

HOUSING CHOICES IN LOW-DENSITY NEIGHBOURHOODS

TALK VANCOUVER SURVEY RESULTS & SUMMARY

October 2019



**HOUSING
VANCOUVER**



Executive Summary

A survey was live on Talk Vancouver from July 9th to September 15th which asked the public for their input on duplexes and issues and implications of deep basements in single-family houses. In total, there were 3,382 survey respondents, comprising 1,281 renters, 1,877 owners, 98 co-op residents, and 126 residents with other forms of housing tenure.

Duplexes were largely viewed favourably, with 88% of respondents agreeing or strongly agreeing with allowing duplexes in single-family neighbourhoods. Most respondents viewed duplexes as a workable and low-impact option for the densification of single-family neighbourhoods. Concerns about the introduction of duplexes related to infrastructure needs (including parking), green space, protection of character homes, and unobtrusive designs. Respondents expressed enthusiasm about the housing choice and home-owning opportunities duplexes provide; however, many respondents voiced a need for more varied and intensive housing densification, creation, and affordability strategies on the part of the City.

Deep basements in single-family houses were generally seen as unfavourable, with the majority of respondents viewing the issues identified with deep basements as being important to address. There were significant concerns that basement suites be designed and built to maximize accessibility, health, wellness, and safety. For many respondents this precluded deep basement suites altogether in favour of housing stock partially or mostly above ground. They also urged that in light of the housing crisis, denser forms of new housing be favoured over single-family homes with basement suites. Existing residents do not like the visual and practical impacts of new large single-family homes; however, it was generally acknowledged that basements will be rented out and there were calls for a means to oversee/retrofit/legalize existing suites. Finally, there was a consistent minority argument that the city step back and allow housing supply/type to be determined by market forces.

Overall, respondents encouraged the city to move forward with its densification efforts with laneway houses, duplexes, and secondary suites. They recommended that building height restrictions be eased to make for more liveable suites in comparison to deep basements. Some respondents wrote in other housing options that they feel the City should consider as viable for low-density areas, with the most popular being townhouses, low-rise apartments, and triplexes. Aesthetically pleasing design for all housing types was emphasized, including retaining older housing stock, and discouraging 'monster homes' and high rises. The predominant mood was that the City should incentivize a variety of housing types to provide for the cross-section of its populace and come up with affordability provisions so that the new stock is truly financially accessible. This included, for many, the need to crack down on empty homes, speculation, and short-term rentals in the city. People were further concerned that Vancouver be a green city; reducing the footprint of its built environment and continuing to prioritize green space. The majority of respondents believed that increased density, if done thoughtfully, could make for a more accessible, liveable, sustainable, and cosmopolitan city.

Background

Vancouver is experiencing a housing crisis. Rising housing costs have far outpaced local incomes. To respond to this challenge, the City developed the Housing Vancouver Strategy, through work with many stakeholders and with the input of over 10,000 local residents.

Part of the strategy is to increase housing options in low density neighbourhoods. Providing housing options that allow more people to live in our low-density areas across the city will help achieve more complete communities. Complete communities have daily destinations such as shops, services, jobs, parks, schools and community centres, within walking/rolling distance of where people live. Creating more complete neighbourhoods is a key building block of the upcoming City-wide Plan and an important aspect of the City's Climate Emergency Response.

A survey was live on Talk Vancouver from July 9th to September 15th which asked the public for their input on duplexes and issues and implications of deep basements. In total, there were 3,382 survey respondents, comprising 1,281 renters, 1,877 owners, 98 co-op residents, and 126 residents with other forms of housing tenure.

Qualitative Response Analysis Methodology

The survey included three open-ended questions. The questions prompted thoughts on duplexes, new house construction (with and without suites), and general opinions on housing options in low-density neighbourhoods in Vancouver. Survey results were analyzed and summarized by an external consultant.

Open-ended responses to each of the questions were analyzed and coded inductively to find common themes. Initial themes were derived based on the sample coding and analysis of the first 100 responses to each question. Responses were coded to as many themes as applicable. These themes were used as a starting point for analyzing and coding the remaining data. Overall, coding was iterative. As new nuances and themes surfaced from the data, new codes were added, adjusted, and merged.

Along with results of responses to quantitative Likert scale questions, this document contains a summary of findings for each open-ended question. Coding of the open-ended responses and sample quotes can be found in the Appendix.

Results

Topic 1: Duplexes in Single-Family Neighbourhoods

What are your thoughts on duplexes in single-family neighbourhoods?

3,382 responses

I strongly agree with allowing duplexes in single-family neighbourhoods



I somewhat agree with allowing duplexes in single-family neighbourhoods



I am neutral on duplexes in single-family neighbourhoods



I somewhat disagree with allowing duplexes in single-family neighbourhoods



I strongly disagree with allowing duplexes in single-family neighbourhoods



Open-ended responses

2,395 responses

Summary

Duplexes were largely viewed favourably. The vast majority of respondents saw them as a workable and low-impact option for the densification of single family neighbourhoods.

There were concerns about their introduction, including that infrastructure needs (especially parking) be accounted for, green space and character housing protected, and design be unobtrusive. Respondents were enthusiastic about the ways in which duplexes provide new housing and home-owning opportunities, allow for double unit density within a comparable footprint, and revitalize communities, while also enabling a higher quality of life. A number of respondents brought up that while this is a start, there is a need for more intensive affordability and densification strategies given the extent of the housing crisis.

Themes

Affordability & housing crisis

A significant number of respondents brought up the need for more varied and intensive housing densification, creation, and affordability strategies on the part of the City. Duplexes were acknowledged as providing new opportunities for some, but not most Vancouverites. There were fears that big developers/speculators will render duplexes even more inaccessible. Some people voiced concerns that the housing crisis is exacerbating socioeconomic divides and that it is draining Vancouver culturally as people leave to find viable housing.

