

RENTAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM REVIEW - PHASE II CONSULTATION SUMMARY

November 2019

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EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

INTRODUCTION: RENTAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM

Since 2009, the City of Vancouver has had incentive programs to increase the supply of purpose-built rental housing in Vancouver. After 10 years of results, City staff are reviewing the rental incentive programs and exploring updates and improvements to recommend to Council.

Council direction regarding the review of the market rental incentive programs is included in the Housing Vancouver Strategy 3-Year Action Plan and the Housing Vancouver Affordable Housing Delivery & Financial Strategy, as well as in several motions passed in 2019.

Purpose-built rental housing provides secure, long-term housing for renter households earning a broad range of incomes. A robust supply of purpose-built rental housing is crucial for supporting a diverse city and growing economy. The rental incentive review has been focused on exploring the effectiveness of the rental incentive programs in creating new housing supply to improve housing affordability and to counter the persistently low rental vacancy rate.

Specific programs under review include the **Short Term Incentives for Rental Program**, **Rental 100 (the Secured Market Rental Housing Policy)**, the **Affordable Housing Choices Interim Rezoning Policy**, as well as a preliminary review of early findings from the **Moderate Income Rental Housing Pilot Program**. The review took place in two phases, culminating in a fall 2019 report to Council.

Phase I examined the performance of the City's rental incentive policies over the past decade and the current market conditions for developing rental housing. Phase II explored ideas to improve existing rental incentive policies and specific recommendations to ensure the continued effectiveness of these programs. The following is a synthesis of the key themes, findings, and comments gathered from Phase II of the review.

RENTAL INCENTIVE PROGRAM REVIEW PUBLIC CONSULTATION

Public consultation and engagement is a key driver in the policy development and continuous improvement of the City's rental incentive programs. Residents and stakeholder groups were given the opportunity to share their experiences, opinions, and ideas in a variety of mediums during both phases of the review.

Phase I

Phase I consultation included engagement and workshops with industry (including developers and landlords), a survey of renters residing in buildings constructed under City incentive programs, and pedestrian intercept surveys. The findings were compiled by CitySpaces Consulting and can be found on the [Creating New Market Rental Housing](#) page on the City's website and in Appendix M of this Report.

Phase II

Phase II consultation was conducted by City of Vancouver staff during August to October 2019. Engagement included in-person dialogue and written comment forms at the open houses, and an online public survey via Talk Vancouver. Workshops were also held with industry and other key stakeholders.

- **Public Open Houses** - Planning, Urban Design & Sustainability department staff hosted two public open houses at the Kitsilano Neighbourhood House (September 25th, 2019) and the Polish Community Centre on Fraser Street (September 26th, 2019). Overall, 127 residents attended the open houses to voice their opinions and ideas on the City's rental housing incentive programs.
- **Talk Vancouver Survey** - A Talk Vancouver online public survey was available in September, 2019 and attracted over 3,283 responses. The survey included qualitative and quantitative questions regarding participants' thoughts on the need for rental housing, existing rental housing incentive programs, and proposed changes to improve the City's programs. Respondents were also asked to provide new ideas and policy improvements to meet the City's objectives for rental housing.
- **Stakeholder Workshops** - Key stakeholders workshops were held to gather input from developers, landlords, local Business Improvement Area directors and the City's Renters Advisory Committee.
 - Urban Development Institute
 - Business Improvement Area Executive Directors
 - City of Vancouver Renters Advisory Committee
 - LandLordBC

Overall, we heard from 3,500 people during the Phase II consultations. More details about these events can be found in Sections A to D of this appendix.

WHO WE HEARD FROM - HIGHLIGHTS

Phase 1 Consultation	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Survey of rental incentive building residents• Intercept Survey• Stakeholder Consultation
Phase 2 Public Open Houses	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Kitsilano Open House - Sept. 25th, 2019• Fraser St. Open House - Sept. 26th, 2019• 127 attendees
Phase 2 Talk Vancouver Survey	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• September 16th - 30th 2019• 3,283 Respondents• 49% renters; 43% owners; 4% Other (living with family); 4% Co-op members
Phase 2 Stakeholder Workshops	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Urban Development Institute (UDI)• Renters Advisory Committee (RAC)• Business Improvement Areas (BIAs)• MIRHPP Survey for Developers/Consultants

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM RESIDENTS - PHASE II

HIGHLIGHTS

Introduction

The high level key themes and values captured include the perspectives of a diverse range of residents, with representation from renters, home owners, co-op members, and those living in other housing types throughout Vancouver. Although there were some diverging levels of agreement between renters and home owners on specific policies, residents overall want to see improved housing affordability in Vancouver. The majority of respondents recognize the need to adapt City of Vancouver's land use and development regulations and policies to accommodate the growing number and proportion of renter households in the city.

There is a need for purpose built rental

The overwhelming majority of survey respondents believe there is a need to build more purpose-built rental in the city. This finding was consistent across renters and owners responding to the survey. However, some open house and survey respondents question the need for purpose-built rental housing, while some assert that purpose-built rentals do not belong in low density neighbourhoods. This feedback came predominantly from respondents who own their homes.

Results

- 85% believe that there is a need to build more purpose-built rental in the city.
- 78% of respondents support building below market rate apartments in Vancouver

Renters are facing significant challenges

With a rental vacancy rate under 1%, the growing population of renters in Vancouver is competing for a limited supply of available apartments. As a result, many renters engaged as part of the review indicated that they are making trade-offs in order to live in the city. The most commonly cited challenges include living in small units, paying unaffordable rents, and living in inadequately maintained rentals.

Results

- 46% of renter respondents say their rental home is only somewhat meeting their housing needs.
- 15% of renter respondents say their rental home is not meeting their housing needs at all.

Residents support City of Vancouver's Rental Incentive Programs

We heard from residents that they believe the City's rental incentive programs are working and should be refined to enable more housing that meets the needs of renters. Many respondents agree that the City should encourage and streamline purpose-built rental housing development.

Results

- 66% of survey respondents strongly agree/agree, and 9% are neutral with the idea of providing incentives to developers to encourage the construction of new purpose-built rental in Vancouver.
- Another 65% of respondents agree with prioritizing City actions that enable new rental housing to address challenges facing renters.
- 77% of survey respondents strongly agree/agree with allowing up to 6 storey purpose-built rental housing C-2 zones.

Residents want to see a diverse range of affordable housing options

When we asked Vancouverites about the types of housing options that were needed in the city, 70% agreed that there is a need for other types of housing in addition to new purpose built rental housing. We also heard that the majority of respondents (87%) believe it is important for the City to require family housing (units with 2 or more bedrooms).

Particular housing types respondents identified a need for included housing cooperatives, social and below-market rental, and ground-oriented options such as townhouses and rowhouses.

There is a willingness to see higher buildings to achieve greater affordability

69% of respondents agree/strongly agree with building larger and taller rental buildings that include a portion of units secured at rates affordable to moderate income households. The proportion of home owners that agreed with this statement (57%) was lower than the proportion of renters (79%), however most renters and home owners believe that prohibiting taller buildings increases development costs and therefore monthly rents for Vancouverites. Renters and many home owners believe that allowing for taller buildings is an important part of improving housing affordability in Vancouver.

However, some residents are concerned about the impact of taller buildings

Some open house respondents, more often those that are home owners, expressed concern that the character of their neighbourhoods could be negatively impacted by taller and larger rental buildings, and also shared concerns about shadow impacts on their properties, loss of green space, and loss of views. The impact of taller buildings on individual property values was also cited as a concern. Respondents also had some general concerns about potential issues associated with population growth in their communities, including increased traffic congestion, school capacity, park and community centre space, and street parking concerns. Some respondents are concerned with “spot rezoning” and expressed a desire to be engaged in community planning exercises to ensure their insights are incorporated into evolving City policies which impact their neighbourhood.

Vancouver residents have concerns about geographic equity in the housing market

Vancouverites want an equitable city where both renters and home owners have easy access to public transit, amenities, and social infrastructure. Some home owners in low-density areas were interested in increased choices for their properties and communities. Many renters, especially those with families, said that they want to have the option of living on quieter residential streets rather than on busy arterial roads.

Result

- 82% of survey respondents supported policies to allow rental buildings in low density areas adjacent to major streets and commercial districts.

Please refer to **Sections A to D** of this appendix for more information.

WHAT WE LEARNED FROM STAKEHOLDERS - PHASE II MAIN THEMES

Development Industry

Representatives from the Urban Development Institute assert the need for more certainty and consistency in the City's planning and development approaches. Respondents feel that the City's Zoning and Development By-laws, housing policies, and development approvals processes should be streamlined to expedite new rental development. Industry also emphasized a need for sufficient density and flexibility in building design to ensure financial viability. Developers and landlords also note potential challenges to viability posed by rent restrictions and limited rent increases over time.

Business Improvement Area Associations

Overall, BIA Executive Directors understood the proposed direction to enable more rental development in C-2 zones, but expressed that local businesses are concerned about the affordability and suitability of new commercial spaces in mixed-use developments, vacant storefronts, and the viability of new retail space in some parts of the city. Participants also recognized that these issues are not specific to new mixed-use rental buildings, as the majority of redevelopment in local shopping areas has been for new mixed-use strata buildings, which were recognized as having more significant vacancy issues related to commercial retail units.

Renters Advisory Committee

The Renters Advisory Committee recognized the need for more purpose-built rental and below market rentals housing in Vancouver. Members also identified the need to ensure that new purpose-built rental housing is easier and more appealing for developers to build. The Committee also highlighted concerns about renter displacement and gentrification.

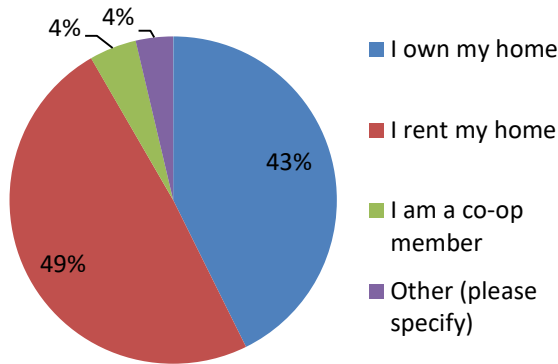
Consultation Summaries

Section A: Talk Vancouver Quantitative Survey Results Overview

The City of Vancouver’s Rental Incentives Survey was the main channel for residents to express their thoughts and provide feedback to help inform the City’s incentives. Over 3,200 residents sent in a response. The following section summarizes the quantitative results of the survey.

