

# **REPORT**

## ***Climate Action, Planning and Development***

**To:** Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council  
**Date:** July 10, 2023

**From:** Jackie Teed, Acting Director, Climate Action, Planning and Development  
**File:** 13.2545.01

**Item #:** 2023-470

**Subject: 2021 Census Update**

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** Council receive this report for information.

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### **PURPOSE**

To update Council regarding growth and change patterns shown through the results of the 2021 Census.

### **SUMMARY**

The 2021 Census information shows that New Westminster's population and housing continues to grow in alignment with regional and municipal projections. Although New Westminster has a high proportion of households without children, the population of children has been growing over recent Census periods as anticipated, which is felt in the enrollment capacity challenges for schools and child care. Growth in jobs has also increased in alignment with projections, and the long-term impacts from the pandemic shift towards hybrid and working from home models are not yet known. Income disparity and poverty rates have dropped in the most recent Census period, and the people of the City are becoming more diverse.

### **2021 CENSUS HIGHLIGHTS**

Statistics Canada's Census provides information every five years that can help inform the City's planning and programming, and provide data to help measure progress towards community goals and projections. For context and comparison, Attachment 1 outlines municipal and regional projections for population, housing and jobs.

Data from the 2021 Census has been released in phases over the past year and a half. Census findings on various topics are explored in Attachment 2, and New Westminster 2021 Census tract boundaries are shown in Attachment 3. The section below provides highlights on population, dwellings, jobs, demographics, diversity and income.

## Population

The 2021 Census found 78,916 people lived in New Westminster. This made New Westminster (5,052 people per sq.km) the second densest municipality in Canada, after Vancouver and just ahead of the City of North Vancouver. This addition of 7,920 people represented 11.2% population growth since the previous Census in 2016. Growth between the 2016 and 2021 Census years was concentrated in Downtown (43%) and Queensborough (28%). Twelve percent of growth was in Sapperton, and the other 17% was distributed around the city, with a slight population decline in the West End.

New Westminster's 2016-2021 percentage growth rate (11.2%) was fourth among the 21 Metro Vancouver municipalities (excluding First Nations Reserves and electoral areas), and the population in 2021 was very close to the Official Community Plan's (OCP's) projection for that year, and slightly lower than Metro Vancouver's projections. However, there is typically an adjustment to Census numbers to reflect under-enumeration. It is anticipated that this adjustment will be published in September of 2023, and population will meet or exceed projections.

## Dwellings

The 2021 Census found 37,737 total private dwellings in New Westminster, of which 36,099 were occupied by usual residents (people who live in New Westminster most of the time). This figure slightly exceeds both the OCP's and the Regional Growth Strategy's 2021/2020 projections for the city.

Notable housing growth trends include:

- The 2016 to 2020 period saw more new housing units completed than any other five year period in the 1991-2020 period analyzed; with 4,623 units completed between 2016 and 2020;
- In 2021, 70% of New Westminster households lived in apartments (up slightly from 69% in 2016), compared to 43% at the Metro Vancouver level. In fact, New Westminster had the highest percentage of households living in apartments of any Metro Vancouver municipality in 2021 (next highest was North Vancouver City at 67%);
- In 2021, New Westminster had 2,414 dwellings per square km, an increase from 2,190 dwellings per square km in 2016 and 2,086 in 2011;
- Almost half of New Westminster households rented their dwelling in 2021 (45%), in line with 2016 when 44% of households rented; and,

- There were many large notable projects completed during the 2016 to 2020 period, including new buildings in Brewery District, Victoria Hill, Downtown (notably Riversky at 988 Quayside Drive). Queensborough also had a lot of new projects completed this period, including a significant volume of townhome projects.

The June 12 Housing Need Report Update to Council included additional information about dwelling units and changes in supply and needs in more recent years. The report noted, for example, a more recent downturn in housing completions in 2021/2022, but noted approvals continued to be strong and completions are anticipated to rise again. Regarding rental, the Housing Need Report Update found market rental units in the pipeline also remain strong, which will assist in serving the rise in renter households evident in Census information.

## **Jobs**

In 2021, New Westminster had 33,415 jobs and 47,565 residential labour force members, for a ratio of 0.70 jobs per resident labour force member. The number of jobs in New Westminster increased from 27,100 jobs in 2016 to 33,415 jobs in 2021 (a 6,315 job increase), while the number of resident labour force members increased from 42,990 members in 2016 to 47,565 members in 2021 (a 4,665 resident labour force member increase). This resulted in an improvement of jobs per resident labour force member ratio from 0.63 in 2016 to 0.70 in 2021.

