



The City of Vancouver Talk Housing With Us Engagement Program

Final Report
Summer 2011



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Appendix A: Communication and Outreach Materials

1.0 Overview

In early May 2011, the City of Vancouver launched **Talk Housing with Us**, a public outreach and engagement project to support the City's ongoing efforts to create more affordable housing and end street homelessness in Vancouver by 2015.

A new public engagement website at talkvancouver.com provided an online forum for citizens to engage in dialogue and tell the City what they think should be done about homelessness and affordable housing. People were invited to share ideas on the actions required to ensure that everyone in Vancouver has a home. The **Talk Housing with Us** website also provided links to detailed information on the current state of homelessness and affordable housing in Vancouver, and what progress the City has achieved to date.

As part of the engagement program, the City conducted a series of activities during May and June, including a Stakeholder Workshop, focus groups, a Renters' Roundtable, and an Unconference. City Councillors also conducted community dialogues with citizens at coffee shops around Vancouver.

Feedback from the **Talk Housing with Us** events, as well as the website, will help inform and shape the revised Housing and Homelessness Strategy for Vancouver, slated to go before City Council in the summer of 2011. The strategy seeks to improve affordability at all points along the housing continuum, from shelters and supportive housing to affordable rental and home ownership.

Over two months, nearly 400 people shared their thoughts and ideas, made connections, and worked to find solutions to the housing challenges facing Vancouver at the **Talk Housing with Us** events and in the online forums. An overview of engagement program activities and participant feedback is provided below.

2.0 Engagement Program

2.1 Objectives

The City of Vancouver's core mission is to create a great city of communities which cares about its people, its environment and the opportunities to live, work and prosper. Two key goals for realizing this mission are to end street homelessness by 2015 and increase housing for low and modest income households.

Recognizing that success toward these goals depends largely on the support and cooperation of stakeholders and partners, as well as widespread support from the community, the City launched the **Talk Housing with Us** engagement program. The program was designed to:

- engage Vancouver's citizens in a dialogue about housing and homelessness; and

- help inform and shape the City's Housing and Homelessness Strategy for Vancouver.

2.2 Target Audiences

A goal of the engagement program was to engage a diverse range of participants, including people who currently work in the housing field as well as people who may be less familiar with the issues but have an interest in discussing issues related to housing and homelessness.

All **Talk Housing with Us** activities were advertised to the broader public, with additional efforts made to attract the following groups:

- Renters
- Community Associations
- Seniors
- Students
- Aboriginal Communities
- Housing Providers
- Housing Funders
- Real Estate Developers
- Medical Health Professionals
- Teachers

2.3 Communication and Outreach Materials

To support the **Talk Housing with Us** program, the City created six fact sheets and two videos:

Fact Sheet	Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy
Fact Sheet	Vancouver's Talk Housing with Us Engagement Program
Fact Sheet	Rental Housing
Fact Sheet	Homelessness
Fact Sheet	Housing and Homelessness Strategy
Fact Sheet	Strategies 1 and 2 - Housing and Homelessness Strategy
Fact Sheet	Strategies 3 and 4 - Housing and Homelessness Strategy
Video	Ending street homelessness
Video	Renting in Vancouver

A range of print and electronic materials, including posters, ads, and cards were created to promote the program and announce events both online and in the community. Appendix A contains samples of all **Talk Housing with Us** communication and outreach materials.

3.0 Engagement Activities and Feedback

3.1 Talk Housing with Us Website, Online Discussion Forums and Online Survey

3.1.1 Overview

The **Talk Housing with Us** website formed the hub of the engagement program, providing information about upcoming events, background information about housing and homelessness in the City including videos, fact sheets and links to other housing resources. The website also hosted the discussion forums and an online survey for anyone wishing to submit their comments confidentially to the City.

Online dialogue took place in three forums where participants shared their thoughts, ideas and comments on two key questions:

1. *What are important steps we need to take to increase housing for low and modest income households?*
2. *What are important steps we need to take to end street homelessness by 2015?*

An additional forum was created to host proposed discussion topics leading up to the **Talk Housing with Us** Unconference. This space allowed Unconference participants to post their proposed topic title and a brief description of the session they planned to host at the Unconference.

The website was launched on May 4th, and by June 20th had 2400 unique visitors. A total of 165 people registered for the online forums with 88 comments made related to increasing housing for low and modest income households and 19 comments made related to ending homelessness by 2015. Twelve Unconference participants posted their discussion topic ideas in the online forum. Three respondents submitted completed online surveys. A copy of the survey is attached in Appendix A.

3.1.2 Summary of Feedback

Participants in the online forums provided comments, ideas and suggestions related to two key questions. A summary of the responses for each question is provided below:

- A. What are important steps we need to take to end street homelessness by 2015?**

The online forum generated a range of feedback and suggestions related to ending street homelessness by 2015. Discussions in the forums focused on:

- Increasing the number of 24-hour, low barrier shelters in order to help clients access longer-term housing services.
- Providing sizeable tax rebates to developers to encourage them to build more affordable properties.
- Strengthening enforcement of laws protecting renters from being evicted as a result of receiving welfare.
- Increasing the percentage of available social or affordable housing required in new condominium and apartment developments.
- Adopting a plan to distribute social housing across Vancouver.
- Implementing a residential re-zoning policy, enabling the City to purchase a percentage of housing units at construction cost and rent these units at affordable market rents.
- Providing medical treatment required to help the homeless manage mental disorders.
- Encouraging the City to review the policy recommendations included in the Community Action Report submitted by Headlines Theatre Company.
- Increasing stakeholder involvement to support the City in achieving its goal to end homelessness.

B. What are important steps we need to take to increase housing for low and modest income households?

The online forum generated a range of responses, suggestions and feedback. Respondents urged all levels of government to increase efforts to create more affordable housing and leverage existing resources.

Discussions in the forum focused on the following topics:

- a) Foreign Ownership and Speculative Buying
- b) Social Housing Investment and Co-op Expansion
- c) Rental Apartment Building Incentives
- d) Rent Caps
- e) Zoning
- f) Planning
- g) Design

Respondents suggested landlords and developers need to participate in the planning process to achieve more viable, long-term solutions to address the current shortage of affordable housing.

a) Foreign Ownership and Speculative Buying

Respondents encouraged both the City and the Province to take steps to curb speculative buying and impose restrictions on non-resident property ownership. Respondents noted that housing owned by foreign investors often sits empty while co-operative housing wait list times continue to increase, demonstrating the negative impact foreign ownership and speculative buying has had on housing in Vancouver.

Solutions to address the problem of foreign ownership and speculative buying included:

- Tax unoccupied homes as a business. Owners of multiple homes should pay business taxes in addition to property taxes.
- Limit the number of residences an individual can purchase and impose penalties if the property sits empty beyond a specified length of time.
- Implement restrictions on investment buyers. Restrictions could include a tax on the purchase of a second home.
- Increase the Land Transfer Tax for foreign buyers as a way to discourage speculative real estate investment. Revenues from this tax could be used to build more affordable housing.

b) Social Housing Investment and Co-op Expansion

Respondents would like an increase in social housing for low income households and in co-op housing provided citywide. Proposed solutions included:

- Integrate social housing with co-op housing.
- Increase the percentage of low and modest income units in new condominium developments.
- Set and achieve a target for the construction of new co-op units within ten years.
- Involve residents in the design of liveable units and communities.

c) Rental Apartment Building Incentives

Respondents urged the City to continue to provide incentives to developers to develop new rental units. Respondents suggested incentives be tied directly to a reduced purchase amount or rental costs. Developers and landlords would need to declare sales or rental rates in order to receive the incentive.

Respondents suggested the City set a target of new rental buildings to be built within the next ten years, with a focus on building affordable multi-bedroom units.

d) Rent caps

Many respondents expressed concern about increasing rental rates and suggested current rates do not correspond to average earnings in Vancouver. Respondents inquired as to whether the City can impose rent caps on available housing or impose rate restrictions to better reflect personal income levels.

e) Zoning

Zoning and neighbourhood planning were frequently discussed in the forum. Some respondents wanted to see an increase in zoning of high density developments, while others felt zoning needs to be more restrictive and the City should limit the number of permits for construction of high towers. Many respondents felt the City needs to encourage development of higher density neighbourhoods in more affordable parts of the city.

Some respondents suggested the City should take measures to ensure strata corporations do not implement rental restriction bylaws. It was also suggested any rezoning application coming before City Council should include proposals to ensure rental restriction bylaws could not be implemented by future strata corporations.