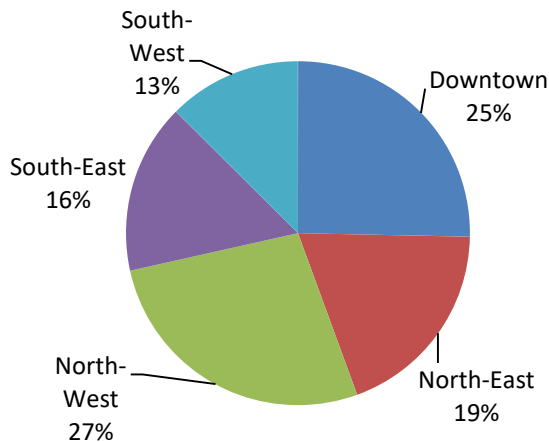
1. Do you own or rent your home in Vancouver? Where do you live?

		I own my home	I rent my home	I am a co-op member	Other (please specify)
Total	3283	1401	1608	153	121



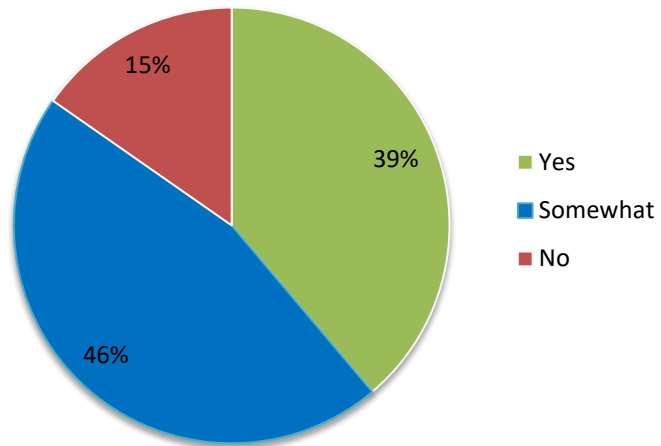
The housing tenure of survey respondents is comparable to the city-wide rates of 53% renters to 47% owners.

		Downtown	North-East	North-West	South-East	South-West
Total	3283	728	548	779	459	360



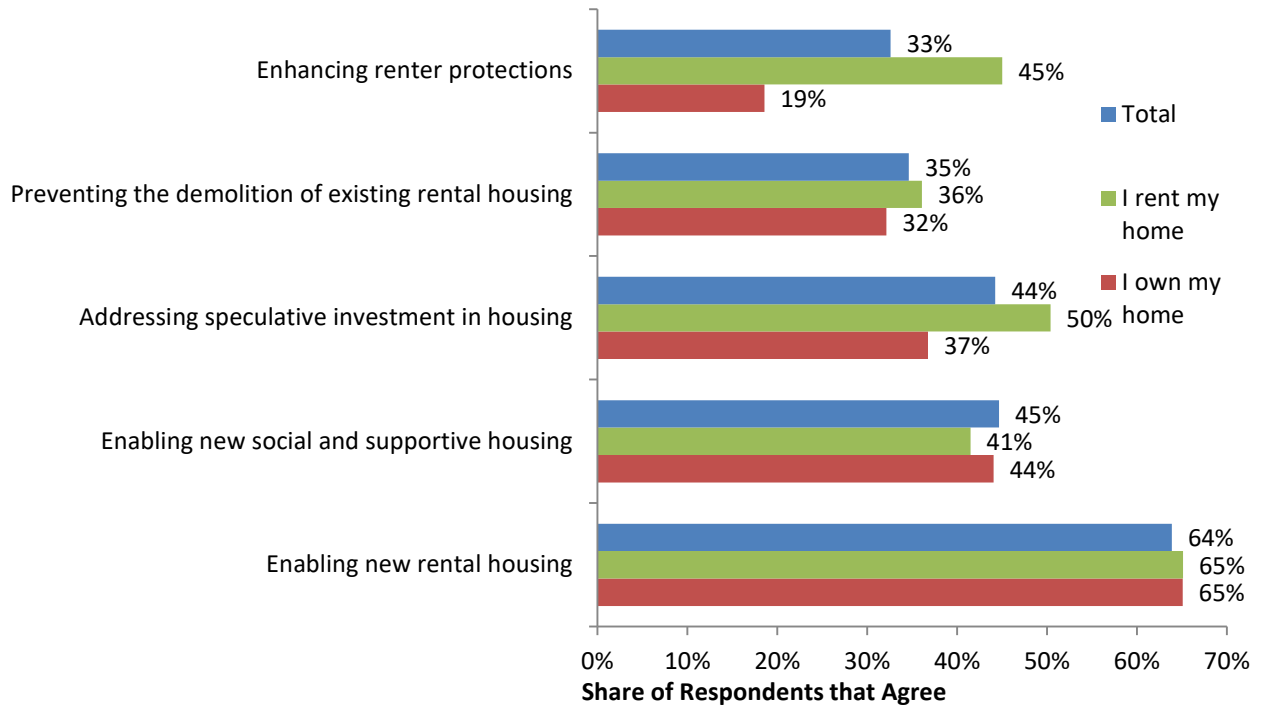
2. Does your rental home currently meet your housing needs?
***Question only asked to renter households**

	I rent my home
Total	1607
Yes	39%
Somewhat	46%
No	15%



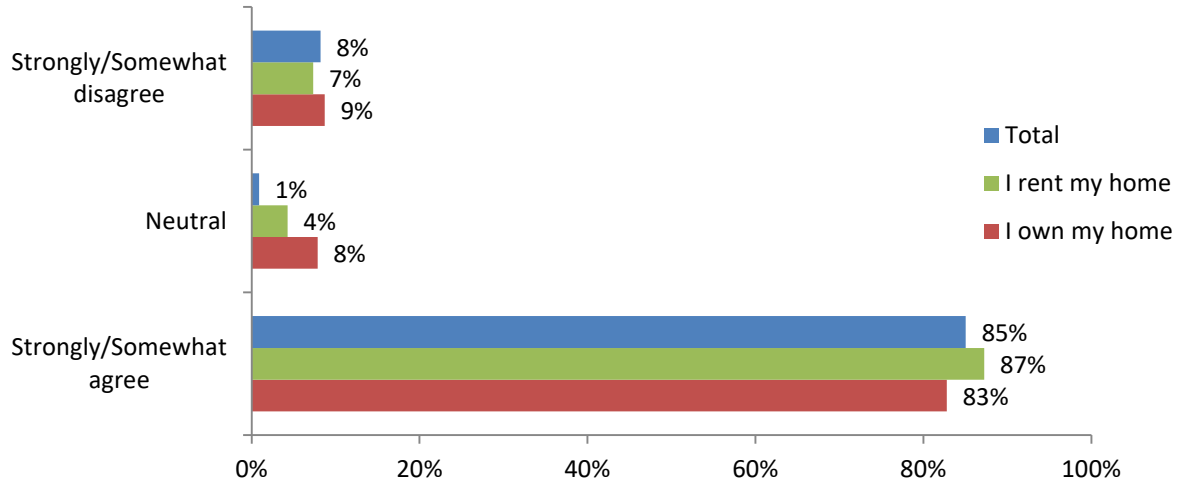
3. What City actions do you think would make the greatest impact on challenges facing renters?

Answer	Total	I own my home	I rent my home	I am a co-op member	Other (please specify)
Total	3283	1401	1608	153	121
Enabling new rental housing	64%	65%	65%	44%	59%
Enabling new social and supportive housing	45%	44%	41%	75%	56%
Addressing speculative investment in housing	44%	37%	50%	50%	42%
Preventing the demolition of existing rental housing	35%	32%	36%	47%	29%
Enhancing renter protections	33%	19%	45%	32%	31%
Other (please describe):	26%	27%	25%	31%	31%
Don't know	1%	1%	1%	0%	2%

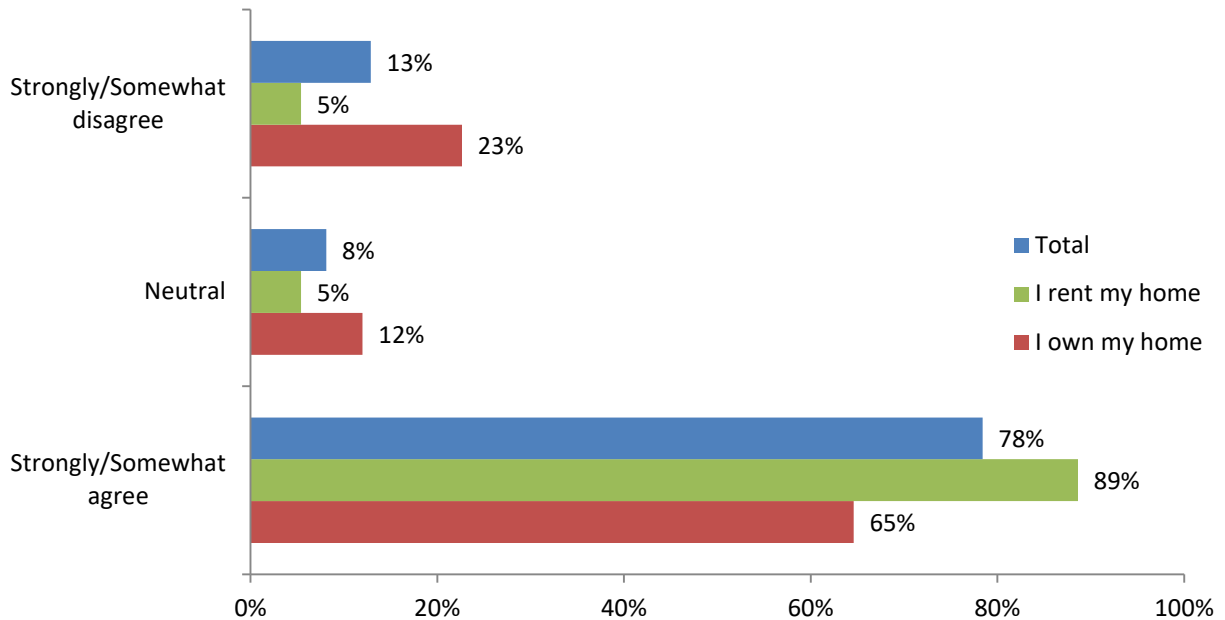


4. Do you agree or disagree with the following statements about new rental housing?

a. There is a need to build more purpose built rental in Vancouver



b. There is a need to build more purpose built rental in Vancouver at below market rates



