



COUNCIL REPORT

Report Date: July 9, 2024
Contact: Dan Garrison
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Meeting Date: July 23, 2024
[Submit comments to Council](#)

TO: Vancouver City Council
FROM: General Manager of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability
SUBJECT: Seniors Housing Strategy

RECOMMENDATIONS

- A. THAT Council approve the Seniors Housing Strategy as attached in Appendix A.
- B. THAT Council approve the Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy as attached in Appendix B.
- C. THAT Council approve the consequential amendment to remove Seniors Housing from the Interim Rezoning Policy for Social Housing, Seniors Housing, and Institutional, Cultural and Recreational Uses in Former Community Visions Areas as attached in Appendix C.
- D. THAT Council approve the Resident Relocation Policy for Community Care and Assisted Living Residences as attached in Appendix D.
- E. THAT Council approve the new Seniors Housing, Community Care Facility and Group Residence Guidelines as attached in Appendix E, and repeal of the Seniors Supportive or Assisted Housing Guidelines and Community Care Facility – Class B and Group Residence Guidelines.
- F. THAT Council request the Mayor write a letter to the BC Minister of Housing, Minister of Health and the CEO of BC Housing on behalf of Council to respectfully request changes to the SAFER program and home support services, additional funding for seniors social and supportive housing and long-term care in Vancouver, and other important actions as outlined in Appendix F.

PURPOSE AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report brings forward for Council's consideration:

- The City's first Seniors Housing Strategy, which identifies the housing needs and challenges of older adults and strategies and actions to address these needs,
- An accompanying rezoning policy to enable the development of seniors housing in neighbourhoods across the city,
- A new Resident Relocation Policy for Community Care and Assisted Living Residences to ensure residents of redeveloping long-term care and assisted living facilities receive protections,
- Updated design guidelines to ensure new long-term care, assisted living and seniors supportive or independent housing meets the needs of residents, and
- A draft letter outlining the key areas of advocacy to the Provincial government with regards to seniors housing and supports.

The overarching goal of the Seniors Housing Strategy is to ensure elders and older adults have the housing and supports needed to allow for aging in appropriate and affordable housing in their community.

COUNCIL AUTHORITY/PREVIOUS DECISIONS

- Vancouver Plan (2022)
- Housing Vancouver Financial Delivery Strategy (2018)
- Housing Vancouver Strategy (2017)
- The Age-Friendly Action Plan (2013)

CITY MANAGER'S COMMENTS

The City Manager supports the recommendations herein.

CONTEXT AND BACKGROUND

Older adults are a fast-growing age demographic in Vancouver, with more older persons in the city than ever before. More than 194,000 people (30%) in the City of Vancouver are 55 years or older, with this number expected to increase significantly over the next twenty years. Seniors are also getting older as a cohort, with higher proportions of people aged 75 and older in the coming future.

If approved, this strategy will be the first seniors-specific housing strategy in the City of Vancouver. With the fast growing and aging population, it is urgent that the city do its part and work in partnership to meet the needs of this diverse population.

The Seniors Housing Strategy is an implementation of the Vancouver Plan and Housing Vancouver Strategy.

Vancouver Plan (2022)

Approved in 2022, the Vancouver Plan is a long-range land use strategy that guides growth of the city in an intentional way, clarifying where growth and change will occur over the next 30 years. The Plan includes a housing vision that advances an equitable housing system and

increases housing diversity and options in all neighbourhoods, while prioritizing housing for those who need it most. This work is part of implementation of Direction 1.1 Housing Need: Plan for and accommodate existing and future housing need, including exploring demographic-based housing strategies to meet diverse housing needs, including the needs of seniors.

Housing Vancouver Strategy

Approved in 2017, the Housing Vancouver Strategy also includes a focus on seniors, recognizing the fast-growing demographic and the demand for seniors' facilities. The Seniors Housing Strategy implements one of the key actions under Strategy 4, which is to develop housing policies to improve care and wellness for seniors and the development of affordable independent living options for seniors in need. The Housing Vancouver Strategy further highlighted the need to ensure affordable housing serves those with the greatest need, including low-income seniors at risk of homelessness, as is prioritized in this work.

DISCUSSION

The Seniors Housing Strategy identifies the housing needs and challenges of older adults, along with strategies and actions to advance the housing and supports needed to allow older adults to age in their community in appropriate and affordable housing.

1. Housing Needs of Older Adults

Older adults in Vancouver are a diverse group with different needs, preferences, cultures, life experiences, abilities, and ages. Quantitative and qualitative data show that older adults have different housing and supports needs that change over time. Some key findings from the Strategy include:

Older adults who rent face serious affordability challenges

According to the BC Seniors Advocate 2024 report *Ageing Matters: What We Heard from B.C. Seniors*, there is an urgent need for financial relief among the 1 in 5 B.C. seniors who rent. In Vancouver, this need is higher with 30% of older adults in the city renting and facing serious affordability challenges. According to 2021 Census data, there are over 14,000 senior-led households aged 55+ who are paying more than 30% of their household income on rent in the private market. Over one-third of these households are in crisis (approximately 5,100 households) and spending over 50% of their household income on rent. In addition, there are high numbers of older adults living in social housing as well as on the BC Housing social housing waitlist (43% of people on the waitlist are 55+). As of the last City of Vancouver homeless count, 21% of people counted were over 55 years old and almost half first experienced homelessness when they were already a senior.

In order to address these challenges, the Strategy calls for improvements to the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) Program, which would have an immediate and significant impact on older adults in Vancouver paying more than 30% to rent their homes now, and who can't wait for new homes to be built. Other important actions include partnering to deliver more affordable housing options for older adults, with a focus on new supportive housing targeted to seniors and creating the regulatory framework to support this new supply.

The majority of older adults are homeowners and want to stay in their homes and neighbourhoods as long as possible

The majority of older adults 55+ are homeowners (70%), with over two-thirds of these residents no longer having a mortgage. Overall, we heard a high level of satisfaction with their current housing situation. Many older adults plan to remain in their homes and communities for as long

as possible but may need more housing options and supports to do so. To advance this, the Strategy supports the BC Seniors Advocate's call to eliminate the daily rate to receive at-home supports and to investigate opportunities to foster and support Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) when undertaking future area planning processes, which includes opportunities for a diverse range of new housing (e.g., multiplex, rental apartments, condos). Further, it supports improving access to information to connect older adults to programs that may allow them to remain in their homes, such as property tax deferral and home renovation programs.

Many older adults will need health and other supports as they age

Though there is a high overall level of housing satisfaction amongst older adults, those in older age groups tend to experience different challenges than younger seniors. Many older adults will require a different type of housing or health supports as they age. This could include temporary supports after a fall such as at-home bathing or cleaning, health services, or ongoing social supports to improve overall health and well-being. For older adults who require complex care, there is a shortage of long-term care and assisted living in Vancouver. According to Vancouver Coastal Health, in 2025 there will be a shortage of just over 300 subsidized long-term care beds and 90 subsidized assisted living units in the City of Vancouver and without further action, this shortage could grow to close to 1,500 long-term care beds and 350 assisted living units over the next ten years due to demographic changes.

To support the additional care options needed, the Strategy includes actions to partner with Vancouver Coastal Health and BC Housing to deliver new and redeveloped long-term care, along with seniors social, co-op and supportive housing. It also includes streamlining and expediting subsidized long-term care and assisted living projects, exploring the development of a campus of care model, including opportunities on City-owned land, and working in partnership to advance specific projects.

In summary, older adults need more non-market housing (social, supportive and non-profit co-op housing) and long-term care and assisted living options. In addition to new supply, they need supports to remain in their homes and make their current housing affordable, including increased rental supplements and at-home supports. Older adults with the highest housing needs need immediate actions to remain housed; they cannot wait for the construction of new buildings. The recently approved Housing Vancouver 10-year Housing Targets (2024 – 2033) are important to helping meet the needs of older adults over the next decades as we continue to see an aging population. However, the findings of the Seniors Housing Strategy identifies that it is equally important to create affordability in the existing rental stock for the older adults who need it now.

2. Directions and Actions

The Seniors Housing Strategy includes five key directions and over 20 actions to meet the overarching goal of ensuring elders and older adults have the housing and supports needed to allow for aging in appropriate and affordable housing in their community. The Strategy seeks to prioritize the housing that is needed most, including social, supportive and co-op housing for older adults, along with subsidized assisted living and long-term care, while recognizing some need is filled by private-pay long-term care, assisted living and independent living.

Key Directions:

1. Increase the supply and renewal of affordable and appropriate housing for older adults.
2. Improve home and building supports for older adults.
3. Increase the supply of deeply affordable housing, rental subsidies, and other services for older adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

4. Improve access to information to connect older adults to housing and services.
5. Continue advancing other work to make Vancouver more equitable for older adults.

See Appendix A Section 7 for details on the above Directions and their related actions.

As part of the Seniors Housing Strategy actions, there are new policies and guidelines being brought forward to help increase the supply of affordable and appropriate housing for older adults. These include:

Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy

The intent of the Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy is to create more housing options, with and without care supports for older adults to age in their community. This policy creates a supportive regulatory environment that allows non-profit organizations, government partners, and private operators to develop needed seniors housing. The policy follows the Vancouver Plan land-use framework by enabling new seniors housing in Villages, Neighbourhood Centres and Rapid Transit Areas, near local shops, services, parks and transit. This includes enabling private options with supports and greater opportunities and flexibility for 100% non-profit and government-owned subsidized community care and assisted living, as well as social housing for seniors. This policy will not apply to projects that are instream and already in application. Refer to Appendix B for more details.

Resident Relocation Policy for Community Care and Assisted Living Residences

This Policy supports the needed redevelopment of private and public long-term care and assisted living residences, while ensuring existing residents are protected. New long-term care and assisted living buildings are important as existing buildings are aging and require updates. The Policy builds on provincial regulations for long-term care and assisted living through the Community Care and Assisted Living Act. It requires good communication with residents and families, support with relocation including moving expenses, and ensuring new accommodation is secured at an appropriate building within the city. The Resident Relocation Policy for Community Care and Assisted Living Residences will not apply to projects that are instream and already in application. Refer to Appendix D for more details.

Seniors Housing Design Guidelines

These guidelines support the integration of community care (i.e., long-term care), group residences, and seniors supportive or independent housing and assisted living throughout the city by providing a framework for assessing applications. The intent of the framework is to promote design that fosters high quality architecture, dignified care, and access to activities of daily living for older adults and other residents with varying levels of ability and individual needs. These guidelines will not apply to projects that are instream and already in application. Refer to Appendix E for more details.

3. Government Roles in Seniors Housing

The housing and supports needed to ensure the well-being of older adults fall under multiple jurisdictions and all governments and authorities need to work together to ensure success. The Government of Canada is key to supporting older adults through income supports and tax credits and plays a key role in funding provincial health and housing systems. The Province of British Columbia and its authorities, including BC Housing and health authorities, play a crucial role in funding and delivering affordable housing, complex care, and home supports. This

includes the SAFER rent supplement program for older adults living in market rental housing, and homeowner grant programs and property tax deferral.

Municipalities are largely responsible for regulating land-use and creating policies to encourage uses. The City additionally invests in affordable housing through granting and provision of City-owned land.

Figure 1 - Role of Governments in Seniors Housing and Supports



4. Greater Collaboration with Senior Governments

The City of Vancouver is committed to partnering with the Provincial government and its authorities to deliver on our shared goals of meeting the housing needs of older adults. This is identified through the Strategy in several actions that were developed in consultation with Vancouver Coastal Health, BC Housing, and the Ministry of Housing.

Vancouver Coastal Health has identified seven priority sites for redevelopment and expansion within the City of Vancouver, one of which is located on City-owned land. VCH has identified the need for close to 1,500 beds by 2034 and anticipates being able to deliver 300 to 500 beds over the next three years. Actions within the Strategy include streamlining and expediting subsidized long-term care and assisted living projects being brought forward and working in partnership with VCH and BC Housing to explore the development of a campus of care, including opportunities on City-owned land. Additional actions for exploration in partnership with VCH and BC Housing include the suitability of seniors-only shelters or shelter spaces as an interim step to permanent housing.

Further, the City will work in partnership with BC Housing to advance a project serving Chinese and Indigenous seniors housing needs in Chinatown, and to increase supportive housing for seniors that meets the needs of older adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness. BC Housing has recognized the need for additional supportive housing for older adults through existing projects including Chalmers Lodge at 1450 W 12th Ave, opening in 2024. In tenancing this building, preferences will be given to seniors who are already BC Housing tenants but wish

to move into a more seniors-focused building with supports that may include daily meals, life and employment skills training, and connections to health care and other community services.

Though the City and its partners are committed to moving forward on the above noted actions, there are other important changes that need to be made to meet the needs of the most vulnerable older adults. These actions include the continued improvement of the SAFER program to reflect market conditions and needs in Vancouver, which would cost the Province an estimated \$25 million per annum. In addition, it includes more funding for seniors supportive housing, eliminating the daily rate to receive home supports and a call for more home supports in social housing to encourage healthy aging in place. The above is outlined in a draft letter to the BC Minister of Housing, Minister of Health, and the CEO of BC Housing, found in Appendix F.

5. Older Persons Strategic Action Plan

This Seniors Housing Strategy focuses on housing and related supports and is an important piece in moving towards making Vancouver more equitable for older adults. Housing is one of several key components of the World Health Organization Age-friendly Cities Framework. Work is needed across the city and with partners to better support the well-being of older adults and elders. This Strategy aligns with the upcoming Older Persons Strategic Action Plan, which is currently being scoped by staff prior to a framework being brought to Council in the fall.

6. Public Engagement

The Seniors Housing Strategy involved two phases of public and stakeholder engagement. The first phase in the spring of 2023 gathered information on the housing challenges and needs of older adults in Vancouver. It also helped to identify opportunities and partnerships that the City should pursue to improve housing for seniors. In the second phase, in the spring of 2024, the public and stakeholders were further engaged to ensure that the draft Strategy and its related policies reflected community experiences and could be effectively implemented.

In the second phase of engagement, the majority of respondents expressed support for the Strategy. The most noted reasons for support were that the actions identified will help meet the needs of seniors across a range of income and health needs, with support for the focus on low-income renters and those experiencing or at risk of homelessness. Further, there was specific support for advocacy for more home and health supports to help people age in place. We also heard some concerns, specifically around the Strategy implementation, details and timelines, and a desire to see governments work together in a real way to see the actions through. We also heard there should be more focus on temporary housing options for seniors experiencing homelessness, as well as concern from the private-pay sector that they are not being treated the same as non-profit and government-owned subsidized housing options within the rezoning policy.

For a full summary of public and stakeholder engagement, see Appendix H.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

In addition to land use policies, the City uses a variety of enabling tools to support affordable housing, including seniors housing, in partnership with senior governments and housing partners:

- City land – Long-term, below-market land leases to housing partners

- Development contributions – “Turn-key” housing secured through community amenity contributions and/or inclusionary zoning policies
- City capital grants (mainly from Empty Homes Tax) – Funding to enhance viability and affordability of partner projects
- Development Cost Levies (DCL) Exemptions – For eligible social housing projects
- Property Tax Relief – Special valuation rules for Class 3 - Supportive Housing effectively exempt them from property taxes; and reduced assessed value for social housing lowers property taxes

Consistent with Council policies, all affordable housing is expected to be self-sustaining over the long term where rents are set at levels that will cover mortgage payments (to repay some or all of the construction costs), operating costs and capital replacement; and do not require further operating subsidies, property tax exemptions, and/or financial guarantees from the City. An exception to this is the application of the annual permissive exemption to certain legacy seniors housing projects.

Prior to 1974, seniors housing was granted a statutory exemption from taxes. The Province later amended the *Vancouver Charter*, requiring Council to enact a by-law annually to grant the exemption. Council has since granted the exemption to legacy seniors housing that has been in existence since prior to 1974 on an annual basis, subject to certain conditions. Council also adopted a policy that no new seniors housing should be approved for the exemption. Staff are reviewing the current approach and will report back to Council as part of the 2025 Seniors Housing Exemption Report this fall.

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

If the recommendations in this report are adopted by Council, Council will approve new policies and revise other policies related to seniors housing.

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Appendix A



City of Vancouver Seniors Housing Strategy

The City of Vancouver is located on the traditional, unceded territories of the xʷməθkʷəy̓əm (Musqueam), Sḵwxwú7mesh (Squamish) and səliłwətał (Tsleil-Waututh) Peoples, who have lived on these lands since time immemorial.

As a City of Reconciliation, the City of Vancouver has committed to “form a sustained relationship of mutual respect and understanding with local First Nations and the Urban Indigenous community.” This is an ongoing and evolving commitment, and one that is essential to our path forward.

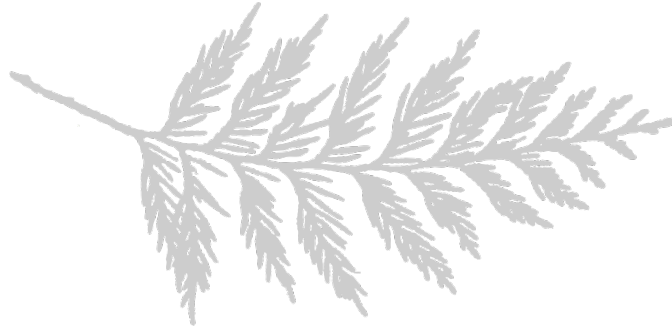


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Acknowledgements

The development of the City's first Seniors Housing Strategy is the result of the involvement and expertise of many older persons, caregivers, community-based organizations, non-profit housing providers, and Council advisory committees. Staff would like to express thanks to the Older Persons and Elders Advisory Committee (OPEAC) for their leadership, vision, and advice in the development of this Strategy. Gratitude also goes to the Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee (PDAC), the Renters Advisory Committee (RAC), the 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee and non-profit organizations that serve older adults for their expertise in this area.

A key consideration in developing the Seniors Housing Strategy is recognizing that the City's scope, role and influence may not extend to all challenges identified. In these instances, the action is scaled to the City's specific role, and opportunities for advocacy and working with partners are also identified.