Overall, respondents expressed city-wide zoning needs to be more flexible and steps need to be taken to ensure a certain percentage of units are available for low and moderate income buyers.

f) Planning

Respondents suggested the City should focus on building new, mid-density communities instead of luxury high rise towers. Respondents suggested this could be accomplished by implementing a variety of policies, including: taxation, changes to land use, and changes to planning and zoning bylaws. Respondents want the City to focus on a strategy of building low and mid-rise apartments, which respondents feel use less energy to build and are easier to maintain.

Respondents also indicated a preference for walkable, transit oriented neighbourhoods designed with families in mind. Respondents want to see neighbourhoods made up of mixed incomes throughout the city. They do not want to see neighbourhoods designed to service only the needs of one

particular income strata of society. Many respondents were concerned about the lack of inventory of family-liveable housing, especially in "eco-densified" areas. Respondents want to see more three-bedroom units and an increase in zoning for townhouses in areas adjacent to the core. Respondents also want the City to develop artist communities, and incorporate zoning bylaws that allow artists to create and sell their work in the places where they live.

g) Design

Respondents suggested housing units need to be more functionally designed, highlighting how existing 'open space concept' designs favoured by developers are often not practical. Respondents suggested emphasis be placed on creating liveable spaces, incorporating adequate kitchen and storage space as well as outdoor living areas. Respondents suggested current innovations in 'micro housing' design, such as the CUBE project, should serve as models for other developments.

3.2 Stakeholder Workshop

3.2.1 Overview

On April 27th, 2011, the City of Vancouver hosted a Stakeholder Workshop. The purpose of the workshop was to gather input from key stakeholders on the City's future Housing and Homeless Strategy and to consider approaches to take over the next ten years. Around 80 individuals participated, from a wide range of organizations including those that have experience and expertise in housing the homeless and creating affordable housing.

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The full-day Stakeholder Workshop began with a brief overview of the housing continuum in Vancouver and covered the City's current and future strategies based on two key themes: ending street homelessness by 2015, and increasing housing choice for low and moderate income households.

Each of these themes was covered separately during two workshop sessions: Session 1 focused on Current Actions, asking: What's working well? What can be improved? Session 2 focused on Moving Forward, presenting and obtaining input on the City's proposed strategies; goals for the next 3-5 years; the role of stakeholders and partners; and a 10-year vision for all parts of the housing continuum.

3.2.2 Summary of Feedback

The summary of feedback from the Stakeholder Workshop provided below is excerpted from the City of Vancouver Talk Housing with Us Stakeholder Workshop Report, provided by Raymond Penner of the Strategic Action Group.

Session I: Current Actions

Theme 1: Ending Street Homelessness by 2015

Workshop participants identified and discussed a variety of initiatives targeted at ending street homelessness. Key themes from these discussions are summarized below:

- 1. Low-barrier shelters are an important element in addressing the basic needs of the most vulnerable people, facing the largest housing challenges.**
 - Low barrier shelters provide a supportive environment where basic needs are addressed and an opportunity is created where trust can build with those who have the most difficulty in being housed
 - Overall, shelters are seen as a viable and important part of a housing continuum, and as a first step alternative to living rough
 - A significant benefit of shelters is that they provide a focus (i.e. physical location) for the integration of services for vulnerable people who have varied and often significant needs for support
- 2. While shelters are answering a housing need, they are not an end in themselves but need to be part of a more comprehensive housing continuum.**
 - One of the main concerns is that reliance on the shelters can lead to the illusion that the problems of homelessness are addressed but they do not focus on the causes of homelessness nor on prevention
 - Another concern is that shelters can function as a barrier when people are “stuck” in them with no clear options for something more sustainable
 - There is a concern that too much of a focus on shelters is taking resources away from long-term solutions for homelessness such as other social housing options
- 3. Supportive housing provides an important element in the housing continuum by providing housing stability and support services to people with significant challenges.**

- Supportive housing is a way of helping the homeless integrate back into society
- The supportive housing that is in place or is currently under development has provided an opportunity to refine the integration of services and to support a range of partnerships that have broadened the parts of the population being served

4. Supportive housing also has challenges that need to be addressed.

- While the City's Supportive Housing Policy is helpful in setting some key principles, there is still perceived resistance from communities who do not accept that street homelessness exists throughout the City
- Providing the 14 sites was significant but not enough; City policies and procedures, together with community resistance, have led to delays in getting the planned new supportive housing in place in a timely manner
- As with the danger that people can get stuck in shelters, without a more comprehensive plan and other social housing options, people in supportive housing also run the risk of being stuck
- Where possible, people should be supported to move onto more independent living

5. Geography is important to address street homelessness.

- The Downtown East Side has the highest number of both visible street homeless and of low barrier shelters however street homelessness exists throughout the City and the Region; at this point, shelter distribution doesn't yet meet the needs in communities where there are street homeless
- While much focus has been on street homelessness in Vancouver, this is a regional issue and the City cannot take on the challenge without involving neighbouring municipalities doing their part
- The 14 new supportive housing sites the City has supplied go some way toward supporting a more city-wide balance for housing those people in need of such housing in their neighbourhoods but still does not reach all the neighbourhoods where there is a need

6. The resources that are required are being supplied by a network of agencies and service providers but there is room for improved coordination of these resources and services.

- The City is only one body in a constellation of government and non-government organizations that are committed to ending street homelessness - the City has been working in and facilitating many partnerships with all levels of government, non-profit service providers, the inter-faith community and business organizations, all of whom bring various capabilities and components of the overall solution that will be required to end homelessness

- While there are many groups involved in the efforts to end homelessness, the partnerships and alliances face numerous bureaucratic challenges both from within the City but also in these partnership with service providers that need to be addressed or minimized to be more effective in ending homelessness
- In spite of the acknowledged need to better integrate the services and resources that are currently available, there is a recognition that there is a need for more resources and for creative approaches to look outside the sources that currently exist

7. Need to remember that the homeless are people and that the funding needs they have vary widely.

- Homelessness is a situation faced by many and it is important to ensure the focus is on people as individuals, not merely “client” populations
- Some of the housing options and services currently available do focus on the needs of specific groups (e.g. youth, women) and it is important to continue to keep in mind the needs of specific populations in developing options for homelessness - a “one size fits all” model doesn’t really work

8. While gains are being made in the shelter and supportive housing resources available, there is room for improvement to ensure homelessness is addressed more comprehensively.

- It is important to address the social, economic, health and political factors in play that are blockages to individuals being stuck in an ongoing cycle of homelessness
- There is a need to develop a better housing continuum that provides sufficient resources, housing options and adequate opportunities to move out of the cycle of poverty and homelessness to stability and integration into society
- With the number of agencies and partnerships involved, there should be a concerted effort to identify (perhaps with the help of partners outside the organization) where City policies and practices are in themselves blockages to finding better solutions
- The community as a whole needs to understand the benefits of ending street homelessness from a social, economic and health perspective; this includes developing a recognition that homelessness exists throughout the City and these needs are not only those of the visibly homeless on the Downtown East Side
- More resources will be required to truly end all homelessness that provide a full range of housing options for the homeless, preventative measures for those in danger of becoming homeless and support for those trying to transition to more independent living; these resources will likely need to come from new sources

Theme 2: Increasing housing choice for low & modest income households

Workshop participants identified and discussed a variety of initiatives targeted at increasing housing for low and modest income households. Key themes from these discussions are summarized below:

- 1. Rate of change regulations (Rental Housing Stock Official Development Plan) has some positive elements but there are concerns around the long-term health of the stock.**
 - The main positive element of this regulation is that it protects the existing rental housing stock
 - The regulation doesn't generate new supply as it does not allow for redevelopment without one-for-one replacement of rental units. Some participants felt this would lead to deterioration of the existing rental stock over the long-term
 - As the stock continues to age, the regulation should be modified to be more flexible and allow for some redevelopment and regeneration of the existing rental stock
 - The regulation focuses on retention, but there are currently no incentives in place to repair and maintain the existing rental stock
- 2. There is support for the City's policy of requiring 20% of the units in new neighbourhoods be available for affordable housing, but implementation of the policy needs to be improved as it doesn't require that affordable units are actually built.**
 - Participants expressed support for the city-wide focus of the policy
 - Need to address funding challenges - the policy was developed at a time when there was senior government housing programs in place to providing funding for construction and operations; these programs are very limited
 - Need to address implementation challenges - density is being provided without requirement for social housing to be built
 - The concept of affordability needs to be redefined considering today's realities; it is important for the City to work with partners to find ways to enhance affordability by supply rental units
- 3. The Short-term Incentives for Rental Housing Program (STIR) has been effective in encouraging the development of more purpose-built market rental housing, but concerns exist around affordability of units and community impacts of projects.**
 - From a project viability perspective, STIR combines the best incentives available at the local level to encourage development of purpose-built market rental
 - STIR fits needs of income earners that cannot afford to own, but affordability for lower income earners are not addressed