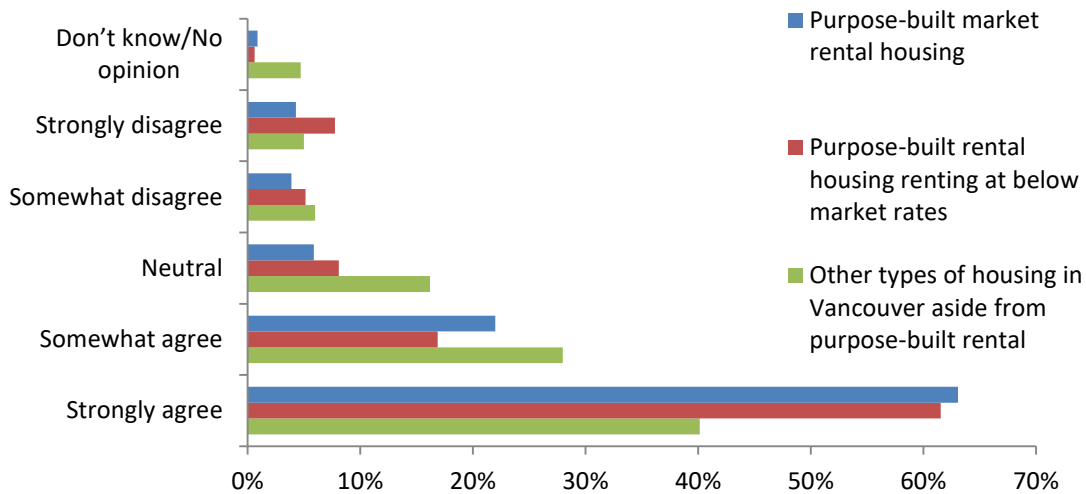
c. There is a need for other types of housing

2,239 respondents responded that there is a need for other types of housing aside from purpose-built rental and below-market rental housing. 2,118 respondents answered the open-ended question, which have been thematically coded below. See Section B for more details.

Codes	Results (out of 2118)
Co-op/Coop	763
Social/Sub-/ Below	325
Town-/Row	319
Condo/Strata	303
Family	231
All/Everything	150
Apartment	141
Duplex	121
Laneway	113
Assisted/Support-	94
Senior	90
Mix/Mixed Income	58
Basement	49
Secondary	48

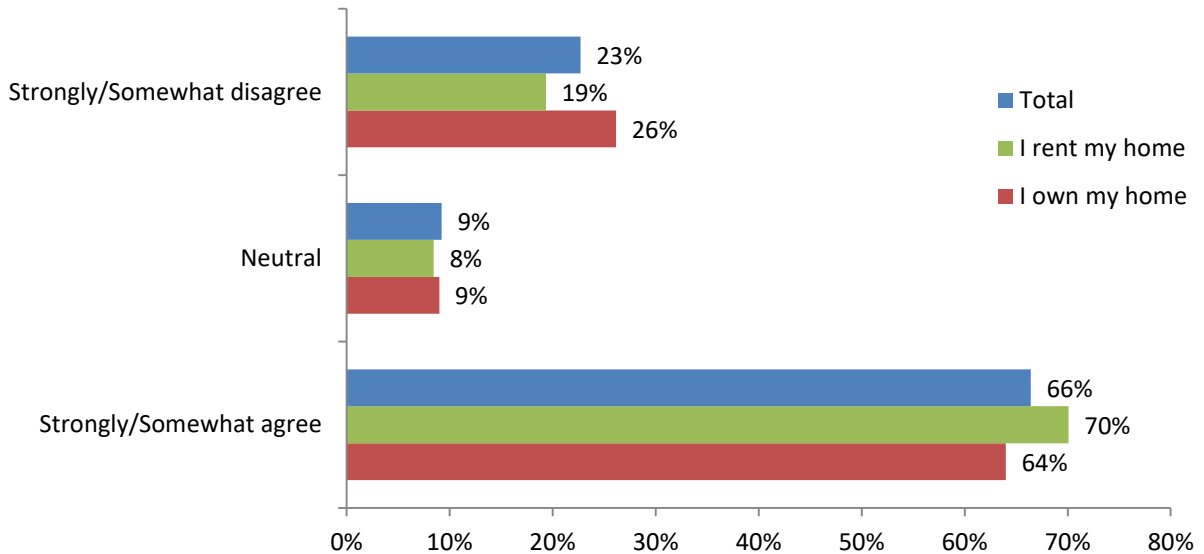
d. Total Responses

	There is a need to build more purpose-built market rental housing in Vancouver to meet the needs of residents	There is a need to build more purpose-built rental housing renting at below market rates to meet the needs of residents	There is a need for other types of housing in Vancouver aside from purpose-built rental housing to meet the needs of residents
Strongly agree	63%	62%	40%
Somewhat agree	22%	17%	28%
Neutral	6%	8%	16%
Somewhat disagree	4%	5%	6%
Strongly disagree	4%	8%	5%
Don't know/No opinion	1%	1%	5%



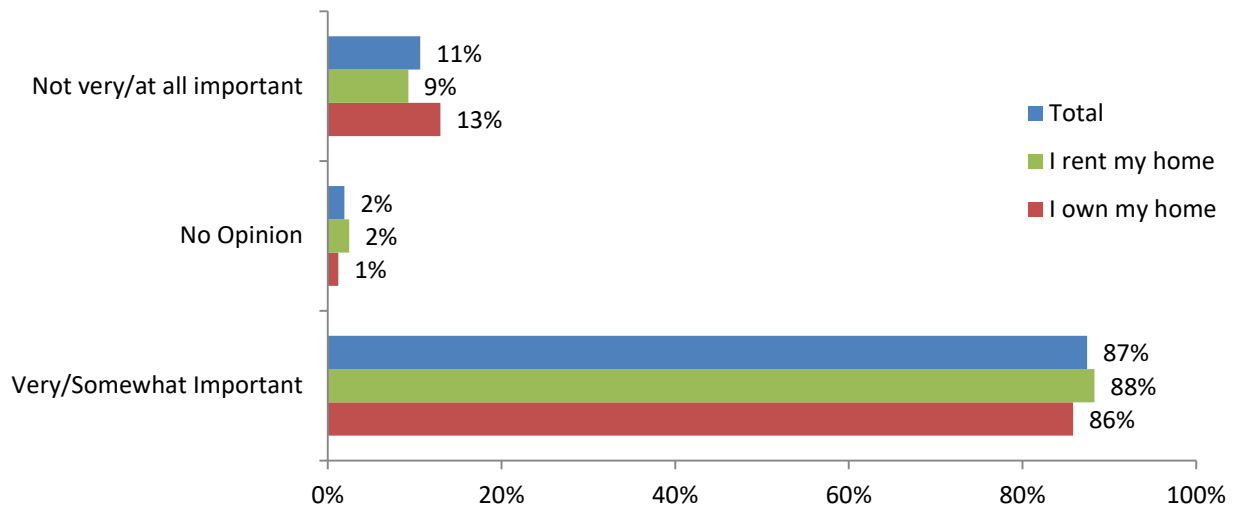
5. Do you agree or disagree with of the idea of providing incentives to developers to encourage construction of new purpose-built rental housing?

	Total	Housing Tenure			
		I own my home	I rent my home	I am a co-op member	Other (please specify)
Total	3282	1400	1608	153	121
Strongly agree	35%	34%	36%	24%	36%
Somewhat agree	32%	30%	34%	30%	25%
Neutral	9%	9%	8%	17%	12%
Somewhat disagree	10%	12%	9%	11%	11%
Strongly disagree	13%	15%	11%	14%	13%
Don't know/No opinion	2%	1%	2%	3%	2%
Merged: Strongly agree OR Somewhat agree	66%	64%	70%	54%	61%
Merged: Somewhat disagree OR Strongly disagree	23%	26%	19%	25%	24%



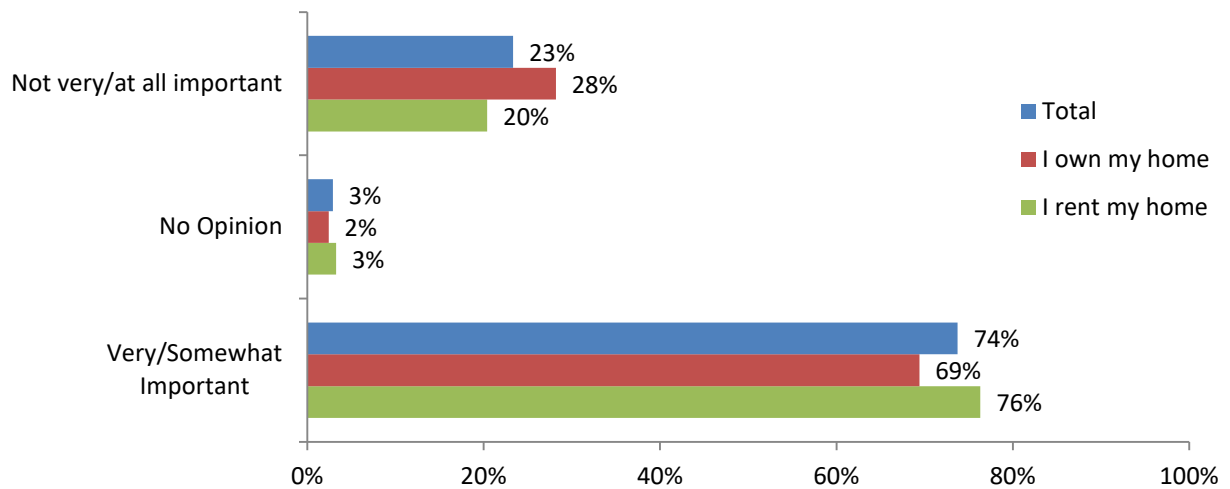
6. The City seeks to encourage rental housing for families in all parts of the city. However, it is more difficult to include family-sized units in rental housing projects, particularly 3-bedroom units, as these units are more expensive to build. How important do you think it is for the City to require family housing units (2 bedrooms or more) in all purpose-built market rental housing buildings?