Executive Summary

The Seniors Housing Strategy was developed through extensive public and stakeholder engagement. It highlights the diversity of housing needs of elders and older adults, which vary widely depending on age, health, income and other factors. For this strategy, the terms *seniors*, *older adults*, *older persons* and *elders* are used interchangeably and refer to a person who is 55 years of age or older.

With a rapidly aging population and some seniors in crisis, there is an urgent need to advance actions to improve housing for older adults, in collaboration with partners. The strategy outlines policies, partnerships, and advocacy to work towards the overarching goal of ***ensuring elders and older adults have the housing and supports needed to allow for aging in appropriate and affordable housing in their community***. It includes five key directions and over 20 actions to be implemented across City of Vancouver departments and in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health, BC Housing, and community partners.

Key Directions:

1. Increase the supply and renewal of affordable and appropriate housing for older adults.
2. Improve home and building supports for older adults.
3. Increase supply of deeply affordable housing, rental subsidies, and other services for older adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness.
4. Improve access to information to connect older adults to housing and services.
5. Continue advancing other work to make Vancouver more equitable for older adults.

The Seniors Housing Strategy is one piece of the City's work to improve the lives of older adults and will continue to evolve over time as other strategies and related policies progress. The Monitoring Framework in Appendix IV outlines the partnerships required and a timeline to implement this strategy.

1. Introduction

Seniors are a fast-growing age demographic, with more older persons in the City of Vancouver than ever before. Many older adults live on fixed incomes and will need to consider changing health, accessibility and housing needs as they age. Some older adults will choose to stay in their existing home or community as long as they can, while others may seek out or require housing with supports or will downsize to a more manageable or accessible home. Low-income seniors who rent their homes face serious affordability challenges and are in urgent need of additional rental supports and secure affordable non-market housing (i.e., non-profit social, co-op, and supportive housing). Further, the City of Vancouver faces a shortage of subsidized long-term care beds and assisted living units, which will only be made worse by the aging population.

The overarching goal of the City of Vancouver's Seniors Housing Strategy is to ***ensure elders and older adults have the housing and supports needed to allow for aging in appropriate and affordable housing in their community***. To achieve this, the City of Vancouver will:

- Use regulatory tools to encourage more appropriate and affordable housing options for older adults across the housing continuum and within neighbourhoods, so they may age in their community.
- Advocate to the Provincial and Federal governments for the needed health and rental supports to allow older adults to maintain their housing, and partner to deliver seniors-specific non-profit and government-owned housing.
- Prioritize those who need it most by focusing on affordable housing options, such as seniors social, co-op and supportive housing, and subsidized assisted living and long-term care.

This strategy focuses on housing and related supports; however, it is important to note that work is needed across the city and with partners to better support the well-being of older adults and elders. The Seniors Housing Strategy is one step towards improving the lives of older adults and will continue to evolve.

The responsibility for seniors housing and supports falls across all jurisdictions, with many important factors beyond municipal jurisdiction, such as rent supplements, health care, and other services such as home supports. However, the City of Vancouver has a role to play in advocating on behalf of older adults in Vancouver, and in facilitating partnerships across levels of government and with senior-serving community organizations. With a rapidly growing older population and some older adults in crisis, the time to act is now.

2. Housing Needs of Older Adults

Older adults in Vancouver are a diverse group with different needs, preferences, cultures, life experiences, abilities, and ages. For this strategy, seniors are generally considered to be 55 years or older. However, a nuanced approach to aging needs to be considered as intersecting inequities and barriers can create a younger threshold for aging. For example, people with disabilities experience aging in different ways, with people's disabilities often becoming more complex and challenging as they age. Conversely, many older persons show positive socioeconomic outcomes, and are doing relatively well in terms of housing security and affordability when compared to younger age groups.

The below sections reference several quantitative data points to give us an understanding of the existing and future housing needs of older adults and elders. However, this data does not fully represent the diverse needs of older adults and should be supplemented by community and public engagement findings in section 3.

Existing Housing Needs

In terms of existing housing tenure, the majority of older adults 55+ are homeowners (70%), with over two-thirds of these residents no longer having a mortgage on their home. Only 30% of older adults 55+ are renters, significantly less than the overall City of Vancouver population, which is made up of 55% renter households. Homeowners tend to have greater security of tenure, less affordability pressures, and live in their homes longer than renter households.

Though fewer in numbers, older adults who rent experience greater affordability challenges as they age. About 30% of older adults 55+ who rent experience core housing need – an inability to find housing that is affordable based on their income, housing unsuitability or inadequacy, such as living in a building that is in need of major repairs or living in an inaccessible unit. Core housing need tends to increase with age for renter households as shown in Figure 2, from 23% of those aged 55-64 to a peak of 41% for those 75-84 years of age.

Figure 1 - Vancouver 55+ population by housing tenure (2021)

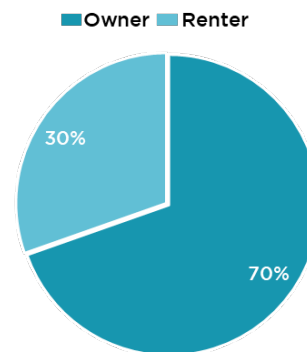
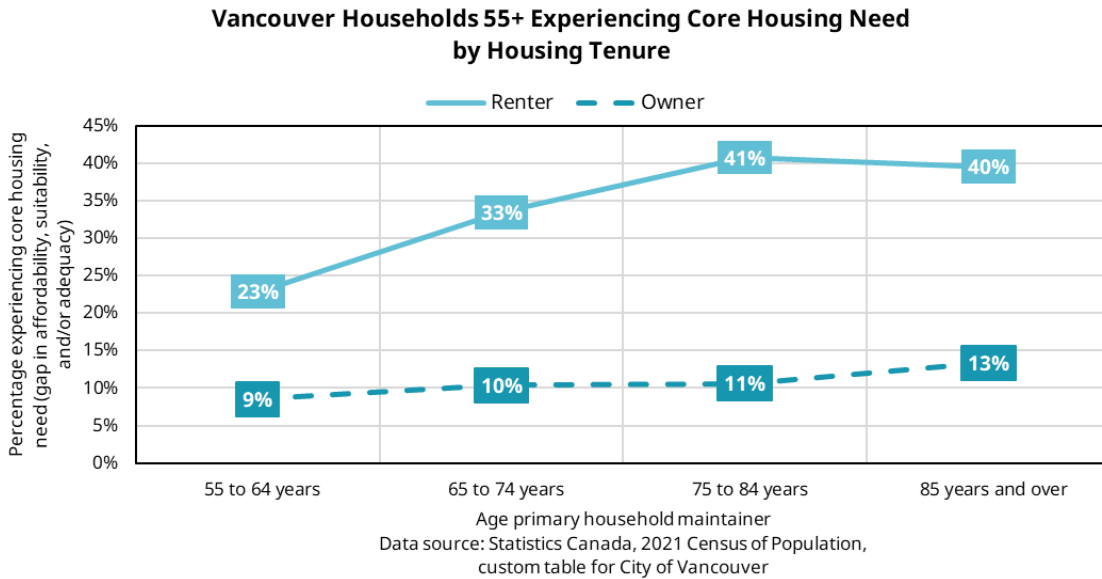
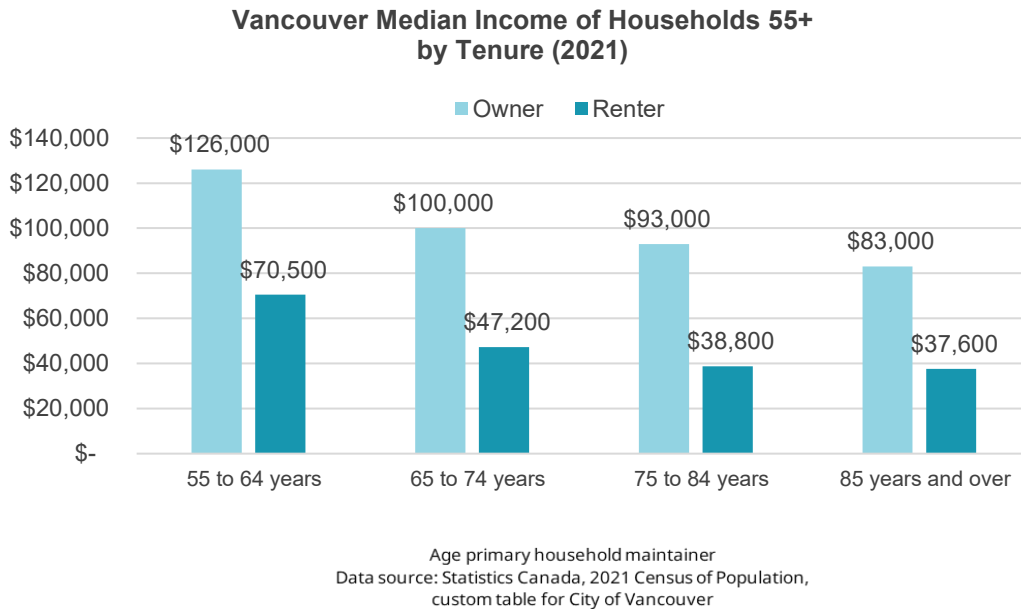


Figure 2 - Vancouver 55+ households in core housing need (2021)



A large share of older adults 55+ are low-income in Vancouver. As of the 2021 Census, 17% of older adult households are considered low-income and make less than \$26,503. Low-income older adults typically rely on retirement income benefits from the Provincial and Federal governments, including Old Age Security (OAS), Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS), and the BC Seniors Supplement, to supplement their own income and savings. Low-income older adults who rent their homes are especially impacted by inadequate income supports. As shown in Figure 3, older adults who rent tend to have about half the median income as older adults who own their homes.

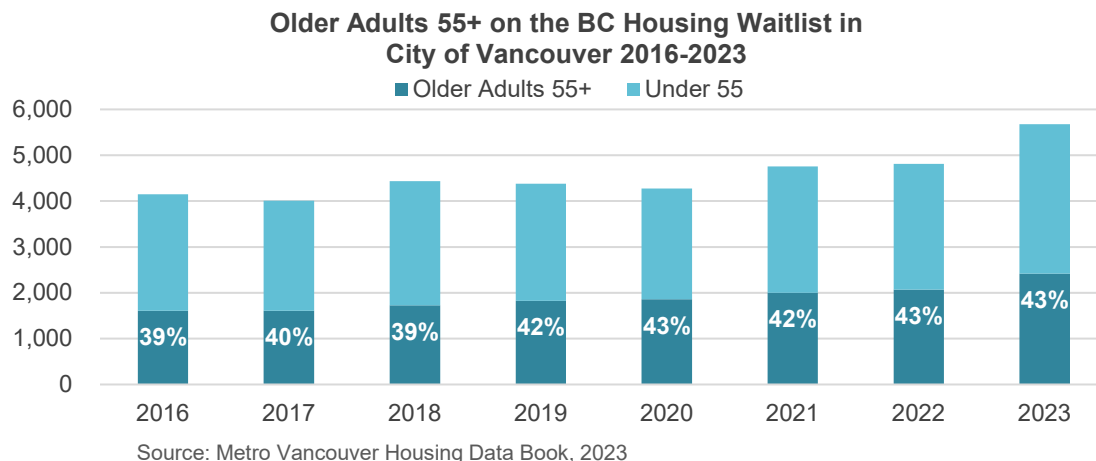
Figure 3 – Vancouver median incomes of households 55+



Even with income supplements market rents in Vancouver, which averaged \$1,786 for a one-bedroom unit in 2023, are unaffordable. In 2023 there were close to 3,250 older adults receiving the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) program rent subsidy in the City of Vancouver. The average monthly rent of SAFER recipients was \$1,113 and the average monthly payment was \$219 per household as of a March 2023 data snapshot. While the program works for older adults with lower-than-average market rents, it is inadequate for people with rents closer to market. Statistics Canada 2021 census data shows there are over 14,000 senior-led households aged 55+ who are paying more than 30% of their household income on rent in the private market. Over one-third of these households are in crisis (5,100 households), spending over 50% of their household income on rent.

As a result of unaffordability in the rental market, there is a significant and growing number of older adults on the BC Housing Social Housing Waitlist. In 2023, about 43% of people on the social housing waitlist in the City of Vancouver were 55+ (2,420 persons), even though older adults 55+ made up only 30% of the City’s overall population. From 2022 to 2023, the number of people on the social housing waitlist increased by 18%, the largest increase seen in recent years.

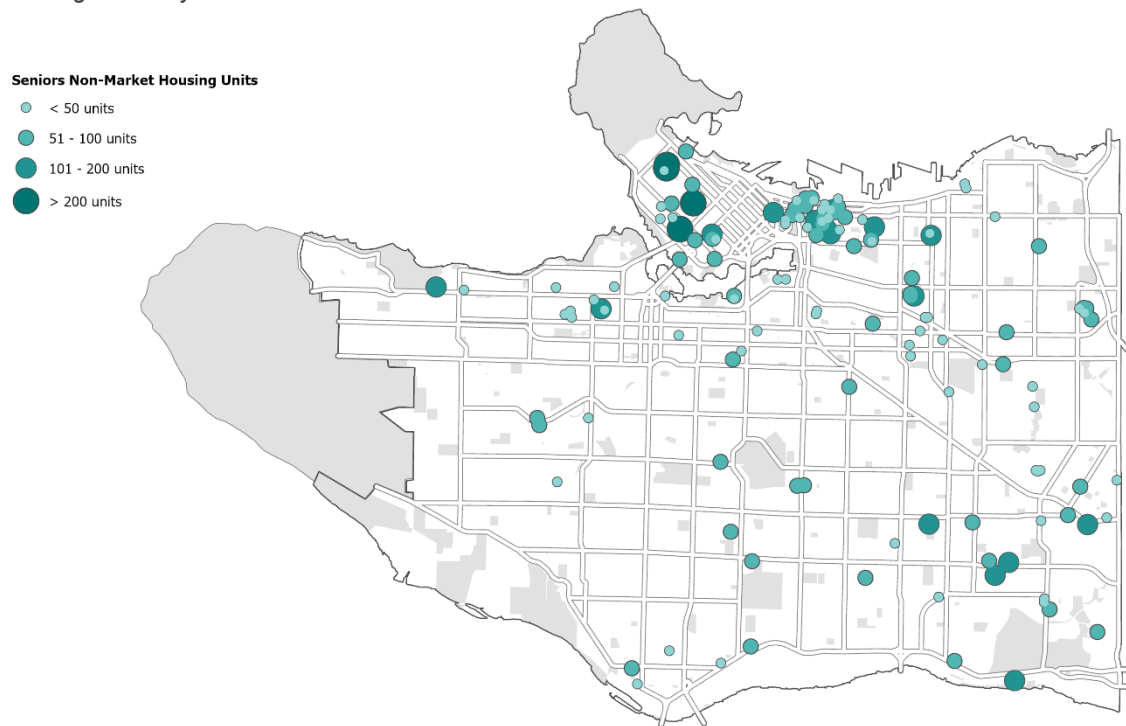
Figure 4 – Older Adults 55+ on the BC Housing Waitlist within the City of Vancouver



There are a significant number of older adults currently living in social housing and non-profit co-op housing. About 25% of individuals aged 55+ who live in rented housing live in subsidized rental housing. This includes both seniors-specific non-market housing, restricted to households aged 55+, and non-market housing with no age requirements, but does not include long-term care or assisted living.

Approximately 30% of non-market housing (social, supportive and non-profit co-op housing) within the City of Vancouver, or approximately 9,000 units, is restricted to residents aged 55+ (see Figure 5). This type of housing offers affordability and relative stability, however, it does not generally include at-home or building supports. We heard from that there are not enough supports for older residents with social, physical, and mental health needs. While both paid and non-profit support organizations exist, high fees and long wait times act as a barrier to accessing these services.

Figure 5 - Locations of Seniors Non-market Housing (restricted to 55+), City of Vancouver Non-market Housing Inventory 2024



Older adults experiencing homelessness or living in inadequate Single Room Occupancy Hotels (SROs) have the highest housing needs. The 2023 City of Vancouver Homeless Count found that 21% of people experiencing homelessness were 55 years of age or older. Of these older adults, almost half (47%) experienced homelessness for the first time when they were 55 or older. The top cited reasons for why older adults lost their housing included: not enough income for housing, landlord conflict, physical health issues, and unfit or unsafe housing conditions.

Although there is little data on the number of older adults living in SROs, we've heard from Downtown Eastside housing and service providers that many older adults living in SROs face multiple and complex health, social, and economic challenges.

Further, we know some older adults are disproportionately impacted by the housing crisis and the lack of affordable health and other supports. This includes women, older adults living alone, Indigenous persons, racialized older adults, persons with language barriers, persons with disabilities, and older adults who identify as 2SLGBTQ+. According to the 2022 Canadian Survey on Disability, 43% of older adults (65+) live with a disability. We know that finding accessible housing can be very challenging and this is especially true of affordable accessible

Women+ Living Alone

The percentage of women+ living with a partner decreases substantially in older age groups. Older women+ are more likely to have experienced separation or divorce, and much more likely to experience being widowed, compared to older men+. Only about 40% of women+ who are 80 years old live with a partner compared to 70% of men+.

housing. Findings from public and stakeholder engagement help to better describe these housing challenges (see section 3).

Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy for BC (2022)

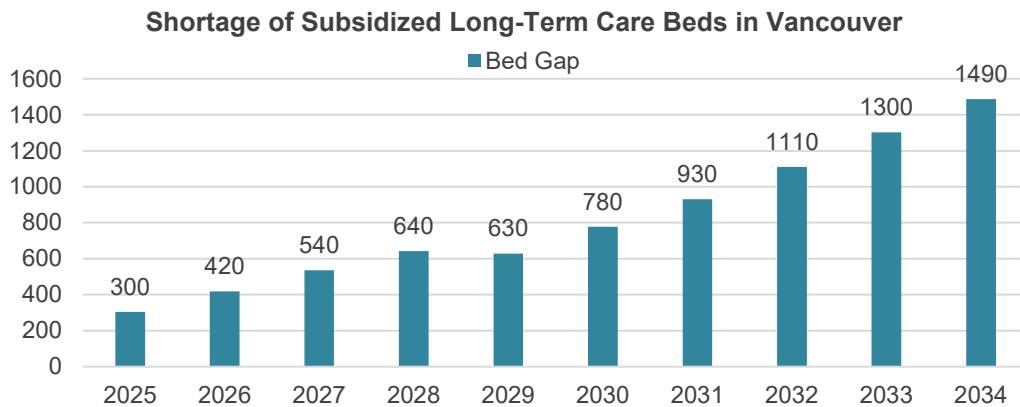
The Aboriginal Housing and Management Association (AHMA) identified a growing elders population and a high number of elders living alone within AHMA housing providers buildings. The report identified the need for greater tenant supports for elders and inadequate funding for these services. Most funding programs offer limited funding for culturally appropriate supports and services, reducing housing providers ability to offer cultural and community events, and reducing opportunities for the involvement of elders.

Trends

When considering the housing needs of older adults into the future, it's important to take into account increasing populations as well as where older adults live. According to BC Statistics population growth estimates, the population of older adults 55+ will increase by close to 30% from 2024 to 2045. In addition to overall growth, there is anticipated to be a growing cohort of older seniors, with a high share of adults aged 80 and over in 2045.

Growing and aging older adult populations means a higher need for buildings with supports as well as at-home supports. For older adults who require complex care, there is a shortage of long-term care and assisted living in Vancouver. According to Vancouver Coastal Health, in 2025 there will be a shortage of just over 300 subsidized long-term care beds and 90 subsidized assisted living units in the City of Vancouver and without further action, this shortage could grow to close to 1,500 long-term care beds and 350 assisted living units over the next ten years due to demographic changes.

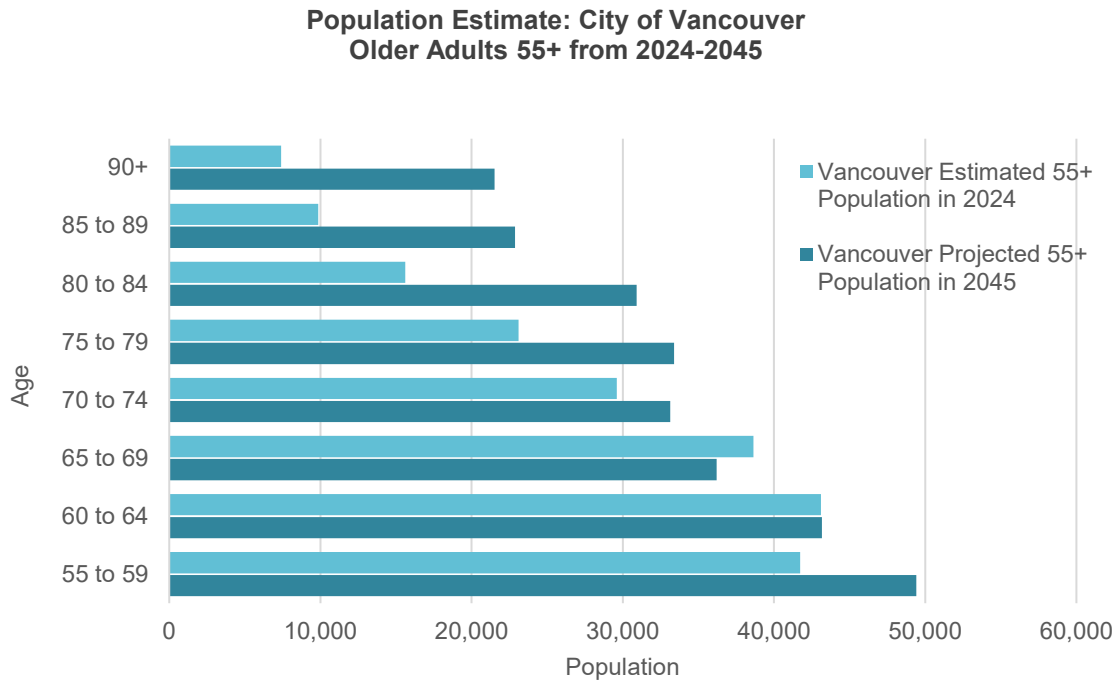
Figure 6 - Estimated Shortage of Long-term Care Beds if no actions taken, City of Vancouver



Source: Vancouver Coastal Health, June 2024

The number of older adults on the social housing waitlist points to the need for more social and non-profit co-op housing, and more subsidized assisted living and long-term care or low-cost home supports as needs change. In addition, for older adults who don't require supports, there will likely be a higher need for more accessible and manageable housing, should they choose or need to downsize over time. This could include both rental and condo housing options in communities where older adults are living now.

Figure 7 – BC Statistics Population Projections for Older Adults 55+ in the City of Vancouver 2024-2045



Source: BC Statistics

3. Engagement: What We’ve Heard

From March to May 2023, the City of Vancouver along with consultant Happy Cities heard from more than 1,500 people through an extensive engagement process. The purpose of this first phase of engagement was to understand the housing challenges and future housing needs of older adults. Engagement activities included:

- 200 phone survey responses,
- 950+ online survey responses,
- 7 pop-up and community outreach events, reaching over 150 people,
- 4 focus group discussions, reaching 45 stakeholders,
- 9 conversation kits, reaching 65 people, and
- 1 ideas fair, attended by 60 stakeholders.

We heard from a variety of people and organizations that serve older adults in Vancouver. While experiences varied, in summary, we heard:

- The majority of seniors are satisfied with their current housing situation. However, those who are living in unaffordable or inadequate conditions need immediate action and support. Low-income renters are vulnerable and the most likely to describe their housing situation as unstable. If they lose their housing, they may struggle to navigate the housing system, placing them at risk of homelessness.

- Though there is a high overall level of housing satisfaction, older seniors tend to experience different challenges than younger seniors. Adults 65+ expressed higher concerns with health issues affecting their ability to age in place.
- Affordability is the top housing challenge for adults 55+ in Vancouver. Most older adults are in favour of measures to improve affordability with 97% in support of adding more social and supportive housing options for seniors.

Chinatown Affordable Seniors Housing Inventory Study

The community-led study Vancouver Chinatown Affordable Seniors Housing Inventory 2023 identified the severe lack of affordable, suitable and secure housing with culturally appropriate and integrated eldercare for Chinatown seniors. The study recommended to re-imagine ways of senior living aligned with the vision of a “campus of care”, meaning seniors have different options for housing across the care spectrum so they can meaningfully age-in-place.

- Older adults in Vancouver are a diverse group with different needs, preferences, cultures, life experiences, abilities, and ages. Factors including racism, ageism, and lack of accessibility make it difficult for some older adults to access appropriate housing.
- Most people want to age in place in their current home, but not everyone can access the supports and home upgrades they need.
- 16% of those surveyed had not yet considered their future housing options. People often won't explore their options until a change in health requires them to do so.
- Around two thirds of older adults would consider in-home support services, but existing services offered are not affordable and cannot meet the growing demand.
- Walkable neighbourhoods are key to supporting well-being, social connection, and independence for older adults. Universal design in new housing is also important to ensuring older adults can remain in their homes as long as they want.
- Caregivers expressed similar challenges for those they care for, related to high rents, home costs, and the need for more affordable at-home supports. They also expressed challenges for themselves related to a lack of resources and burnout, stressing the importance of respite and adult day program options.

Key Challenges

In addition, we heard several common challenges from older adults and the organizations seeking to serve them. These include:

Housing affordability and availability

- There is a lack of affordable housing for low-income older adults. There are long waitlists for social, co-op and supportive housing and many on it have no other options while they wait. Older adults on the waitlist are living in inadequate or unaffordable housing or may be experiencing homelessness.
- Similarly, there are long waitlists for subsidized assisted living and long-term care. Many people do not have family or other supports and cannot afford to pay for home supports while they wait for the needed care.

Figure 8 - Top challenges from public engagement



Housing and health supports

- Leaders in the non-profit sector expressed a serious lack of mobile, often temporary, supports to assist older adults living in social housing after suffering from minor health incidents. Without these supports, tenants may undergo a rapid deterioration in their health and no longer be able to maintain successful tenancies. The non-profit organizations noted that because these buildings are independent social housing, they are not staffed or equipped to provide the supports needed. In addition, as landlords they do not have the legal authority to intervene and request assistance from the health authority when needed.
- We heard there are poor supports for market renters, for example, the existing SAFER Program that provides rent supplements to market renters is grossly inadequate given current area rents. An overhaul to the program is needed, which should include a regular inflator to keep up with changing market conditions.
- There is a lack of culturally appropriate supports in long-term care and assisted living settings. There are only a few buildings in Vancouver that provide culturally focused meals, activities, and staff who speak residents first language. Older adults with disabilities may also face specific challenges, such as a lack of support staff trained in American Sign Language. In addition, some organizations serving older adults have stated there continues to be discrimination of 2SLGBTQ+ residents in care settings and has called for improved staff training to ensure safe and inclusive spaces.

“Not knowing where I’m going to end up when I’m older, that’s my biggest fear. There’s not many options out there.”

—Pop-up attendee and BC Housing resident

We Must Do Better: Home Support Services for BC Seniors Report 2023

The BC Seniors Advocate highlighted the inadequacy of the current home support services system in the province in a 2023 report, noting BC is the most expensive province when it comes to the cost of home support services. In 2023, a senior with an annual income of \$29,000 would have to pay \$9,000 a year for a one-hour daily visit of home support. The majority of other provinces do not charge any amount for home support, and it was found that this leads to a higher number of seniors in BC being admitted earlier than needed to long-term care facilities.

Challenges navigating the system

- Many people noted the process to get in to subsidized assisted living or long-term care is complex, especially if the person does not speak English or has no family or other supports to assist them.
- We heard that older adults often find navigating systems related to finding affordable housing challenging. This can include technological challenges, onerous applications and proof required, or the need for translations of materials.
- Challenges navigating the changing supports for low-income older adults from income assistance to OAS and GIS. Without assistance from outreach organizations, some people experience gaps in income support that have to be filled through other rent supplements or sources.
- Some older adults are discharged from hospital without appropriate discharge planning. Their existing home may no longer be accessible or adequate for their health needs and without social worker support, this can lead to homelessness.

For the full summary of public and stakeholder engagement findings, see Appendix I: [What We Heard Report](#).

Figure 9 – City of Vancouver Seniors Housing Ideas Fair (June 2023)



City of Vancouver Older Persons & Elders Advisory Committee (OPEAC)

The mandate of the Older Persons and Elders Advisory Committee is to advise Council and staff on enhancing access and inclusion for older persons and elders to fully participate in City services and civic life.

Staff engaged with the OPEAC throughout the Strategy development, including in scoping, engagement, and drafting policies. The committee provided critical insights and was key to assisting staff to reach a number of other valued stakeholders.

Some of the key findings and opportunities highlighted by OPEAC include working closely with non-profit housing organizations, service providers, Vancouver Coastal Health, the Province, housing experts, and other community organizations to:

- Expand rent-gear-to-income non-profit housing options for lower income seniors.
- Ensure a continuum of care and support systems are in place to prevent homelessness and better meet the needs of those experiencing homelessness, including the creation of safe senior-designated shelters across all neighbourhoods as well as SRO replacement and improvements.
- Fast track planning initiatives and continue existing property tax exemptions to facilitate the development of seniors' appropriate housing geared to incomes of older persons across all neighbourhoods.
- Support ageing in the right place by ensuring new homes are better designed, including through building by-law changes, to support temporary and permanent mobility impairments, dementia, and to foster social connections.
- Explore cost-effective innovative housing solutions for older adults (e.g., Abbeyfield houses, dementia villages, home share, multigenerational living), and encourage the co-location of age-friendly retail and other services with housing.

4. Housing Affordability & Supports for Older Adults

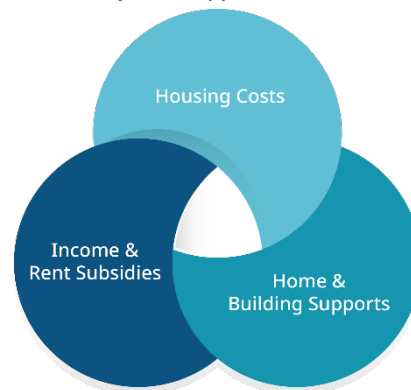
The typical approach to understanding housing affordability, whereas housing costs should be less than 30% of a household's income, does not work as well for older adults. This is because as people retire incomes are likely to decrease and become largely fixed, meaning people are more vulnerable to inflation and unforeseen economic crises. However, older adults may have savings, and homeowners may have accrued equity in their homes.

Most older homeowners in Vancouver have fully paid their mortgages, so monthly housing costs are typically lower for homeowners. There are also existing programs to defer property taxes and other costs for older homeowners, should this be needed. Built-up equity may also allow homeowners to move to a more appropriate or accessible home, or to bring in home support services as needed.

Conversely, older adults who rent tend to have lower incomes and are not as likely to have built-up equity. Having a fixed lower income is even more challenging as a renter as they must continue to pay rent, which increases regularly as allowable under the Residential Tenancy Act. Without significant savings, these older adults need rental supports or other government assistance to maintain their housing as they age. If older renters are evicted or otherwise displaced from their homes where they have lived for a long time, they are likely to need significant rent supports or to secure a social housing unit, due to high market rents.

In addition to the costs of housing, at home medical and other supports are key to allowing older adults to maintain their housing, as well as their health and well-being. Home supports are essential to enabling older adults to maintain independence in their home, reducing the need for long-term care and supporting health outcomes. The costs of housing, the availability of income supports and rent subsidies, and the affordability of home or buildings supports all need to be considered in meeting the housing needs of older adults.

Figure 10 - Connection of housing affordability and supports for older adults



Roles & Responsibilities

The housing and supports needed to ensure the well-being of older adults fall under multiples jurisdictions and all authorities need to work together to ensure success.

The Government of Canada is key to supporting older adults through federal income supports such as the Canadian Pension Plan, Old Age Security, the Guaranteed Income Supplement for low-income older adults, and tax credits. It also plays a key role in funding provincial health and housing systems, and in direct funding and financing to non-profit housing providers.

The Province of British Columbia and its authorities including BC Housing and Vancouver Coastal Health have the primary responsibility to build and fund affordable and appropriate housing and supports, along with providing health care for older adults. This includes funding social and supportive housing and new and replacement subsidized long-term care and assisted living, both of which are crucial to meeting the housing needs of older adults now and into the future. The Province also funds home and health supports so older adults can stay in their homes as their health needs change. In addition, homeowner grant programs, property tax deferral programs, and the SAFER program is under provincial jurisdiction, which are key to ensuring older adults can continue to age in their homes affordably.

In terms of municipal roles, cities are largely responsible for regulating land-use, building requirements through the Vancouver Building By-law, and creating policies to encourage uses. Additionally, the City of Vancouver invests in affordable housing through granting and provision of land, and partners with other levels of government and non-profit organizations to meet housing needs.

Within the realm of seniors housing, the City of Vancouver is active in all its roles. This includes enabling new seniors housing developments throughout the city, regulating development designs, and regulating tenant and resident relocation requirements. The city also partners and invests with other levels of government and non-profit organizations on social housing projects and will advocate for the funding and supports needed by older residents of Vancouver.

The community non-profit sector also plays an important role in meeting the needs of specific populations, such as newcomers and those at risk of homelessness. Seniors' centres, neighbourhood houses, and other non-profit and charitable organizations serve important roles in connecting older adults to services and supports, as well as providing supports directly.

Figure 11 - Role of Governments in Seniors Housing & Supports



Advancing Non-Profit Social, Co-op and Supportive Housing

The non-profit housing sector provides affordable, stable homes for households earning low and moderate-incomes and has become increasingly important to meeting specific housing needs. In addition to the actions to encourage seniors housing within this strategy, the City continues to advance the development and protection of affordable housing through a number of other initiatives. This includes: Vancouver’s Social Housing Initiative to pre-zone land for social and co-op housing in every neighbourhood to speed up approval of projects; building new co-op housing on City-owned land; exploring opportunities to support building acquisitions by the non-profit sector; continuing to expedite affordable housing projects through City processes and permitting; providing capital grants to non-profit and co-op housing construction; and exploring the creation and implementation of standardized building designs that would allow the use of off-site construction methods to increase the speed of development. See the Housing Vancouver Three-Year Action Plan (2024-2026) for more information.

5. Goals & Priorities

The overarching goal of the City of Vancouver’s Seniors Housing Strategy is to **ensure elders and older adults have the housing and supports needed to allow for aging in appropriate and affordable housing in their community**. This means:

- Using regulatory tools to encourage more appropriate and affordable housing options for older adults across the housing continuum so they may age in their community (see Figure 12),
- Advocating for the needed health, rental and income supports to allow older adults to maintain their housing, and
- Prioritizing those who need it most by focusing on affordable housing options, such as seniors social and supportive housing, and subsidized assisted living and long-term care.

Figure 12 - Seniors Housing Continuum



Most older adults will choose to age in their existing home, whether ownership housing, rental housing or social or co-op housing, and will typically only move into housing with supports when their needs change (see Appendix II for seniors housing type definitions). As an alternative to moving into housing with built-in supports, some older adults will have personal care or medical services brought into their home, or have renovations done, allowing them to age in place for longer.

Based on housing data and public and stakeholder engagement, we know that low-income renter households, people experiencing homelessness, and people with disabilities or health needs tend to be the most housing insecure and vulnerable as they age. This **Strategy seeks to prioritize the housing that is needed most**, including social, supportive and co-op housing for older adults, along with subsidized assisted living and long-term care. The replacement of SROs with self-contained social housing, and the continued provision of homelessness services and shelters that serve older adults are also priorities.

Aging in the Right Place

'Aging in the right place' is a concept that recognises the “the process of enabling healthy aging in the most appropriate setting based on an older person’s personal preferences, circumstances and care needs”

Source: National Institute on Aging, 2022, p. 18

In addition, at-home supports are important to ensuring appropriate housing for people as they age. Adequate private market rent supplements, such as the BC Housing SAFER program are similarly vital to ensuring rental housing remains affordable to people as they age.