- The incentives allow greater density, smaller units and reduced parking requirements, which have raised community concerns related to density and building heights
 - The City needs to rethink how the requirements and incentives can work together to improve affordability of units. Partnerships are needed with senior governments, non-profits and private sector to achieve deeper levels of affordability
- 4. The City's expanded allowance of secondary suites has been an important source of affordable rental housing for low and modest income earners.**
- For renters, secondary suites generally tend to be more affordable than new purpose built rental housing; for the owner, they do not require subsidies as there is a financial incentive to have a suite in place (e.g. mortgage helper)
 - By allowing these suites to be built throughout the City, there is a better distribution of affordable rental units and the legalization of suites produces safer housing
 - Secondary suites could be expanded further (e.g. townhouses, homes with two suites, etc.)
 - Illegal suites still exist – there are concerns around suites that do not meet building codes
- 5. Laneway housing has added to the rental housing stock but does not address affordability for lower income households.**
- Like the STIR Program, this has added more rental housing stock in the City and allows for people of different ages to remain in their community (e.g. seniors, young people)
 - There are no affordability requirements so much of this housing is not available for low and modest income earners
- 6. The Federal/Provincial affordable housing programs have been critical in producing social housing and should be extended.**
- Need to develop a revised national housing strategy that addresses the issue of homelessness and ensuring adequate affordable housing for low and modest income households
 - Co-op housing is a good model although the concept of affordability needs to be indexed to the cost of living in Vancouver
 - There is support for building non-market projects but it may be more cost effective to encourage other types of affordable housing including secondary suites and laneway housing
 - income earners; this strategy needs to be backed up with dedicated, long term financing

Session 2: Moving Forward

Theme 1: Ending Street Homelessness by 2015

The City of Vancouver has three draft strategies to end street homelessness in the City by 2015. These are:

- ⇒ The City will provide land for 1,200 supportive housing units.
- ⇒ The City will ensure that street homeless individuals are housed in the neighbourhoods where they feel safe and connected.
- ⇒ The City is committed to tracking progress towards its goals and an annual report card will be produced. To track progress on towards ending street homelessness by 2015 an annual homeless count will be conducted each year in March.

The draft strategies to end street homelessness by 2015 were discussed during the second part of the workshop. In summary, key themes from these discussions included the following:

1. The City's strategies are generally supported, but the strategy to house people in their neighbourhoods needs to be clarified.

- In order to ensure that the 450 units are built and operating by 2015, the delays that have beset some of the projects currently underway or still in the planning stage need to be addressed – this includes streamlining the processes both internally in the City and with partners
- It is important to look past the 450 units and look at existing stock and other types of property to increase capacity – one example suggested was development of supportive housing on church lands
- It is critical that this addition to the supportive housing units is part of a broader and long term strategic plan that includes multiple partners – both government and non-government
- The intent of this strategy is not clear in terms of location (i.e. does this mean the DTES?); there was support for the idea that this strategy could provide support for housing the homeless throughout the City, not just in the DTES or in neighbourhoods where homeless are found in the Homeless Count
- It is important that consideration is given to ensure that the appropriate support services will be available in conjunction to where the housing is located

2. The strategies need to be expanded to include broader considerations for other parts of the housing continuum, integration and improvement of social services, policy change in key areas (e.g. income policy and prevention).

- Providing land is important, but not a strategy – more is required

- Shelters are one part of the housing continuum – there is a need for a broader strategy that includes more than just ‘street homeless’, such as social housing for seniors, youth and families
- Need better coordination and integration of services – access to healthcare, mental health services, nutrition, etc.
- There needs to be a fuller discussion of prevention strategies
- Need involvement from senior governments to improve existing social services (e.g. income policies, policies around youth and corrections) to reduce poverty and homelessness

3. Participants felt it was important to monitor and track progress. The strategy of regularly publishing a report card was supported, particularly in conjunction with other agencies. However, there was concern over the cost and usefulness of an annual homeless count.

- It is important to have good information on the whole housing continuum
- There must be careful thought to the information that needs to be included, the frequency and who the partners (or other data sources) should be
- Some participants felt an annual homeless count would be expensive, labour intensive and not particularly useful; they preferred a three-year assessment

Key actions to end street homelessness by 2015:

- Continue to provide low-barrier shelters
- Develop a strategy to better integrate supportive housing in neighbourhoods (e.g. improved stakeholder and community engagement process)
- Work with senior governments to explore the impact of current income policies on homelessness
- Develop a broader strategy that includes the entire housing continuum with senior levels of government and other partners; Need to establish long-term financial commitments
- Develop prevention strategies to stop the flow of people into homelessness
- Focus on the housing and support needs of specific groups (e.g. Aboriginal, youth, women, the aging homeless population, etc.). We are developing a lot of supportive housing and have improved programs for the general homeless; the next step is to explore the needs of different groups
- Develop strategies to better integrate and coordinate services between service providers, governments, non-profits and private sector. Start with the assumption of no new funding for services. How can we do more with what we have?

Theme 2: Increasing housing choice for low & modest income households

The City of Vancouver has three draft strategies to increase housing for low and modest income households. These are:

- ⇒ Tailor zoning approaches and conditions to meet local housing needs and opportunities
- ⇒ Integrate successful strategies for rental inventory into current neighbourhood planning initiatives
- ⇒ The City is committed to tracking progress towards its goals and an annual report card will be produced.

The draft strategies to increase housing for low and modest income households were discussed during the second part of the workshop. In summary, key themes from these discussions included the following:

1. There is strong support to continue to work towards increasing housing for low and modest income households.

- Continue to use incentives to encourage rental housing (e.g. STIR)
- Continue to encourage secondary rental stock (e.g. more laneway housing and secondary suites)
- Explore density as a mechanism to create more affordable housing (e.g. infill developments, transit- oriented development, etc..)
- Need to provide diversity of housing choice city-wide – mix of tenure and types
- Explore creative ways to maximize use of existing sites in developing social housing (e.g. consider new forms of affordable housing, consider building market-rental and then covert to social housing to help with financing)
- It is important to protect the existing rental stock, but there are currently no strategies in place to address the challenges associated with maintaining the stock

2. The strategy of tailoring zoning approaches and conditions to meet local housing needs and opportunities should be aimed at creating affordable housing.

- Use zoning as a tool to create affordable housing (e.g. allow additional density, create zones that allow more secondary suites etc.)
- Develop a city-wide housing plan to identify current and future needs of Vancouverites
- Pre-zone areas to include different forms of housing (e.g. rental, infill, townhouses, etc.)
- Review the City's Financing Growth Policies so that the process around Community Amenity Contributions is clearer

3. **There is support for the strategy to integrate rental inventory strategies into current neighbourhood planning initiatives, however participants felt firm leadership from the City is necessary to ensure the strategies are implemented**
 - If the City is committed to ensuring affordable rental housing throughout the City, it is imperative that there is clear leadership from the City in guiding development and implementation in all neighbourhoods
4. **Participants felt it was important to monitor and track progress; the strategy of regularly publishing a report card was supported as a way to do this.**
 - Measurement is important to gauge progress and re-evaluate directions
 - Report card should be used as an advocacy tool in collaboration with other municipalities and the region

Key actions to increase housing choice for low & modest income households:

- Continue the 20% affordable housing policy, but modify to improve implementation options and ensure the housing is built
- Continue to use incentives (e.g. density) to encourage rental housing
- Continue to encourage secondary rental stock (e.g. more laneway housing and secondary suites)
- Explore providing incentives for maintenance of existing rental stock
- Link rental development with transportation planning
- Clear direction with strong leadership is needed to implement affordable housing policies; better community engagement strategies are necessary to address community concerns
- Develop strategic partnerships with non-profits, private sector and other levels of governments to find alternative sources of financing

3.3 Renters Roundtable

3.3.1 Overview

The Renters Round Table was held on May 26th in the Alice MacKay room at the Vancouver Public Library. The objective of the round table was to gain a clearer understanding and build awareness of the challenges and benefits renters face related to housing in Vancouver. The tone of the round table was informal, café-style with a focus on listening to participants' comments and sharing ideas.