Environmental considerations

Duplexes were viewed as a more environmentally friendly housing form than detached homes. It was emphasized that increased density is environmentally responsible and sustainable. There was some unease about demolitions.

Positive features of duplexes

Duplexes were predominantly viewed as a sensitive housing densification option that protects neighbourhood character and provides a quality of life comparable to detached homes. Duplexes were viewed as a step towards increased density, affordability, housing, and efficient land use. Respondents were excited about there being more homeownership opportunities within Vancouver.

Impacts to neighbours & neighbourhoods

Residents were concerned about the limited availability of street parking and either argued against densification for this reason or for a formal solution that would not penalize existing homeowners. Broader infrastructure needs were also expressed with most respondents voicing concerns that services and amenities will be strained and need to be increased; and a minority arguing that density is more efficient for infrastructure provision. There was considerable enthusiasm for the idea that duplexes could bring more young families into neighbourhoods as duplexes provide a relatively financially accessible home amenable to family living. It was similarly named that duplexes are conducive to community and that they allow residents the option to downsize locally when they get older. Residents were concerned with the need to retain green space and believed that duplexes should be designed to mesh with neighbourhood architecture. Protecting heritage/character homes was emphasized with suggestions that the City incentivize converting existing homes over new builds. A smaller number of respondents brought up concerns over loss of privacy, increased noise, renter displacement, and supporting local businesses.

Zoning

There were similar numbers of respondents opposed to any single family zoning as there were opposed to the densification of single home areas. Some people called for duplexes to be neighbourhood specific rather than universally permitted.

Topic 2: New Houses With and Without Secondary Suites

Have you ever lived in a secondary suite?

Total participants: 3,382

Yes, I currently live in a secondary suite



Yes, I have previously lived in a secondary suite



No, I have never lived in a secondary suite



If yes, thinking about the most recent secondary suite you lived in... Would you say that the secondary suite is/was...?

Total participants: 1,905

Fully above ground



Partially below ground



Mostly below ground



Fully below ground



Livability

Basements in new houses are often pushed deep in the ground and only have a thin band of windows, which provide minimal light and ventilation. In your opinion, how important is it to address this issue?

3,382 responses

Very important



Important



Not important



Not important at all



Don't know



Greenhouse Gas Emissions

Deeper basements require more concrete, which produces more greenhouse gas emissions. In your opinion, how important is it to address this issue?

3,382 responses

Very important



Important



Not important



Not important at all



Don't know



Site Impacts

Deeper basements require more excavation on the site, the removal of a significant amount of soil, and make it more difficult to retain existing trees. In your opinion, how important is it to address this issue?

3,382 responses

Very important



Important



Not important



Not important at all



Don't know



Emergency Preparedness

Toilets in deep basements are more likely to require pumping up to the city sewer system rather than relying on gravity flow. This means that during power failures, toilets won't flush and sinks won't drain.

In your opinion, how important is it to address this issue?

3,382 responses

Very important



Important



Not important



Not important at all



Don't know



Groundwater

In some areas, there is a risk of encountering groundwater during excavation. When basements are deeper it can mean that groundwater is continuously pumped into sewers, which can limit sewer capacity. In your opinion, how important is it to address this issue?

3,382 responses

Very important



Important



Not important



Not important at all



Don't know



Design Flexibility

Many new houses have basements that don't meet the City's requirements to have a suite because they are too deep in the ground and don't have windows; they can't be legally converted into suites in the future. In your opinion, how important is it to address this issue?

3,382 responses

Very important



Important



Not important



Not important at all



Don't know



Open-ended responses

Are there any other issues related to new house construction (with or without suites) that concern you?

1,277 responses

Summary

Deep basement suites in single-family homes were generally viewed unfavourably. There were significant concerns that basement suites be designed and constructed to maximize accessibility, health, wellness, and safety. For many respondents this precluded deep basement suites altogether in favour of housing stock partially or mostly above ground. They also urged that in light of the housing crisis, denser forms of new housing be favoured over single-family homes with basement suites. Existing residents were not a fan of new larger single home builds and their visual and practical impacts. However, it was generally acknowledged that basements will be rented out and there were calls for a means to oversee/retrofit/legalize existing suites. Finally, there was a consistent minority argument that the city should step back and allow housing supply/type to be determined by market forces.

Themes

Accessibility

People had general concerns about access in and out of secondary suites for those with mobility challenges. Deep basements were generally viewed to be less accessible than other housing forms, especially in a crisis.

Affordability & housing crisis

Participants largely urged that the city focus on densification options other than basement suites in low-density areas. There were also some qualms about the costs of constructing suites to code disallowing affordable rents. Nevertheless, a significant minority argued that the need for housing outweighs any concerns about basement suites. Big development

and real estate speculation in the city were understood to be exacerbating the housing crisis.

Design solutions

There was a trend of respondents urging that the problems raised by the survey could be resolved through good building design. There was a strong consensus that height restrictions should be relaxed to eliminate the need for secondary suites to be in deep basements. Window wells and sunken patios were suggested to improve lighting.

Environmental considerations

Respondents want the City to have requirements for replacing trees/maximizing green space, to consciously increase density among transit lines, and to try to reduce the environmental impact of its construction projects. However, there was considerable scepticism about the survey's contention that the environmental impacts of deep basements are of concern considering other more invasive ongoing construction projects in the city. Participants pointed out the relative energy efficiency of basements as well as the smaller footprint of high-density housing.

Hazard & emergency preparedness

Participants strongly felt that there should be more than one exit from suites and that windows be accessible as exits. They emphasized that suites should be built to code for emergencies and were concerned that basements are innately more dangerous due to being underground (eg. more likely to flood, more likely to be trapped and harder to rescue in a fire or earthquake, etc.).

Health & well-being

People felt basement suites provide a poor quality of life and exacerbate existing health and socioeconomic disparities. They were extremely concerned with how lack of natural light impacts health and mental health. Mould/dampness and quality of air/ventilation were two other predominant concerns. Respondents further brought up access to common yard space, illegal suites, pests, radon, security, sound-proofing, suite entrance location, and

temperature as liveability factors that were not in their favour.