While the emphasis of this strategy is on non-profit and government owned housing types, including social housing, assisted living and long-term care, all types of

housing are necessary to meet the diverse socioeconomic levels of seniors. This includes secured market rental and condo housing, so older adults may downsize to a more manageable or accessible unit, as well as lower density options such as multiplexes. Multiplexes are a new form of housing approved by Council in 2023, which will provide more low-density ownership options within neighbourhoods so people can age in their community or live in multigenerational households.

More housing types will also be added through ongoing implementation of the Vancouver Plan (2022), the City’s long-range planning framework, which will allow for the full continuum of housing types, including more social, rental and strata housing options across the city. Private pay and public, subsidized long-term care and assisted living will also provide options that may be appropriate for existing homeowners. These new housing additions, along with other factors that create “Complete Neighbourhoods” such as improved amenities, transportation, parks and plazas, and shops and services, will allow for better aging in community.

Multigenerational Living

While the focus of this strategy is on seniors-specific housing, there are many benefits of multigenerational living for older adults. Through the Housing Vancouver Three-Year Action Plan (2024-2026), the City is supporting multigenerational social and co-op housing through pre-zoning, advancing new projects on City-owned land, and exploring opportunities to support building acquisitions by non-profits, among other actions.

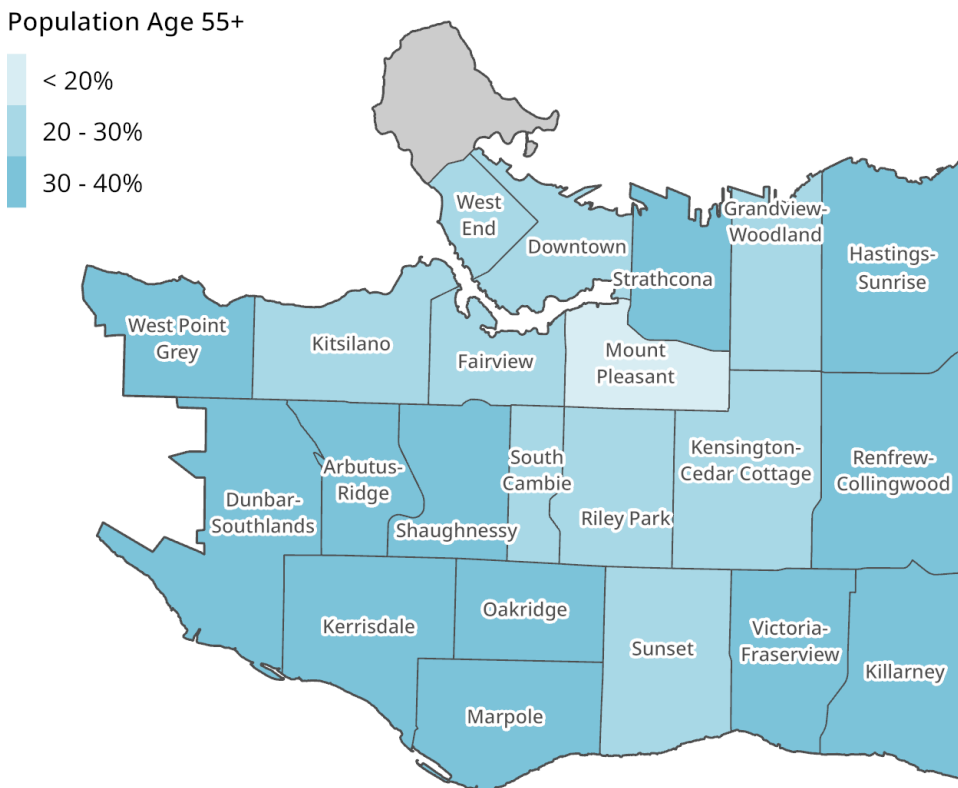
Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs)

The NORC concept refers to communities that over time may house a higher proportion of older adults. It may also include communities that were designed to house a concentration of older adults, such as apartment or social housing buildings with a high number of adults aged 55+. NORCs can be identified across housing types. Source: *National Institute on Ageing and NORC Innovation Centre, 2022*

There is a growing body of work that supports the need for housing models and infrastructure that support older adults’ independence, safety, health and social well-being. Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) provide the opportunity to deliver health and social services more efficiently, while promoting engagement with the aging community. In Vancouver, there are several neighbourhoods with a higher proportion of 55+ households, as well as seniors specific buildings that should be considered in future planning processes.

As shown in Figure 13, there are higher concentrations of older adults in lower density areas of the city. This aligns with the data that there are a high number of homeowners and is an important consideration in creating new policies to enable diverse and affordable housing options for seniors to age in community. In addition to housing and support options for older adults, it is important to promote multigenerational living in these areas. Within engagement, many people expressed that mixed-income and multigenerational buildings and communities can help foster connections and have positive impacts in terms of sociability for both older adults and younger adults and families.

Figure 13 - Concentrations of older adults 55+ by local area (Statistics Canada Census 2021)



6. Connections to Broader Work to Improve the Lives of Older Adults

This Strategy focuses on improving housing for older adults; however, it is important to note that this goal is highly connected to other areas such as transportation, accessibility, and health services. The World Health Organization (WHO) Age-friendly Cities Framework (see Figure 14) lists eight interconnected domains linked to the well-being of older people.

Figure 14 - World Health Organization Age-friendly Cities Framework



The City of Vancouver *Age-friendly Action Plan 2013 – 2015* identified over 60 actions for the city to take to help make Vancouver a safer, more inclusive and engaging place for older adults. Many of these actions have now been completed or are continuing within related City strategies and ongoing work. The following strategies also work to advance the well-being of older adults:

- **The Healthy City Strategy (2014)** – The Healthy City Strategy, approved in 2014, is Vancouver's overall social sustainability framework. It takes a comprehensive approach to advance a Healthy City for All, including healthy people, healthy communities, and healthy environments, and 13 goals to improve outcomes across the social determinants of health. Its vision of a “healthy city for all” seeks equitable access to the best possible health and well-being across the whole population, including people of all ages. The Healthy City Action Plan (2015) also specifically supported training staff in responding to the needs of older persons and persons with dementia, and initiatives to promote social connections and inclusion.

- **Resilient Vancouver** (2019) – This is a citywide strategy that takes a comprehensive approach to addressing shocks, such as earthquakes, and stresses, such as social isolation. The strategy recognizes the importance of safe and adaptive buildings and infrastructure in the face of extreme heat and earthquakes and building community capacity to care for vulnerable people during emergencies through the Resilient Neighbourhoods Program.
- **Extreme Heat Response Plan** (2022) – The City prepares annually for extreme heat and wildfire smoke by establishing Cooling Centres and Clean Air Spaces, expanding access to water and outdoor cooling, investing in cooling in non-market housing, and working with community organizations on neighbourhood-scale heat plan. The City also distributes Cool Kits and Air Filters to ensure older adults and other vulnerable community members have cooling and clean air in their homes.
- **The Accessibility Strategy Phase 1** (2022) – The City's first Accessibility Strategy was approved in 2022. This work was inclusive of older adults, including those with age-related impairments, and noted that people with disabilities experience aging in different ways. Phase 2 will be considered by Council in July 2024 and includes a city-wide multi-year action plan. It reflects upcoming accessibility improvements to the Vancouver Building By-law, to better align with Provincial Building Code changes to improve accessibility in multifamily buildings. Additionally, it includes engaging with the community to increase the number of affordable accessible units and advocate for other changes needed.
- **Grants for Seniors' Centres and Programs** (Ongoing) - The City is active in providing services and support for our growing seniors population. Council provides operating funding to Vancouver's Community Centres, and annual grants to help seniors' centres, neighbourhood houses and other community-based organizations serving older adults. The result of this funding is increased organizational capacity to provide a diverse array of outreach initiatives, peer counseling programs, and culturally inclusive programming for seniors.

Older Persons Strategic Action Plan

Pending Council direction, the City of Vancouver will continue advancing broader actions in response to the aging population through the creation of a new, comprehensive *Older Persons Strategic Action Plan*. This action plan will build on the *Age-Friendly Action Plan 2013-2015* and subsequent aligned efforts by implementing actions and strengthening partnerships to help ensure that Vancouver meets the needs of older persons. This work will plan for and promote access to supports and services for the City of Vancouver's diverse cohort of older persons.

7. Key Directions & Actions

The following key directions and actions will help achieve the City's goal of ensuring elders and older adults have affordable and appropriate housing options and supports to allow for aging in the right place. These actions are wide ranging in their scope and implementation timeline. Some actions have corresponding policies that have been developed with this Strategy, while others will be implemented over time through citywide planning processes and in partnership with other levels of governments, health authorities, and community organizations.

Key Directions

Direction 1: Increase the supply and renewal of affordable and appropriate housing for older adults

More social, supportive and co-op housing for older adults, along with more long-term care and assisted living options is critical to allowing older adults to age in an affordable, safe and secure home. Providing these options within neighbourhoods will provide opportunities for local residents to downsize or move to a building with health supports within their existing community, allowing people to age in the right place. Further to increasing supply, the renewal of existing affordable housing and tenant protection is important to maintaining housing for senior renters. The City will work in partnership with senior levels of government to advance more affordable housing, with rents geared to income and shelter rate options for older adults, as well as subsidized care options.

Actions:

- 1.1. Implement a new seniors housing rezoning policy to enable more social, co-op and supportive housing serving older adults, as well as assisted living, and long-term care residences within neighborhoods, with greater allowances for non-market (social, supportive and non-profit co-op housing) and subsidized options.
- 1.2. Implement a Resident Relocation Policy for Community Care and Assisted Living Residences to ensure residents of redeveloping long-term care and assisted living buildings receive added protections.
- 1.3. Encourage more appropriately designed seniors housing through improved City design guidelines for community care and assisted living residences, and seniors supportive or independent housing.
- 1.4. Develop policies and practices to support new and redeveloped long-term care, assisted living, and seniors social, co-op and supportive housing in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health and BC Housing.
 - 1.4.1. *Streamline and expedite subsidized long-term care and assisted living projects within city processes.*

- 1.4.2. *Explore the development of a campus of care model¹ with BC Housing and Vancouver Coastal Health, including both seniors social housing and subsidized long-term care or assisted living, including opportunities on City-owned land.*
- 1.4.3. *Work with community leaders to advance a project serving Chinese and Indigenous seniors housing needs in Chinatown, in partnership with BC Housing and Vancouver Coastal Health.*
- 1.4.4. *Partner with BC Housing to increase supportive housing programs for seniors that meet the needs of older adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness.*
- 1.5. Streamline the development of seniors social housing within neighbourhoods throughout the city through pre-zoning.
- 1.6. Investigate opportunities to strengthen City of Vancouver tenant relocation and protection policies for older adults and additional protections under the Residential Tenancy Act, in collaboration with the Provincial government.

¹ The campus of care model typically offers a range of housing and care options in one location, from independent housing to assisted living and complex care. Campuses of care can minimize the transition for older adults when their care needs change, allowing aging in place. It also allows couples, family members and friends to remain on the same site when their levels of care are different. Further, a campus of care can also be created on a neighbourhood level, with care facilities introduced and integrated into NORCs (naturally occurring retirement communities) to minimize the relocation of seniors and to allow aging in familiar environments.

Case Study: North Arm Seniors Co-op on City Land

Located at Fraser Street and 19th Ave, this non-profit co-op houses 58 new studio and one-bedroom homes for older adults aged 55+. The co-op has five fully accessible one-bedroom homes, and the remainder of the homes are adaptable as required by the Vancouver Building By-law. The ground floor of North Arm is the new permanent home of the 411 Seniors Centre Society. The 8,000 square feet space allows 411 Seniors to offer a wide range of free services and low-cost programs. This includes information and referral services, as well as events and seminars.

This affordable housing co-op, which opened in 2023, is a new addition to the Community Land Trust (CLT) portfolio. It was built in partnership with the City of Vancouver, who provided a nominal long-term lease on City-owned land as well as development fee exemptions, and BC Housing, who contributed grant funding to the project. For more information, see www.northarmcoop.ca.



Direction 2: Improve home and building supports for older adults

Housing affordability for older adults cannot be achieved without access to affordable and adequate home and building supports. Home and community supports are essential to enabling older adults to be as independent as possible in their home, reducing the need for long-term care and supporting health outcomes. Home supports in British Columbia are amongst the most expensive to access in Canada. Non-profit housing providers have signaled the significant need for mobile support services to be delivered to older adults living in social housing to prevent unnecessary moves to long-term care or loss of housing.

Culturally appropriate building supports are also crucial to meeting the needs of older adults. These supports vary depending on the type of building and resident population and may include translation services or hiring multilingual staff, running culturally relevant activities and programming, serving culturally appropriate meals, or having building staff who are trained to create safe spaces for Indigenous and 2SLGBTQ+ residents, and other equity-denied groups.

Actions:

- 2.1 Advocate to the Province for the expansion of funding to support the delivery of mobile support services to older adults living in social housing to promote healthy aging in place.
- 2.2 Support the BC Seniors Advocate in calling on the Ministry of Health to eliminate the daily rate to receive home supports so all older adults can afford at home assistance, reducing pressure on the long-term care system and supporting healthy aging in place.
- 2.3 Work in partnership to ensure home and building supports are delivered in a culturally appropriate manner, specific to the population, including by:
 - 2.3.1 *Advocating to the Province for improved training for long-term care staff to ensure safe spaces for 2SLGBTQ+ residents, building supports and programs provided in residents' first language (including American Sign Language), and additional funding for spaces in social housing to hold culturally specific programming.*
 - 2.3.2 *Ensuring the City of Vancouver's approach to selecting housing development partners and operators for any buildings serving older adults prioritizes partnerships that will serve older adults in a culturally appropriate manner.*
 - 2.3.3 *Continuing to ensure housing capital granting processes encourage seniors housing providers to come forward with applications for culturally appropriate housing operations in buildings serving older adults.*

Case Study: Whole Way House Onsite Community Building

Whole Way House is registered Canadian charity serving vulnerable seniors and veterans who have disabilities or are facing marginalization, addiction issues and/or mental health issues in the Downtown Eastside since 2013. The organization partners with seven non-profit housing societies across 11 social housing buildings to support low-income seniors with onsite community building programs and tenant support services to build healthy communities in housing.

Their programs include one-on-one tenant support to help access community resources, health care, groceries, laundry, counselling, food and other supports, and monthly room and wellness check-ups. It also includes group activities such as exercise classes, games, outings, and family-style dinners, among other services. According to social housing building operators, these programs have allowed some older adults to safely remain in their housing, reducing unnecessary moves to long-term care or hospital, and preventing homelessness. For more information, see www.wholewayhouse.ca.



Direction 3: Increase the supply of deeply affordable housing, rental subsidies, and other services for older adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness

A number of interventions are immediately needed to house older adults experiencing homelessness and to prevent older adults from becoming homeless. Low-income older adults who rent their homes are at risk of homelessness should their existing rent go up or if they are evicted or displaced due to redevelopment. More deeply affordable housing, referring to units renting at the shelter rate of income assistance or persons with disabilities assistance programs or at rent-g geared-to-income, are needed.

Rental subsidies through the SAFER program needs to be increased to work with market rents in Vancouver. This would have an immediate and significant impact by providing affordability relief and security of housing to older adults facing a loss of housing and homelessness. The shelter portion of Income Assistance and Persons with Disabilities Assistance programs requires similar significant increases. In addition, there is a high need for the redevelopment and renewal of Single Room Occupancy hotels, as well as new seniors-specific social and supportive housing so older adults can age in secure and affordable housing.

Actions:

- 3.1 Advocate for continued improvement of the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) program to ensure affordability in existing rental housing, including a one-time increase in the rent ceilings to reflect CMHC current average one-bedroom market rents of \$1,786, a formula for regular annual increases to keep up with inflation and allowable rent increases under the RTA, and an increase in income limits to \$45,000 to capture more older adults in need.
- 3.2 Continue to advance the replacement of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings through the SRO Intergovernmental Investment Strategy, with consideration given to ensuring replacement housing meets the needs of existing tenants who are seniors, and improve SRO building conditions for existing residents to ensure secure safe housing for older residents living in SROs.
- 3.3 Explore opportunities to further provide outreach supports for older adults who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, for example through the Won Alexander Cumyow Civic Office in Chinatown, and continue funding organizations that provide seniors-specific homelessness outreach and supports.
- 3.4 Explore the suitability of seniors-only shelters or shelter spaces as an interim step to permanent housing with BC Housing and Vancouver Coastal Health, to ensure older adults can access safe, appropriate shelter.
- 3.5 Work in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health and other health organizations to ensure appropriate housing options are provided to older adults who are discharged from hospital.

- 3.6 Encourage partnerships across the sector to explore and incorporate temporary housing options serving older adults to prevent homelessness, including Seniors Services Society of BC's Temporary Housing Program, Seniors Rapid Access Shelter Program, and other housing models.

Case Study: Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) Program

The provincial SAFER program provides a portable rent supplement for people aged 60 or over renting in the private market. This program does not apply to people who already receive income assistance or another shelter subsidy from a Ministry or the Province. SAFER is important to creating affordability for older adults living in the private market. We heard through public engagement that the program needs a significant overhaul as it has outdated income allowances, maximum rent ceilings and no regular built-in increases.

Recent update: On April 9th, 2024, the Province announced improvements to the SAFER program and a one-time rental benefit of \$430 to those already receiving the rent subsidy. The improvements included an increase to the income limit for eligibility from \$33,000 to \$37,240, increasing the minimum benefit from \$25 to \$50 per month, and an increase to the rent ceiling from \$803 for a single-person households and \$866 for a two-person household to \$931 per household. It also included the ability to review and amend the rent ceiling annually.