Although these are encouraging results, these results may be impacted by high work from home rates during the pandemic and it is unclear whether or not this improvement in the jobs per resident labour force member ratio will continue post-pandemic. Of the 33,415 workers who worked in New Westminster in 2021, 21,955 commuted to work in New Westminster (including commuting from within and outside of the city) and 11,460 worked from home in New Westminster. The rate of jobs per resident labour force member in 2021 of 0.70 in New Westminster was still lower than the Metro Vancouver ratio of 0.79, indicative of New Westminster being less of a job centre than Metro Vancouver as a whole. That said, across North America, the hybrid work environment and movement of job activity away from traditional big city downtown job centres (e.g., Downtown Vancouver) to suburbs was notable during and after the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Census figure of 33,415 jobs in New Westminster was less than the 36,600 jobs projected for New Westminster by 2020 in the 2050 Metro Vancouver plan. However, the Census jobs by location of workplace does not include jobs with no fixed workplace (e.g., trades and landscape crews that go to different sites on different days without a home base). Staff estimate there were an additional 4,177 to 4,745 no fixed work place workers in New Westminster on any given day, bringing the number of jobs in the city in line with regional projections.

## Age Profile, School-Aged and Pre-School Aged Children

In 2021, the median age of New Westminster's population was 40 years old, slightly younger than in Metro Vancouver, where the median age was 41 years old. The largest group in New Westminster in 2021 was the 30-49 year old age group, composing 33% of the total population.

In 2021, 16% of New Westminster's population consisted of seniors (65+ years old), which grew from 13% in 2011 but was still slightly lower than in Metro Vancouver (17%). In total, there were 12,680 seniors in New Westminster in 2021, an increase of 1,865 seniors (+17% increase) from 2016.

New Westminster has a relatively low proportion of children and youth (0-17 years old), with 15% of New Westminster's population in 2021 consisting of children and youth compared with 17% of Metro Vancouver's population. However, this portion of the population continues to grow; the child and youth population grew by 1,095 from 2016 to 2021, which constituted a 10% increase, compared to 2% at the regional level. In 2021, there were 11,650 children and youth living in New Westminster.

In 2021 (May 2021 Census), there were 8,715 children of an age that could require childcare (0-12 years old) in New Westminster. As of August 2021, there were 2,729 childcare spaces; 31.3 childcare spaces per 100 children (0-12 years old). There was considerable variance by sub-area (ranging from 14.1 childcare spaces per 100 0-12 year olds in Queensborough to 49.8 childcare spaces per 100 0-12 year olds in West End) and by age (23.1 infant/toddler age childcare spaces per 100 0-2 year olds, 70.8 preschool age childcare spaces per 100 3-4 year olds and 16.0 school age childcare spaces per 100 5-12 year olds). Overall, there has been an improvement in child care spaces per child since 2016, when there were 24.9 spaces per 100 children.

## Diversity

New Westminster's population is diversifying:

- 47% of the population captured in the Census identified as a person of colour and/or as part of a racialized group (Visible Minority as per 2021 Census), an increase from 39% in 2016;
- 38% of people were born outside of Canada (and 7% moved to Canada within the last 5 years), an increase from 35% in 2016. Among recent immigrants to New Westminster, the three most common source countries were all in Asia: India, China and Philippines, while one South American country (Brazil) and one African country (Eritrea) comprised the top five source countries;
- 3.1% of the population identified as Indigenous in 2021; and
- In 2021, 21% of residents spoke non-official languages at most commonly at home. The following languages were the mother tongue of 1,000 or more people (or "first language learned"): Tagalog, Mandarin, Punjabi, Cantonese, Spanish, Korean, Portuguese and Russian.

**Income**

The 2021 Census reflects income in 2020, which was an anomalous year for the income of individuals and households. Pandemic-related unemployment negatively impacted income on the one hand, and new and enhanced income supports such as the improved child benefit (from 2016) and the various COVID-19 income supports available in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic stabilized and raised low incomes on the other hand. In total, 74.1% of New Westminster residents received some sort of COVID-19 income support in 2020, including the 25.3% of residents who received CERB (Canada Emergency Response Benefit).