Impacts to neighbours & neighbourhoods

Residents were upset about the loss of older homes and did not appreciate the aesthetics or size of many of the new builds ('monster homes'). They were apprehensive about the impact of excavations on their properties and on groundwater/sewer capacity. There were also comments on the prospect of further stress on available street parking.

Regulations & restrictions

Respondents were divided as to the utility of existing regulations and restrictions. Some urged that standards be relaxed and that the overly stringent requirements were preventing the creation of housing, i.e., if people want to rent deep basements, the city should not get in the way. There was also a call for a different set of standards for older homes with the goal of legalizing/retrofitting existing basement suites. At the same time, a comparable number of respondents argued that building codes need to be heavily enforced to ensure suites are liveable and that owners are not renting out deep basements illegally as long-term or short-term rentals. Many people felt that deep basement suites should be banned altogether.

Do you have any other comments about housing options in low-density neighbourhoods?

1,902 responses

Summary

Overall, respondents encouraged the city to move forward with its densification efforts with laneways, duplexes, and secondary suites. They recommended that building height restrictions be eased to make for more liveable suites in comparison to deep basements. Some respondents wrote in other housing options that they feel the City should consider as viable for low-density areas. The most popular were townhouses, low-rise apartments, and triplexes. People cared about aesthetically pleasing design for all housing types, including retaining older housing stock, and discouraging 'monster homes' and high rises. The predominant mood was that the City should incentivize a variety of housing types to provide for the cross-section of its populace and come up with affordability provisions so that the new stock is truly financially accessible. This included, for many, the need to crack down on empty homes, speculation, and short-term rentals in the city. People were further concerned that Vancouver be a green city; reducing the footprint of its built environment and continuing to prioritize green space. The majority of respondents believed that increased density, if done thoughtfully, could make for a more accessible, liveable, sustainable, and cosmopolitan city.

Themes

Affordability & housing crisis

This section echoed earlier concerns about the lack of affordable housing in Vancouver and the need for provisions in addition to creating more supply to solve the crisis. Empty homes, speculation and big developers were named as requiring intervention. There was also considerable discussion of how the crisis is causing culture drain and exacerbating socioeconomic disparities in Vancouver. Many people voiced frustration that they feel homeowners have disproportionate influence over housing decisions and policy in the city.

Deep basements are substandard housing

Deep basements came up again as being undesirable and as providing a lower quality of living.

Design aesthetic

Respondents spoke at length about what type of design they would like in their city. They would like to retain aesthetically pleasing building stock where possible (not just character homes) and for the city to incentivize the retrofitting/renovations of these buildings over new builds. They would like new builds

to be attractive and in line with the general architecture of their specific locales. High rises were generally disliked.

Environmental considerations

People urged that the City preserve existing green space and create new parks, encourage housing forms with small environmental footprints, discourage demolitions, and facilitate the creation of denser environmentally conscious neighbourhoods.

Impacts to neighbours & neighbourhoods

Parking came up again as a key concern; residents would like the City to have a plan for how to handle the influx of cars that comes with more people. They also recommended that the City expand its services and amenities as needed. Respondents pointed out that increased density will help local businesses and create more vibrant active communities, particularly in neighbourhoods that have hollowed out.

Incentivizing other housing forms

Some people requested incentives to build new housing forms such as tax breaks or increased square footage allowances.

Other housing densification/creation strategies

Respondents wrote in other housing forms they believe the City should seriously consider. Townhouses were the most popular and many people argued they made more sense as a gentle densification strategy than duplexes

or deep basement suites. Low and mid-rise apartments were also heavily suggested, followed by 3 & 4 – plexes, purpose built rentals, and co-operative housing.

Regulations & restrictions

People asked for more streamlined and flexible housing regulations, emphasizing that the current regulations and restrictions are themselves a barrier to creating housing. Laneways and building height came up the most as restrictions to reconsider. However, they strongly urged that the City clamp down on short-term rentals.

Zoning

Of those respondents who expressed their opinions on increasing densification in single family neighbourhoods, the vast majority was in support. Of those in support, over half urged that the city take it further than duplexes, laneways, and secondary suites, citing ‘missing middle’ housing options and the need for purpose built rentals that provide secure affordable tenancies for citizens. Some people opposed densification altogether and some asked that it be applied to specific locales rather than as a blanket policy.

Appendix

What are your thoughts on duplexes in single-family neighbourhoods?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Affordability & housing crisis	Culture drain	36	Concerns that the affordability and housing crisis is howlwoing out Vancouver culturally as people are forced/choose to move.	A single detached in a single-family is beyond the reach of all but the .01%. So young families are leaving these neighborhoods and they are hollowing out. This is destroying the city.
	Need affordability strategy/provisions	140	Calls for a broad strategy/city-wide plan around housing affordability. Observations that duplexes will still not be within reach for the majority of Vancouverites.	Our housing crisis is HUGE...people cannot afford to live and work here! Minimum wage earners that work full time do not actually earn enough money for rent, let alone any other expenses. As a senior, I am also being forced to probably have to move far away from my friends, my health care professionals etc., and live where I will not feel safe or connected. I am sick to death of seeing nothing but "Luxury Condo's" being built that remain empty and no one can afford..
	Need variety of housing densification/creation strategies	268	Calls for housing densification and ceration strategies beyond dulaxes/suites.	Duplexes are such a small step in the right direction that it feels silly to even have to debate ever allowing them. It seems obvious to me that in a housing and climate crisis we need more types of dwellings across the entire city(and it seems odd that the current zoning effectively bans all but detached houses in *most* of the city).
	Social inequality.	58	Discussions of how housing prices, scarcity, and preponderance of single-family zoning exacerbate pre-existing socioeconomic disparities in quality of life and life chances for Vancouverites.	Everyone in a city has a right to live in any neighbourhood and there should be a variety of housing options in every area. Vast swathes of single-family homes which are unaffordable to those except the very wealthy (generationally or otherwise) act as economic and often racial segregation.
	Speculation, vacancy & big development	87	Assertions that real estate speculation and big developers are exacerbating the housing and affordability crisis. Complaints about empty homes. Fears developers and investors will capitalize on duplex builds and they will become as prohibitively expensive and/or sit empty. Calls for city intervention so this does not happen.	Investment property shouldn't be allowed, at least in Vancouver proper. Houses are for LIVING IN, not generating income. Only people living in their houses should be able to own those properties in the city. Why not pass a by-law to this effect? People can buy investment properties in other cities, or vacation spots. People in Vancouver need housing. The people who deliver the services to Vancouver need housing IN Vancouver. Why should they have to commute from the suburbs or live in tiny rental units?