The session began with opening remarks by Mayor Robertson followed by a brief presentation about the current rental housing situation by Abigail Bond, Assistant Director of Housing Policy with the City of Vancouver. The rest of the evening was

dedicated to interactive discussion around three topic areas, facilitated by Raymond Penner of the Strategic Action Group.

The facilitator worked through a set of questions for each topic:

Session 1: Introduction

- What type of rental housing do you live in? What do you like about this?
- Have you moved in the past five years? If yes – how often? Was this from another rental? Why did you move? If no – Why not?

Session 2: Issues, Challenges, Concerns and Hopes

- What are the most significant issues you have experienced in finding rental accommodation?
- What do you consider the most significant challenges in keeping your rental accommodations?
- As a renter, what are your concerns for your housing future?
- As a renter, what are your hopes for your housing future?

Session 3: How to Engage Renters

- As a renter, how connected do you feel to the community you currently live in? Do you get involved in community issues? If yes – Which ones? How? If no – Why not?
- As the City moves forward on policies and actions to preserve the existing supply of rental housing and increase the supply of rental housing, what is the best way for the City to engage you in future discussions and initiatives?

Participants were asked to discuss each question with their neighbour or neighbours. The facilitator then called the participants' attention back to the front of the room and asked people to share the key points of their discussion. Discussion feedback was noted and captured live on a screen at the front of the room for review and comment by participants. Participants were encouraged to move around the room at key points throughout the discussion. Mayor Robertson provided closing remarks, thanking people for taking the time to discuss rental housing issues in the city.

Nearly eighty people attended the Renters Roundtable and all but four participants identified themselves as renters.

3.3.2 Summary of Feedback

The summary of feedback from the Renters Roundtable provided below is excerpted from the City of Vancouver Talk Housing with Us Renters Roundtable Report, provided by Raymond Penner of the Strategic Action Group.

The major opinions and ideas emerging from the discussion are as follows:

- There was concern over rent increases; participants report that renovations proposed by their landlord are often cosmetic in nature and do not appear to really be needed.
- Major rent increases often occur as tenants move out, resulting in similar suites in a building having disparate rental rates.
- Renters face a wide variety of discrimination – racial (in particular First Nations), age, mobility impairment, families (particularly with very young children) and pet owners.
- Renters are concerned with market pressures continuing to force rents higher. Some of this is attributed to: lack of rental supply and high condo prices which keep people in the rental market.
- Condo renters were concerned about absentee landlords and security of tenure.
- There should be more protection and support for renters to help tenants understand their rights under the Residential Tenancy Act, as well as a body that will act in their interests and in disputes with landlords.
- The City could help renters organize themselves to help bring more of a voice to renters' issues.
- There should be ongoing communication between renters and the City to discuss issues and to provide input into City programs/policy directions.
- More affordable and social housing is required.
- Concern was expressed over the loss of affordable SRO units in the Downtown Eastside.
- Providing more support to local area economic development groups could help address housing affordability for marginalized populations.

3.4 Talk Housing with Us Unconference

3.4.1 Overview

On Saturday, June 4th, the City hosted an Unconference at the Empire Landmark Hotel. The objective of the Unconference was to bring housing stakeholders and members of the public together to share ideas on the actions required to ensure everyone in Vancouver has a home.

The structure of the day was predetermined, but the content was created by participants leading up to the Unconference, via the online forums, and during the morning at the Unconference. Potential presenters were invited to present a short description of their discussion topic at the front of the room and capture it on a card. Each discussion topic became a breakout discussion and was applied to a blank agenda

framework listing breakout discussion locations throughout the day. Participants were encouraged to share ideas for both immediate (within 5 years) solutions and a longer term strategies.

The day began in plenary in concentric circles with facilitators and speakers positioned in the middle of the circle. Once they developed their agenda for the day, participants were free to attend whichever breakout discussion topics they were interested in. Groups broke out into eight discussion spaces and one theatre where participants could share housing videos.

Facilitators encouraged everyone to follow the Guiding Principles and the Law of 2 feet to ensure participants got the most out of their day and enable a cross pollination of ideas:

Guiding Principles	Law of 2 Feet
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whoever comes are the right people • Whatever happens is what happens • Whenever it starts is the right time • When it is over, it is over 	<p>If you are neither learning nor contributing it is your responsibility to respectfully use your own 2 feet to find some place you are learning or contributing.</p>

A note taker was assigned to each breakout space, to capture the discussion. The notes were transformed into ‘word clouds’ and presented on large screens during the closing plenary session when participants returned to the main circle to share their experiences from the day.

Nearly 80 citizens participated at the event. The tone of the day was energetic and focused on innovation, creative thinking and taking action towards solutions. Participants said they felt energized and their experience at the conference created a powerful, shared sense of community.

3.4.2 Summary of Feedback

Participants at the Unconference designed a robust agenda for discussion, including topics focusing on how to strengthen tenants’ rights, how to solve the problem of limited housing supply, and how transportation planning decisions affect housing and community affordability. Leading up to the Unconference, people were encouraged to give others a preview of their Unconference discussion topics, with suggestions ranging from taxation of offshore condo owners to address rental unit shortages to finding long-term partners to deliver affordable housing.

In total there were 20 independent discussion sessions, and 5 videos were shown in the theatre. A brief summary of participant discussions is provided below:

1. Rent Banks – Rental Assistance Program

Participants explored a rent bank concept and discussed how rent banks could provide rental assistance to people in distress. Discussions highlighted the successful implementation in five municipalities and how the City of Vancouver could work with community groups to develop a Rent Bank for Vancouver.

2. Affordable Home Ownership

Participants discussed the difference between affordable ownership and social housing. It was suggested the City of Vancouver could create a non-profit organization in partnership with developers. Participants also explored ways to create affordable home ownership through this organization, and whether the organization could use its non-profit equity to create more affordable housing.

3. Low-Cost Senior Housing

Participants discussed how rental rates in Vancouver no longer follow the old “30% of income” rule of thumb, stating that today rates are closer to 50% or more. For many seniors, OAPP and CPP do not cover rent or limits their choice of housing. Discussions explored aspects of what makes housing affordable. Many participants felt paying more attention to design would solve a lot of the problems associated with small spaces.

4. Tenants Assistance

Participants discussed the lack of an official advocate for renters in Vancouver. It was suggested that the City of Vancouver create and fund a community-based advocate to assist renters. Discussions explored possible responsibilities associated with this position, including education and community outreach.

5. How to Solve the Problem of Supply

Participants discussed the problem of supply of affordable housing in Vancouver and explored ways in which the City of Vancouver could encourage and develop affordable housing while still making money. Participants suggested the City needs to incorporate longer term vision planning in to current planning processes.

6. Homefullness at Woodwynn Farms

Participants learned about the highly structured Homefullness program at Woodwynn Farms to successfully transition homeless people back into the community. Participants felt this program was an easy and successful template the City of Vancouver could adopt to address some of the homelessness issues in Vancouver.

7. Social Attitudes

Participants explored the key role the City of Vancouver can play in changing social attitudes around housing issues. Three main relevant attitude dynamics were discussed: landlord/tenant relationships; housing as a basic need versus investment; and community ownership of issues.

8. Strengthening Tenants Rights and Forming a Tenancy Association

Participants discussed how even though 52% of Vancouverites rent, renters are a disjointed group. It was suggested the City of Vancouver's could form an official tenants' organization. Discussions explored the structure of this organization and the issues it could address.

9. Working Families, Homelessness

Participants discussed the current realities facing lower-wage workers and the difficulties they incur trying to find affordable housing. Discussions explored ways the City of Vancouver could help control rising costs of family unit rentals.

10. RS-1 Zoning?

Participants discussed the history of RS-1 Zoning and its relevance in Vancouver's current housing reality. Discussions examined various zoning initiatives and the importance of incorporating more transportation into city planning.

11. Development in the Neighbourhood of Expo Blvd, Pacific Blvd, & Cambie Bridge

Participants discussed how certain communities have evolved over the past years. It was suggested the City of Vancouver become more involved in community planning to help ensure businesses and services to help bring communities together are included in all development plans.