These are positive changes; however, more improvements should be made. For older adults who have had to move in recent years and have near market rents, the SAFER program remains inadequate. If the SAFER formula was updated to work for older adults renting in Vancouver, with a rent ceiling of \$1,786 to match the average one-bedroom rent in 2023 (CMHC Rental Market Survey) and an income limit of \$45,000 to meet the average incomes of those overpaying on rent, it would create immediate affordability for those in urgent housing need and at risk of homelessness.

If this reached the over 4,900 seniors with incomes below \$45,000 who are paying more than 30% of their household income on rent in the private market (Census 2021 for 65+ led households), it is estimated it would cost the Province approximately \$25 million annually. This is a significant increase from the estimated \$8.5 million in SAFER program costs for recipients within the City of Vancouver in 2023. However, the costs of creating affordability in the existing market through SAFER remains significantly lower than the billions in funding and financing to build new social housing that would otherwise be needed. Further, this increase would reach low-income seniors now, improving overall health and well-being and preventing homelessness.



Direction 4: Improve access to information to connect older adults to housing and services

Many older adults do not have adequate information on their housing and care options as they age or do not know their rights. The City of Vancouver can help support older adults by better hosting information, as well as connecting and partnering with the community organizations serving older adults and other government agencies to better reach older adults where they are. This includes increasing awareness of and accessing housing programs and services such as the SAFER rent subsidy, assistance in applying to social and co-op housing, and accessing the Provincial accessible home adaptation program, seniors' renovation tax credits, and property tax deferral options.

"It doesn't feel like there's anyone out there who's listening who can help us. You have to go through the system [to find affordable housing] but the system isn't working. So you have to live in fear every day."

—Focus group participant

Actions:

- 4.1 Engage with community organizations serving older adults and provincial and national experts on a regular basis to further explore knowledge gaps and actions to improve access to housing and supports and strengthen capacity of the seniors-serving sector to provide effective and culturally appropriate outreach and programs.
 - 4.1.1 *With support from the new Strategic Lead, Older Persons, efforts will be made to ensure disproportionately impacted groups are reached, including through community organizations such as cultural associations, shelter providers and transition houses.*
- 4.2 Advocate to the Province to increase funding to seniors' centres, neighbourhood houses, and other organizations that provide housing navigation and referral services, and services that support older adults to age in the right place, such as light housekeeping.
- 4.3 Investigate opportunities and partnerships with the Tenant Resources and Advisory Centre (TRAC), senior serving organizations, and the Provincial government to improve renter knowledge and offer better supports for older adults who rent.
- 4.4 Build partnerships with the BC Non-profit Housing Association and Landlord BC to educate and encourage landlords and building managers to better support aging residents, and to reduce stigma and discrimination for older adults accessing rental and other housing.
- 4.5 Review and update seniors-related housing information on the City's media and webpages and information provided via the 311 platform, with the aim of improving clarity of information. This will also consider how to increase prominence and knowledge of topics such as SAFER and property tax deferral, both online and in partnership with community centres, seniors' centres, neighbourhood houses and the Vancouver Public Library.

Case Study: Seniors Services Society SHINE Program

The Seniors Housing Information and Navigation Ease (SHINE) program, funded by the BC Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions and led by the Seniors Services Society of BC, is a province-wide initiative designed to facilitate timely access to and navigation of appropriate housing services and support for seniors. The program assists seniors and their caregivers to easily access senior-specific programs, supports and services across BC related to housing, housing security, isolation and mental wellness. This includes advising tenancy rights, communication support with rental organizations/applications, mediation, conflict resolution and self-advocacy training, and representing the needs of local seniors at community committees. For more information, see www.seniorsservicesociety.ca/shinebc.



Direction 5: Continue advancing other work to make Vancouver more equitable for older adults

Recognizing that housing is only one part of creating a city that supports older adults, the City of Vancouver will continue to advance other areas of work. This includes moving towards more accessible and universal design, which benefits older adults and the general population, through the Accessibility Strategy (2022), as well as broader work related to transportation, service hubs, and resiliency to improve the lives of older adults. Through planning processes, the City will enhance the consideration of older adults by promoting the types of housing and services needed.

Actions:

- 5.1 Pending Council direction, continue advancing broader actions in response to the aging population through the creation of a new, comprehensive Older Persons Strategic Action Plan.
- 5.2 Refresh the Healthy City Strategy as Vancouver's overall social sustainability plan, including renewed social development goals and outcomes that can be disaggregated and reported for older persons, and an updated implementation and governance framework.
- 5.3 Support non-profit housing organizations to deliver alternative housing types and explore new models, including home share.
- 5.4 Investigate opportunities to foster and support Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) when undertaking future area planning processes, including by:
 - 5.4.1 *Using specific engagement methods to reach older adults (e.g., in-person events, paper surveys)*
 - 5.4.2 *Encourage opportunities to co-locate uses and pair population needs in the development or improvement of public spaces, infrastructure, transportation and provision of services, so older adults can continue to age in community.*
 - 5.4.3 *Plan for more affordable and diverse housing options and services while considering community planning around NORCs to encourage multigenerational communities.*

Case Study: Oasis Program

Oasis is an older adults' driven model of aging in place, located in naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs). It offers programs including onsite recreational and social programs in apartment buildings with a larger population of older adults, free of charge and with the support of the landlord. Oasis is founded on three pillars: preventing social isolation, facilitating better nutrition and promoting physical fitness for members. An Oasis site includes a coordinator and volunteers who work directly with residents in a NORC to establish, implement, and co-coordinate programming to help establish a sense of community. This program was founded in Kingston, Ontario and has expanded to multiples sites in Vancouver, in partnership with community organizations. You can learn more about Oasis here: www.oasis-aging-in-place.com.



8. Implementation & Monitoring

Each strategy in this plan will be achieved through the accompanied list of actions. Some actions have started, while others will begin soon after this plan is adopted, as Council approves them, or once staff capacity allows. Actions that have been completed to date, subject to Council approval, include: the Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy, the Resident Relocation Policy for Community Care and Assisted Living Residences, and updated Seniors Housing Design Guidelines.

This strategy and included actions will be reviewed and updated in line with the broader Housing Vancouver Strategy and Three-Year Action Plan. The Vancouver Plan Official Development Plan (ODP) and subsequent regular ODP reviews, will also provide opportunity for the integration of seniors housing priorities and policies.

The housing needs and trends of older adults will continue to be monitored through the City of Vancouver Annual Housing Progress Report, Housing Data Book and the Housing Needs Report. This includes data on:

- The number and proportion of older adults 55+ experiencing homelessness,
- The number of older adults receiving the SAFER rent supplement,
- The number of seniors on the BC Housing Social Housing Registry,
- Tenure of senior-led households (i.e., renter vs ownership),
- Income distribution of senior households, and
- Share of senior households spending 30% or more of income on shelter.

In terms of outcomes, it will take continued efforts, funding and actions by all levels of government and community partners to significantly improve outcomes for older adults with high housing needs. Some actions will take time to see the effects, such as newly constructed seniors social and supportive housing and assisted living and long-term care. Other actions, such as an improved SAFER program, could create immediate and significant improvements to outcomes for older adults who rent their homes.

Staff will continue to monitor and update seniors housing outcomes, with the objectives to decrease the number of older adults experiencing homelessness, spending more than 30% of their income on shelter, and waitlisted on the BC Housing Social Housing Registry. Another important outcome, monitored by the BC Seniors Advocate, is the number of subsidized assisted living and long-term care beds within Vancouver Coastal Health, with an objective of increasing and renewing subsidized beds over time. This, along with increased and more affordable at-home health supports, will ensure elders and older adults can age in appropriate and affordable housing, in their neighbourhood of choice.

Appendices

Appendix I: Seniors Housing Strategy Phase 1 Engagement Summary

You can find the Phase 1 Engagement Summary Report [here](#) or at <https://www.shapeyourcity.ca/seniors-housing>.

Appendix II: Seniors Housing Types Definitions

Older adults live in many types of housing and their needs change as they age. The following types of uses are all considered “Seniors Housing” for the purposes of this strategy; however, it should be noted that vast majority of older adults do not live in housing specific for seniors.

Assisted Living provides housing and assistance services to seniors and people with disabilities who can live independently but require regular assistance with daily activities. These types of buildings are regulated by the Provincial Community Care and Assisted Living Act and must be registered through the Assisted Living Registrar. The Residential Tenancy Act does not apply. Each residence has private units, shared dining and social areas, housekeeping services, personal care services and emergency response. Assisted Living can be subsidized or private pay. For subsidized units, residents can expect to pay 70% of their after-tax income, plus a hydro surcharge.

Home Sharing typically refers to a program where older adults share their homes with students for a below-market rent and, in turn, the students provide some light assistance around the home, such as walking a pet, mowing the yards, or offering technical support. Home sharing initiatives aim to combat social isolation among older adults while adding much needed affordable housing for students.

Independent Housing, which is not defined in any legislation, typically refers to retirement communities or other housing geared towards older adults. These may be stand-alone seniors’ housing facilities, or there may be independent living units co-located within assisted living and long-term care facilities. Independent housing can be ownership or rental in tenure, there is no subsidized option. As part of a tenancy agreement with the landlord/facility operator, services such as leisure activities, dining or housekeeping may be offered. These types of tenancies generally fall under the Residential Tenancy Act.

Long-term Care (i.e., Community Care, Residential Care) is regulated by the Provincial Community Care and Assisted Living Act and is for persons who require 24-hour professional care and are unable to live independently. These facilities are licensed by local health authorities, and do not fall under the Residential Tenancy Act.

Seniors Social Housing is long-term housing for low-income adults aged 55+, with rental fees calculated on a rent geared to income basis (30% of household total gross income) or at

the shelter rate of income or disability assistance, or at low-end of market rents. In Vancouver, this type of housing must be owned by a non-profit housing organization or government body, with a housing agreement on title securing the use and affordability.

Seniors Supportive Housing provides low-income seniors and people with disabilities accessible housing with supports. It represents accommodation for individuals who can live independently with some assistance. The buildings also have services that include hot meals, housekeeping, laundry, social activities and emergency response systems. Each building varies in style, size and amenities. This program assists low-income adults who are 55 years of age or older and falls under the Residential Tenancy Act. This type of housing is subsidized, with rental costs generally 50% of gross income.

Seniors-centred Temporary Housing refers to several types of temporary housing that are appropriate for older adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness. This may include seniors-specific shelters, home share options for seniors, Seniors Services Society of BC's Temporary Housing Program and other alternative temporary housing initiatives.

Appendix III: Additional Seniors Housing Maps

Figure 15 - Density of older adults 55+ in Vancouver, Census 2021

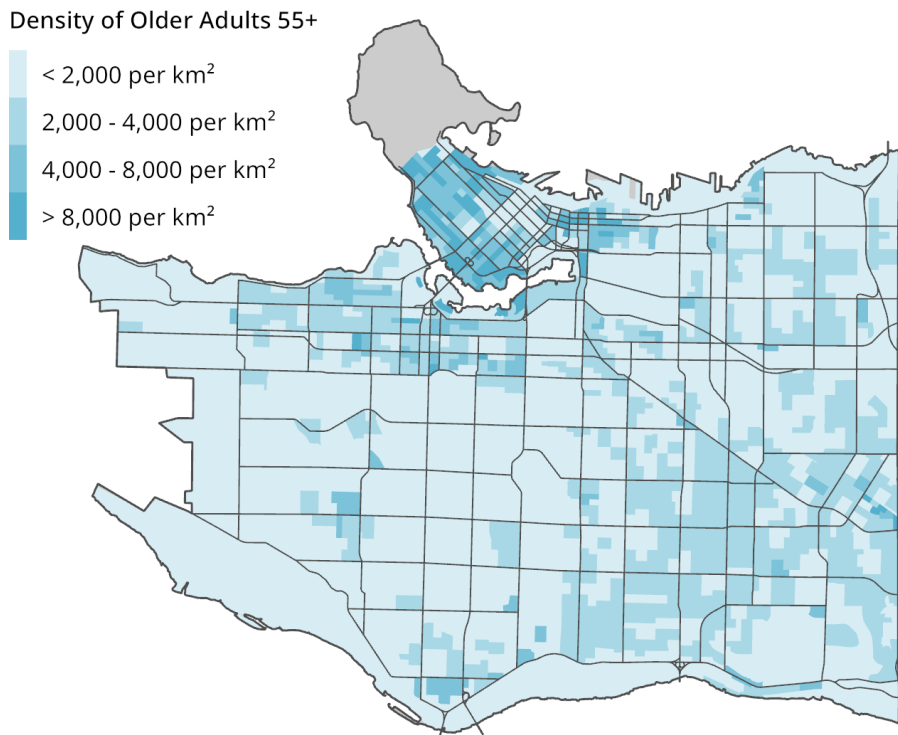


Figure 16 - Density of older adults 55+ by Local Area, Census 2021

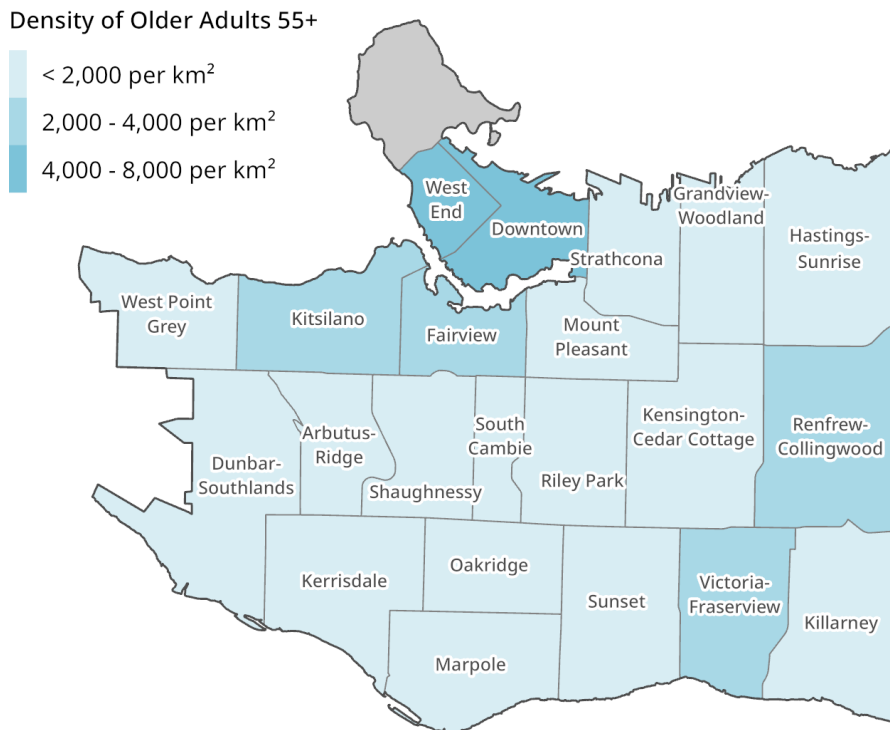


Figure 17 - Density of households renting aged 55+, Census 2021

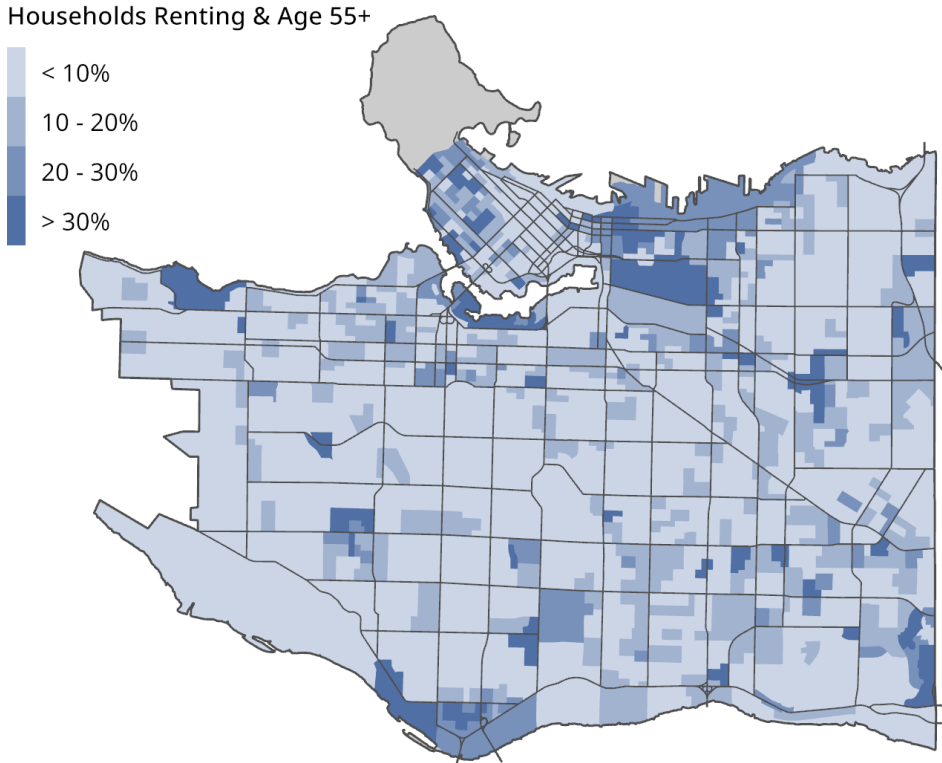


Figure 18 – Long-term Care Inventory (2024)