What are your thoughts on duplexes in single-family neighbourhoods?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Environmental considerations		54	Comments on the environmental implications of duplexes. Largely assertions that smaller homes/increasing density is positive with some concerns about the footprint of demolishing existing housing stock.	From a housing perspective, and from a climate change perspective (ie reducing sprawl by supporting transit and giving people options to live closer to their work), increasing density in low-density neighbourhoods is extremely important.
		24	Comments that increased density in low density areas will be a more efficient use of infrastructure and will revitalize/increase available services and amenities.	Higher density neighbourhoods allow for the delivery of city services more cost effectively.
Impacts to neighbours & neighbourhood		54	Feedback on the implications of increased density for city services and amenities in low density areas. Arguments that increased density in low density areas will strain infrastructure and/or that city services and amenities needs to be expanded ahead of time.	Unless there is a corresponding plan to increase services (road infrastructure, schools, fire dept, health care....) you cannot jam more people into any neighborhoods. They were built this way with all the capacities in mind. You must increase all facets for it to be done properly.
		26	Thoughts on various ways residents could take advantage of the downsizing opportunities duplexes provide and reasons to do so.	I think if the 1/2 duplex can be sold, this is a good option for homeowners who have a lot of equity tied into their property, to free up some money for retirement, sending kids to school etc, while contributing to solutions for the housing crisis.
		68	Comments that the aesthetics of duplexes should be pleasing and fit with existing neighbourhood architecture.	If aesthetics, lot size, and clearances re neighbouring homes/lots fits in with the neighbourhood, I think these could bring a nice balance.
		148	Thoughts on duplexes as a good housing form for families and/or enable young families to return to the neighbourhood.	As renters with a family, we are distressed by the lack of available rental housing options. Duplexes allow for more living space for families than high rises and are situated in pleasant residential neighbourhoods with schools and other amenities.
		84	Assertions that duplexes are conducive to a sense of community and that increased density will revitalize neighbourhoods.	Density in other areas can also help build more lively and vibrant communities in areas of the city that are struggling to keep schools open (for example) while other areas are beyond capacity and turning kids away from their neighborhood schools!

What are your thoughts on duplexes in single-family neighbourhoods?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Impacts to neighbours & neighbourhood	Helps local businesses	26	Comments on how increased density will help local businesses thrive.	It also continues to support existing small businesses so that they are not displaced with development that is accompanied by large corporate grocery stores, pharmacies etc.
	Need to protect character/ older homes	69	Concerns about the loss/destruction of viable existing housing stock, especially heritage/character homes. Suggestions that existing homes be converted to duplexes and that the city make this easier.	I think that the retention of older homes is important as it is more sustainable than destroying often good quality and well built houses to be replaced with newer but not as well built structures. There should be a bylaw allowing and facilitating the transformation of older buildings in multiplexes (or duplexes) instead of the replacement of a older single family homes but new duplexes.
	Parking & traffic concerns	167	Arguments that low density areas are not equipped for more cars. Calls either to not densify these areas for this reason or for some kind of solution.	I am in favour as long as a requirements for some onsite parking is addressed.
	Preserve greenspace	48	Assertions of the need to actively preserve greenspace such as yards and parks.	I support increased density BUT NOT larger house footprints that minimize garden and green space in our residential areas. We have to stop houses being built to the lot lines and concrete aprons around everything!!
	Privacy & noise concerns	24	Varied opinions on the implications of duplexes for privacy and noise. Mainly that they are worse than detached homes but better than other housing forms.	It also allows for more privacy as living in condos or basement suites (any top/bottom) situation can cause problems as children are inevitably noisy.
	Renter displacement	26	Concerns that rental stock will be more expensive in new duplexes than existing rentals in single family homes. Apprehensions that renters in existing single family homes will lose their housing when homes are demolished/ converted into duplexes.	Demolishing a home to build an expensive duplex just chases away renters or increases rents.

What are your thoughts on duplexes in single-family neighbourhoods?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Positive features of duplexes	Efficient use of space	174	Arguments that duplexes are an efficient use of space. Comments about how efficiency is needed given the limited land available in Vancouver proper.	In this housing crisis we simply must move away from the single family home being the dominant land use and housing type in our geographically limited city.
	New homeownership opportunities	331	Statements about how duplexes will allow more people to become homeowners in Vancouver.	Duplexes are an excellent way of providing more housing in our single-family neighbourhoods, which is still spacious and ground-oriented while being much more affordable.
	New housing opportunities	214	Statements about how duplexes will provide more housing stock, options, and diversity. Acknowledgment of the housing crisis. Hopes for affordability.	Allowing more options in single-family neighbourhoods will help with affordability.
	New rental opportunities	65	Belief that duplexes will create new rental opportunities and potentially decrease rents. Statements about the positive features of duplex rentals over other housing forms and the perks of living in single family areas.	Even if both sides are owned by the same person, and one side is rented out, the rental unit is a huge step up from a basement suite.
	Provides a house-like home	110	Commentary on how duplexes provide a quality of life similar to a detached home-with natural light, space, a yard, residential neighbourhood community, etc.	Duplexes could provide space-efficient housing options for a greater amount of people, while maintaining the city's desired 'suburban' style. Duplexes would avoid the issue of mega houses and mini mansions, where a few privileged people afford to live upstairs, and several less wealthy people rent underground, or in cramped units accessed from the backyard.
	Sensitive means of increasing density	366	Statements emphasizing that duplexes are a gentle/palatable way of adding density. Arguments that duplexes are a logical progression/housing choice to add to single family neighbourhoods as they fit with their character.	I agree with the principle of gradually increasing density in single family neighbourhoods, as long as it's done sensitively. Doing it through duplexes is one of the more sensitive ways. What is important, though, is to retain the neighbourhood character