2021 Census found that the median household income in New Westminster in 2020 was \$82,000, or \$72,500 after tax, which was slightly below the regional median household income of \$90,000, or \$79,500 after tax. However, a lot of this difference was due to differences in household composition between New Westminster and Metro Vancouver: New Westminster had a relatively high percentage of one person households and a relatively low percentage of couple households with children (and without additional residents). For some household types, the median household income in New Westminster was actually higher than for Metro Vancouver (e.g., for lone parent families, the median household income in New Westminster was \$72,000 compared with \$71,000 in Metro Vancouver).

Overall, in 2020, New Westminster’s household income ranges were similar to Metro Vancouver’s, but slightly less unequal than Metro Vancouver’s, as 9% of New Westminster households earned \$200,000 or more compared with 13% of Metro Vancouver’s households and 5% of New Westminster households earned less than \$20,000 compared with 6% of Metro Vancouver’s households.

Between 2010 and 2020, New Westminster saw reductions in poverty rates, with the overall poverty rate (based on Low Income Measure – After Tax) decreasing from 15.6% in 2016 to 10.1% in 2020 (slightly lower than the 11.1% regional rate) and the child poverty rate decreasing from 17.0% in 2016 to 10.2% in 2020. The senior’s poverty rate in New Westminster saw a smaller decrease, from 18.8% in 2016 to 16.0% in 2020.

**DISCUSSION**

**New Westminster’s Growth**

New Westminster continues to accommodate a significant amount of regional growth, in line with regional expectations. The City has been successful in setting policy that results in the accommodation of growth. As discussed in the June 12 report to Council regarding housing needs, the City is doing well in supplying housing approvals to meet the needs of many New Westminster residents, and more affordable rental units are needed, including deep subsidy and supportive residential units which will require funding support from senior government.

While recent growth has been focused in the Downtown and Queensborough, it is anticipated that growth will be more spread throughout the city over the coming years as more infill housing is constructed, and as development potential near the 22<sup>nd</sup> SkyTrain station is facilitated through the creation of the Bold Vision.

While jobs in the city also continue to grow, the pandemic-induced shift towards working from home may have lasting impacts on office development potential for New Westminster and across the region.

The population growth of seniors, school-aged children, and pre-school aged children have implications for service provision, school planning, and the provision of child care spaces to meet the growing need. More childcare spaces in certain neighbourhoods, such as Queensborough and for certain age groups, such as infant/toddler and school age, will be needed to meet growing demand. These population increases were anticipated in past projections, including in the 2016 Child Care Needs Assessment.

### **Diversity, Equity and Inclusion**

Staff have not received complete cross-tabulations on income, housing and other information for equity-denied groups. As more information for equity-denied groups is received, staff will monitor trends to inform the targeting of programs and policies.

New approaches to using Census and other data to surface patterns and trends related to equity include:

- Metro Vancouver's on-going Social Equity in Regional Growth Management Study, which includes multiple phases of work including spatially mapping a wide range of indicators at the Census tract level, across the region. Highlights regarding New Westminster include inequality in tree canopy and parkland distribution, with Downtown, parts of Queensborough and Brow of the Hill having more deficits in these topics than other areas. This project is an interesting example of using Census and other data sources to surface patterns, and has the potential (along with more robust direct engagement) to inform policy and program targeting.
- The University of British Columbia's Housing Assessment Resource Tools (HART), providing information on housing need for various priority populations. Highlights from New Westminster's 2016 profile include that single mother-led households, refugee claimant- and new immigrant-led households, and black-led households had the highest prevalence of core housing need – significantly higher than the rate for the community overall. It is anticipated that the tool will be updated with custom 2021 Census data in the coming months.

Staff will continue to monitor these and other initiatives to help inform policy and program targeting. Bringing reconciliation and equity, diversity and inclusion lenses to data analysis also requires careful consideration of the limitations of the data at hand. Data regarding indigeneity, for example, is limited in the Census, as First Nation or urban indigenous individuals may not wish to identify themselves through formal enumeration by the federal government.

## **OPTIONS**

The following options are presented for Council's consideration:

1. That Council receive this report for information; or
2. That Council provide staff with alternative direction.

Staff recommends Option 1.

## **ATTACHMENT**

Attachment 1 - Population, Housing and Jobs Projections

Attachment 2 - 2021 Census Release Findings

Attachment 3 - 2021 Census Tract Boundaries

## **APPROVALS**

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