



Southwest New Brunswick Housing Study

Executive Summary

Southwest New Brunswick (SWNB) is a large geographic region with municipalities made up of several small towns and villages. Most employment centers around industry – primarily aquaculture and fisheries – but also manufacturing and more recently, cannabis production. Other key sectors include tourism, marine science, and construction. Downtown areas tend to feature small retail businesses as well as smaller franchises and chains. This economic structure means many jobs are part-time, contracts, and/or seasonal positions. As the population has aged, the importance of attracting and retaining immigrants has grown. **Employees in those positions are likely to require rental housing. Demographic analysis also indicates an ageing population who will over the coming years require smaller and lower maintenance dwellings – likely apartments.** Unfortunately, SWNB municipalities have not seen development of adequate rental housing over the years and this has led to issues for residents, employers, and the overall communities.

In 2019, representatives from Horizon Community Health, Vibrant Communities Charlotte County, and planners from the Southwest New Brunswick Service Commission (SNBSC) formed a working group to find solutions. A market study has been conducted using existing census data as well as new data collected from landlords/developers, employers, and residents. The following table shows results from the developer/landlord study, and most importantly, vacancy rates:

	St. Stephen**	Saint Andrews*	St. George*	Blacks Harbour	Harvey	Grand Manan	McAdam	SWNB (aggregated) **	Provincial (Oct 2019)
Vacancy rate	0.3%	2.3%	2.1%	6.7%	0%	0%	20.0%	0.96%	2.6%
Rental unit types	Bachelor, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 bd	Bachelor, 1, 2, 3, and 4 bd	1 and 2 bd	2, 3, and 4 bd	1, 2, 3, and 4 bd	2 and 3 bd	2, 3, and 5 bd	Bachelor, 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5 bd	Bachelor, 1, 2, and 3+ bd
Rent (\$/month)	300-1285	450-1700	400-800	600	350-1150	800	325-385	300-1700	Average rent 812
Utilities (included or not)	2.7% included	21.3% included	Not included	Not included	6.7% included	Not included	Not included	6.5% included	NA
Response rate	Unit	69.0%	86.4%	61.8%	50.0%	60.0%	11.1%	100%	Excellent data quality
	Landlord	44.9%	42.9%	21.4%	18.8%	58.3%	16.7%	18.2%	

** = Excellent data quality

* = Good data quality

No* = Poor data quality

While each municipality has specific challenges and assets, all suffer from a lack of affordable, quality rental units. The overwhelming majority of housing stock are single-family homes. Even in municipalities with high vacancy rates, resident surveys reveal that the current rental stock is not meeting the needs of current residents and will be even less likely to meet needs in the future as demographics shift: especially the increasing prevalence of part-time/contract work, reliance on immigrants, and seniors ageing out of larger owned homes. While the market generally meets the needs of homeowners, **current renters face a host of issues at much higher rates than homeowners: over-spending, lack of space, lack of maintenance, difficulty finding appropriate dwellings, and discrimination.**

Existing needs and shifting demographics point to the creation of:

- Affordable multi-unit apartment buildings with a portion of 2 or more bedroom and accessible units;
- seniors apartments;
- smaller standalone units to rent or own such as townhouses, tiny-homes, mini-homes, and garden suites;
- conversion of existing single-family homes into multiple units;
- supportive housing; and
- mixed-use developments including affordable rental housing (retail, community centres, non-profit, etc...).

Given demographics and the lack of public transportation, new builds would ideally be located within walking distance of amenities.



The following table shows the number of new units that should be created/converted to meet current and future demand:

Municipality	Required new units assuming no growth or change (healthy vacancy rate of 3-5%) (Year 1)	Required with 1% population growth (Year 1)	From Employment (within 5 years)	From internal movement (within 5 years)	Total (within 5 years)
St. Stephen	22-36	30-44	171	260	431
St. George	5-8	6-10	81	83	164
Saint Andrews	7-11	9-13	66	103	169
Grand Manan	5-9	7-11	121	140	261
Harvey	2-3	3-4	17	20	37
Blacks Harbour	Healthy vacancy rate		43	50	93
McAdam	Healthy vacancy rate		42	67	109
Total	41-67	66-82	541	723	1264

Getting these units built will require coordination between stakeholders: developers, non-profit organizations, municipalities, SNBSC, the Province, and the Federal government through CMHC. This report provides data and analysis that those building housing can use to apply for CMHC funding with the assistance of SNBSC. **Besides collaboration, other recommendations include revising Zoning By-laws to be compatible with community needs for housing, developing vacant/surplus municipal/provincial land, increasing non-profit capacity, and updating this report periodically.**

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