	Total	Housing Tenure			
		I own my home	I rent my home	I am a co-op member	Other (please specify)
Total	2922	1242	1436	136	108
Very important	61%	59%	61%	78%	54%
Somewhat important	27%	27%	28%	18%	31%
Not very important	7%	8%	7%	2%	7%
Not at all important	4%	5%	3%	1%	4%
Don't know/ No opinion	2%	1%	2%	1%	5%
Merged: Very important OR Somewhat important	87%	86%	88%	96%	84%



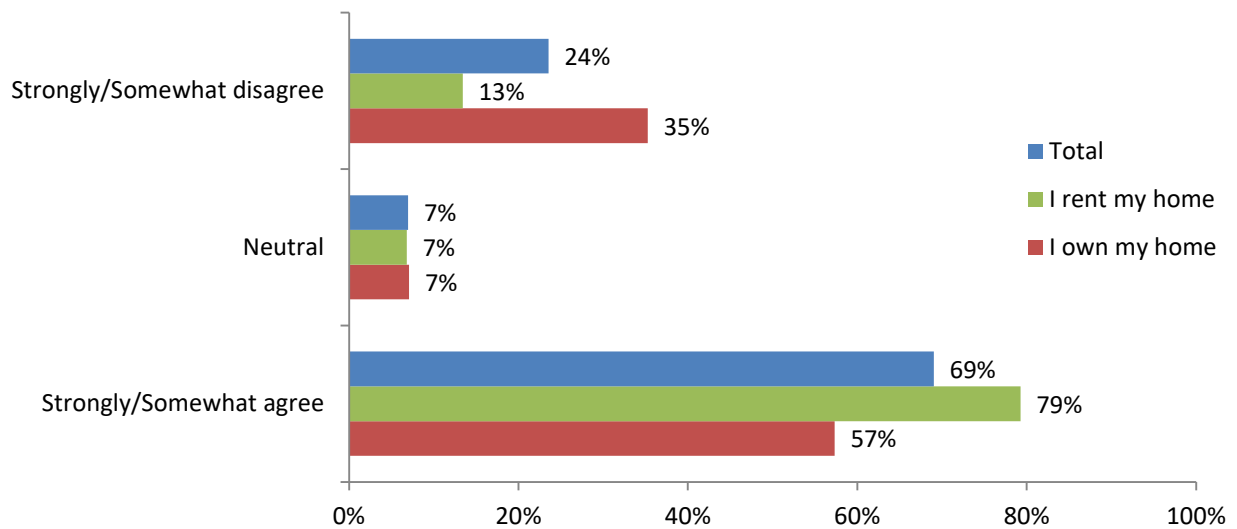
7. How important do you think it is for the City to regulate common amenity spaces in purpose-built market rental apartment buildings (e.g. minimum amenity space size, etc.) in order to provide better functioning for residents?

	Total	Housing Tenure			
		I own my home	I rent my home	I am a co-op member	Other (please specify)
Total	2922	1242	1436	136	108
Very important	41%	38%	41%	63%	46%
Somewhat important	33%	32%	36%	26%	25%
Not very important	14%	15%	14%	7%	17%
Not at all important	9%	13%	7%	1%	9%
Don't know/ No opinion	3%	2%	3%	4%	3%
Merged: Very important OR Somewhat important	74%	69%	76%	88%	71%



8. Do you agree or disagree with the following? Larger and taller buildings are acceptable if the result is the creation of rental buildings with units that are affordable for moderate income households.

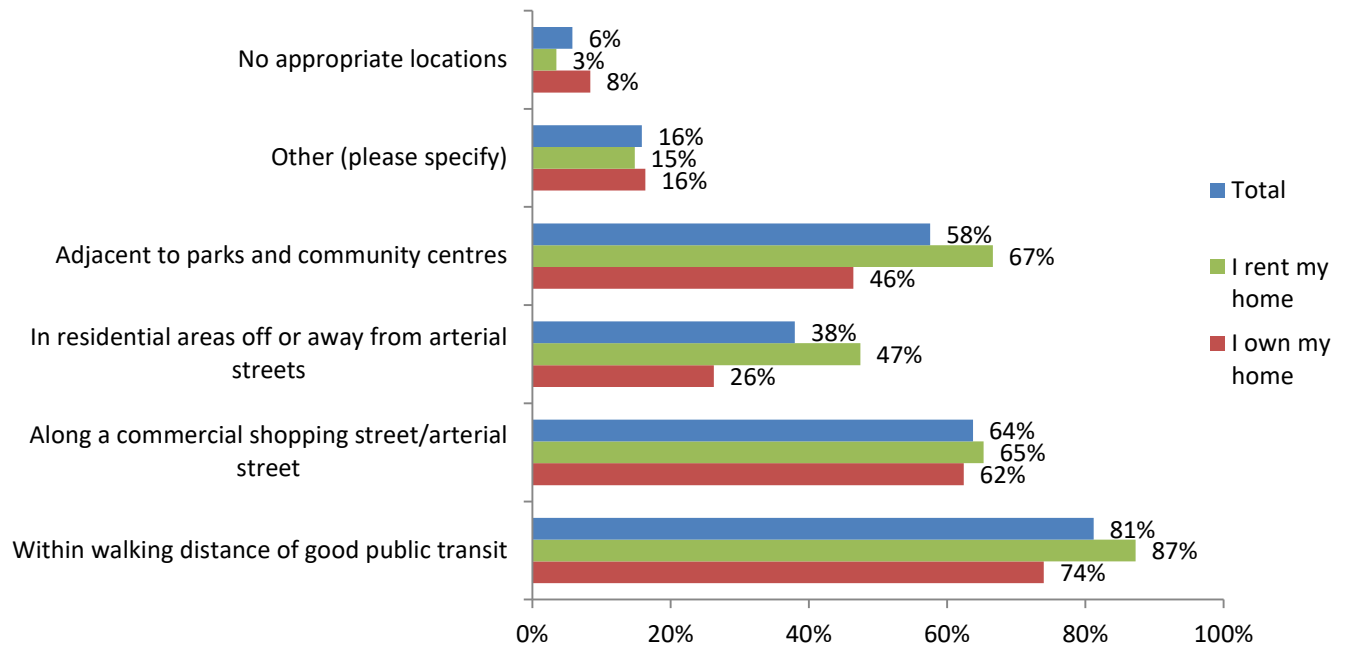
	Total	Housing Tenure			
		I own my home	I rent my home	I am a co-op member	Other (please specify)
Total	2923	1242	1437	136	108
Strongly agree	45%	35%	54%	43%	46%
Somewhat agree	24%	23%	25%	29%	19%
Neutral	7%	7%	7%	7%	8%
Somewhat disagree	11%	15%	8%	11%	14%
Strongly disagree	12%	21%	6%	10%	12%
Don't know/No opinion	0%	0%	0%	1%	1%
Merged: Strongly agree OR Somewhat agree	69%	57%	79%	71%	65%
Merged: Somewhat disagree OR Strongly disagree	24%	35%	13%	21%	26%



9. What locations should the City consider to build larger and taller built market rental apartments with units affordable to moderate incomes?

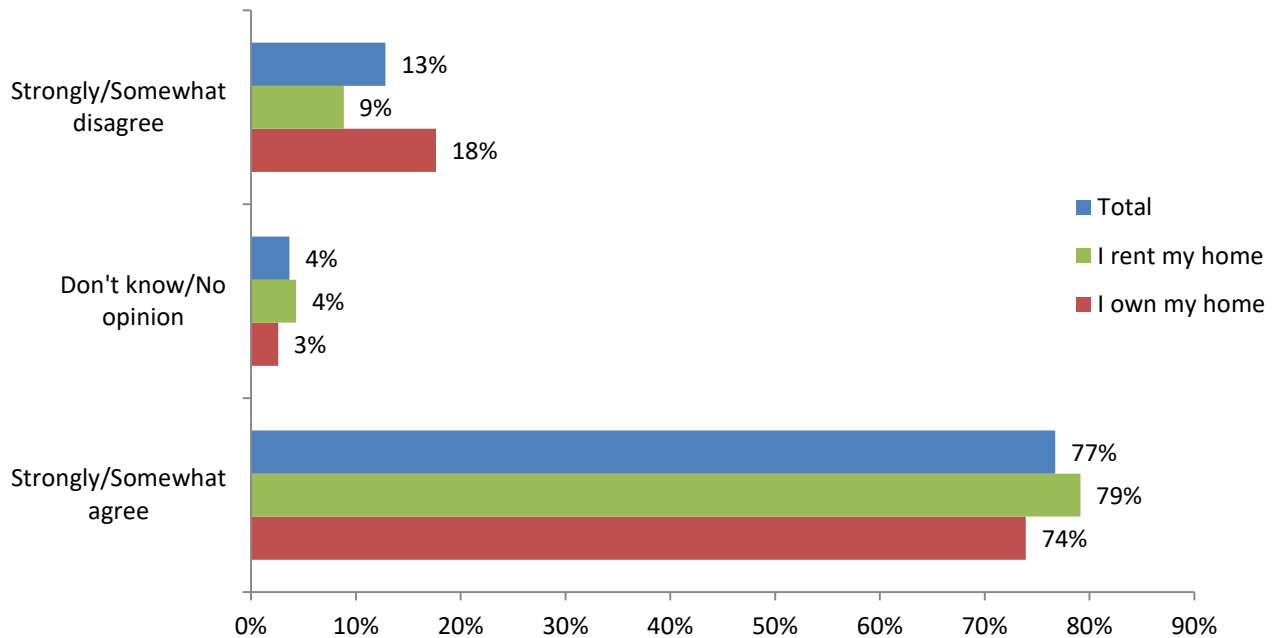
Respondents were asked to select all that apply