What are your thoughts on duplexes in single-family neighbourhoods?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Zoning	Against densification of single home areas	84	Desire to maintain single family areas for various reasons including loss the neighbourhood character, green space, property values, quality of life, and streetside parking. Arguments that the infrastructure in these areas is not equipped for added density.	Our family chose to buy and live in a low density neighborhood. If we had wanted otherwise we would have chosen a different neighbourhood. Where will we be forced to live if we want low density? The suburbs?? Then we will pollute more driving everywhere. And be living where we don't want to. Would the city prefer to force people to relocate to another city or province?
	Against single family zoning	93	Desire to upzone all of Vancouver proper to meet housing and affordability needs. Arguments that single family zoning is no longer viable sustainable or desirable for Vancouver as a growing city.	Vancouver is a city with a growing population. It is not rational to expect extensive single-family zoning within the limits of a city. World-class cities don't grow this way.
	Make duplexes neighbourhood specific	45	Calls for duplexes to be considered on a neighbourhood/area specific basis rather than being allowed in all low density areas.	It should depend on the size of the lots in single-family neighbourhoods; if majority of lots are of the same, smaller size, than duplexes should be allowed. However, if there are a number of larger-sized lots within the neighbourhood, then duplexes should NOT be allowed.

Are there any other issues related to new house construction (with or without suites) that concern you?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Accessibility		21	Access in and out of suites for those with mobility challenges.	Accessibility is an issue. Anyone who has mobility issues is going to have a problem getting into a secondary suite that is more than a few steps down. I was in a wheelchair and then a walker for a few months last year and it was very difficult getting up and down stairs.
Affordability & housing crisis	Basement suites provide desperately needed affordable housing	67	Arguments that the fact basements provide much needed housing stock outweighs any concerns raised by the survey	A crappy dark musty deep basement suite - substandard housing- is better than no options at all.
	Expensive construction costs	16	Claims that deep basement suites are expensive to construct and that will impact housing affordability. Requests for the city to provide financial incentives to offset construction costs.	Deeper basements mean increased construction cost and therefore increased home prices and rental rates.
	Prioritize more dense above ground housing creation strategies	100	Contentions that basement suites are not a good strategy to tackle the housing and affordability crisis. Calls that the city allow denser housing formats in low-density neighbourhoods.	Literally all of these problems would be solved if we just allowed people to build apartment buildings instead of only-slightly-less-expensive houses.
	Speculation & big development	20	Concerns about real estate speculation and big developers exacerbating the housing and affordability crisis.	The biggest hurdle is outside buyers, which have driven house costs up. House costs are exponentially more than the 90% of Vancouver residents can afford, so where are the buyers coming from? Definitely not Vancouver. The answer should be restricting housing purchases to BC residents whom pay income tax in BC. You must pay a years worth of income tax and reside here for a year to be able to purchase a house/land. This policy will take effect when the average housing mortgage in Vancouver is beyond 50% of the average yearly income. That's it. We have a problem of influx. There are more people with millions outside of Vancouver than inside. So it is impossible to fix with density housing. The density housing will just go up in cost as well to the same levels.

Are there any other issues related to new house construction (with or without suites) that concern you?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Design solutions	Allow for taller houses	123	Assertions that the city should moderately relax height restrictions on single family builds with secondary suites.	Relax the building height rules, basements can then be built higher. All problems solved. The restrictions on height are arbitrary and houses a few feet taller are hardly a threat to the peace and prosperity of the city.
	Ceiling height	40	Very mixed opinions on ceiling height trends and requirements for basements and upper floors. No consensus.	Ceiling height should be at least 8 feet. Being mostly underground with less light already feels rather oppressing. Low ceiling heights add to that.
	Good design	39	General call for design solutions/ assertions that the problems raised by the survey can be resolved with good design.	The city has a solution to all this by allowing shorter basement suites! I've lived in many "illegal" basement suites with low ceilings and no one died. Most of these concerns can be addressed with thoughtful design.
	Sunken patios	6	Arguments for sunken patios.	The city should allow larger sunken patios for basement suites.
	Window wells	27	Arguments for window wells.	Light. Why doesn't Vancouver allow external light wells - even when they may encroach into setbacks and side yards. This would help solve the livability, and potentially safety issues. Every other country I have lived in uses them. They make some sense in a dense environment.
Environmental considerations	Greenhouse gas emissions & environmental footprint	75	Largely criticisms of the survey's contention that deep basement concrete increases greenhouse gas emissions. Suggestions for reducing the impact of basement construction. Perspective-taking comments re: other construction projects in Vancouver, the relative footprints of low density vs. high density housing, assertions that deep basements are more energy efficient for heating/cooling, etc.	The Greenhouse Gas item is a bad question. Yes, it's important to limit greenhouse gas emissions, but what's the relative impact of more concrete compared to pushing residents out further and thus increasing commute, etc.