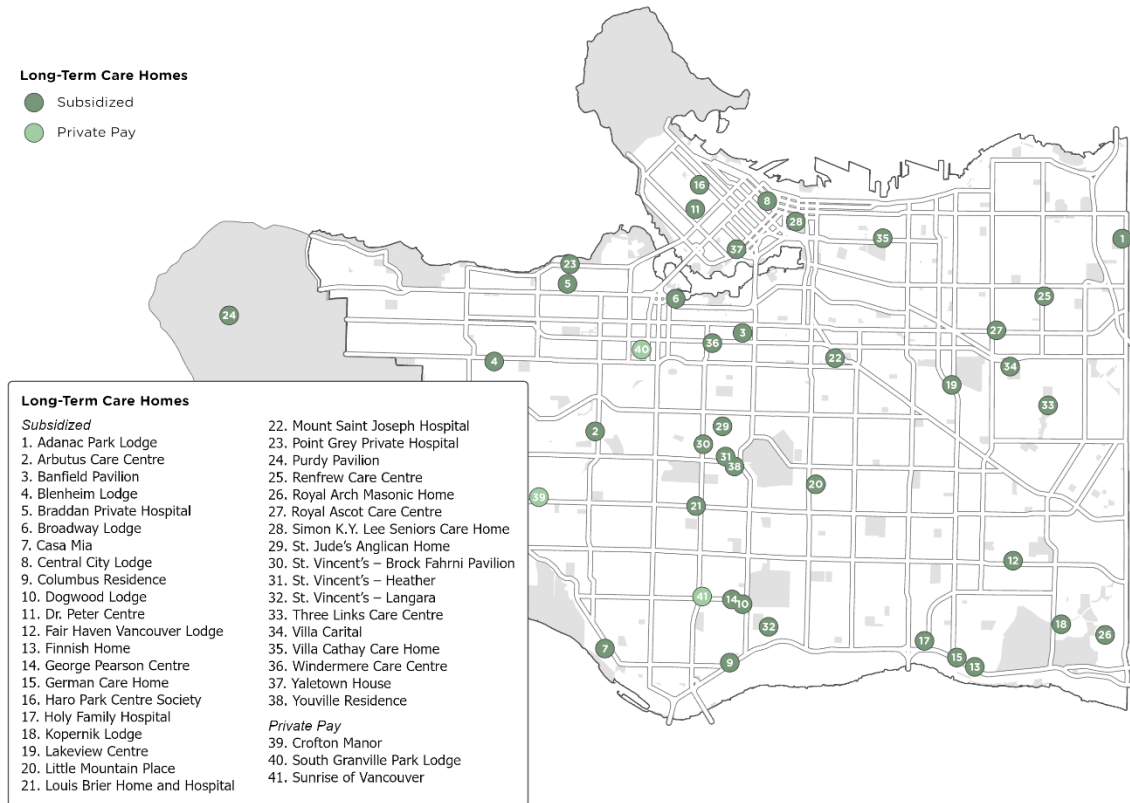
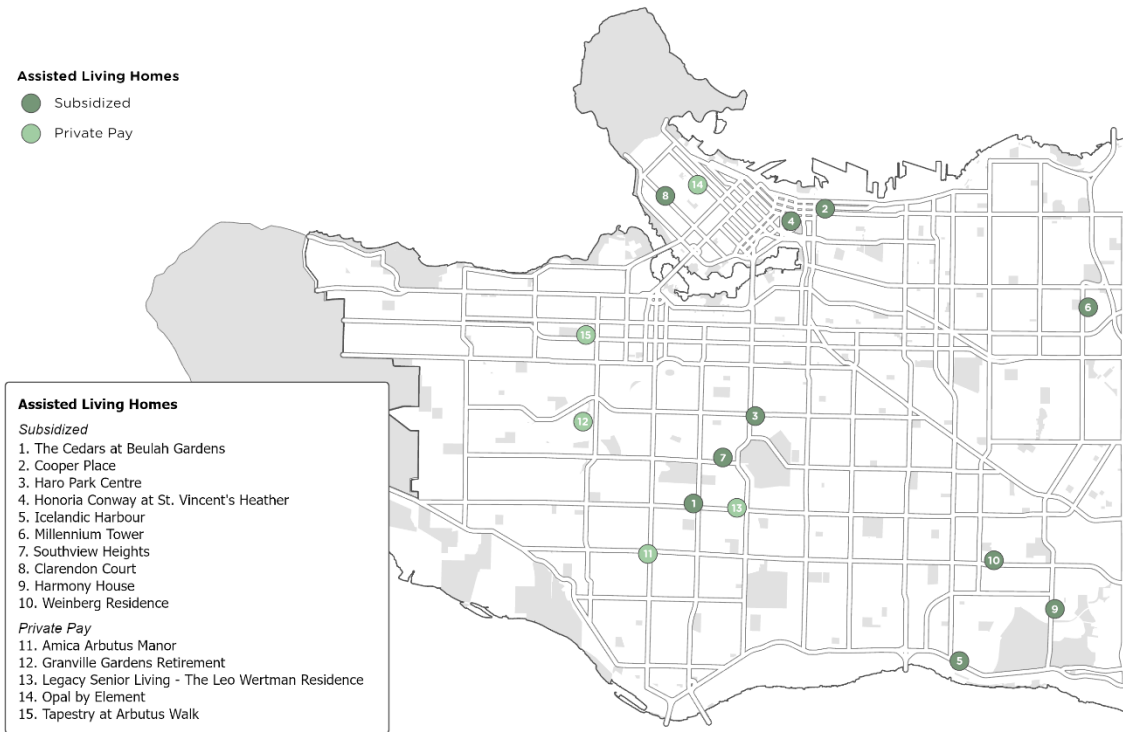


Figure 19 - Assisted Living Inventory (2024)



Appendix IV: Monitoring Framework

This monitoring framework outlines an approximate timeline for each action and the party or parties responsible for completing the action. Short-term refers to an action to be completed over the next 1 to 2 years, medium-term refers to 3 to 5 years, and long-term is 5+ years to completion.

Direction 1: Increase the supply and renewal of affordable and appropriate housing for older adults

Timeline	Action	Responsibility
Short-term	1.1 Implement a new seniors housing rezoning policy to enable more social, co-op and supportive housing serving older adults, as well as assisted living, and long-term care residences within neighborhoods.	City of Vancouver
Short-term	1.2 Implement a Resident Relocation Policy for Community Care and Assisted Living Residences to ensure residents of redeveloping long-term care and assisted living buildings receive added protections.	City of Vancouver
Short-term	1.3 Encourage more appropriately designed seniors housing through improved City design guidelines for community care and assisted living residences, and seniors supportive or independent housing.	City of Vancouver
Medium-term	1.4 Develop policies and practices to support new and redeveloped long-term care, assisted living, and seniors social, co-op and supportive housing in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health and BC Housing.	City of Vancouver Vancouver Coastal Health BC Housing
Short-term	1.5 Streamline the development of seniors social housing within neighbourhoods throughout the city through pre-zoning.	City of Vancouver
Medium-term	1.6 Investigate opportunities to strengthen City of Vancouver tenant relocation and protection policies for older adults and additional protections under the Residential Tenancy Act, in collaboration with the Provincial government.	City of Vancouver Residential Tenancy Branch

Direction 2: Improve home and building supports for older adults.

Timeline	Action	Responsibility
Short-term	2.1 Advocate to the Province for the creation of a new fund to support the delivery of temporary	Ministry of Health Ministry of Housing

	home supports to older adults living in social housing to promote healthy aging in place.	
Short-term	2.2 Support the BC Seniors Advocate in calling on the Ministry of Health to eliminate the daily rate to receive home supports so all seniors can afford at home assistance.	Ministry of Health
Short to medium-term	2.3 Work in partnership to ensure home and building supports are delivered in a culturally appropriate manner, specific to the population.	City of Vancouver Ministry of Health

Direction 3: Increase the supply of deeply affordable housing, rental subsidies, and other services for older adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Timeline	Action	Responsibility
Short-term	3.1 Advocate for continued improvement of the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) program to ensure affordability in existing rental housing, including a one-time increase in the rent ceilings to reflect CMHC current average market rents and a formula for regular annual increases to keep up with allowable rental increases and rental market changes.	Ministry of Housing
Medium to long-term	3.2 Continue advancing the replacement of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings through the SRO Intergovernmental Investment Strategy and improve SRO building conditions for existing residents to ensure secure safe housing for older residents living in SROs.	City of Vancouver Ministry of Housing
Short to medium-term	3.3 Explore opportunities to further provide outreach supports for older adults who are experiencing or at risk of homelessness, for example through the Won Alexander Cumyow Civic Office in Chinatown, and continue funding organizations that provide seniors-specific homelessness outreach and supports.	City of Vancouver BC Housing
Short to medium-term	3.4 Explore the suitability of seniors-only shelters or shelter spaces as an interim step to permanent housing with BC Housing and Vancouver Coastal Health, to ensure older adults can access safe, appropriate shelter.	City of Vancouver Vancouver Coastal Health BC Housing

Short to medium-term	3.5 Work in partnership with Vancouver Coastal Health and other health organizations to ensure appropriate housing options are provided to older adults who are discharged hospital.	City of Vancouver Vancouver Coastal Health
Short to medium-term	3.6 Encourage partnerships across the sector to explore and incorporate temporary housing options serving older adults to prevent homelessness, including Seniors Services Society of BC's Temporary Housing Program or other housing models.	City of Vancouver Non-profit sector

Direction 4: Improve access to information to connect older adults to housing and services.

Timeline	Action	Responsibility
Short to medium-term	4.1 Engage with community organizations serving older adults and provincial and national experts on a regular basis to further explore knowledge gaps and actions to improve access to housing and supports and strengthen capacity of the seniors serving sector to provide culturally appropriate outreach and programs.	City of Vancouver
Short-term	4.2 Advocate to the Province to increase funding to seniors' centres, neighbourhood houses, and other organizations that provide housing navigation and referral services, and services that support older adults to age in the right place, such as light housekeeping.	Ministry of Housing Ministry of Health
Short to medium-term	4.3 Investigate opportunities and partnerships with the Tenant Resources and Advisory Centre (TRAC), senior serving organizations, and the Provincial government to improve renter knowledge and offer better supports for older adults who rent.	City of Vancouver Non-profit sector Ministry of Housing
Short to medium-term	4.4 Build partnerships with BC Non-profit Housing Association and Landlord BC to educate and encourage landlords and building managers to better support aging residents, and to reduce stigma and discrimination for older adults accessing rental and other housing.	City of Vancouver Non-profit sector
Short-term	4.5 Review and update seniors-related housing information on the City's media and webpages and information provided via the	City of Vancouver Community Centres Vancouver Public Library

	311 platform, with the aim of improving clarity of information.	
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Direction 5: Continue advancing other work to make Vancouver more equitable for older adults.

Timeline	Action	Responsibility
Short-term	5.1 Pending Council direction, continue advancing broader actions in response to the aging population through the creation of a new, comprehensive Older Persons Strategic Action Plan.	City of Vancouver
Short-term	5.2 Refresh the Healthy City Strategy as Vancouver’s overall social sustainability plan, including renewed social development goals and outcomes that can be disaggregated and reported for older persons, and an updated implementation and governance framework.	City of Vancouver
Medium-term	5.3 Support non-profit housing organizations to deliver alternative housing types and explore new models, including home share.	City of Vancouver Non-profit sector
Medium-term	5.4 Investigate opportunities to foster and support Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) when undertaking future area planning processes.	City of Vancouver

Policy

Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy

Approved by Council Month Day, Year

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1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Seniors are a fast-growing age demographic in Vancouver, with more older persons in the city than ever before. Many seniors live on fixed incomes and will need to consider changing health, accessibility and housing needs as they age. Some older adults will choose to stay in their existing home or community as long as they can, while others may seek out or require seniors' housing with supports or will downsize to a more manageable or accessible home.

The City of Vancouver's Seniors Housing Strategy (2024) aims to ensure older adults have the housing and supports needed to allow for aging in appropriate and affordable housing in their community. It also seeks to prioritize those who need it most by focusing on affordable housing options, such as seniors social, co-op and supportive housing, and subsidized assisted living and long-term care. This rezoning policy helps achieve these goals by enabling more housing options for older adults, with and without supports, in neighbourhoods across the city. It also offers more flexibility for 100% non-profit and government-owned seniors housing buildings to encourage the development or redevelopment of these important uses.

The Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy also aligns with the Vancouver Plan (2022), which has a key goal to create Equitable Housing and Complete Neighbourhoods by allowing more housing options and opportunities for everyone to choose a livable neighbourhood that meets their needs. This policy follows the Vancouver Plan land-use framework, by enabling new seniors housing in Villages, Neighbourhood Centres and Rapid Transit Areas, near local shops, services, parks and transit.

2 INTENT

The intent of the Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy is to create more housing options, with and without care supports, near transit, green spaces and off busy streets for older adults to age in their community. This includes enabling private options with supports and greater opportunities for 100% non-profit and government-owned subsidized community care and assisted living, as well as social housing for seniors.

For this policy seniors housing refers to the following uses, which are defined within the Zoning & Development By-law and which are intended for older adults:

- **Community Care Facility - Class B**
The use of premises operated as a community care facility by a licensee under the Community Care and Assisted Living Act (British Columbia) to provide residential care to 7 or more persons not related by blood or marriage to the licensee or, if the licensee is a corporation, to any director, officer or member of the corporation.

- **Seniors Supportive or Assisted Housing**
The use of a building for residential units designed to accommodate seniors as they age including separate common areas for dining and socializing, and the provision of meals, housekeeping and personal care.
- **Social Housing (where occupancy is restricted to older adults 55+)**
Social Housing that meets the Zoning and Development By-law definition, and where there is a housing agreement or other security as required by the City restricting occupancy to residents aged 55 or older. Social housing must be owned and operated by a non-profit or government body at affordability levels specified in the by-law.

To encourage and enable more affordable types of seniors housing, additional heights and densities will be considered to create new seniors social housing, seniors supportive or assisted housing, and community care facilities that are 100% owned by a non-profit corporation, or by or on behalf of the City, the Province of British Columbia, or Canada.

This policy applies to all applications received on or after July 23rd, 2024. Rezoning applications will be considered when all of the following criteria are met.

3 ELIGIBLE SENIORS HOUSING TYPES

Projects must demonstrate that 100% of the residential or institutional floor space is one of, or a combination of, the following uses as defined by the Zoning and Development By-law:

- Community Care Facility – Class B
- Seniors Supportive or Assisted Housing
- Social Housing, where occupancy is restricted to those aged 55 or older.

Seniors Supportive or Assisted Housing and Seniors Social Housing should be restricted to residents aged 55 years of age or older, whereas a Community Care Facility should be intended for use by older adults but may also serve a broader age range with care needs.

4 LOCATION AND FORM OF DEVELOPMENT

Subject to urban design performance including consideration of shadow analysis, public view impacts, frontage length, building massing, and setbacks, and demonstration of a degree of community support, sites and densities that would be considered under this policy are outlined in Table 1.

Seniors social housing and 100% government or non-profit owned community care facilities may be considered for additional heights and densities above those outlined in Table 1, as described in Section 4.1. It should also be noted that a six storey Community Care Facility may be taller in height than a typical six storey Seniors Supportive or Assisted Housing or Seniors Social Housing building due to additional mechanical and electrical systems to meet operational needs.

Table 1: Location and Form of Development

Rezoning to Specific Height and Density¹				
Type	Location	Arterial Street	Local Street	Mixed-use, on Arterials Only
Community Care Facility	Vancouver Plan Villages, Neighbourhood Centres and Rapid Transit Areas (see yellow areas of Map A).	< = 6 storeys Up to 3.5 FSR	< = 6 storeys Up to 2.4 FSR or 2.7 FSR on corner sites	< = 6 storeys Up to 3.5 FSR or 3.7 FSR on corner sites
Seniors Supportive or Assisted Housing	Vancouver Plan Villages, Neighbourhood Centres and Rapid Transit Areas (see yellow areas of Map A).	< = 6 storeys Up to 2.4 FSR or 2.7 FSR on corner sites	< = 6 storeys Up to 2.4 FSR or 2.7 FSR on corner sites	< = 6 storeys Up to 3.5 FSR
Seniors Social Housing	Vancouver Plan Villages, Neighbourhood Centres and Rapid Transit Areas (see yellow areas of Map A).	< = 6 storeys Up to 2.7 FSR or 3.0 FSR on corner sites	< = 6 storeys Up to 2.7 FSR or 3.0 on corner sites	< = 6 storeys Up to 3.5 FSR
All Seniors Housing and Community Care Uses within Community Plan Areas	Community Plan Areas and Major Project Sites (see blue areas of Map A).	Projects will be considered if they align with the heights and densities as set per the applicable community plan or major project site policy, or if the site overlaps with a Transit-Oriented Area as per Appendix: Map B. For sites within a Community Plan that overlap with a Transit-Oriented Area, the heights and densities will be considered as specified in the rows above.		

The Rezoning Site should not leave any remaining R1-1 or RT lot(s) with a total continuous frontage of less than 50 feet (15.2 meters) or obstruct access to a lane for any remaining lot(s).

¹ Additional height and density may be considered for some projects as described in section 4.1. If a project includes more than one allowable type of development, the project may go up to the higher of the two allowable FSRs.

4.1 Additional Height and Density Considerations beyond Table 1

Additional height and density will be considered for seniors housing types that are 100% owned by a non-profit corporation, or by or on behalf of the City of Vancouver, the Province of British Columbia, or Canada.

In Vancouver Plan areas (see yellow areas of Appendix: Map A) additional height and density will be determined based on heritage considerations, site context, urban design performance, and a detailed proposal review.

In community plan areas (see blue areas of Appendix: Map A), these projects will be considered for additional height and density where policies already enable redevelopment to apartment forms or where it falls within Transit-Oriented Areas, as identified in Appendix: Map B. Heights and densities to be determined based on heritage considerations, site context, urban design performance, and a detailed proposal review.

Qualifying projects for additional height and density may be mixed-use (e.g., include a commercial component), but all of the residential units proposed in the development must be rental in tenure or fall within the definition of a community care facility.

Applicants should also review the Transit-Oriented Areas Rezoning Policy, which guides rezoning applications within lands identified in the Transit-Oriented Areas By-law, as per Bill 47 'Housing Statutes (Transit-Oriented Areas) Amendment Act, 2023' from the Province of British Columbia (BC) as there may be additional applicable enabling policies.

4.2 Rezoning Eligible Areas

This policy applies to areas of the city that currently allow residential, including:

- (a) Vancouver Plan identified Villages, Neighbourhood Centres and Rapid Transit Areas, as shown in Map A; and
- (b) Community Plan Areas and Major Project Sites, as shown in Map A.