12. Affordable Housing Trust

Participants explored how the City of Vancouver could support local housing communities through the creation of a Real Estate Investment Trust. How this trust would operate and how it would benefit communities, were some of the topics discussed.

13. Combining Housing and Transportation

Participants expressed their wish to see an increase in both transportation options and the quality of transportation currently available outside the downtown core. It was suggested the City of Vancouver become more involved in ensuring accessibility

between communities. Participants explored various transportation options, including bringing back streetcars.

14. Cul-de-Sac Land Co-operative

Participants discussed the advantages of creating Cul-de-Sac land co-operatives. Ways in which the City of Vancouver could work with land owners to ensure that development adhered to its policies were explored.

15. Design

Participants discussed design options the City of Vancouver could consider when exploring alternatives to affordable housing.

16. Women and Housing

Participants discussed the needs and concerns of women and single mothers when it came to assessing affordable housing options.

17. Rezoning

Participants discussed some of the problems associated with current rezoning practices.

18. Property Endowment Fund

Participants discussed how the City could use its Property Endowment Fund to create affordable housing. It was suggested the City of Vancouver could partner with non-profit organizations and co-ops on affordable housing projects. Discussions explored how the fund should be used to support other partners and how non-profits could bring their equity to the table.

19. Grassroots Housing Process

Participants discussed alternative grassroots approaches to affordable housing. Ways in which the City of Vancouver could support some of these alternative solutions and initiatives were discussed.

20. Prisoners

Participants discussed the societal impact and the cost to taxpayers of newly-released prisoners failing to find affordable housing. Discussions examined discriminations and difficulties newly-released prisoners faced within the social housing system. It was suggested the City of Vancouver take a more proactive approach in assisting newly-released prisoners transitioning back into the community.

21. Housing and Transportation Affordability

Participants discussed the need for increased co-operation and planning among those who determine land-use policies and those who plan transportation. It was suggested the City of Vancouver become more involved in community planning and educating the public on its land-use vision.

3.5 Community Dialogues

3.5.1 Overview

Two community dialogues were held by City Councillors as part of the Talk Housing with Us Engagement Program:

1. **Non-Profit Co-operative Housing**

Facilitated by Cllr Geoff Meggs and the Co-operative Housing Federation of Canada
June 8, 2011

2. **Artists Live-Work**

Facilitated by Cllr Heather Deal
June 16, 2011

An overview of key themes for each dialogue is provided below.

3.5.2 Summary of Feedback

Non-Profit Co-operative Housing

At the dialogue, participants discussed how co-op housing offers a viable addition to the City's housing types. The first new co-operative in a number of years has been set up as part of the Olympic Village. This may pave the way for other new co-ops based on a similar more sustainable model. In addition, there was a discussion about how co-ops might be interested in working on projects within areas covered by the Rate of Change regulation and whether new co-op housing would be considered as purpose built rental.

Artists Live-Work

The discussion focused on challenges related to whether people actually work in live-work spaces or just live there. Different classes of units were also explored. There was discussion about whether live-work units should be taxed as commercial units or residential. Participants discussed whether a non-profit cop-op model for artists' live-work would be a good option to explore or whether there were any other incentives that could be applied. It was suggested that there needed to be stepping stones in terms of sizes.

Appendix A: Communication Materials

1. Fact Sheet: Vancouver's Talk Housing with Us Engagement Program
2. Fact Sheet: Rental Housing
3. Fact Sheet: Homelessness
4. Fact Sheet: Housing and Homelessness Strategy
5. Fact Sheet: Strategies 1 and 2 - Housing and Homelessness Strategy
6. Fact Sheet: Strategies 3 and 4 - Housing and Homelessness Strategy
7. Flyer: Talk Housing with Us
8. Promo Card: Talk Housing with Us
9. Ad/Flyer: Renters Roundtable
10. Ad: Talk Housing with Us Unconference
11. Flyer: Talk Housing with Us Unconference



ENGAGEMENT PROGRAM

2011
JAN

Draft
Strategy
presented to
City Council

FEB

MAR

APR

MAY

Final
Strategy to be
presented to
City Council

JUNE



Housing and Homelessness Strategy

ONLINE FORUMS

RENTERS'
ROUNDTABLE

STAKEHOLDER
WORKSHOPS

HOUSING
UNCONFERENCE

COMMUNITY DIALOGUES

Strategy Implementation:

- END STREET HOMELESSNESS BY 2015
- INCREASE HOUSING FOR LOW AND MODEST INCOME HOUSEHOLDS

Rental Housing

**Increase
housing
for low and
modest income
households**

The Housing and Homelessness Strategy seeks to improve affordability and accessibility at all points along the housing continuum, from shelters and supportive housing to affordable rental and home ownership. The City is committed to policies and actions that increase housing for low and modest income households by expanding and protecting rental housing and by achieving a mix of housing types and tenures in all neighbourhoods.

Why is rental housing important?

In 2006, more than half of Vancouver households (52%) rented. To put that in perspective, Vancouver provides nearly half (46%) of the rental housing in the entire Lower Mainland and more than a quarter (27%) of the rental housing for all of BC.

The rental market includes social housing, purpose-built market rental housing and secondary market rental,

including secondary suites, laneway houses, lock-off apartment units and rented condominiums.

Renting allows low and modest income households to live in Vancouver. The typical income of renters (\$34,000) is half that of owners (\$66,000).

Rental housing can also meet the needs of a diverse population. People at different stages of their life often require different kinds of housing. As compared to owners, more renters are in their 20s or 30s, unmarried, living alone, and have recently moved.

\$34,000
Typical
annual
income of
renters

\$66,000
Typical
annual
income of
homeowners

Our Partners

Partnerships are essential in meeting our goal to increase housing for low and modest income households.



Affordable and accessible rental housing is essential to a healthy and vibrant economy. Essential workers such as firemen, police officers, nurses, and new workers from other parts of the world or from other Canadian cities are often renters.



What are the challenges and issues?

\$86,000

median annual income needed to buy a condo in the east side

200

number of units of social housing built annually over the past decade

1%

Vancouver's vacancy rate over the past 30 years

Lack of housing that is affordable

Vancouver is the most expensive Canadian housing market for owners. In 2010, the median annual income needed to buy an east side condo was \$86,000 which is more than double the median income of renters in the city.

For many Vancouverites, rental housing is the only option.

High need for social housing, but limited new supply

New construction of social housing has been declining in past decades. In this decade, only 200 units per year of social housing have been built, which is down significantly from previous decades.

In addition, the current stock of social housing is aging, with the majority of the stock built in the 1970s and 1980s.

Low vacancy rates in the market-rental stock and little new supply

The City estimates an additional 1,000 – 1,500 units of new rental housing are needed each year. This is reflected in Vancouver's low vacancy rates: 1% over the last 30 years.

In addition, there has been little new supply of purpose-built market rental housing in recent decades – only 140 units built per year over the last 5 years. Limited supply results in fewer housing choices, particularly for those with low or moderate incomes.

Significant new supply by the private market is unlikely

The economics of constructing new rental housing are challenging as a result of high land costs and competition from condominium developments.

One of the City's recent studies estimates the financial gap between building strata condominiums and new purpose-built rental housing to range from \$32,000 to \$112,000 per unit.

Primary source of new supply is the secondary market

There are approximately 15,000 to 25,000 rented condominiums in the city. Given that two-thirds of new construction in the city is apartment condominiums, rented condos are the dominant source of new rental housing.

While they are important, rented condominiums do not replace the role of purpose-built rental housing. For the renter, there is limited security of tenure; the owner can decide to sell or move back in themselves, with little recourse for the tenant. Furthermore, they are more expensive (20% to 27% higher rents) and smaller in size compared to purpose-built market rental.

Sources:

Census, 2006

CMHC Rental Housing Survey

CMHC Housing Now (starts and completion survey)

Synthesis Report, McClanaghan and Associates, 2010

Purpose-Built Rental Housing – Economics of New Supply, Coriolis Consulting Corp, 2010

The Role of Rented Condo Stock, City Spaces Consulting, 2010

Actions to protect and increase the rental housing stock

Rate of change regulations

The existing stock of market rental housing has an important role in providing relatively affordable rents to Vancouver renters. The City has rate of change regulations that preserve rental housing in many apartment areas by requiring one-for-one replacement for redevelopment projects involving six or more dwelling units.

