



# Community Engagement/Baseline Survey Report

Survey Data Collection Fall 2022

## Overview

This report provides a snapshot of the baseline data collected through an online survey for Shape Stratford. Respondents were invited to participate through mailings from the Town of Stratford, the Shape Stratford website, and at community events. In total, 573 individuals responded to the survey between November 28-December 20, 2022.

The survey included both open and closed questions, with the overall purpose of the survey to fully encompass all of the goals of the Shape Stratford project. The survey was developed using SurveyMonkey and included 32 questions. We included branching questions to ensure respondents were directed to questions that pertained to their lived experiences. Respondents also created a unique code for identification purposes, which will allow us to match data sets throughout the project.

The survey took on average 8 minutes to complete, and the majority completed all questions of the branched survey.

The following overview was provided to the participants upon entering the survey:

The Town of Stratford is conducting a survey to better understand the current and future housing needs of residents within our region.

Affordable housing is important for individuals and families to contribute to our society, and is not just about the 'physical buildings', rather affordable housing promotes overall well-being, economic strength, and helps with building strong communities. (For our purposes, affordable housing is defined as "housing that meets the needs of a variety of households in the low to moderate income range.") Thank you for taking the time to respond. This survey should take no more than 15 minutes to complete.

Please note that your survey responses are confidential and anonymous. However, we are asking you to respond to the following three questions, so that we can track your responses throughout the project without being able to identify you but to allow us to monitor changes in individual responses that may indicate changes in behaviour, opinion or situation throughout this project period.

## Findings

The following sections provide an overview of the findings of the survey.

### Section 01: Survey Demographics

Over half of the survey respondents have lived in Stratford for over 11 years, a third have lived in Stratford for three to 10 years, and around 14% have lived in Stratford for less than two years.

Half of the respondents currently have full-time employment, a third are retired, 8% are self-employed, 5% work part-time, and 3% are unemployed. The highest academic qualification was most commonly a

bachelor's degree (38.7%), followed by a college diploma (28.3%), and a master's degree (18.4%). Total annual household income was less than \$20,000 for 1.3% of respondents and \$100,000 or more for 41.9%.

The vast majority of residents currently own their home (81.9%), and a minority currently rent (16.6%). Less than 2% reported other housing situations including supportive or transition housing, near homeless, unhoused, and living with family. 90% of those who currently own, own a single detached house. Of those who rent, half live in an apartment and half live in a house. Most rentals are not subsidized (92.1%). Over two thirds of household consist of couples, half of which have children. Other types of households include living alone (15.2%), living with a roommate (5.0%), multigenerational families (4.8%), and single parents (4.2%).

## **Section 02: What is Important to the Residents of Stratford?**

Recreation space (i.e., community centres, playgrounds, parks) and environmental sustainability were both identified as highly important in the development and growth of Stratford. Transportation was also rated as important, while culture and diversity were not weighted as highly. Other areas identified in the open response field were affordable housing (19), commercial, education, and safety.

Two thirds of respondents strongly agree that housing is a fundamental human right; however, this number jumps to almost 90% among those who rent.

### **2.1. How do values in development vary by population groups?**

Length of living in Stratford: Those who lived in Stratford for 11 years or longer reported valuing culture and diversity less than those who had more newly moved to Stratford. Other aspects of importance were not moderated significantly by this demographic variable.

Age: Value for diversity varied by age where those from 15-34, 66-74, and over 75-age group rated diversity as more important compared to other groups.