Are there any other issues related to new house construction (with or without suites) that concern you?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Environmental considerations	Public transit	7	Assertions that it would be good to increase density along transit lines and/or increase public transit in these neighbourhoods that are being densified.	We can't give up green space and trees to increase square footage by adding deeper basements. Add density near transit, not the beach or the forest or the mountain.
	Trees/green space	43	Concerns about losing trees in Vancouver, suggestions that the city make requirements for replacing trees/ maximizing green space, and skepticism regarding the surveys claim that deep basements disrupt trees.	Mature tree roots are typically shallow in Vancouver so they are seriously damaged even with the relatively shallow excavations required for putting in the forms to pour concrete for the structural requirements for non-basement homes. As an arborist and horticulturist, I think improving the sting of newly planted trees is more relevant to creating a tree canopy for the future.
Hazard & emergency preparedness	Earthquakes	20	Structural integrity of basement suites during earthquakes. Concerns about residents being trapped under debris due to being in a basement/being harder to find and rescue.	Deep basements as primary living space make post-earthquake searches for survivors much more difficult. I know, it's an unprecedented issue here, but Vancouver needs to plan for surviving the next very large earthquake.
	Exits	107	Comments emphasizing the need for more than one emergency exit and/or for windows large enough to exit from.	Being able to exit during a fire might be a challenge if all the windows and small and high up.
	Fires	20	General comments on the importance of fire safety concerns other than exits- sprinklers, smoke detectors, fireproof drywall, enforcing fire safety codes etc.	fire safety (should sprinklers be mandated?)
	Floods	29	Flooding concerns unique to basements, comments on possible increased flooding risk in the future due to climate change.	With climate change there is more likelihood of flooding which is more prone to basement units. Ensuring these units have minimal impact and don't flood is very important.
	Power outages & plumbing	41	Sewage back-up concerns, statements asserting this is not actually a problem, design suggestions (eg. battery back up for pumps, on site storage tank for sewage etc.)	All of these problems are easily solvable or something you'll have to address anyway (e.g. get battery backups for the toilets/sinks, you'll have to upgrade sewage systems to handle increased density anyway, etc.)

Are there any other issues related to new house construction (with or without suites) that concern you?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Health & well-being	Access to common yard space	6	The value in access to private yard space and/or equity for suite tenants in accessing yard/patio space.	Yard/ garden space is often provided only for the use of the owner/ main floor tenant.
	Dignified living/quality of life	81	Comments on feeling these living environments are demeaning and/or dehumanizing. Comments that basement suites exacerbate existing health & socioeconomic disparities.	This is no way to densify or house people with dignity. A deep basement suite is the easiest way to make someone feel like a second class citizen. They are literally forced underground and typically have to take a side or back entrance.
	Illegal suites	19	Concerns about the preponderance of illegal suites in Vancouver/that deep basements will be turned into illegal suites with unjust/unsafe living conditions.	Deep basements with no natural light cannot legally be turned into suites but many such suites are illegally on the market, and it is often students and other low income groups who are forced into these unhealthy and depressing suites.
	Mould/dampness	60	Liveability concerns regarding moisture proofing, humidity, mold growth etc.	Poor ventilation and moisture control in basement suites leads to poor indoor air quality and health concerns. I have lived in moldy basements myself and suffered allergies due to mold.
	Natural light/sightlines to outdoors	210	Assertions of the importance of natural light to liveability/health/mental health.	In a city with such a long rainy season, the lack of light in basements affects most people's health. We have to stop thinking of basements as an option. Basements are for troll and murlocks only.
	Pests	9	Increased infestation concerns unique to suites.	Basement suites often have more issues with pests (mice, bugs).
	Radon	18	Safety around possible exposure to radon gas.	Ground gases like radon and from soil contamination are not regularly checked.
	Security	7	Break-in/security concerns unique to suites.	Security was also a concern, as with the windows being right at ground level and juust large enough for someone to sneak through, it was often a concern.
	Sound-proofing & noise-transfer	24	Statements about the sound-proofing needs /standards of basement suites.	Ceiling/floor noise transmission is more of an issue than having a shared wall as per duplexes or townhouses.

Are there any other issues related to new house construction (with or without suites) that concern you?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote	
Health & well-being	Ventilation	48	General comments on poor ventilation in basement suites and its effects on health and mental health.	Basement suites in general are badly ventilated, in part because they have just one entrance. I'd be glad to see through-ventilation and emergency second exits required in new construction. They might be too much to ask in retrofits, possibly deterring the renovations in the first place, which we want to avoid. But for new homes, the added cost would be minimal, and the gain in health, comfort, and safety considerable.	
	Negative impacts to neighbours & neighbourhood	9	Laments over the loss of older/character homes for new construction. Worries that new builds often do not even add to housing.	It's not so much the new houses as the existing homes that are torn down rather than renovated. I seriously object to livable older homes being turned into landfill. Renovate or move old homes, don't just tear them down.	
		Excavations	30	Various negative impacts of excavations on neighbouring properties.	Impact on next door houses, when deep basements are excavated. Our basement floor developed a big crack when a deep excavation next door was created for a new house.
		Groundwater & sewer capacity	42	Apprehensions about excavations encountering groundwater and about pumping groundwater into sewers. Assertions that the city needs to upgrade its sewer system.	Inevitably, the underground water is diverted into the sewer system and not into the surrounding ecosystem, resulting in a less natural, more sterile environment. We can only build so much on the land before the land becomes arid.
Parking	Larger new builds	28	Complaints about the size/aesthetics of some recent builds. Concerns that if houses are built with non-deep basements (aka taller) it will impact daylight/views for the existing neighbouring houses.	They allow too much square footage for the lot and you get a house that is much too high and dwarfs the houses next to them which then end up being demolished as they give up as they have lost their light and privacy.	
	Parking	24	Concerns about increasing densification putting further stress on available parking. Suggestions that the city require new builds to include onsite parking and/or allow for underground parking.	Need to provide parking like a garage or driveway, extra people in a suite just adds to the already stressed parking in neighborhoods.	