	Total	Housing Tenure			
		I own my home	I rent my home	I am a co-op member	Other (please specify)
Total	2923	1242	1437	136	108
Within walking distance of good public transit	81%	74%	87%	82%	82%
Along a commercial shopping street/arterial street	64%	62%	65%	58%	66%
In residential areas off or away from arterial streets	38%	26%	47%	43%	41%
Adjacent to parks and community centres	58%	46%	67%	63%	58%
Other (please specify)	16%	16%	15%	18%	21%
No appropriate locations	6%	8%	3%	7%	6%



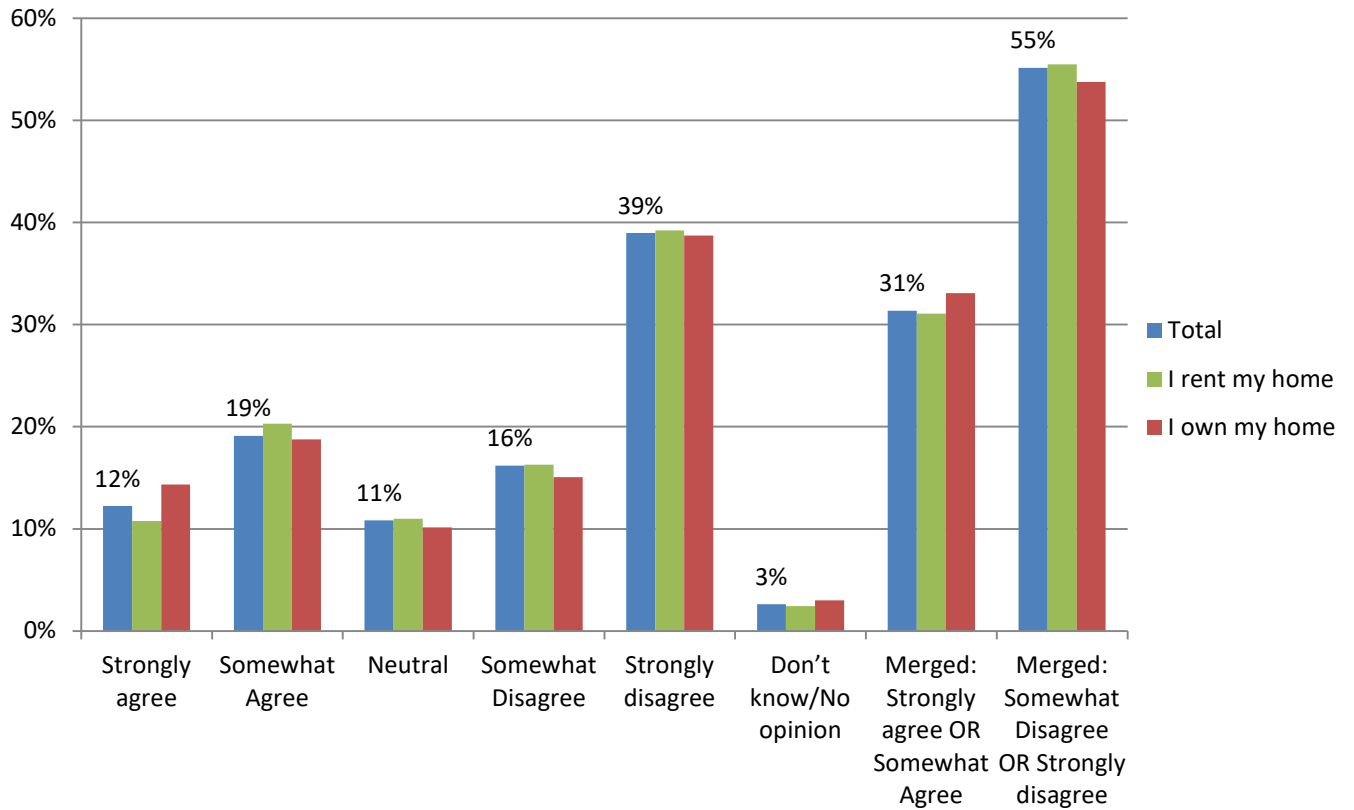
10. Do you agree or disagree with allowing purpose-built market rental housing up to 6 storeys, to be created through a development permit process instead of a rezoning process, in commercial areas zoned as C-2?

	Total	Housing Tenure			
		I own my home	I rent my home	I am a co-op member	Other (please specify)
Total	2923	1242	1437	136	108
Strongly agree	49%	46%	53%	50%	46%
Somewhat agree	27%	28%	26%	30%	27%
Neutral	7%	6%	8%	4%	8%
Somewhat disagree	5%	5%	4%	5%	6%
Strongly disagree	8%	12%	5%	7%	6%
Don't know/No opinion	4%	3%	4%	4%	6%
Merged: Strongly agree OR Somewhat agree	77%	74%	79%	80%	73%



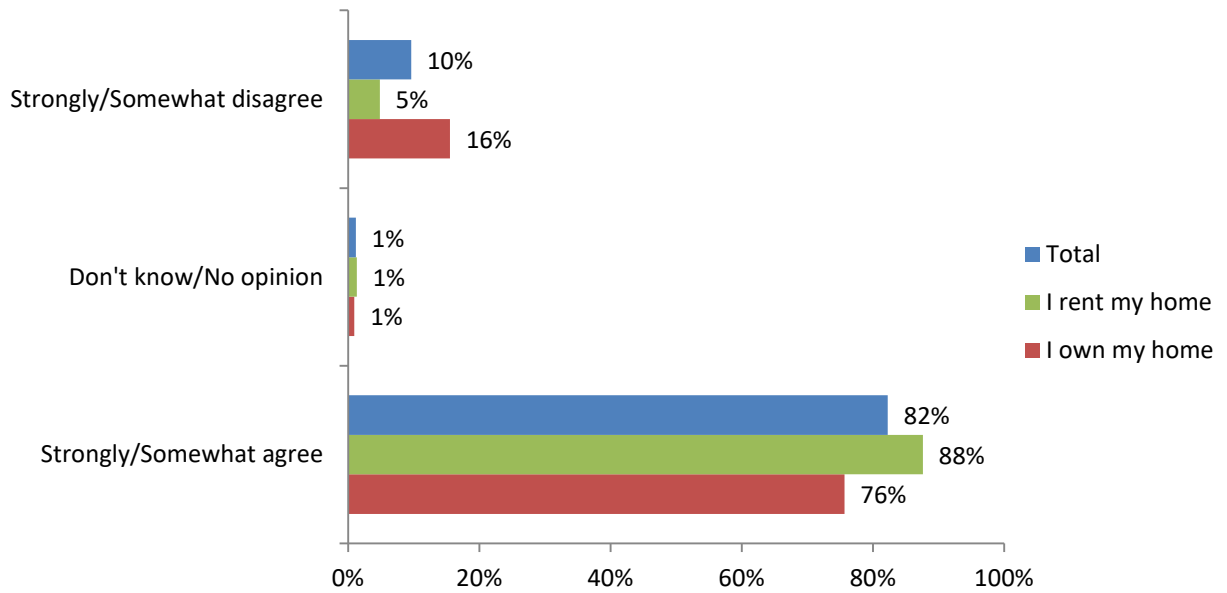
11. Do you agree with the idea of the City allowing a portion of units within new purpose-built rental housing to be operated as hospitality/hotel units rented to short-term visitors for a period of less than 30 days?

	Total	Housing Tenure			
		I own my home	I rent my home	I am a co-op member	Other (please specify)
Total	2924	1242	1438	136	108
Strongly agree	12%	14%	11%	8%	13%
Somewhat Agree	19%	19%	20%	13%	16%
Neutral	11%	10%	11%	17%	9%
Somewhat Disagree	16%	15%	16%	22%	20%
Strongly disagree	39%	39%	39%	38%	40%
Don't know/No opinion	3%	3%	2%	2%	2%
Merged: Strongly agree OR Somewhat Agree	31%	33%	31%	21%	29%
Merged: Somewhat Disagree OR Strongly disagree	55%	54%	55%	60%	60%



12. Do you agree or disagree with the City continuing to allow new purpose-built rental homes in specific low-density areas on or near major arterial streets?

	Total	Housing Tenure			
		I own my home	I rent my home	I am a co-op member	Other (please specify)
Total	2924	1242	1438	136	108
Strongly agree	57%	48%	65%	58%	45%
Somewhat Agree	26%	28%	23%	32%	31%
Neutral	7%	8%	6%	4%	9%
Somewhat Disagree	4%	6%	3%	2%	6%
Strongly disagree	5%	9%	2%	2%	6%
Don't know/No opinion	1%	1%	1%	1%	3%
Merged: Strongly agree OR Somewhat Agree	82%	76%	88%	90%	77%



CONSULTATION SUMMARIES

Section B: In-Depth Analysis of Open-Ended Responses –Talk Vancouver Survey

Overview

In addition to various closed-ended questions, there were eight optional open-ended questions for respondents to provide narrative and comment based feedback. A total of 18,177 open-ended comments were received from the 3,283 respondents.

Methodology

Given the diversity and quantity of responses to the open-ended questions, Staff performed high-level analysis to determine common themes and appropriate coding categories. Key words were chosen based on these themes and codes, and a thematic word count table was created for several open-ended questions. A key word search was conducted to determine the most prevalent concerns, suggestions, and opinions put forward by the respondents. The remaining open-ended responses were scanned for differing opinions and ideas, and added to the thematic table.

Questions where respondents were asked on their agreement with specific policy proposals are presented quantitatively through their level of agreement (%), and qualitatively through the themes within their responses. Comments within each category were selected for a closer analysis and a selection of relevant respondent quotations are included below.