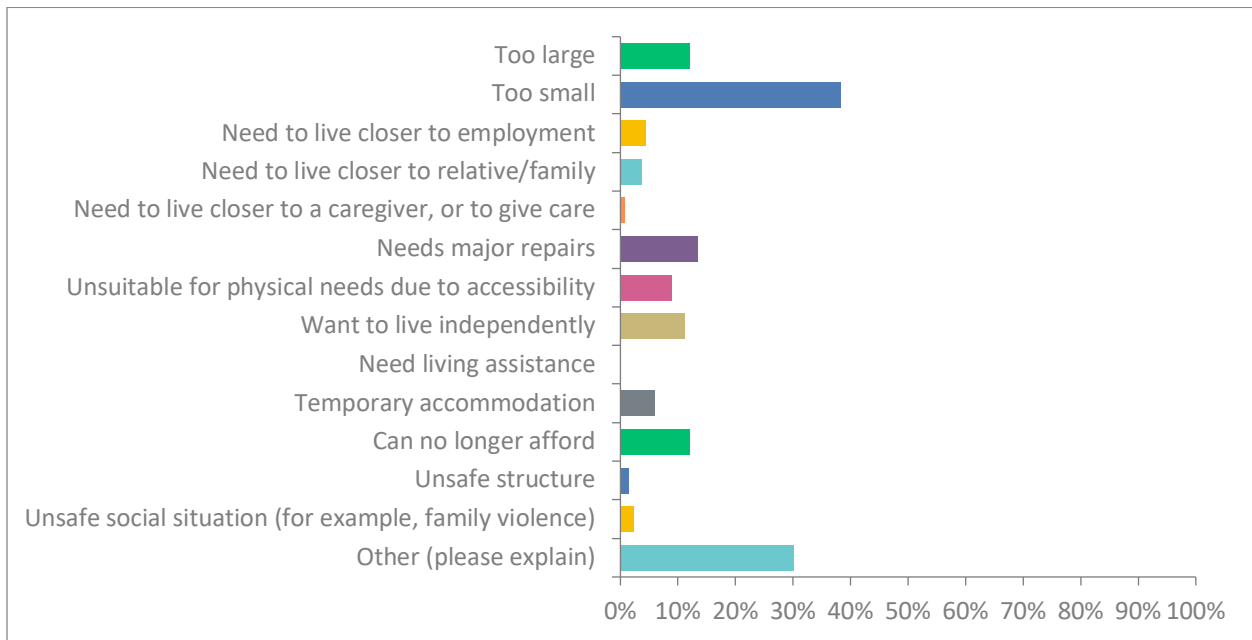
Employment status: Those with full-time and part-time employment and are retired value environmental growth and sustainability more. Those with full-time and part-time employment also value recreational spaces followed by self-employed, retired, and other (e.g., unemployed, not to say, disability).

Current housing situation: Those rented or owned properties thought that recreational space was less important than those may be near homeless, living with family, in a supported facility, or other living status. Within those who own a place, those who own townhouse/rowhouse value recreational space less than others.

Type of households: Those who have children value recreational spaces slightly more.

### Section 03: Current Living Situation Needs Assessment

While the needs of most households are completely met by their current home, a quarter of respondents indicated their household’s needs are only somewhat, or not at all, meet by their current home. Most of them are couple with children (46.2%), followed by those living alone (17.1%) and couple without children (17.1%). Most of them are homeowners (72%) rather than renters (28%), but by proportions, more renters declare that their current homes do not meet their needs (41.6% versus 19.4% of owners).



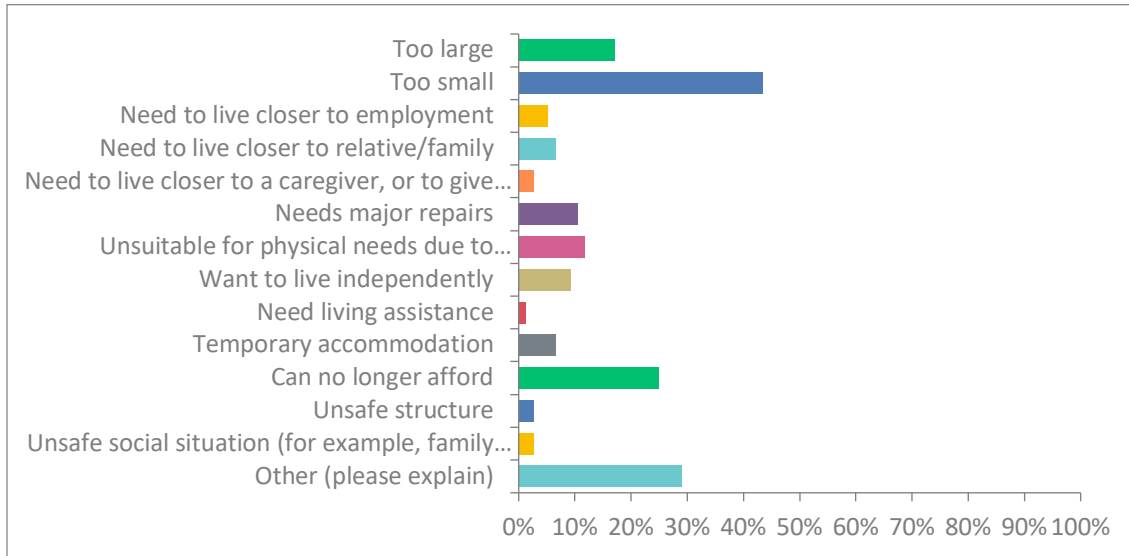
Those who responded “other” stated:

- a lack of public transit (most popular response)
- lack of a garage (second most popular response)
- the increased cost of housing in Stratford
- unsafe property/rental conditions
- amount of housing repairs, and regular maintenance (snow clearing/yardwork)
- high property taxes
- other tenants causing concerns, lack of privacy

Looking into the future, 15% of respondents do not expect their current home to continue to meet their household’s needs and a further 18.4% were unsure. Most of those who said no are couple with children (33.3%), couple without children (25.3%), and those of live alone (18.7%), but single parent and multigenerational family are more significantly likely to not expect their current home to continue to meet their household’s needs by proportion (35% and 24% within their population group respectively). Most of respondents who selected “not sure” are also from these three population groups. A similar

number of owners and renters do not expect their current home to continue to meet their household needs, with a much higher percentage of renters (48.5%) out of all renters compared to owners (11.1%).

Respondents’ rationales are listed below:



In relation to why their current home would not meet their future needs, those who responded “other” provided the following rationale:

- growing family will need more space
- downsizing of family, thus reducing need for more space
- poorly maintained rental housing
- smaller lot sizes/overcrowding of houses
- unable to afford home in future
- issue of other tenant’s smoking/marijuana usage

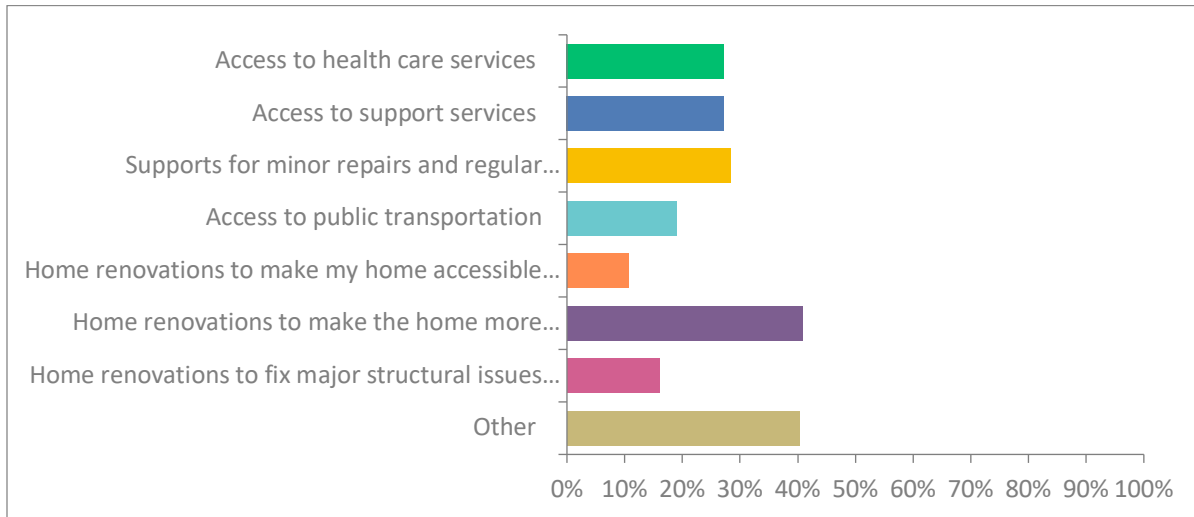
#### Section 04: Supports to Stay

Respondents were asked what was needed to encourage them to stay in their current housing situation and the “other” category provided 68 responses. The main supports suggested included:

- physical facilities indoors and outdoors for adults and children
- activities for seniors
- one-story housing/no stairs
- access to town water and sewer system
- financial relief for those on fixed incomes
- lower property taxes
- lower/regulated rent
- protection for tenants and holding landlords accountable