In addition, this policy applies to:

- (a) Any block that is partially included within a Vancouver Plan area identified in Map A; and

- (b) Any site outside of the area identified in Map A that has an existing Community Care Facility – Class B, Seniors Supportive or Assisted Housing, or Social Housing apartment building. These sites would be considered for the same heights and densities as allowable in the yellow area of Map A.

4.3 Mixed-use Residential Building Policies

Mixed-use will generally be required for sites that:

- (a) are immediately adjacent to a property that has existing zoning for commercial use (e.g., C-1, C-2, RR-3A, RR-3B, or CD-1 with retail at grade), or
- (b) include a corner lot at an intersection where two or more of the other corner sites are zoned for commercial use.

4.4 Design Guidelines

Rezoning applications should respond to the following guidelines, as appropriate, based on seniors housing type being proposed.

- (a) Seniors Housing, Community Care Facility and Group Residence Guidelines: Part A Community Care and Group Residences, or
- (b) Seniors Housing, Community Care Facility and Group Residence Guidelines: Part B Seniors Supportive or Independent Housing and Assisted Living.

5 TENANT RELOCATION AND RESIDENT RELOCATION POLICIES

The Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy supports protections of existing residents and tenants living in varying types of seniors housing.

All rezoning applications considered under this policy must meet the Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy or the Resident Relocation Policy for Community Care and Assisted Living Residences, depending on applicability. Generally:

- (a) The Resident Relocation Policy for Community Care and Assisted Living Residences applies to existing community care facilities and assisted living residences; and

- (b) The Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy applies to existing social housing and seniors supportive or independent housing that is rental in tenure.

6 COMMUNITY AMENITY CONTRIBUTIONS (CACs)

Community Amenity Contributions (CACs) policies apply to privately initiated rezoning applications. CAC requirements vary by seniors housing type as outlined the Community Amenity Contributions for Rezoning Policy.

7 ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS FOR PROJECT PROPONENTS

The below additional requirements should be considered in rezoning proposals.

7.1 Security of Tenure and Operational Requirements

Legal agreements (e.g., Housing Agreement pursuant to section 565.2 of the Vancouver Charter, including no stratification and no separate sales covenants) or any legal mechanisms deemed necessary by the Direction of Legal Services and the Director of Planning, Urban Design and Sustainability will be used for a term of 60 years or the life of the building, whichever is greater.

This includes:

- (a) For Seniors Supportive or Assisted Housing, a Housing Agreement or other legal mechanism to restrict occupancy to those aged 55 years of age or older and to secure the units as rental housing (e.g. no stratification and no separate sales covenants), if the project is rental tenure.
- (b) For Seniors Social Housing, a Housing Agreement or other legal agreement to restrict occupancy to those aged 55 years of age or older and to secure the use as social housing.

7.2 Housing for Families and Unit Mix

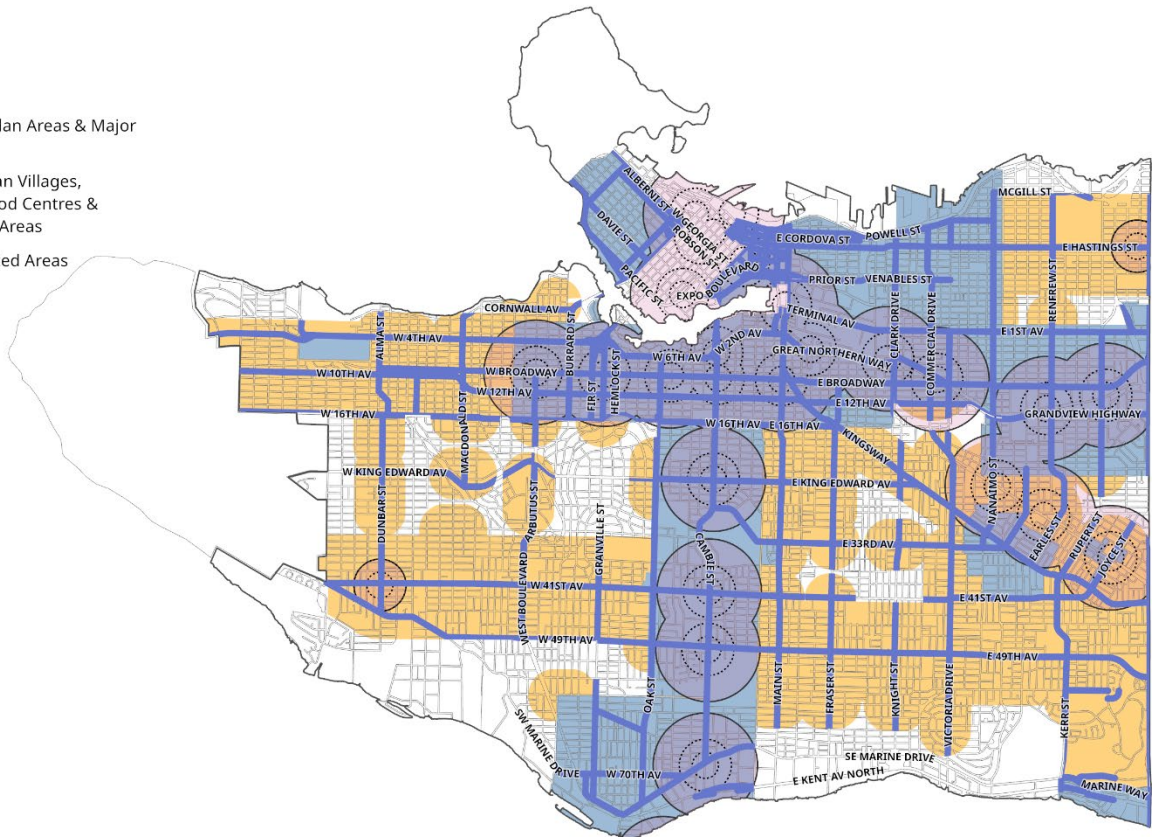
The City's Family Room: Housing Mix Policy for Rezoning Projects will not apply to development applications coming through this policy as the purpose of the policy is to support older adults.

7.3 Green Buildings

The Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy supports green building objectives and the development of near-zero emission buildings. All rezoning applications considered under this policy will be expected to meet the Green Buildings Policy for Rezoning.

Map B: Locations of sites that can be considered within the Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy with Transit-Oriented Areas

- On Arterial
- Community Plan Areas & Major Project Sites
- Vancouver Plan Villages, Neighbourhood Centres & Rapid Transit Areas
- ⊙ Transit-Oriented Areas



Policy

Interim Rezoning Policy for Social Housing, **Seniors Housing**, and Institutional, Cultural and Recreational Uses in Former Community Visions Areas

Approved by Council November 1, 2023

Last amended July 23, 2024

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1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

This interim rezoning policy is a consolidation of rezoning policies for social housing, ~~seniors housing~~, and institutional, cultural and recreational uses that were previously contained in Community Visions documents. Except for these aspects, the policies and directions in the documents have been superseded by those in the Vancouver Plan, Housing Vancouver Strategy, and other more recent policy directions.

This document is interim until additional work is completed to replace this with enabling policies that further align with Vancouver Plan goals for improving equity, liveability, and affordability across the city.

2 INTENT

In line with directions in the Vancouver Plan and Housing Vancouver Strategy, the policies in this document enable consideration of the rezoning applications for social housing, ~~seniors housing~~, and institutional, cultural and recreational uses in the former Community Visions areas shown on Map 1: Areas Where Rezoning for Social Housing, ~~Seniors Housing~~ and Institutional, Cultural and Recreational Uses May be Considered. Where area plans have been adopted subsequent to the Community Visions, these areas are excluded from the map as the land use policy in those plans supersedes the Community Visions.

Enabling rezoning for these types of projects is intended to allow development that advances city-wide policies and directions. Rezoning typically includes public consultation as part of considering an application; staff look at not only the needs of the project, but also how it relates to its existing surroundings and to the future of the area as described in the Vancouver Plan.

3 INTERIM REZONING POLICIES

3.1 Social Housing

Social housing is important to the overall health of Vancouver’s housing system. It provides a secure housing option for many low and moderate income households. However, it is generally concentrated in a few limited areas of the city. The Vancouver Plan, Housing Vancouver Strategy, and other more recent policies aim to create more inclusive and affordable neighbourhoods throughout the city and expand opportunities for social housing.

3.1.1 Council may consider rezoning applications in any area shaded on Map 1 for the development of 100% social housing as defined in Section 2 of the Zoning and Development By-law.

3.2 Seniors Housing

~~Similar to the majority of Canadian cities, Vancouver’s population is aging. The proportion of the population over 65 grew at five times the rate of the under 65 population between 2016 and 2021, making it the fastest growing demographic group in the City¹. The Vancouver Plan, Housing Vancouver Strategy, and other more recent policies aim to improve housing options to better meet the needs of seniors and to allow seniors to stay in the community as their housing needs change.~~

~~3.2.1 Council may consider rezoning applications for the development of low-rise (typically 4 to 6 storeys) seniors supportive or assisted housing or community care facilities as defined in Section 2 of the Zoning and Development By-law targeted to seniors aged 55+, if the site is:~~

- ~~(a) located in the area shown on Map 1; and~~
- ~~(b) located near local shopping and services, transit, or a park.~~

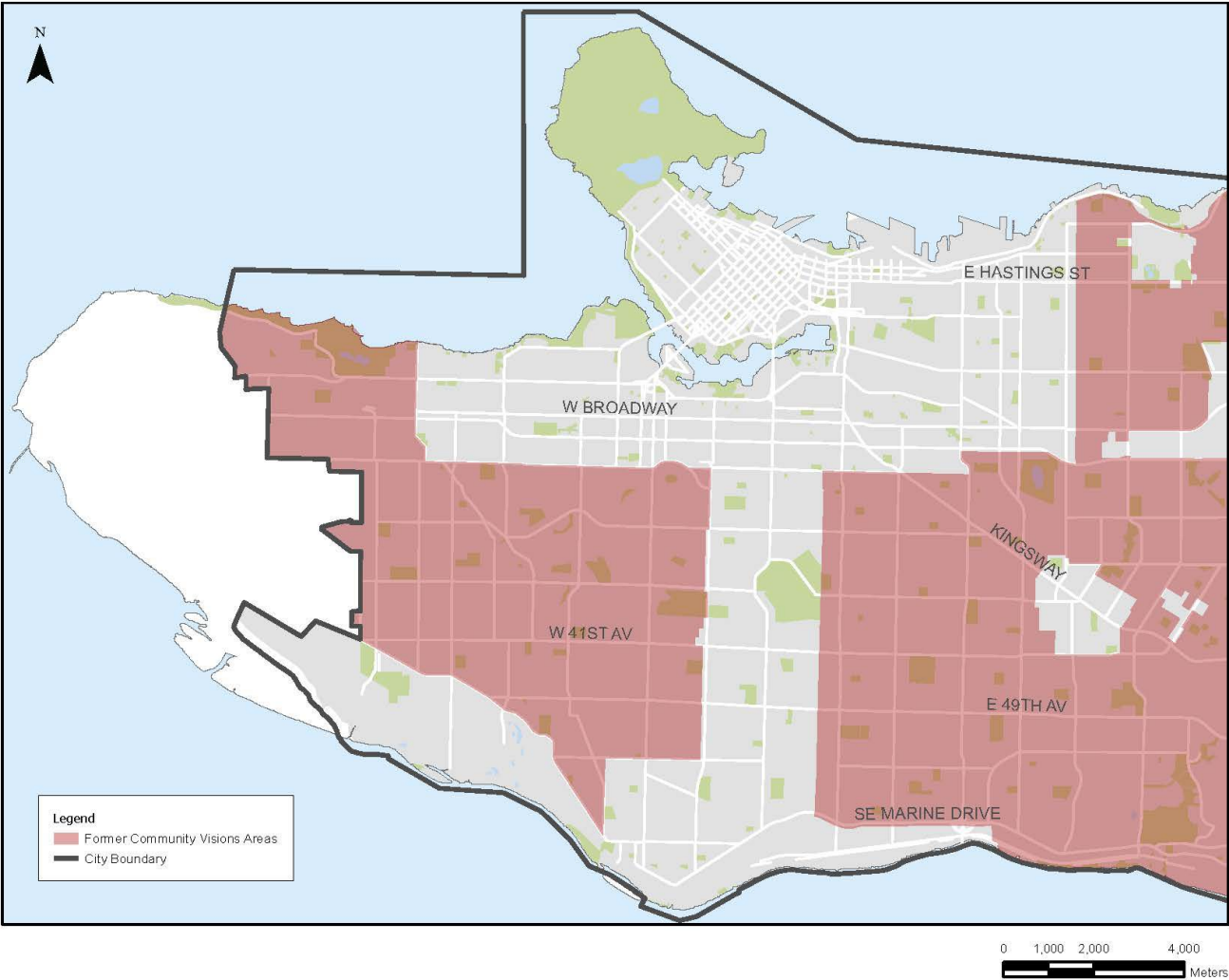
Institutional, Cultural and Recreational Uses

The Vancouver Plan, Housing Vancouver Strategy, and other more recent policies aim to facilitate a variety of housing options to meet the diverse range of housing needs and to improve access to community-serving uses.

¹ 2021 Census, Statistics Canada, Census of Population

3.2.1 Council may consider rezoning applications located in the area shown on Map 1 to enable the expansion, downsizing, or reuse of existing publicly owned or non-profit institutional, cultural and recreational uses.

Map 1: Areas Where Rezoning for Social Housing, ~~Seniors Housing~~, and Institutional, Cultural and Recreational Uses May be Considered²



² In residential areas outside of the former Community Vision areas identified in Map 1, the City will continue to consider social housing projects through the use of the Affordable Housing Policies (1989).

Policy

Resident Relocation Policy for Community Care and Assisted Living Residences

Approved by Council Month Day, Year

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1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Seniors are a fast-growing age demographic in Vancouver, with more older persons in the city than ever before. Many older adults live on fixed incomes and will need to consider changing health, accessibility and housing needs as they age. Some older adults will choose to stay in their existing home or community as long as they can, while others may seek out or require seniors' housing with supports or will downsize to a more manageable or accessible home. The City of Vancouver's Seniors Housing Strategy (2024) aims to ensure older adults have the housing and supports needed to allow for aging in appropriate and affordable housing in their community.

The City of Vancouver's Resident Relocation Policy for Community Care and Assisted Living Residences (Resident Relocation Policy) supports the needed redevelopment of private and public long-term care and assisted living residences while ensuring existing residents are protected. New long-term care and assisted living buildings are important as existing buildings continue to age and require updates for health and safety. New buildings allow for better care and support residents to live with freedom, choice and dignity. This Resident Relocation Policy builds on provincial regulations for community care (i.e., long-term care) and assisted living through the Community Care and Assisted Living Act.

Community care facilities are regulated by the Province of British Columbia's Residential Care Regulation. In Vancouver, this regulation is overseen by a licensing group at Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH). It includes requirements for written notice of closure at least one year prior to the date of closure and the development of a plan for the relocation of residents, to be approved by the Medical Health Officer, if a building is closing.

Assisted living residences are regulated by the Province's Assisted Living Regulation. This regulation is overseen by the Assisted Living Registrar and includes requirements for written notice of closure at least one year prior to the date of closure, and a health and safety plan on how the resident's needs will be met during the redevelopment.

This Resident Relocation Policy applies to private, public and non-profit owned community care and assisted living residences and is intended to ensure all residences are held to a high standard when it comes to resident moves. In addition to the Provincial regulatory requirements, Vancouver Coastal Health funded long-term care facilities follow VCH's Principles Guiding Resident Moves Related to Home Renovations or Closures. These principles outline VCH's responsibility for planning and managing the renewal of care homes receiving funding from VCH, where residents are affected by upgrades, conversions and closures (see the appendix for more details).

2 INTENT

The City's Resident Relocation Policy seeks to ensure proactive communication and provide resident protections during the redevelopment of an existing community care or assisted living residence, in addition to the Provincial regulations in place through the Community Care and Assisted Living Act. For VCH-funded care homes, additional requirements are found through their Principles Guiding Resident Moves Related to Home Renovations or Closures. The Residential Tenancy Act and the City of Vancouver's Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy does not apply to these uses.

This Resident Relocation Policy aligns with both Vancouver Coastal Health principles for moving residents and aligns or exceeds the Province's Residential Care Regulation. This policy is intended to ensure that both VCH-funded and private care homes and assisted living residences are held to a high standard with regards to resident moves.

This Policy is required:

- as a condition of rezoning for an existing community care or assisted living facility; or
- for conditional approval of development applications, where a rezoning is not required, for existing community care facilities and assisted living residences.

This policy applies to all applications received on or after July 23rd, 2024.

Community Care (i.e., long-term care) and Assisted Living are regulated by the Provincial Community Care and Assisted Living Act. It is the responsibility of the applicant to ensure resident moves meet applicable requirements including the British Columbia Community Care and Assisted Living Act, Residential Care Regulation, Assisted Living Regulation and Residents' Bill of Rights. Where conflicts exist between the requirements of these guidelines and legislations enacted by the federal or provincial government, the highest level of requirements will apply.

3 POLICIES

3.1 Policy Coverage

This Policy applies to existing community care and assisted living residences, as defined under the Zoning and Development By-law under Community Care Facility.

3.1.1 Eligible households

3.1.1.1 All residents residing in an applicable building type at the time the rezoning or development permit application is opened are eligible for this policy.

3.1.1.2 Residents who move-in after the application but during the redevelopment process will also be covered by this policy. Prior to move-in, these residents and their representatives, family members and contact persons should be informed of the development process through a meeting and letter.

3.1.2 Exclusions

3.1.2.1 Residents living in buildings that fall under the City's Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy are not eligible for the Resident Relocation Policy for Community Care and Assisted Living Residences (e.g., primary rental, secondary rental, independent living that is rental in tenure, non-profit social and co-op housing, and supportive housing).

3.1.2.2 Residents who are temporarily staying in the building for a short-stay service, including respite care or convalescent care, are not eligible for the Resident Relocation Policy for Community Care and Assisted Living Residences.