Summary of Responses by Theme

1. Aside from purpose-built rental housing, what other types of housing are needed?

Codes	Results (out of 2118)
Co-op/Coop	763
Social/Sub-/ Below Market	325
Town-/Row	319
Condo/Strata	303
Family	231
All/Everything	152
Apartment	141
Duplex	121
Laneway	113
Assisted/Support-	94
Senior	90
Mix/Mixed Income	58
Basement	49

The responses above are in addition to the strong support for purpose built rental, and below-market purpose built rental housing, which were provided as options in prior survey questions

Diversity

It is important to note that the vast majority of respondents included a mix of housing types in their comments rather than just one type; over 150 respondents responded with the suggestion that all/every type of housing type is needed throughout the entire city, rather than choosing specific housing types. In general, respondents felt that Vancouver's housing stock has a selection of expensive single-detached houses and small condominium apartments, with few options in between.

Co-op Housing

The top housing priority for respondents was co-op housing. Respondents suggest building and expediting co-op housing projects and other non-profit housing models to address the lack of affordable housing options in the city. There is high demand for these co-ops as demonstrated by long wait lists, with many respondents noting that it could take up to a few years to move into a unit. Furthermore, respondents feel that the co-op model offers housing stability and an alternative to the conventional publicly built social housing market.

Social/Subsidized/Below-Market Housing

Social and subsidized housing was a common priority with 325 residents mentioning the need for more government supported units and projects. Social housing accommodates those with low and moderate incomes, and vulnerable populations, including seniors and people with disabilities. Social housing units offer long-term affordable options for residents. Many point out the importance of having a rent-geared-to-income model to ensure that renters are not paying more than 30% of their income to housing costs.

Condominiums/Strata

Over 300 believe that more condominium and strata housing is needed in Vancouver. Respondents believe that condominiums allow people to live near their place of work, reduce commute times and give residents the option to walk and bike within the city. Furthermore, condominiums offer residents an entry point into home ownership and the housing market. Respondents also note that condominiums increase the overall housing supply in the city without requiring as much land as lower density housing. However, many respondents feel that there is an oversupply of luxury condominiums in Vancouver, and call for ways to incentivize affordable condominium options.

Housing for Families

Another common theme is the need for more family appropriate units throughout the city, such as large apartments, townhomes and duplexes. Respondents feel that the majority of Vancouver's housing stock is inadequate for growing families and multi-generational households. The high cost of family appropriate homes in the market is noted as an obstacle to starting a family in Vancouver, and forces families to move out of the city. 319 respondents felt that there is a need for more townhouses because it is recognized as a feasible way to accommodate families in lower density neighbourhoods. Some respondents felt that gentle density in the form of duplex homes allows for density without changing the character of neighbourhoods. Unit floorplans which have well designed spaces and have 3+ bedrooms are desirable for families.

“Missing Middle” Forms of Housing

Over 600 respondents alluded to the need for more “missing middle” housing, or housing typologies with a range of multi-unit housing compatible with the scale of single detached neighbourhoods. These include townhouses, duplex, triplex and fourplex houses. Some respondents suggest that these housing units shouldn't require a complex development

application process to be built because these housing types have minimal neighbourhood impacts. Furthermore, missing middle housing offers family sized units in neighbourhoods without fundamentally changing the community's character.

Seniors/Assisted and Supportive Living

130 respondents assert the need for more seniors housing and assisted living suites for people with disabilities in the city. Both owners and renters felt that building affordable options for seniors in an increasingly aging society could free up homes for the market. Respondents also feel that building accessible units in neighbourhoods is an effective solution for seniors to age-in-place within their communities rather than moving to an unknown area. Residents point out the need for more assisted housing units for people with disabilities, facing drug addiction, or mental health illnesses. Many recognize implementing a housing first solution as an effective way to prevent homelessness with at risk groups.

"There is a lack of affordable housing, especially for those of us who use wheelchairs and need an accessible space. There is a lack of stability and security and many of us do not want to have to move. I'd like to age in place."

"Housing specifically suited for people who are homeless or at risk of homelessness, or have mental health or addiction issues - supportive housing with staff and programs in place to assist them in their daily lives."

2. What locations should the City consider to build larger and taller purpose-built market rental apartments with units for affordable to moderate incomes?

Throughout the City/Low Density Neighbourhoods

The most common idea among respondents was to build rental throughout the city, including low density neighbourhoods outside of the downtown core. Feedback was received regarding the uneven growth in the city with downtown and central neighbourhoods absorbing the majority of new developments. Concerns were raised that central areas are growing too rapidly for the amount of social and physical infrastructure available in downtown. Respondents felt that the rest of the city should accommodate more developments and growth to respond to housing demands and population growth.

"We have 70% of our land zoned for SFH. We need more apartment buildings everywhere. This could be condos or rental buildings. We should strive for 3-4 bedroom apartment buildings."

"Neighbourhoods change. Trying to keep the entire city looking like a memory of the Seventies will not end well for anyone."

Near Amenities/Social Infrastructure

Respondents note the importance of adding density in neighbourhoods well served by social infrastructure such as parks, community centres and schools as potential areas. Residents also believe that areas close to commercial districts, strip plazas, and grocery stores have high potential to accommodate larger and taller buildings. Allowing for higher densities in these areas gives residents the prospect to live in walkable neighbourhoods, while simultaneously improving business opportunities for business owners.

"Within 5-7 min walk of commercial shopping, parks, or community centers regardless of whether those things are on/off/away from an arterial street"

"Buildings with mixed residential/commercial units so the commercial units help pay for the below market rents."

Along Major Transit and Active Transportation Corridors

Residents gave feedback on the need to add density in areas near major transit routes specifically SkyTrain stations and high frequency bus routes. Respondents believe that areas in close proximity to stations are ideal for high density growth because it can support efficient and convenient transportation for new residents without adding congestion on local roads. However, some residents are concerned with the associated noise pollution near SkyTrain routes. Higher density development near busy cycling routes is also supported by respondents. Overall, residents support higher density development in areas where there is potential for shorter, and more efficient commute times.

“Commuter traffic is a main source of pollution. Density allows for shorter commutes, support additional transit. People who commute less are also happier”

Close to Arterial Roads

Respondents support building higher density along major arterials throughout the city. It was expressed that these roads often have good transit connections, existing commercial uses, and have less impact on low density neighbourhoods. Some residents have suggested allowing for higher density on streets directly adjacent to arterial roads to maximize access to transit and commercial uses for residents. Respondents also recognize that mandatory parking minimums could be reduced near arterial roads because of the walkability these areas offer.

“Most arterials with single family homes on them have excellent and frequent transit to many parts of the city where jobs are but lack any population to use and support that transit or even local shopping areas. Areas like Renfrew, Sunset, Fraserview. There is strong potential to expand local communities for jobs and housing and reduce commute times. Many renters and owners fight to live north of King Edward due to the opportunities, amenities, transit, and connectedness. If we had more options south of King Ed and East of Commercial Drive we would have less need to compete over existing areas of limited housing”

Specific Neighbourhoods

Neighbourhoods with the most specific mentions as areas for more rental were largely on the west side including Kitsilano, West Point Grey, Shaughnessy, and Dunbar. Respondents generally felt that low density neighbourhoods should be targeted for growth and development. Areas around Expo and Canada Line SkyTrain lines were mentioned, including Commercial-Broadway, Nanaimo, and Joyce-Collingwood.

“In neighbourhoods that are low density. Honestly, why does the density have to keep increasing in the most densely populated neighbourhood in Canada?” – Renter

“West Side-Shaughnessy, Dunbar, areas other than downtown” –Renter

3. What City actions do you think would make the greatest impact on challenges facing renters?

Zoning and Density

Many respondents believe that updates to the Zoning and Development By-law to accommodate for higher density developments in more areas would have the greatest impact in addressing the challenges facing renters. Restrictive zoning policies are perceived as a barrier to increasing Vancouver's housing stock. Some suggested medium to high density rental housing should be allowed in predominantly single detached home areas. Respondents feel that densities are too low to enable rental development viability.

"Eliminate single-family zoning like Oregon is doing" -Owner

"Re-zoning lower-density neighborhoods for townhouses and apartments"–Renter

Tax and Development Incentives

Some respondents felt that tax and development incentives should be offered to landlords and developers that build rental units. Respondents feel that lowering property taxes and development charges for rentals incentivizes home owners with extra space to create a secondary suite to rent out, and offers developers a financial incentive to build rentals. Offering tax incentives to renovate older affordable housing units should also be offered.

Speeding up the Development Process for Rentals and Co-ops

Respondents assert that the development process for rental housing, including secondary/basement suites, and purpose-built rental housing should be expedited to address the low vacancy rates and deliver more rental housing. Cutting red tape and simplifying the bureaucratic planning process to speed up development were common themes expressed.

"Speed approvals for market rental housing. Relax requirements, grant even more density, height, eliminate parking requirements and lower development and permitting fees." -Renter

Concern over Short Term Rentals

Respondents believe that properties with short-term stays such as AirBNB should be taxed at a higher rate to avoid the conversion of rental units and bedrooms to short term accommodations. Some suggest banning AirBNB in the city to prioritize local residents rather than tourists.

"Ban and enforce ban on short term rental. No vacation rentals, no Airbnb etc. Houses in Vancouver should not be for tourists."

Vacancy Control

A cap or freeze on rent to provide immediate relief for renters facing high housing costs was also an action frequently suggested by respondents.

Intergovernmental Efforts

The City of Vancouver should work with the Provincial and Federal Governments to build and own affordable housing units. Some respondents believe that developers should not be allowed to market condominium units overseas. Many highlight the positive CMHC policies from the 1970s, when new co-op and rental developments were financially incentivized by the Federal Government.

"Petition the provincial and federal government for funding. Demand a 25 year housing plan from the federal government." –Co-op Member

4. Do you agree or disagree with allowing purpose-built market rental housing up to 6 storeys, to be created through a development permit process instead of a rezoning process, in commercial areas zoned as C-2? Why or why not?