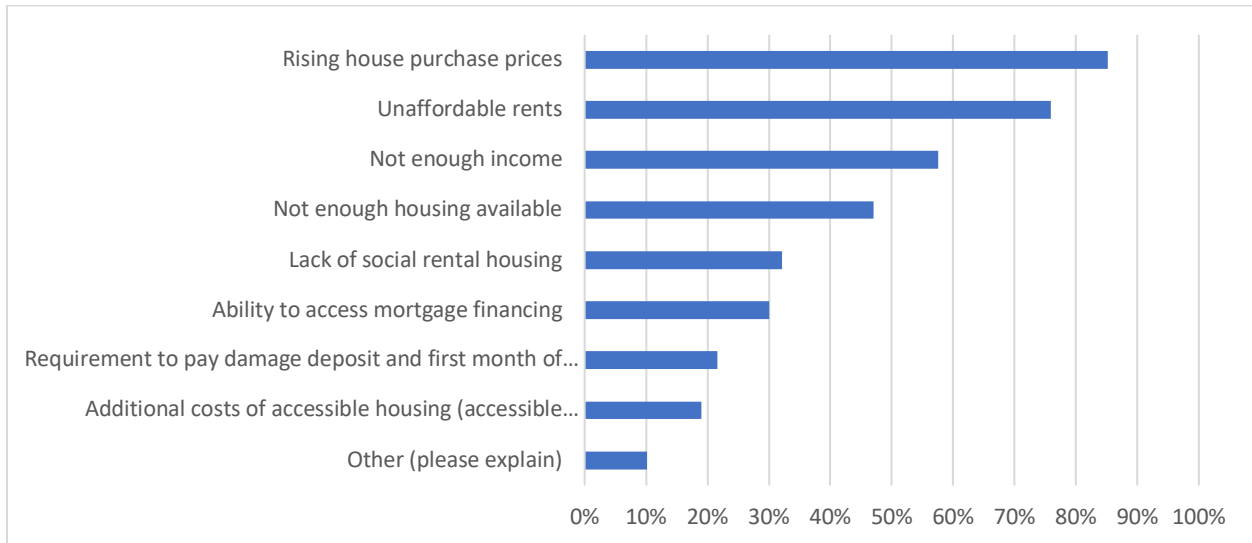
- employment that pays a living wage
- access to childcare

The following figure highlights additional responses of what is required/needed to stay in their current home.



### Section 05: Affordable Housing

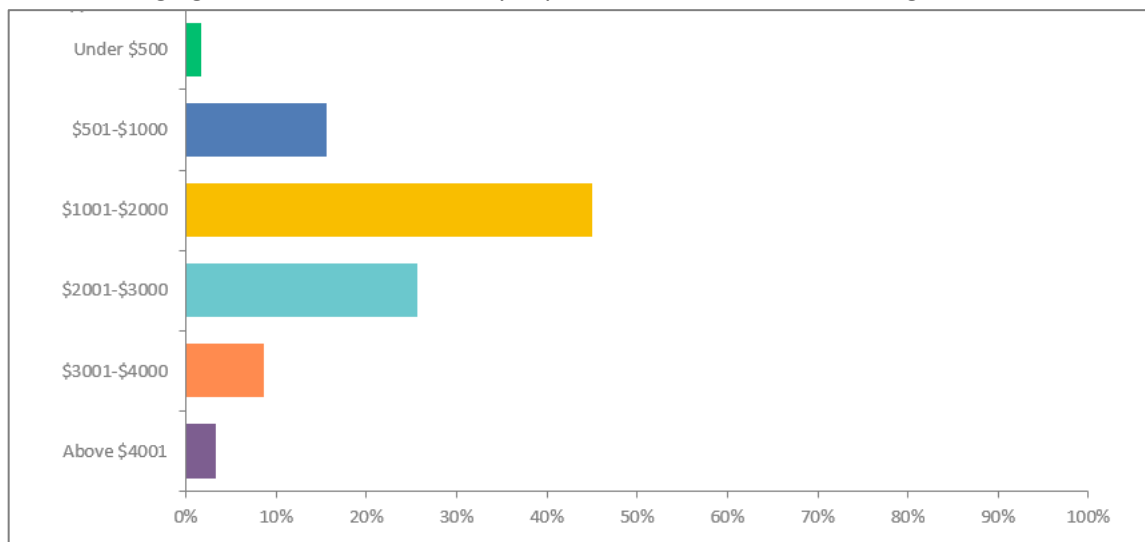
A quarter of survey respondents experienced difficulty finding affordable housing in the last five years. Perceived reasons to affordable housing access by all respondents are shown below, the “other” category include specific details to supplement existing categories/contributions to rising housing costs including rising mortgage interest rates , property taxes, disadvantaged populations like young people, low-income individuals, and seniors, utilities costs, transportation costs/accessibility in relation to housing location, damage deposits, influencing neighbourhood affluence, zoning regulations, urban planning decisions against dense housing.