Are there any other issues related to new house construction (with or without suites) that concern you?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Regulations & restrictions	Do not allow deep basement suites	75	Strong opinions against the construction/existence of deep basement suites.	It's unbelievable that this is even happening. Basement living in a secondary suite is bad enough but buried deep underground is just inhumane. Get it together, Vancouver.
	Enforcement needed	41	Emphasis on the need to enforce city building regulations and codes for basement suites.	Basement apartments are not proper apartments and the city should highly regulate and regularly inspect and fine homeowners who do not comply.
	Existing & new builds should have different standards	30	Call for a different set of standards and regulations for existing vs. new builds. Goal of legalizing/retrofitting existing basement housing.	I think for existing basements these should be allowed as suites but new ones being built should adhere to new requirements. Existing homeowners with suites shouldn't be penalized for old legislation that was once allowed. But change for the better, livability environment etc for new ones.
Secondary suite questions	Flexibility needed	48	Arguments for more flexible basement suite regulations. Arguments that current requirements dissuade people from building them. Private property and free market arguments.	These quote "issues" are not really issues at all. The City should keep their nose out of these things. We are in need of more housing. Stop making it so difficult for homeowners to convert their basements into rental suites. The free market will work these things out. If a suite is too dark then it will be cheaper to rent - plain and simple. We need inexpensive places to rent.
	Short-term rental concerns	6	Concerns that new basement suites will be used for short-term rentals.	The scourge of Air Bnb - my concern is that they won't be rented out to people who actually live in Van (like me)
feedback		65	Feedback that the questions were confusing, educational, leading, or ambiguous	These questions are too confusing, ambiguous, and complex for a public survey.

Do you have any other comments about housing options in low-density neighbourhoods?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Affordability & housing crisis	Culture drain	22	Concerns that the affordability and housing crisis is hollowing out Vancouver culturally as people are forced/choose to move.	I think we need to increase density wherever we can, if we don't want to lose younger people who make under 50K a year in Vancouver, but so far it looks like this is not something the CoV is interested in. San Francisco is an example, where there are no longer people who can work in the lower paid sectors (yet essential) who can live in or near the city. Already people in their 20s and 30s are leaving in droves, as well because wages in this city are abysmal and housing is very stressful.
	Need affordability strategy/provisions	117	Calls for a broad strategy/city-wide plan around housing affordability. Calls to ensure affordable rents.	I'm not convinced that taking a 2 million dollar property and converting it into two, 1 million dollar, properties is going to do much to improve the current affordability situation. Vancouver is addicted to the money that real estate speculation generates. The city still has a lot of work before duplexes are going to make an impact on the average "\$50K/year" worker's bottom line. A million bucks is still out of reach for 90% of the population.
	Social inequality	56	Comments on how housing prices, scarcity, and preponderance of single-family zoning exacerbate pre-existing socioeconomic disparities in quality of life and life chances for Vancouverites. Frustrations that homeowners are taking up a disproportionate amount of space in the conversation due to their relative resources and influence.	I've been to a lot of cities and Vancouver is up there in terms of first world housing disparity. A bike ride north (let's say starting at 57th Ave) along the Arbutus greenway into downtown is shocking. We've dedicated half our city to palatial mansions on half-acre lots behind iron gates. 30 minutes later I'm surrounded by hundreds of people who spend the majority of their lives on the street. It's shameful.
	Speculation, vacancy & big development	84	Assertions that real estate speculation and big developers are exacerbating the housing and affordability crisis. Complaints about empty homes. Calls for intervention.	We need to stop issuing approvals and building permits for luxury condos and homes, especially in low/middle income neighbourhoods. Go back to building regular apartment buildings, regular homes. If developers really cared about increasing density to help ease the housing crisis, then they wouldn't slow down when prices start to drop. The greed needs to stop.

Do you have any other comments about housing options in low-density neighbourhoods?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Deep basements are substandard housing		83	Comments on how deep basements suites are undesirable and offer a lower quality of living.	It doesn't seem to be fair or ethical in the progressive and democratic city like Vancouver to put young growing families in a dark and small basement suites while allowing retirees or well to do families live in bigger brighter houses on top, enjoying whole a lot more space and view including yards and garages.
Design aesthetic	Against high rises	30	General complaints about/dislike of high rise buildings in the city.	I am in favour of gentle densification, townhouses, duplexes, row houses, shorter apartment blocks in single family home areas. I am not in support of all the new taller buildings scattered around the city, outside of the downtown area.
	Design important	54	Calls for attractive design in various types of housing. Calls for housing design to mesh with the area it is in. Complaints about some of the larger new single house builds.	Consider shifting to a form-based code. Determine what the buildings should look like from the outside, but let the architect/builders figure out how to meet the requirements (duplex, triplex, fourplex, five plex - who cares?)
	Need to protect older/character buildings	72	Concerns about the loss/destruction of viable existing housing stock, especially heritage/character homes. Suggestions that existing homes be renovated/retrofitted rather than destroyed. Calls for character/heritage homes to have a separate set of codes. Comments that when they are demolished existing affordable rental stock is often lost.	My big concern is the demolishing of Vancouver's architectural history - older homes are torn down quickly. Renovation should be the first choice and renovating to include more suites within the house should also be a mandate - stop the monster houses, please.
Environmental considerations	Environmental footprint	38	Largely comments for ecologically friendly builds and denser neighbourhoods. Concern over demolitions.	How can we be the greenest city when we have all this demolition waste?
	Preserve greenspace	50	Assertions of the need to actively preserve green space and trees.	Densification is good, but so is retaining our canopy cover. The more trees we can keep, the healthier we all are both mentally and physically. Living in a concrete jungle with little or no green space close to home is depressing. I know, I used to live in London.