Agree (77%)

- The vast majority of respondents **agree with the proposal to allow 6 storey** developments in C-2 zones through a development permit process rather than a rezoning process.
- Residents feel that this is an **appropriate place to build medium density developments** as a response to the housing crisis in Vancouver.
- Respondents believe this will **encourage new development because it will simplify and expedite the process**. Overall, residents feel that streamlining the application process in C-2 zones will create more housing and deliver results faster than a rezoning.
- Respondents also noted that this policy change **could benefit local businesses because there is a potential to increase the customer base** in C-2 zones by adding 6 storey residential buildings. Feedback was received to ensure that the existing street level commercial uses are preserved to avoid displacing local businesses and maintain the vibrancy of these streets.
- There was also a significant amount of positive feedback regarding the potential to create **walkable neighbourhoods** with this policy change.

Disagree (13%)

- Residents bring up the concern that this policy greatly **impacts the neighbourhood character** of communities with lower densities. Respondents are concerned that the streets will become “faceless street walls with monotonous buildings”.
- Concerns were expressed that taller buildings will increase **traffic congestion, parking constraints, shadows** cast by the buildings, and a **higher demand for public infrastructure** like schools and community centres.
- **Respondents feel that projects should be reviewed on a case by case basis** to ensure that the community’s concerns are heard and considered in the design of these buildings. Respondents feel that the rezoning process has more opportunities for engagement than the usual development process.

Concerns on Both Sides

- Some were concerned that small local retailers would be replaced by big box retailers because new mixed-use buildings often have larger commercial units that smaller businesses can’t afford to lease.
- Concerns were brought up that up-zoning all C-2 areas will **block views and sightlines to the north shore mountains**. Respondents felt that the City’s view cones should not be compromised.

5. What do you think is the most significant challenge facing renters in Vancouver?

Affordability

The high cost of rent is the most cited challenge, according to 2,400 respondents. Housing affordability is a challenge for those living with fixed incomes or low incomes as many spend significantly more than the defined housing cost threshold of 30% of household income. Seniors, students, and fixed/low-income households are especially vulnerable to housing affordability challenges. Many respondents complain about paying too much rent for too little in square footage and amenities.

“The ridiculously high rent. It’s even worse if you’re trying to find something pet-friendly, which is usually more expensive and/or so, so tiny. If by some miracle you find a place with ‘reasonable’ rent, the building is falling apart.”

Rental Availability and Competition

Over 1,000 respondents find the low vacancy rate of rental housing in Vancouver to be a prevailing issue. Many renters feel stuck in their current apartments due to the lack of adequate choices for affordable rentals in Vancouver. The high competition for rental suites in the city is a challenge to renters in search for a more suitable apartment for their household e.g. pet friendly, more bedrooms, and better location.

“The EXTREMELY low vacancy rate! We have a situation where rentals are extremely scarce. Many potential tenants show up to each showing of a rental home. This gives all the power to landlords.”

Unit Suitability

Over 600 responses were related to the inadequate unit size or layout as a challenge for renters. It is difficult to accommodate families and children in many apartments due to the lack of space/extra bedrooms, amenity spaces, and storage. Newer apartments were pointed out as having smaller unit sizes and fewer bedrooms compared to older buildings. Some respondents note that although older buildings typically have larger units, concerns were raised over the lack of maintenance and general upkeep of these units.

In addition, many respondents indicated that that finding pet-friendly apartments, family sized units, and an accessible rentals is especially difficult in Vancouver. Single renters do not have many affordable one-bedroom/studio options to live on their own, and often have to live with a roommate.

“Lack of affordable, decent rental housing for young people and lower income, poorly maintained rental housing (mold, environmental hazards, run-down buildings)”

“Price for a room - many young adults are unable to rent a single bedroom apartment due to pricing, forced to live with housemates/roommates when that isn’t necessarily ideal.”

Displacement and Housing Security

Renters are vulnerable to the threat of evictions and housing stability when landlords increase rent or wish to renovate apartment units. Renters have a challenging time finding alternatives when they are evicted from their apartments due to the low vacancy rates in the city.

“That rent increases are out of control and that there isn’t enough available for rent. When I go to an apartment viewing there are often 40 other people there. Renovictions are also a major issue.”

Location

Many respondents complain about their long commute times to work, school, and amenities like grocery stores and community centres due to the location of their current homes. Some expressed that work opportunities are often more limited for renters living in the “fringes of the city” due to the long commute times to amenities.

“Location - needs to be close to their work, and they need to be close to public transit; the houses need to use less concrete in construction; the buildings need to include daycare facilities for working parents.”

6. Do you have any comments or other ideas about how we can improve the affordability of new purpose-built market rental buildings, or opportunities to expand or enhance the Moderate Income Rental Housing Pilot Project?

- **Density:** The majority of respondents believe that the program can be improved with increased density in MIRHPP buildings
- **Accessible units:** Respondents felt that MIRHPP rentals should have more accessible units for people with disabilities and seniors.
- **Income Eligibility:** Comments regarding the eligibility for MIRHPP should ensure that it accommodates groups such as artists and servers with inconsistent incomes. Some respondents also felt the household income eligibility range of \$30,000 to \$80,000 was too high. They feel that households making \$80,000 should not be eligible for MIRHPP
- **Affordable Commercial Units:** Respondents feel that the design of street level retail in MIRHPP buildings could result in big box retail stores that do not add to the “community fabric” or cater to those with moderate incomes.
- **Single Person Households:** Respondents contend that moderately priced rental units for single people are in low supply in Vancouver. There should be more 1 bedroom units in MIRHPP buildings to accommodate single income/person households.
- **Parking Requirements:** A common suggestion from the respondents was to relax the parking requirements in rental buildings, especially if it is located near high frequency transit routes. Respondents felt that this could reduce the land and construction costs for developers, and opens up more room for housing and common amenities.

7. Do you agree or disagree with the idea of the City allowing a portion of units within new purpose-built rental housing to be operated as hospitality/hotel units - rented to short-term visitors for a period of less than 30 days?

Agree (31%)

- **12% of respondents strongly agreed, and another 19% somewhat agreed with the idea.**
- Respondents who agreed said this could **ease the pressure on the hotel industry**, which currently has a shortage of rooms, and invite more tourism and economic activity to the city.
- Some respondents only agree to this proposal **if the hospitality/hotel units subsidize rental units in the same building through a tax/levy.**
- A few respondents felt that this could **lower the overall development costs for buildings** if short-term units bring increased revenue, thereby lowering the cost of rental units.

“Vancouver is losing hotel rooms with no plans to build more. This could help ease the pressure and invite more tourism.”

Disagree (55%)

- **39% of respondents strongly disagreed, and another 16% somewhat disagreed with policy idea.**
- The vast majority of respondents disagree with the idea of creating short-term hospitality units in residential buildings.
- Residents are concerned that **short-term renters will be disruptive to existing tenants**, especially with the absence of a concierge/security desk. Respondents are concerned that short-term stays will result in increased security incidents, maintenance issues, noise complaints and privacy issues.
- Respondents see this as a **way of incentivizing the conversion of potential housing units to hotel/AirBNB style businesses**. Some respondents feel this idea is inappropriate given the housing crisis and 1% vacancy rate in the rental market.
- Respondents assert that short-term accommodations should be left exclusively to the hotel industry, and should not be pushed to residential developments.

“Absolutely no “hospitality” units should be given space in a desperately-needed rental building. The priority must be given to actual renters. The point of all of this is not to provide profit to developers or landlords, but to provide housing.”

Section C: Public Open Houses

Overview

Public open houses were held in Kitsilano on September 25th, 2019 and Fraser on September 26th, 2019. Overall, 127 residents attended these open houses to voice their concerns, ideas, and opinions on the City's rental incentive programs. City staff prepared informational materials and to ensure that residents have a clear understanding of proposals for the rental incentive programs. Staff were also available to answer questions and listen to residents' comments, which have been thematically summarized below.

Kitsilano - Consultation Themes and Comments

- Kitsilano residents felt the history and distinct character of their neighbourhood was very important and would like **more consultation and engagement with the City** to ensure that new policy changes are not disruptive.
- Concerns over **displacement** of local residents and businesses were raised, and that special attention should be placed in ensuring that proposed policy changes do not fundamentally change the character of neighbourhoods and prevent the loss/displacement of families.
- Concern that the **urban design and architectural standards** for new developments should be compatible with the existing neighbourhood character.
- Residents indicated a preference **for 6-storey buildings rather than tall residential towers** in the neighbourhood. This development typology was felt to be more compatible with the current housing stock in Kitsilano.
- Concerns were raised regarding the impact of new developments on **property values** in Kitsilano.
- Overall, **residents agree with the policy goals of MIRHPP** and the proposed changes to rental programs. Some residents even state that the minimum 20% moderate income units are not enough to address the housing crisis.
- Some attendees questioned **the need for purpose built rental** developments in Vancouver.

Fraser Street - Consultation Themes and Comments

- Residents expressed interest in **more community consultation** and engagement on specific development proposals put forward under rental incentive programs.
- Attendees are more **supportive of lower scale, 6 storey developments rather than tall buildings**.
- Residents are concerned with the possibility of **displacement as a result of lot consolidation** for larger developments.
- Respondents are generally supportive of **redevelopment along Kingsway Street** to help with the **revitalization** of the area.
- There were concerns raised about **overcrowding in local schools** with increased development and population growth.
- Attendees wish to see higher density in Fraser to address affordability issues.
- Respondents voiced their support for a **streamlined approvals process** to ensure faster housing development.

CONSULTATION SUMMARIES

Section D: Stakeholder Engagement & Workshops

1) Moderate Income Rental Housing Pilot Program Survey

Overview

A survey of industry professionals was conducted to gain insight on their experiences with the **Moderate Income Rental Housing Pilot Program (MIRHPP)**. Given that private developers build the vast majority of rental buildings in Vancouver, their feedback is invaluable to understand industry perspective on how the MIRHPP program is working so far. Overall, 20 respondents completed the entire survey. Respondents included those who are currently working on a MIRHPP proposal, those that previously worked on but withdrew a proposal, and those that are interested in the pilot but have not worked on a proposal.