Most of those who experienced affordable housing challenges are couples (make up 26.1% and 23.8% of all respondents who experienced affordable housing challenges); individuals living with a roommate, single parent, and multi-generational family are also more likely to have faced affordable housing challenges (42%, 50%, and 33% of its population grouping). Similar number of renters and owners experienced affordable housing challenges, with renters significantly more likely to have experienced such in general (64% of all renter respondents versus 16% of all owner respondents).

Those who did not experience difficulty either did not need to find housing in the past five years due to already owning a home or were lucky (purchased before the price increase, fortunate to have sufficient funds).

The following figure indicates the monthly expenses associated with housing costs:

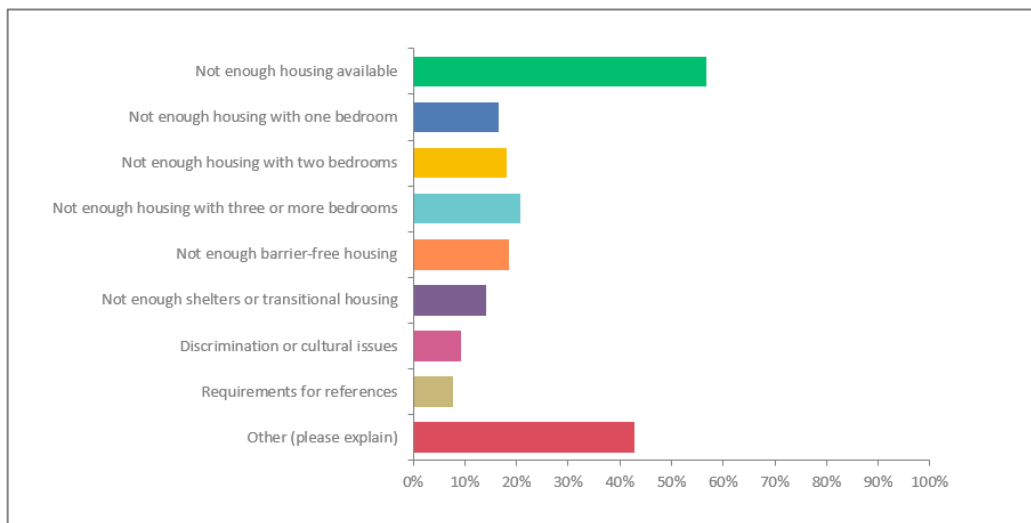


This is further broken down by those that own and rent in the table below:

Row Labels	\$1001-\$2000	\$2001-\$3000	\$3001-\$4000	\$501-\$1000	Above \$4001	Under \$500 (blank)	Grand Total
Own	160	105	39	65	16	5	430
Rent	52	17	2	7		1	87
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>212</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>41</b>	<b>72</b>	<b>16</b>	<b>6</b>	<b>517</b>

### Section 06: Future Growth

Respondents were asked to identify concerns regarding people finding housing in Stratford and the following figure illustrates their number one concern was not enough housing available (56.65%) and the second highest was “other” at 42.94%. There were 210 responses to “other” and the majority related to issues surrounding affordable housing, not enough units/rentals available, lack of transportation, high property taxes, and discriminatory practices with rentals (e.g., pets, children, age). 11% of respondents reported that they have either experienced or possibly experienced discrimination in relation to housing before.