Outcomes and learnings to date:

- Since its introduction in 1989, rate of change has been successful in protecting the rental stock. Demolitions have fallen from approximately 580 in 1990 to 30 in 2010.
- The City's recent study found that without rate of change regulations, 14,200 units of rental housing could be at risk of redevelopment by 2019.

Affordable housing in new neighbourhoods

Since 1988, the City has required 20 percent of the units in new neighbourhoods be available for the development of affordable housing. The City works closely with the developers to produce a housing mix and with senior governments and other partners to fund and construct social housing projects.

Outcomes and learnings to date:

- A total of 1,600 units of social housing have been built.
- City has set aside sites for a further 2,400 affordable housing units.

- This policy encourages balanced communities and ensures people with low and moderate incomes are also able to live in well planned, conveniently located neighbourhoods.

Short-term incentives for rental housing (STIR)

STIR is a 2.5-year program introduced in June 2009 to respond to the market rental shortage with incentives for the development of new market rental housing.

Incentives include: waiving of development cost levies on rental units, parking requirement reductions, discretion on unit size, increased density and expedited permit processing.

Outcomes and learnings to date:

- The program created opportunities to increase construction-related jobs.
- Three applications have been approved for 350 units, 106 of these units are under construction.
- There are 14 applications in process for approximately 740 units of rental housing.
- There have been successes with mid-density projects, nearly 500 units in projects of 8 storeys or less.
- More consultation with community is needed on higher density projects.

Secondary suites policy expansion

Secondary suites supplement the city's purpose-built rental housing stock. Single family housing with secondary suites are permitted in all residential areas in the city.

In 2009, to facilitate the creation of more secondary suites, zoning changes were approved to enable full-size basements and more livable basement suites in all single family areas.

Outcomes and learnings to date:

- Currently there are over 25,000 secondary suites in the city.
- Since the zoning changes were made in 2009 to enable full-size basements, there was an increase from 30 to 200 permits per year.

Laneway Housing

In 2009, laneway houses were introduced as a new form of rental and family housing in single family areas in Vancouver.

Outcomes and learnings to date:

- As of March 2011, approximately 250 laneway houses have been approved.

Moving forward: building on our momentum

Report Card

The City is committed to tracking progress towards its goals and an annual report card will be produced.

The City has identified two key strategies to expand and protect rental housing and achieve a mix of housing types and tenures in all neighbourhoods.

1. **Tailor zoning approaches and conditions to meet local housing needs and opportunities**
2. **Integrate successful strategies for rental inventory into current neighbourhood planning initiatives**



**Tailor zoning
to meet
housing needs**



**Integrate rental inventory
strategies into
neighbourhood planning**

Homelessness

**Committed to
ending street
homelessness
by 2015**

The Housing and Homelessness Strategy seeks to improve affordability and accessibility at all points on the housing continuum, from shelters and supportive housing to affordable rental and home ownership. As part of this strategy, Vancouver City Council has committed to end street homelessness by 2015.

Who are the homeless in Vancouver?

The City's Homeless Count in March 2010 found 1,715 homeless people, with roughly 1,300 in shelters and 400 on the street.

The homeless population is made up of mostly single men (80%) and is aging steadily; the largest growth is in the 45+ age group.

One-third of homeless people are Aboriginal compared to 2% of the population of the city as whole.

The homeless have significant health problems that contribute to their homelessness. More than 80% report one or more health condition, such as addictions, mental illness or other chronic medical conditions. Between 50% and 70% of all homeless people have suffered serious trauma, and nearly half have been in government care at some point in their lives, such as foster care, a group home or a correctional facility.



Our Partners

Partnerships are essential in meeting our goal to end homelessness.



Why focus on street homelessness?

Over 75% of street homeless people have multiple barriers and require housing and other support to minimize human suffering and improve quality of life.

Street homeless people access many public services at a cost of about \$55,000 per person, per year in Vancouver for police, fire, ambulance, hospitals, and the justice system.

Street homelessness erodes the overall health and economy of a city.

Recent Actions on Homelessness (2008 – 2011)

Urban Health Initiative

Creating healthy, welcoming and supportive communities and neighbourhoods is critical to sustaining the progress on street homelessness.

The Urban Health Initiative focuses on four key areas, including Homelessness, Sustainable Food Systems, Mental Health and Addictions, and Neighbourhood Safety.

The City has already launched several projects, including Mental Health Training 101 for City staff who interact with people with mental illness and a program to assist SRO managers to prevent and address issues with problem hoarders.



Increased shelters and decreased sleeping rough

In December 2008, Mayor Robertson launched the Homeless Emergency Action Team (HEAT) Initiative in partnership with the Province, Streethome Foundation and non-profit agencies. HEAT added 450 additional low-barrier shelter beds, a 60% increase in shelter capacity in the city.

The City, Province and non-profit partners went on to launch the Winter Response shelter initiative, adding a further 160 beds over the past two years during the winter months.

Decreased barriers and enhanced services in shelters

The shelter spaces opened through the HEAT and Winter Response programs lowered barriers to people coming inside. They provided storage for carts and welcomed people inside with their loved ones, including pets and partners.

Shelter guests received two hot meals every day, had access to shower and laundry facilities and were connected to basic health services, such as primary care, dental and mental health services.

Increased availability of immediate/interim supportive housing

The City also worked with its partners to expand the availability of supportive housing as quickly as possible using existing vacant buildings. Projects included:

- **Bosman Residence: 100 rooms**
Key partners include the Mental Health Commission of Canada, Streethome Foundation, BC Housing and the PHS Society.
- **Dunsmuir House: 90 rooms**
Key partners include BC Housing, RainCity Housing and Atira.

Increased availability of permanent supportive housing

In May 2010, the Province and Streethome Foundation committed funding to develop supportive housing on the 14 sites provided by the City. The partnership will result in over 1,500 new supportive housing units by 2013.

The City has provided grants to help make additional supportive housing projects a reality, including projects with the Union Gospel Mission, Lu'ma Native Housing, and the Aboriginal Mothers Centre.

Prevented loss or further deterioration of existing Single Room Occupancy (SRO) Stock

The City's goal is to replace SRO rooms with self-contained social housing units on a 1-for-1 basis. Until this goal can be achieved, the City manages the rate of SRO loss through the SRA Bylaw and the quality of that stock through the Standards of Maintenance Bylaw.

What have we learned?

A low-barrier approach brings people inside

The HEAT and Winter Response shelters were effective at encouraging people to come inside, some for the first time in many years.

Nutritious food is critical

Access to food in shelters and supportive housing encourages people to come inside and has a measurable impact on their health. People who are well fed tend to have fewer behavioural issues, both in housing and on the street.

Location and communities on the street are important

The City has found that people who are homeless are more willing to come inside when shelter and housing is provided in neighbourhoods where they feel safe and connected. People are also more likely to come inside if they won't be separated from the communities they have formed on the street.



What have we achieved?

More individuals have been sheltered and housed

- Street homelessness decreased by 47% since 2008 - from 811 to 420 people.
- Significant decrease in street disorder and aggressive panhandling (*data from Downtown Vancouver BIA*).

Bringing supportive housing on stream

- Over 1,600 units of supportive housing will open between January 2011 and December 2013.
- The SRO stock in the downtown core is being maintained and improved.
- Single room stock in the downtown core is being maintained and replaced with new or renovated social housing.
- 28 buildings targeted for Standards of Maintenance bylaw enforcement in 2010.

Communities are mobilizing across the city

- Homeless Action Week events are bigger and bolder than ever.
- Business Improvement Associations are engaged and supporting actions to bring people inside.
- Interfaith Alliance is coming together to coordinate efforts of the faith communities.

\$55,000

City's cost per year for each street homeless person

47%

decrease in street homeless since 2008

1600

units of supportive housing will open before the end of 2013

60%

increase in shelter capacity in 2008

Moving forward: building on our momentum

The City has identified two key strategies aimed at ending street homelessness by 2015.

Report Card

The City is committed to tracking progress towards its goals and an annual report card will be produced.