Do you have any other comments about housing options in low-density neighbourhoods?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Impacts to neighbours & neighbourhood	City services & amenities	59	Calls for city services and amenities to be expanded.	Increased densification should be coordinated with increased community services such as transit, traffic control, schools, community centre, and other amenities.
	Local businesses	36	Calls to help local businesses thrive/opportunities for new local businesses.	I have visited low density neighbourhoods that have cafes/groceries that have grandfathered into the area. I love these and the way they bring the community together, they connect people in these neighbourhoods. It would be wonderful to see zoning able to accommodate more of these.
	Parking & traffic concerns	106	Arguments that low density areas are not equipped for more cars. Calls either to not densify these areas for this reason or for some kind of solution.	I have noticed less parking spots. The streets are getting over crowded with cars. It is a real concern. Neighbours are fighting over parking spots in their neighbourhood. A very real and serious threat.
Incentivizing other housing forms	Sense of community	36	Comments about ways to build and maintain vibrant communities.	I think allowing more housing choice in single family neighbourhoods is a great idea that will ultimately make for better, more vibrant, and diverse communities.
		37	Arguments that there need to be incentives to create housing and suggestions for said incentives.	Densify! Consider subsidies or tax breaks for homeowners willing to create rental housing via secondary suites.
Other housing densification/creation strategies			This category includes arguments for various housing types throughout the city, mostly in the context of single-family areas but not exclusively so.	
	3 & 4 plexes	106		Four-plexes should be allowed. Get grown up like big cities do (Montreal, Toronto). It is not a god given right to own a single family dwelling.
	Co-ops	34		Seriously it's next to impossible to get a new co-op development approved in this city.
	Low & mid-rise apartments	146		I'm not convinced that duplexes and secondary units are the only way to add density that doesn't 'ruin the character' of neighbourhoods that now have mainly detached homes. A simple two- or three-story walk-up apartment building, attractively designed, is not going to brutalize a neighbourhood. Big front yards are overrated.

Do you have any other comments about housing options in low-density neighbourhoods?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Other housing densification/creation strategies	Purpose built rentals	64		I also note our housing crisis is not just about ownership, but about rentals. By restricting rentals to areas that are currently zoned for multifamily already, we are encouraging displacement of tenants, since the only place we can reliably build is where there is already a rental building. Allowing rental apartments to be built in currently low-density areas is the only way to add to our rental stock while avoiding displacement. The city should explore rental-only zoning in low-density neighbourhoods (and NOT just on arterials) as a way of encouraging new rental development.
	Townhouses	184		Townhouses would be better than either of these options. Most cities have them as the main housing option. People can own their space, and it can be a large space with a proper garden, but there can be many more homes per block while still retaining the character of quiet tree-lined streets etc.
Regulations & restrictions	Allow for taller houses	37	Assertions that the city should moderately relax height restrictions on single family builds.	I feel that some relaxations on building height would be positive to provide more livable homes.
	Barriers to creating housing	77	Arguments that the amount of regulations and restrictions are dissuading/preventing the housing supply. Some comments urging the city to just act on densification and it's pace and approach is in itself a barrier to new housing.	I have now worked on a number of Character Retention Projects where the number of existing units has decreased as a result of regulations/code. Increase the number of allowable units on a 33x122 lot to four (4) and 50x122 to five (5) or (6) as long as they are safe, have exits, etc.
	Laneways	86	Positive opinions of laneways. Calls for less restrictions (ability to own, ability to build with duplex, larger sizes, etc.).	Please increase the maximum size of laneway houses so that they can more reasonably fit a young family. If laneways could be 1,500 sq.ft. it would likely fill the gap of many young families looking for houses but not able to afford an existing single family dwelling / larger house. It would also allow people to live above ground for those who don't want to (continue to) live in basements.
	Short-term rental concerns	25	Opinions that the preponderance of short-term rentals is worsening the housing and affordability crisis. Calls for intervention.	Restrict owners from allowing Airbnb type companies from using these housing options, otherwise you're thwarting the attempt at achieving higher density for locals.

Do you have any other comments about housing options in low-density neighbourhoods?

Code	Subcode	# of Mentions	Description	Sample Quote
Zoning	Against densification of single home areas	77	Desire to maintain single family areas	I don't see the need to densify these areas. There seem to be plenty of vacant or abandoned industrial zone that could be converted into decent and affordable housing. Low density areas offer some much needed buffer, breathable and green zones in our city.
	Density	303	Comments supportive of the plan of adding duplexes and secondary suites to single family areas. General comments that Vancouver should densify. This category includes people who want taller houses/laneways in addition to duplexes/a higher FSR/additional suites. It excludes those comments that mention different housing forms altogether.	Vancouver is and should be changing. These neighbourhoods aren't sustainable on any level - ecologically, economically or socially. That all of these neighbourhoods should densify very significantly is a no-brainer. The challenge is in making sure the new housing is built to last, to meet people's actual needs (size and design), is affordable and aren't eyesores.
	Low density areas should allow more than suites, laneways, & duplexes	415	Calls that single family areas allow housing densification and creation strategies beyond those named in the survey. Opinions that there is too much land dedicated to single family zoning.	2. This survey starts with a line (and I'm paraphrasing) "Vancouver is experiencing a housing crisis" and we're talking about look and feel? It seems like the City is more concerned about existing landowners problems about "look and feel" than the fact that there are thousands of people who are under housed and experiencing homelessness. Low-density neighbourhoods are for suburbs and rural areas. All of the single-family neighbourhoods ought to be rezoned to permit townhouses, rowhouses, duplexes, and the like. I understand that people have an emotional connection to how their neighbourhood currently "looks and feels" but that is frankly just not important when we are experiencing a housing crisis. We need more housing. We need more purpose built rental housing. We need more diversity in our housing supply. Zoning is not a panacea-- but it will help. Come on y'all.
	Targeted density	73	Various calls for neighbourhood or area specific densifying efforts eg. near transit hubs, on corner lots, along arterials, in certain neighbourhoods, not in certain neighbourhoods, etc.	It's time to increase the density on the West side of the city! Should allow medium density just off arterials/transit routes. Residents of multi-family housing don't all want to be on noisy streets.