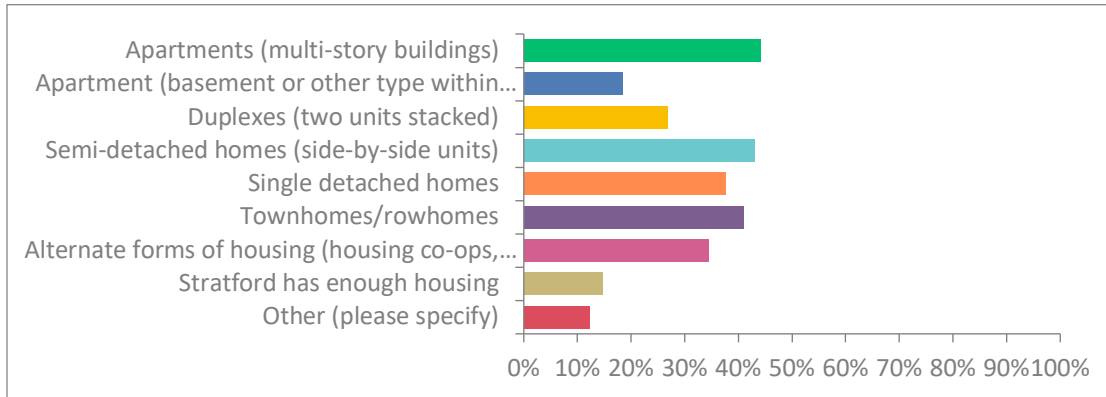
The final question of the survey was an opened question, inviting respondents to share anything else they would like us to know about their housing situation or housing in general in the Town of Stratford. In total, 218 respondents provided additional information that ranged from affordable housing, lack of public transport, bridge traffic, a balance between development/protecting green spaces/wildlife habitat, senior housing, high taxes, home renovations/maintenance, size/type of housing (e.g., how many stories for an apartment), building green homes or retrofitting homes to be climate-friendly, building permits/zoning (e.g., basement apartments or Airbnb), access to medical services, and schools.

Several people commented on the survey design (felt some questions were leading) and how the survey will be disseminated (should ensure public transparency of results). Some people expressed disapproval against density and population growth in the town and the thought that affordable housing is a problem



with individual behavioral rather than town planning (e.g., individuals are at fault for not being able to afford houses in the town, the town should not be bringing in low-income individuals).

**Section 07: Residents’ Perspective on Stratford’s Future Housing Development Needs**



The above figure indicates respondents’ perspectives on the future types of housing most needed in Stratford. This metric/data can be used as a proxy for attitude towards high density development among residents, which is a main success measure identified for this project. Housing types provided to survey respondents/residents are supportive of various density developments:

- High density: apartments (multi-story building), apartments (basement or other type within)
- Medium density: townhomes/rowhomes, alternative housing.
- Low density: duplexes, semi-detached houses, single detached homes.

As shown above, residents’ preferences for high density housing options are comparable to that of low-density housing options. Other development ideas suggested by residents include affordable and/or low-income housing (17), senior-friendly homes (9), and granny homes (5), and condos (3).