Respondents indicated strong ongoing interest in the MIRHPP, with nearly three-quarters noting that they would consider making a submission if a future opportunity to proceed with a proposal under the pilot became available.

Strengths

Good Approach and Policy Objectives

Respondents characterized the MIRHPP as a creative and thoughtful incentive program, which could be further improved through future policy refinement. Developers feel that City staff have effectively supported the policy implementation and project planning processes and are working to ensure that design, planning, and economic objectives are being addressed through the MIRHPP.

Incentives Provided – Additional Height and Density

The opportunity for taller buildings and higher densities was noted as the central strength and most important incentive to enable moderate income rental projects with secured affordability to be economically viable

Challenges

Uncertainty and Ambiguity

Respondents noted that there is ambiguity and uncertainty associated with the fact that this is a limited pilot program and further that the generalized nature of the policy guidelines are a particular challenge. In particular, these factors make it difficult to secure land to enable a viable proposal. Respondents expressed that there is a need for clearer guidelines to provide more up-front certainty.

Lengthy Rezoning Process

Respondents recognized that rezoning is a lengthy and challenging process that involves substantial costs and uncertainty, and significantly extends the development timeline for new rental buildings. Respondents highlighted a need to expedite the rezoning process, especially for much needed affordable rental housing, including potentially by conducting the rezoning process and development permit concurrently.

Long-Term Financial Performance of Moderate Income Rental Units

Respondents recognized that the required starting rents, which were set in late 2017 and cannot be adjusted with the rate of inflation ahead of occupancy, and the permanent controls on rent

increases following occupancy create significant challenges for MIRHPP project viability. It was noted that the rent control provisions could result in a long-term income shortfall if the costs to maintain and operate the moderate income units increase more than revenues.

Urban Design Challenges

Respondents emphasized the challenge of balancing the needed density to enable project feasibility while meeting urban design goals set out by the City. Although it was noted that staff generally have a good understanding and appreciation of the underlying economics and financial viability of development projects, respondents expressed that this is not always evident in the design feedback received on projects.

Neighbourhood Opposition

While some respondents indicated they have found strong support for their proposal, others have recognized that neighbourhood opposition is a common challenge in the development process, particularly for taller and larger buildings. Some residents view new, larger developments as a disruption to existing neighbourhood character, which is a particular tension given that the MIRHPP relies on additional height and density to enable the required affordability.

Policy Improvements

Greater Clarity on Eligible Locations, Density and Urban Design Guidelines

Many respondents recognized a need for more specific guidelines on eligible locations and achievable heights and densities and that the uncertainties associated with the program increase the complexity of the rezoning process, extend the approvals timeline significantly and increase risk and project costs.

Additional Incentives

Respondents noted that in many cases more height and density is needed to achieve the affordability required under the MIRHPP currently. The opportunity to clarify and simplify the opportunity to secure a DCL waiver to support the delivery of moderate income rental units was also recognized as a potential improvement.

Balancing Financial and Design Objectives

Respondents suggested that the City take a more holistic and prioritized approach to reviewing project proposals under the MIRHPP in order to balance project feasibility and design objectives. Respondents recognized there are many competing City objectives which increase uncertainty and weaken project viability, and that trade-offs are necessary in order to enable proposed MIRHPP projects to be built.

Expediting the Approvals Process

The length of the rezoning and development approvals processes was emphasized as a key challenge which should be addressed. Respondents said that additional clarity and certainty on eligible locations and achievable heights and densities would help, and that the City should consider opportunities to truly expedite the approvals process such as concurrent processing of rezoning and development permit applications.

2) Urban Development Institute Workshop

Overview

City of Vancouver Planning Staff held a rental program review workshop with members from the Urban Development Institute on September 30th, 2019. Staff presented on the progress of the various incentive programs in place, trends in the rental market, and the proposed changes to these programs. Attendees were then invited to discuss and share their thoughts on how these programs could be improved from a development perspective. Overall, 17 industry professionals attended the event, a summary of the findings are below.

Themes

C-2 Zoning

- Respondents are supportive of pre-zoning C-2 areas for higher densities; it is seen as positive change to expedite development.
- However, there were concerns that the proposed urban design requirements for commercial retail units were too prescriptive and would increase project costs and time. Heights of 14' to 17' should be considered for ground level retail.
- Average building heights should also be considered when reviewing projects rather than maximum heights to allow for flexibility in design.
- There was interest in allowing inboard bedrooms to ensure 3bedroom units remain financially viable for developers and affordable for renters.
- Concerns were raised that BC Step Code was not the best sustainability guideline due to the building envelope requirements that make it difficult to build in wood. This increases overall construction costs.
- Parking requirements should be reduced or eliminated to cut project costs.

Affordable Housing Choices – Interim Rezoning Policy

- There was support for the proposed changes to the Interim Rezoning Policy
- Attendees suggested rolling these changes into Zoning and Development By-law.
- There is a strong desire for relaxation of urban design requirements for these buildings to help achieve rental housing goals (i.e. 1960s walk-up apartment model).
- Respondents brought up the point that it is not attractive to do a 6 storey project with below market units when it is possible to build 5 storey market rental housing.

MIRHPP

- Attendees agree with the program's objectives and approach, but desire to see changes in how the program is administered to ensure long-term sustainability of MIRHPP.
- Community plans should be updated to support MIRHPP objectives and policies.
- Respondents suggest targeting vacant lands as potential locations for MIRHPP to minimize displacement.
- Attendees assert that rents need to grow at the same pace as the costs to operate the building to ensure proper maintenance and upkeep.
- Rezoning and Development Permits should be combined into a single application to expedite rental buildings under this program.
- Multiple ways to calculate moderate income rent increases were suggested by attendees; indexed to cost increases; indexed to household incomes over time; indexed to CMHC averages.
- Respondents assert the need for more density to attract developers and ensure viability.
- DCL waivers should be considered for moderate income units.

Development Cost Levy Waiver Program

- Attendees are concerned that DCL waivers are set several years before occupancy of the building, resulting in a waiver that does not reflect opening rents.
- New provincial rent increase allowances set at CPI (Canada Price Index) rates makes it challenging to lock in DCL waiver rents years before occupancy.
- DCL waiver geographies should be reconsidered due to the discrepancy between various areas of the City of Vancouver.
- DCL waivers are often not attractive to developers when rents increase at a greater rate than CPI between the rezoning application date and occupancy/move-in.
- Stakeholders expressed interest in property tax waivers because it reduces operational costs in the long run, and Provincial government contributions

3) Business Improvement Area Workshop

Overview

City of Vancouver Planning Staff held a rental program review workshop with representatives from various Business Improvement Areas (BIAs) on October 2nd, 2019. Staff presented on the progress of the various incentive programs in place, trends in the rental market, and the proposed changes to these programs. Attendees were then invited to discuss and share their thoughts on how these programs could be improved from a business perspective. Overall, 13 BIA representatives were in attendance from throughout the city, a summary of the findings are below.

Themes

Affordability and Vacancy

BIA executives are concerned with the affordability of new commercial units associated with the redevelopment of C-2 because commercial units tend to be larger and have higher rental rates. Retail spaces in strata projects often sit unleased because commercial units aren't a significant revenue generator for developers. Rental buildings tend to have better commercial retail performance and don't sit empty due to the financial importance of leasing commercial spaces for overall project viability.

Viability of Local Retail

BIA executives commented on the need to ensure that small retail opportunities remain available for businesses in new developments.

Attendees assert the need to wait for the results of the Commercial Retail Study and the Employment Lands and Economy Review before moving forward with changes to commercial zoning policies. Caution should be exercised when expanding opportunities for mixed-use, commercial projects to ensure minimal impacts on existing shopping areas.

Amenities and Parking

Respondents are concerned with the relaxed parking requirements in new developments because it adds pressure on commercial-focused street parking. Representatives believe that residents are parking in underground commercial spaces, taking customers away from BIA areas. However, some BIAs also had feedback from developers that commercial parking requirements are too high in transit supported areas.

Some are concerned that neighbourhood amenities like schools are in short supply and can't accommodate new residents.

4) Renters Advisory Committee

Overview

City of Vancouver Planning Staff held a rental program review workshop with the Renters Advisory Committee (RAC) during a committee meeting on September 18th, 2019. Staff presented on the progress of the various incentive programs in place, trends in the rental market, and the proposed changes to these programs. Attendees were then invited to discuss and share their thoughts on how these programs could be improved. Overall, 10 Committee members were present, along with 2 City Councillors and 1 School Board Trustee.

Themes

Policy Ideas and Improvements

- The committee asserts the importance of ensuring that purpose-built rental housing is easier and faster to build. Expectations on heights, densities, and design should be clarified for developers to reduce processing times.
- Diversifying housing options for renters is also important to encourage a mix of rentals, especially townhomes and buildings off busy arterial roads. Community opposition to mid-high rise buildings for neighbourhood character reasons needs to be addressed.
- Rental incentive programs should work to address the climate emergency through density bonusing and sustainable building methods.
- The committee also asserts the need to encourage family sized rental units (2-3 bedroom), and ensuring that these units go to families.
- Attendees feel that opportunities to renew the existing rental stock without displacing tenants should be important.
- Exploring small scale improvements to commercial units in rental buildings should also be considered.
- Increased affordability was a priority for rental housing for moderate income households enabled through new community plans, project sites, and through an extension of MIRHPP.

Policy Objectives/Outcomes

- The committee asserts the importance of ensuring that rental developments are treated equitably to strata in the development process. Some feel that rental applications should be prioritized to address the housing crisis.
- Attendees agree on the need to provide more rental housing for those with moderate incomes (\$30-80k). Some feel that rents should be tied to income to provide more equity.
- Respondents are concerned on the methodology to calculate rent increases. There must be a balance of ensuring that rents remain affordable to households, while upholding the quality and maintenance of these rental buildings.
- Committee members point to the importance of minimizing the displacement of current renters and the impacts of redevelopment.
- Some are concerned about the trade-offs to faster development – will the building quality be impacted? Will amenity spaces be removed to cut development costs?