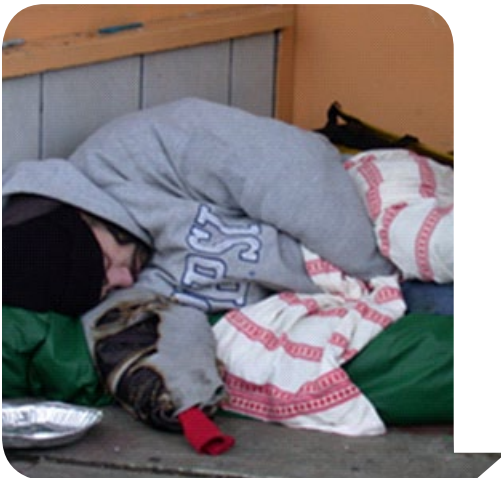
To track progress on ending street homelessness by 2015, an annual homeless count will be conducted each year in March.

1. Provide land for 1,200 additional supportive housing units

- 450 additional supportive housing units to provide the capacity to end street homelessness by 2015.
- 750 additional supportive housing units from 2015 to 2020 to ensure street homelessness does not re-emerge.

2. Ensure that street homeless individuals are housed in the neighbourhoods where they feel safe and connected

- Track access for street homeless individuals into 14 supportive housing projects underway on City-owned land – the goal is to maximize impact on street homelessness while maintaining manageable tenant mixes in buildings.
- Locate new supportive housing sites in neighbourhoods with significant homeless populations but limited supportive housing options.



**Provide land
for supportive
housing units**

**Provide housing in
neighbourhoods
where they feel safe
and connected**





Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy

WORKING TO END STREET HOMELESSNESS BY 2015 AND INCREASE HOUSING FOR LOW AND MODEST INCOME HOUSEHOLDS.

EXPLORING STRATEGIES



CHALLENGES

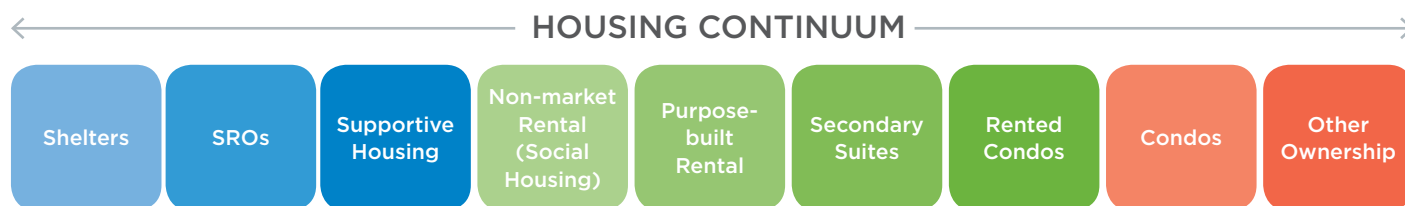
- **Incomes are not keeping up with housing prices**
- **Vancouver has the highest rents and the lowest vacancy rates in Canada**
- **Homelessness has been increasing steadily since the 1990s**

The City of Vancouver's core mission is to create a great city of communities which cares about its people, its environment and the opportunities to live, work and prosper. Challenges with housing affordability and steadily increasing homelessness pose significant barriers to achieving this mission.

In response, the City has developed a draft Housing and Homelessness Strategy in order to:

- end street homelessness by 2015; and
- increase housing for low and modest income households.

The housing continuum reflects the range of options available to households with varying incomes. Housing is needed at all points along the continuum to meet the needs of our diverse population and economy.



Vancouver's housing needs must be balanced with housing supply. Currently, housing needs and supply along the continuum are not balanced. Without a balance, homelessness will increase. Citizens will have to pay more than they can afford for housing and won't be able to pay for other basic necessities. People will be forced to leave the city and commute, which increases pressure on transportation systems and increases greenhouse gas emissions.



AFFORDABLE MEANS:

Households can pay for rent, mortgage, utilities and still afford to pay for other necessities, such as food and education.



MAKING PROGRESS

The City of Vancouver has:

- Established Homeless Emergency Action Team (HEAT) Shelters
- Stepped up enforcement and inspection in SRO Hotels
- Required "1 for 1" replacement of SROs with non-market housing
- Launched the Urban Health Initiative
- Encouraged secondary suites and laneway houses
- Provided free land for over 1500 units of supportive housing (2010-2011)
- Encouraged rental housing development through the Short Term Incentives for Rental (STIR) program
- Implemented the Affordable Housing in New Communities Policy
- Adopted the Rate of Change regulations to protect existing rental housing stock



WORKING TOGETHER

We can be successful. The Housing and Homelessness Strategy recognizes that success requires commitment for action from all levels of government, support and cooperation of stakeholders and partners, and widespread support from the community.

To overcome the challenges of homelessness and lack of affordable housing choices, the City is working with its partners and the citizens of Vancouver to develop the City's Housing and Homelessness Strategy. The Strategy contains 4 strategies to achieve its goals:

Strategy #1: City to provide land for 1200 units of supportive housing (12 - 15 sites).

- 450 additional supportive housing units will help end street homelessness by 2015.
- 750 additional supportive housing units from 2015 to 2020 will ensure street homelessness does not re-emerge.

Strategy #2: Ensure local homeless are housed in the neighbourhoods where they feel safe and connected.

- New supportive housing projects should be built where the homeless are located in the community.
- The City has found that people who are homeless are more willing to come inside when shelter and housing is provided in neighbourhoods where they feel safe and connected. People are also more likely to come inside if they won't be separated from the communities they have formed on the street.

Strategy #3: Tailor zoning approaches to meet local housing needs and opportunities.

Strategy #4: Integrate successful strategies for rental inventory into current neighbourhood planning initiatives.

- These strategies will expand and protect rental housing and achieve a mix of housing types and tenures in all neighbourhoods to meet the diverse housing needs of Vancouver's citizens.

Partnerships are essential in meeting our goal to end homelessness





STRATEGY 1:
**The City of Vancouver to provide land
for 1200 supportive housing units.**

1

STRATEGY 2:
**Ensure local homeless are housed
locally.**

2

WORKING TO END STREET HOMELESSNESS
BY 2015 AND INCREASE HOUSING FOR
LOW AND MODEST INCOME HOUSEHOLDS.

EXPLORING STRATEGIES



IN FOCUS

This is my story: Brutus

When he was young, Brutus and his brother were placed in a children's shelter. He doesn't remember ever having a home.

For the past five years, Brutus has spent most nights on his mattress in the alley. A plastic sheet keeps the rain away. For spending money, he collects cans. "I don't like crackheads and I don't want to live in a hotel where everyone drinks all the time. I want to live in something that's better than skid row. I'm fifty-one years old and I don't want to die out here."



Almost half the
homeless have lived
in Vancouver for more
than 10 years.



CHALLENGES & PROGRESS

The 2011 homeless count found 1,605 homeless people in Vancouver; 6% fewer than in 2010. The number of homeless people is made up of those sleeping on the streets and those in shelters. This is the first time we have seen a decrease in the number of homeless since surveys began in 2002. Over 90% of the 2011 homeless were found in shelters compared to 75% the previous year. This year, 145 people were found sleeping on our streets compared to 420 last year. The City will continue to make the elimination of street homelessness by 2015 a priority, as it is corrosive to the health and well-being of people who are homeless and to the overall health and economy of our city.



SUPPORTIVE HOUSING IS:

- Housing for people who need mental health support
- Housing for people in recovery from addiction
- Low-barrier housing, for people coming directly from the street
- Housing that links tenants with services



BENEFITS OF SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

- Reduces symptoms of mental illness
- Increases residential stability
- Empowers citizens
- Reduces the use of emergency services and centres
- Creates substantial cost savings



LOCATION, LOCATION, LOCATION

The homeless count gives us a good idea of how many people live on our streets and the common challenges they face like mental and addiction issues, health and disability issues and a history of government care (e.g. foster care).

The count shows us that the homeless live all across our city and that almost half have lived in Vancouver for more than 10 years. They have made connections, found their own support networks in our communities and have developed a strong sense of place.

Many are looking for shelter that can accommodate their pets, their shopping carts and their particular life issues. Ultimately they are seeking a home where they are welcome and which provides for their emotional, mental and physical needs.

The City has a number of supportive housing sites around the city that it will work on with its partners and will look for more sites in the future.



PARTNERSHIPS AND SUPPORTIVE HOUSING

Homelessness is a complex issue. No one agency or government can deliver all the solutions needed; partnerships are critical. In recent years, the City has provided free land and capital grants for supportive housing. Construction is primarily funded by the federal and provincial governments, through agencies such as BC Housing. Private foundations like Streethome are playing a larger role. Non-profit societies often contribute land, cash and expertise in operating buildings. The City has a number of supportive housing sites around the city that it is working on with its partners. The City will look for more sites in the future that reflect the diversity of need in neighbourhoods across the city.