**7.1 Opinion on Stratford’s Housing Development Moderated by Resident Demographics**

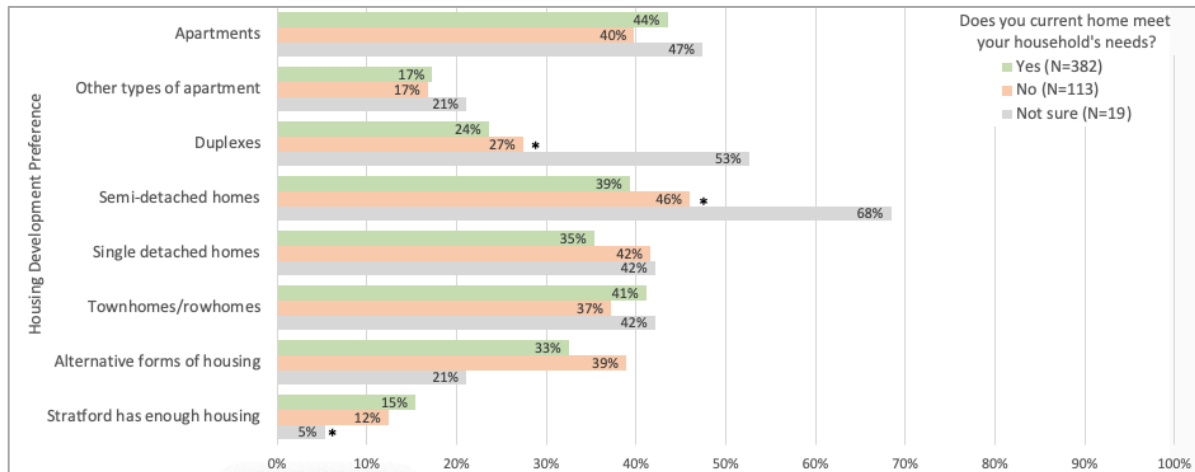
High density and medium density housing are recognized as more needed by the younger population and renters, whereas low density housing is preferred by those with a stable employment and higher income and households with diverse needs (e.g., couples with children/multigenerational). Those with high income and current housing costs are more likely to think that Stratford has enough housing. See the two charts below for a detailed summary on trends in residents’ perspective on Stratford’s future housing development needs by demographic variables.

	Time lived in Stratford	Age	Academic Qualification	Employment Status	Household annual Income
<b>Multi-story buildings</b>		Decreases with increasing age			
<b>Other apartments</b>		Decreases with increasing age			
<b>Duplexes</b>	Higher for those lived in Stratford for <11 yrs	Decreases with increasing age		Higher for those with employment vs retired/other (e.g., unemployed, disability)	
<b>Semi-detached homes</b>					
<b>Single detached homes</b>	Lower for those who lived in S. for 2-5yrs or do not live in Stratford	Higher for those who are 35-65, lower for those who are over 75		Higher for full-time, self-employed, retired individuals, vs part-time and other	Increases with increasing Income
<b>Townhomes /rowhomes</b>		Higher for those <45 or 54-75	Higher for those with a university degree vs college or high school diploma		Increases with increasing income
<b>Alternative housing</b>	Higher those who lived in Stratford for <5yrs	Higher for those who are 15-34, lower for those who are 45-54 and over 75			
<b>Stratford has enough housing</b>					Higher for those who make >\$50,000, highest for those who make >\$150,000

	Monthly Housing Cost	Rent/Own	Household Type
<b>Multi-story buildings</b>		Higher for renters	
<b>Other types of apartments</b>			
<b>Duplexes</b>		Higher for renters	
<b>Semi-detached homes</b>			

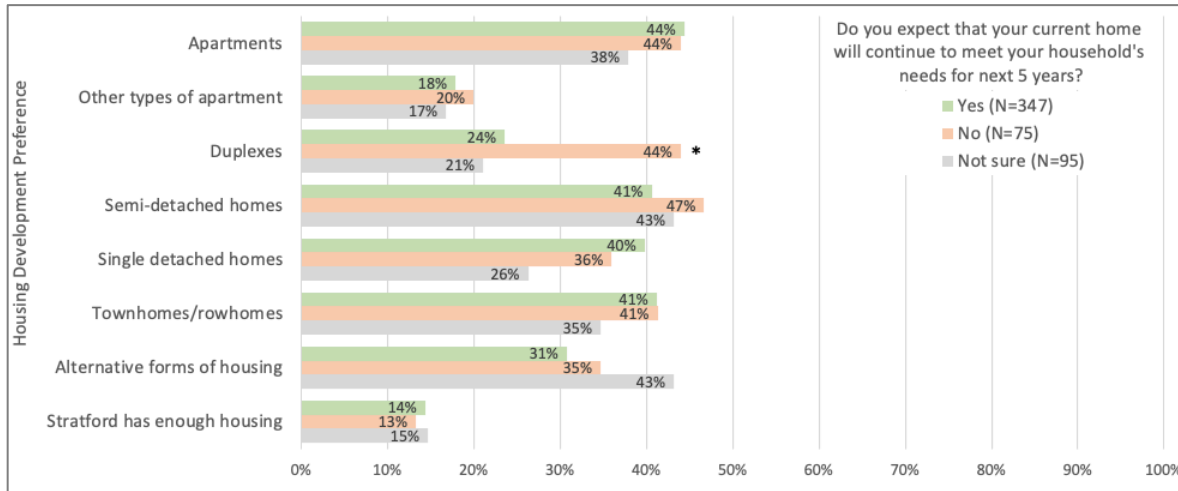
	Monthly Housing Cost	Rent/Own	Household Type
Single detached homes	Higher for those paying >\$1,001	Higher for house owners than renters	Higher for couples with children or multi-generational households
Townhomes/rowhomes		Higher for renters	
Alternative housing		Higher for those who rent	Higher for those who live alone or have multi-generational family; lower for those living with a roommate or couples with children.
Stratford has enough housing	Higher for those who pay >\$2001		

