hello Ratepayers

Some members are asking for a comment on the Short-Term Rental issue that is currently under discussion. I've been dealing with some health issues in the last months, so I won't comment specifically on any recent events, meetings, round tables, town halls and the like, which I have not attended. I will address the issues, and there are a number of interconnected issues, in broad terms.

We sent a mail out to the Ratepayers members in March 2022 on this very issue, Short Term Rentals. For your reference, the newsletter is attached, or you can click on this link. [03 25 2022 Short Term Rentals \(wsimg.com\)](https://www.wsimg.com/03-25-2022-Short-Term-Rentals)

I think it stands up pretty well in terms of describing some of the issues. The urgency with which the community needs to address housing as a primary failing of our community is now even greater than it was 2 years ago.

The CBT Vital Signs report (2023) has the following page which shows how bleak the reality is that housing has become. (Click here to access the full report: https://clayoquotbiosphere.org/files/file/6541460ea68cf/CBT_Vital_Signs_2023.pdf)



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It also reports that the Living Wage (a measure of what it costs to live in the community) for the Clayoquot Sound UNESCO Biosphere Region is \$26.51/hour.

This is the highest of all the communities in British Columbia that report the Living Wage for their region, and is the second highest in Canada, eclipsed only by Canmore, Alberta. Another tourist driven community beside a National Park, playground for Calgary and the world.

We all know about the shortage of Medical Staff. The shortage of Teaching Staff. Appropriate housing is often sited as part of the problem for attracting and retaining staff.

Some Tofitians have experienced residential Property Tax increases that have doubled in the space of only a few years. These would be properties that have locations or attributes desired by Vacation Rental businesses who have driven up the value of similar real estate. Tofino has become, even more so than in the past, a market for residential real estate speculation based on commercial interests operating in the form of Vacation Rental. BC Assessment confirms this trend.

My take is that Tofino needs a comprehensive plan re: housing availability. Whatever it is we have been doing as a community and as a Council, it is not working to adequately sustain the characteristics of what was once a livable community.

“Temporary Use Zones” is that the plan? Are they “temporary?”

Business run staff houses in our neighbourhoods. Is that the plan?

In the last 15 years, Council has not rezoned any significant sized private property for housing development. Meanwhile, they have “Permitted” hundreds of units of commercial accommodation. What kind of planning is that?

Whether you support the current proposals by the province or not, my question is what is the answer? What is the Plan.

What will set Tofino on a course to more home ownership, more housing options. Simply a community you can afford to live in. A community, where, if you work hard, you can afford to own a home and create a life. And not be forced to move on. A community where your children can grow up and build a life for themselves, like you did and not be forced out. A community where you can afford the security of a modest retirement, and not be forced out of your home because of rising costs.

“Opting in or out is not a plan. While I hope we can move forward with more of a consensus, I am not opposed to opting in. It could be part of a reasonable plan.

In the last few decades, we have come from a few B&Bs to a place, where District Staff have calculated in excess of 22% or more of residential properties are engaged in some form of Vacation Rental. Of course, this counts only the operations they know about. If unchecked where does this trend go in the next few years or decades. What is the percentage in 20 or 30 years if left unchecked.

Most egregious are VR’s that are operated without resident homeowners on the property. Providing no residential use at all.

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Completely commercial operations with no residential benefit to the community, and paying residential taxes, not commercial taxes.

Most VR's are operated by resident home owners. They are often an assist for homeowners in paying the mortgage etc. This has some justification as a home occupation on residential property. There, that is part of my proposed consensus. That could be part of a plan, but the plan needs to be comprehensive, and whether we opt in or out it needs to be consistent with a serious housing plan.

Cheers Jack Gillie