Partnerships are essential in meeting our goal to end street homelessness





STRATEGY 3:

Tailor zoning approaches to meet local housing needs and opportunities.

3

STRATEGY 4:

Integrate successful strategies for rental inventory into current neighbourhood planning initiatives.

4

WORKING TO END STREET HOMELESSNESS
BY 2015 AND INCREASE HOUSING FOR
LOW AND MODEST INCOME HOUSEHOLDS.

EXPLORING STRATEGIES



IN FOCUS



This is my story: Debbie

Moving into social housing in the new Woodward's building has been life-changing for Debbie and her eight month old son, Jacob. "Now, there is sunlight every day when I wake up," she said, seated on the couch in her sun-filled living room. "There is hope every day."

Debbie and her baby found themselves without a home several months ago. Now, she has a nursery, her own bedroom and a playground downstairs for Jacob. "This apartment helps to uplift my spirit and motivate me," she said. "This is my home. This is my family."



CHALLENGES

Home ownership requires large downpayments and high incomes:

- Median income of renters: \$36,000
- Income needed to buy an East Side condo: \$86,000
- Income needed to buy a West Side condo: \$112,000

Developers prefer to build condominiums because the return on investment is greater. In many cases, a new rental housing project would not break even. As a result, there has been little new supply of rental housing in recent decades. Yet demand remains high— an additional 1,000 to 1,500 units are estimated to be needed each year.

People who can only afford to rent are coming under increasing pressure to find affordable places to live. People's incomes are not keeping up with housing prices. For some renters, the option to buy a home is virtually non-existent.



IN FOCUS

It's important to protect what existing rental housing we have and prevent situations such as what occurred at Bermuda Manor in Kerrisdale from happening. At one time this building had 67 rental units, at a rent just below \$1,000 per month. A family with an annual income of \$38,000 could afford to live there. It was demolished and replaced by a condo tower of 41 units. The average price per condo was \$1.2 million. To qualify for a mortgage for one of these units, the annual income needed to be \$250,000.

In 2007, regulations to protect existing rental housing were extended to most apartment areas in the city.



MAKING PROGRESS

The City has taken a number of steps to encourage a healthy rental market. The overall purpose is to encourage the building of new rental units and to protect existing rental housing:

- The City has passed Rate of Change Regulations. When rental property is redeveloped, rental units must be replaced on a one-to-one basis. Without these regulations, it's estimated that 14,200 rental units could be at risk of redevelopment by 2019.
- The City requires 20 per cent of units in new neighbourhoods to be available for the development of affordable housing. Partnerships with senior governments and other organizations are important in finding, constructing and operating social housing projects. To date, over 1,600 units of social housing have been built.
- The City has also created the Short Term Incentives for Rental Housing program (STIR). This encourages the building of new purpose-built market rental units by offering incentives such as the relaxation of parking rules, a density bonus, and waiving Development Cost Levies (DCLs). These incentives can reduce the cost of construction for new rental units. As of April 2011, there were STIR applications for 1,050 rental units.
- The City has also encouraged more rentals through laneway housing — small, detached dwellings located in what was once the garage area of a single-family lot. These are limited to rental and family use. As of April 2011, 280 laneway houses have been approved or built.
- Since 2004, the City has also permitted the building of rentable secondary suites in all single family detached homes. There are now more than 25,000 such suites in the City of Vancouver.

Partnerships are essential for increasing housing for low and modest income households



Everyone deserves a home.
talkvancouver.com



Talk Housing with Us!

Homelessness, rental housing and affordable housing... join the conversation about the actions required to ensure that everyone in Vancouver has a home.

Visit the website to contribute your thoughts, or share your ideas in person at these events:

Renters Roundtable

Thursday, May 26, 2011, 6 - 8:30 pm
Vancouver Public Library, 350 West Georgia Street
Alice MacKay Room

Talk Housing With Us Unconference

Saturday, June 4, 2011, 10 am - 5 pm
Empire Landmark Hotel, 1400 Robson Street

Health of the Homeless -

A One Day Youth Homelessness Summit

Tuesday, June 14, 2011, 8 am - 5 pm
Creekside Community Centre, 1 Athletes Way



For more information on these events and to have your say online, visit:

talkvancouver.com





talkvancouver.com



Everyone deserves a home.

Renters! We want to hear from you!

Rental housing is key to a healthy, vibrant city. As Vancouver changes and grows, we need to ensure people have affordable rental housing options. The City of Vancouver is committed to protecting and expanding the supply of rental housing to meet the diverse housing needs of Vancouver's citizens.

Come and share your ideas with **Mayor Robertson** and fellow citizens at the **Renters Roundtable** to help shape the future of rental housing supply in Vancouver:

Thursday, May 26, 2011

6:00-6:30 pm: Registration and
light refreshments

6:30-8:30 pm: Discussion

Alice MacKay Room
Vancouver Public Library
350 West Georgia Street

Space is limited.

Please RSVP to the Renters Roundtable on the Talk Housing With Us website at talkvancouver.com/housing by May 24, 2011.

All participants will be asked to sign a video waiver.



Let's talk housing!

The City of Vancouver invites you to an unconference to learn about, discuss and explore ideas and actions to end homelessness and create affordable housing in Vancouver.

We set the stage, you set the agenda.

You can lead or join any discussion that interests you.

Join us at the
Talk Housing with Us
Unconference:
Saturday, June 4, 2011
10am - 5pm

Lunch and light refreshments will be served.



Empire Landmark Hotel
1400 Robson Street, Vancouver, BC

SPACE IS LIMITED

RSVP for the unconference on the
Talk Housing with Us website at
talkvancouver.com/housing
or by calling 604-673-8285
by June 2, 2011.



talkvancouver.com

Let's talk housing!

What can we do to ensure everyone in Vancouver has a home?

On Saturday, June 4, the City of Vancouver invites you to an unconference to learn about, discuss and explore ideas and actions to end homelessness and create affordable housing in Vancouver.

We set the stage, you set the agenda.

You can lead or join any discussion that interests you.

Have a question you want answered? Have an innovative idea to present or a project you need help with? Follow the 3Ps:



POST IT

Go to talkvancouver.com/housing and post the title and a brief description of the Talk Housing Unconference Discussion Topic you plan to lead at the event. Don't worry if you miss this step, you can still lead a session at the unconference.



PREP IT

On the day of the unconference, people will be asked to announce their discussion topic, post it onto the agenda in one of the available 45-minute time slots and invite people to attend their session.



PRESENT IT

Welcome fellow participants and get started. Each discussion space will have a note-taker ready to capture the conversation and your ideas. Everyone will be invited to share their experiences with the group at the end of the day.

Join us at the
Talk Housing with Us
Unconference:

Saturday, June 4, 2011



10:00 – 10:30	Coffee and Registration
10:30 – 12:30	Welcome and Agenda Creation
1:00 – 4:00	Discussion Sessions
4:00 – 5:00	Closing Circle

Lunch and light refreshments will be served.

Empire Landmark Hotel
1400 Robson Street, Vancouver, BC V6G 1B9

Space is limited.

Please RSVP to the Talk Housing with Us Unconference on the Talk Housing with Us website at talkvancouver.com/housing or by calling 604-673-8285 by June 2, 2011.

Talk Housing with Us

Online Survey

YOUR FEEDBACK ON THE STRATEGY

DISCUSSION TOPICS – Have your say

To overcome the challenges of homelessness and lack of affordable housing choices, the City is working with its partners and the citizens of Vancouver to develop the City's [Housing and Homelessness Strategy](#).

The Strategy contains 4 strategies to achieve its goals. Please provide your comments on the strategies below.

Your responses will be kept confidential and submitted to the City for consideration in the development of the Strategy.

Strategy #1: City to provide land for 1200 units of supportive housing (12 – 15 sites). optional

Strategy #2: Ensure local homeless are housed in the neighbourhoods where they feel safe and connected. optional

Strategy #3: Tailor zoning approaches to meet local housing needs and opportunities. optional

Strategy #4: Integrate successful strategies for rental inventory into current neighbourhood planning initiatives. optional

Please provide any additional comments on Vancouver's Housing and Homelessness Strategy: optional

Done

Cancel

Submitted to:

Mairi Welman
Director of Corporate Communications
City of Vancouver



Submitted by:

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