### 7.2 Perspective on Stratford’s Housing Development by Current Housing Needs



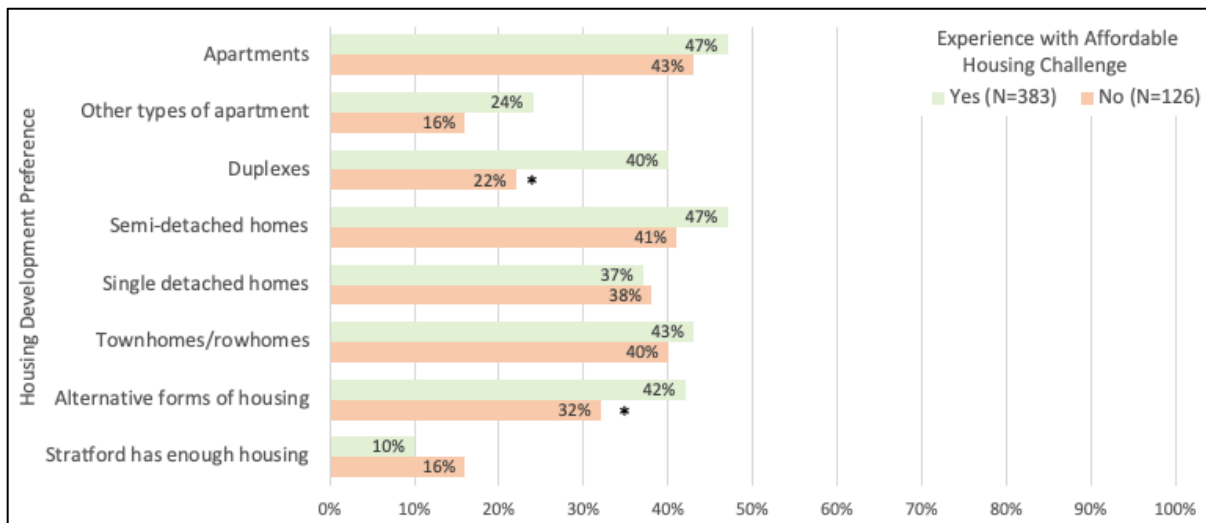
\* used to indicate any significant differences

The above figure describes housing development perspectives between those whose current needs are met, not met, and not sure if are being met. Perspectives on Stratford’s housing development needs remain consistent across most development types, except for opinion on duplexes and semi-detached houses, where those whose needs are not currently being met or are not sure whether are being met think these housing options are more necessary to meet the needs of its residents in Stratford. Perspectives on whether Stratford has enough housing also differed by whether participants’ current housing needs are being met. Those who have their needs met are more likely to agree that Stratford has enough housing.



\* used to indicate any significant differences

Perspectives on Stratford’s housing development needs also differed by whether respondents expect their future home needs being met. Those who do not expect their future needs being met are significantly more likely to think that Stratford needs more duplexes.



Perspectives on Stratford’s housing development needs also differed by whether one had encountered difficulty finding affordable housing in the last 5 years. Those who experienced difficulty are more likely to think that Stratford needs more duplexes and alternative housing.

Lastly, perspectives on Stratford’s housing development needs differ by whether respondents had encountered housing discrimination previously. Those who had experienced housing discrimination are

more likely to think that Stratford needs more duplexes (38.6%) versus those who had never experienced housing discrimination (25.4%).

### **Next Steps**

This survey provided baseline data regarding the Shape Stratford project. This survey will be re-distributed at the mid-point and end of the project for comparative purposes.