3.2 Relocation Policies

3.2.1 Communication and engagement with residents

All residents will be provided with advance notice and ongoing communication of the relocation process, including through:

- (a) A letter to residents and their representatives, family members and contact persons prior to public notification of the application.
- (b) A meeting with residents and their representatives, family members and contact persons to describe the process and hear any specific concerns. This can be done individually or as a small group, as appropriate.

In addition to the above requirements, applicants must follow notification requirements under the Residential Care Regulation and Assisted Living Regulation.

3.2.2 Support with relocation

Residents will be provided with assistance moving, with all associated expenses to be paid directly by the applicant. In addition, the applicant will ensure new accommodation that meets the needs of the residents is secured. This includes:

- (a) Arranging for any assistance needed to move, including packing personal belongings and arranging transportation and movement of furniture and other belongings, which may include equipment. The applicant will assume all appropriate one-time costs associated with the move e.g., transportation, cable and telephone installation, unless the move is requested to be outside of the Vancouver Coastal Health boundaries.
- (b) Ensuring the new accommodation is secured at a community care or assisted living residence that is capable of meeting the resident's care needs, and in a subsidy type (i.e., private pay non-subsidized unit or subsidized unit) that matches the existing type, unless otherwise agreed to by the resident and their representatives, family members and contact persons (e.g. a subsidized registered assisted living unit must be secured for the resident if they are currently in one).
 - (i) If, due to health changes, another level of support is required (e.g., move to long-term care from assisted living), the appropriate residence must be secured.
- (c) The resident and their representatives, family members and contact persons should be asked for their preferences of a new long-term care or assisted living residence, with preferences honoured wherever possible. New accommodation should be secured within the City of Vancouver, unless the needs of the resident makes this impossible or unless otherwise requested by the resident and their representatives, family members and contact persons.

3.2.3 Right of first refusal

Residents should be offered the right to return to the new building upon completion. This should be offered unless it is not possible due to a change in service levels of units, unit types, or other factors demonstrated. The Right of First Refusal includes:

- (a) An offer to return to the new building to a unit that is of the same type (e.g., studio, one-bedroom, private room) and at the associated subsidy rate that the resident currently receives (i.e., private pay non-subsidized unit or subsidized unit).
- (b) Provision of moving assistance and expenses for both moves, should a resident take-up the right of first refusal. See 3.2.2 (a) for more information on required moving assistance.

3.3 Implementation

3.3.1 Submission requirements

The applicant must submit a Resident Relocation Application Form as part of the rezoning and/or development permit application process. Staff will evaluate each Resident Relocation Plan based on the policies set out in this document.

APPENDIX: VANCOUVER COASTAL HEALTH'S PRINCIPLES GUIDING RESIDENT MOVES RELATED TO HOME RENOVATIONS OR CLOSURES

In summary, the VCH Principles Guiding Resident Moves Related to Home Renovations or Closures (2020) includes:

- Planning is proactive in order to minimize potential for resident or family stress.
- The care home closure process is effectively coordinated so disruption to resident and family is minimized. This includes a Closure Team that is responsible for co-ordination of the resident moves and identification of system issues and conflicts and referral for resolution.
- Residents, family members and staff are provided with personalized communication and open and frequent communication and consultation is encouraged and maintained. This includes a joint letter, mutually approved by VCH and the care home, of the planned closure and with an invitation to a small group meeting where individual and personal concerns can be addressed. Existing groups such as Resident and Family Councils are also utilized, as agreed upon by the Chairs of these Councils.
- Open and planned communication with the public and media is maintained. Communication should be planned prior to a public announcement of the closure.
- Residents and families are supported to identify and access one of two preferred care homes, which are capable of meeting resident care needs. The resident's preference will be honoured unless the care homes are not capable of meeting the resident's safety needs.
- Individual resident quality of care is maintained through the planning and implementation of the moves. This includes resident reassessments so individualized care plans are current, supporting documentation, and a jointly facilitated move to ensure special needs are addressed.
- VCH assumes responsibility to move the resident, and their personal belongings, which may include furniture and equipment for VCH owned and operated sites. The closing care home arranges transportation and movement of furniture, equipment and resident belongings. VCH assumes all appropriate one-time costs associated with the move e.g., transportation, cable and telephone installation. Residents who move outside of the VCH boundaries assume costs of relocation.

All care home closures are subject to review, in order to guide and improve processes for future closures. This includes a family satisfaction survey to identify issues and follow-up as necessary to guide future practice.

Guidelines

Seniors Housing, Community Care Facility and Group
Residence Guidelines

Approved by Council Month Day, Year

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1 BACKGROUND AND CONTEXT

Vancouver's Seniors Housing, Community Care Facility and Group Residence Guidelines support the development of housing options for older adults and other populations that is available within their neighborhood of choice and appropriate for their care needs. The guidelines will be applied to a range of housing types that reflect a hierarchy of care supports offered to older adults as they age, and other populations according to their needs. Applications for new development, renovations or change of use are subject to adherence to these guidelines as they relate to resident needs, suitability of location, siting, form of development and any other relevant City policies or planning objectives that may apply.

Community Care and Assisted Living uses are regulated by the Provincial Community Care and Assisted Living Act (CCALA). It is the responsibility of the design team (architects, engineers and builders) engaged by an applicant to design and build projects meeting current standards, relevant legislation and codes, including the British Columbia Community Care and Assisted Living Act, Residential Care Regulation, Assisted Living Regulation and BC Bill of Rights. Where conflicts exist between the requirements of these guidelines and legislations enacted by the federal or provincial government, the highest level of requirements will apply.

2 INTENT

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with a district schedule of the Zoning and Development By-law or with an official development plan by-law for conditional approval of the following uses:

- Community Care Facility - Class B
- Seniors Supportive or Assisted Housing
- Group Residence

The above uses are defined in the Zoning and Development By-law. These guidelines will also be used in assessing rezoning applications that involve these uses and are outlined in two parts:

- Part A: Community Care and Group Residence Guidelines applies to a building or portion of a building used as a community care facility (i.e., long-term care), licensed under the Provincial CCALA, or as a group residence.
- Part B: Seniors Supportive or Assisted Housing and Assisted Living Guidelines applies to a building or portion of the building used as seniors supportive or assisted housing, or as assisted living, whether registered or unregistered under the CCALA.

In buildings with both community care (i.e., long-term care) and seniors supportive or independent housing or assisted living uses, the relevant guidelines should be used for each portion of the building dedicated to that use.

When designing for long-term care, applicants are encouraged to also review Vancouver Coastal Health's most recent Long Term Care Design Guidelines for additional design considerations.

3 PART A: COMMUNITY CARE AND GROUP RESIDENCES

The intent of these guidelines is to promote design that fosters independent, equitable and dignified care and access to activities of daily living for older adults and other residents with varying levels of ability and individual needs. The guidelines also support the integration of community care (i.e., long-term care) and group residences throughout the city by providing a framework for assessing applications. This framework considers the needs of residents, suitability of location, siting and building form, and any relevant City policies or planning objectives that may apply to a given site.

The guidelines outline factors that the Director of Planning, the General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services, and other relevant Civic Departments will take into consideration in assessing rezoning applications for a community care facility or group residence or a development permit application for these uses.

The purpose of these guidelines is to:

- Promote optimal quality of life and health outcomes for building residents;
- Support design of appropriate built form solutions for community care and group residences; and
- Support design and construction alternatives when necessitated by site conditions, building programming or other considerations.

In assessing a rezoning or development application for a community care or group residence, the Director of Planning, in consultation with the General Manager of Arts, Culture and Community Services will:

- Review the information provided by the applicant regarding number of residents, programming, length of stay, funding, traffic, parking, and any other relevant features;
- Consider any features of the proposed facility or its operation which require coordination with adjacent properties; and
- Review the applicant's proposal for communicating with neighbours and responding to queries/concerns.

3.1 General Design Considerations

The community care or group residence development should be designed with a welcoming residential character and consider long-range policies and anticipated future area changes.

3.1.1 Site Selection

Sites should be selected that allow for aging in community, accessible circulation and adequate daylight, including:

- Locating larger buildings in close proximity to transit and other complimentary uses such as community centres, where possible, to improve ease of access for staff and visitors while allowing more options for older adults to age in their community;
- Avoiding steeply sloping sites where possible, which are less desirable due to the complexity of site circulation, as ramps often have significant spatial requirements that are better allocated to usable outdoor space. Level paths not requiring ramps are preferred due to ease of use by those with mobility aids or limited endurance;
- Where the development is located on a sloping site, it is recommended to incorporate landscape transitions to natural grade at the property lines, which may require additional space for stepping and terraces. Extensive exposed retaining walls are discouraged in the setback areas;
- Carefully site buildings on sloping sites to ensure units have adequate daylight access. Access to natural light is important at all times of the year; and
- Appropriately site and screen service spaces such as loading, recycling, and garbage areas to provide high quality streetscapes and interfaces with adjacent properties.

3.1.2 Building Form

To assess the appropriateness of proposed built form, consideration will be given to:

- Any Council-approved plans or guidelines for the area, including long range policies anticipating future changes to the area, recognizing that community care facilities and group residences should contribute to City objectives in approved area plans and policies; and
- Building form and massing which minimizes shadowing on surrounding public spaces, school grounds and parks.
- Tree retention to screen larger buildings, which is especially desirable on local streets.

3.1.3 Architectural Design

The building should be designed to have high-quality architectural design and a welcoming residential character. To assess the appropriateness of proposed design, consideration will be given to:

- Visual interest created through façade composition, high quality materials, and detailing is especially important to break down the scale of larger buildings, which may appear more institutional due to their size. Strategies should break up long frontages including façade articulation, massing changes, colour and materials treatments, and integration of significant landscaped nodes along facades;
- Maximum building widths of up to 45.7 m (150 ft.) are generally recommended to improve compatibility with adjacent lower-scale buildings, increase permeability, and allow better cross-ventilation and access to natural light. Projects with larger frontages can be articulated with inset bridge element(s) set back from the building face or with a visually lighter material treatment to suggest two or more distinct building forms;
- Typical clear ceiling heights of 2.9 m (9.5 ft.) are expected for residential uses. However, in some buildings, ceiling heights must be increased to meet programmatic and operational requirements as required in the Community Care and Assisted Living Act: Residential Care Regulation. Community care buildings providing the highest levels of care require specialized mechanical, air handling equipment and gases in ceiling spaces, which are likely to require increased ceiling heights;
- Massing changes and step backs at upper floors should be considered to reduce vertical scale and improve transition to lower buildings nearby. Significant landscaped nodes along long facades are also effective to reduce apparent scale, in combination with architectural treatments such as use of colour and materials;
- The primary building entry should be well marked and visually obvious from the street(s);
- Weather protection should be provided at all entrances; and
- Seating should be provided at the main entrance and at key pedestrian nodes within the site wherever possible, to facilitate socialization for residents and visitors, and serve as resting places for those with limited mobility and physical endurance.

3.2 Internal Design

3.2.1 Resident Centred Design

The community care or group residence development should be designed so that it centres the health and well-being of residents, including:

- Provision of ground-level community space (e.g., community garden plots, children’s playground, coffee shop and seating areas) where the broader community (people from outside the building) can come in and interact with the community care residents on a regular basis to encourage multigenerational connections. For group residence, community space is recommended as appropriate to the resident populations;
- Provision of resident amenity space of varying sizes for events and gatherings, such as an art studio, exercise studio, sacred space, town hall, salon, and small seating nodes in circulation spaces to encourage social interaction;
- Provision of spaces that consider the diversity of residents with regard to culture, ethnicity and gender, such as providing space for religious and cultural practices, ceremonies and events, and providing gender neutral washrooms;
- Ensuring clear sightlines wherever possible to help staff quickly monitor residents, and to assist residents (especially those with dementia or memory loss) to find familiar places; and
- Implementing a comprehensive wayfinding strategy based on a simple, logical layout, with signage supporting those with differing visual and auditory needs. Signs should also accommodate non-English speakers.

Applicants are encouraged to also review Vancouver Coastal Health’s current Long Term Care Design Guidelines for additional resident centred design considerations.

3.2.2 Unit Design

For projects targeting older adults, design units/rooms to accommodate additional space needed for mobility devices. Unit layouts must provide sufficient space for a support provider to enter the unit and carry out their work. In some cases, a resident may require a two-person assist, requiring additional space within the unit. Some residents require a variety of medical equipment, such as oxygen tanks and multiple mobility aids, which are used frequently enough to require being kept within the unit.

3.3 Circulation

3.3.1 The community care or group residence development should be designed so that circulation spaces are accessible and effective to accommodate resident needs, including consideration of:

- Provision of an accessible path of travel from the public sidewalk to all accessible building entrances, throughout common areas, and to parking areas and passenger loading zones for persons with limited mobility.
- Provision of sufficient space for parking of mobility devices such as three wheeled bikes and power scooters near the building entry and on site.

- Natural light in corridors wherever possible, while mitigating glare.

3.4 Open Space

3.4.1 The community care or group residence development should be designed so that open spaces are usable, promote connection with the natural environment and allow for freedom of movement. Consideration should be given to:

- Design quality outdoor space around the building at grade, the upper floors and roof.
- Applications targeting older adults are encouraged to provide accessible outdoor walking loops (e.g., with smooth walking surfaces and handrails), with meaningful destinations and intermittent seating opportunities wherever possible.
- The open space design should provide meaningful space for interactions with staff, visitors, and family including children, within the site and throughout the building, including upper-level outdoor spaces.
- Provide usable private open space such as accessible balconies near each household¹ or grouping of units where practical.
- Wheelchair accessible units should have an outdoor space that accommodates required turning movements for use of wheeled mobility devices including larger power chairs.
- Common outdoor space in combination with an indoor amenity room is encouraged and should be located at grade and/or at the rooftop where practical.
- Roof access is encouraged to provide outdoor amenity space for residents and visitors. Projections above the roof line for roof deck access should be well integrated with the architectural design.

¹ A household is a grouping of units typically found in community care facilities. Households are typically up to 12 - 14 residents and includes all the spaces required to support day to day living (e.g., meals, personal care).

3.5 Parking and Loading

3.5.1 The community care or group residence development should be designed with adequate and accessible parking, loading, bicycle, and passenger spaces.

- Provide parking spaces in accordance with the [Parking By-law](#). The Parking By-law outlines requirements for parking, accessible stalls, loading, bicycle spaces, and passenger loading. A [Transportation Demand Management](#) (TDM) Plan may also be required.
- Access to parking, loading, bicycle spaces, and passenger loading should be designed to allow for privacy for funeral care with minimum impacts on neighbouring uses and traffic circulation.

4 PART B: SENIORS SUPPORTIVE OR INDEPENDENT HOUSING AND ASSISTED LIVING

Seniors supportive housing, seniors independent housing and assisted living are housing in which there are individual residential units and large common areas, including a large communal dining room and common areas for activities and socializing. It is designed to meet the needs of older adults (55+) and facilitate aging in place. It features a package of services, typically including meals, house-keeping, laundry and activities. Registered assisted living residences may provide some medical services as regulated by the Community Care and Assisted Living Act. Seniors supportive housing, independent housing and assisted living are important components of the continuum of housing choice for seniors, one which allows seniors to maintain and maximize their independence.

These guidelines are to be used in conjunction with a district schedule of the Zoning and Development By-law, and official development plan by-laws for development permit applications for seniors supportive or independent housing or assisted living. They are intended to provide direction primarily related to the livability and usability of seniors supportive or independent housing or assisted living. In zoning districts where design guidelines exist, these too should be consulted.

The guidelines are to assist applicants in their planning and design, and City staff in evaluation. All applications should be accompanied by an operating plan, which should include, but may not be limited to information on details such as the following:

- anticipated resident profile (target market);
- proposed tenure of the units, i.e., subsidized, rental, strata-title, or mix;
- meals service;
- other services provided on site; and

- how the common spaces will be used and programmed.

While there is room for variety and creativity in the design of the components of seniors supportive or independent housing and assisted living, the total package should:

- support the dignity and independence of seniors, while providing the physical environment and services which maintain quality of life and allow aging in place; and
- promote a sense of community within the development.

The City, at its discretion, may consider exemptions in the application of guidelines when a Housing Agreement is entered into between the owner and the City where at least a portion of the units are restricted to occupancy by residents of low and modest incomes.

4.1 General Design Considerations

4.1.1 Site Selection

Seniors supportive or independent housing and assisted living should be located to facilitate older adults to safely and independently access services, facilities and activities outside the project, with consideration to:

- Select sites that have good access to public transit, shopping, and community services;
- The area surrounding the site should have a comfortable walking environment, with sidewalks in good condition, crosswalks, and clearly marked walkways separated from vehicular traffic;
- Avoid steeply sloping sites where possible, which are less desirable due to complexity of site circulation, as ramps often have significant spatial requirements that are better allocated to usable outdoor space. Level paths not requiring ramps are preferred due to ease of use by those with mobility aids or limited endurance; and
- Where a development is located on a sloping site, it is recommended to incorporate landscape transitions to natural grade at the property lines, which may require additional space for ramps, stepping and terraces. Extensive exposed retaining walls are discouraged in the setback areas.

4.1.2 Building Characteristics

Seniors supportive or independent housing and assisted living should look, feel and function as a residential use for older adults of varying ages and abilities. The design should support aging in place without an institutional character, with consideration given to:

- Incorporate aging in place features throughout the building, such as wider doors and hallways, handrails, lever door handles, lower window sills (to allow viewing when seated), lower light switches, raised electrical sockets, and washroom fixtures as appropriate;
- Orient the project to take advantage of direct sunlight, as natural light is important to the creation of liveable residential space;
- Encourage natural light in corridors wherever possible;
- Provide weather protection at all entrances;
- Provide seating inside and outside the main entrances wherever possible; and
- Consider the principles of Crime Prevention Through Environmental Design (CPTED) in the site and building design.

4.1.3 Architectural Design

The building should be designed to have high-quality architectural design and a welcoming residential character. To assess the appropriateness of proposed design, consideration will be given to:

- Visual interest created through façade composition, high quality materials and detailing is especially important to break down the scale of larger buildings, which may appear institutional due to overall size. Strategies should break up long frontages include façade articulation, massing changes, colour and materials treatments, and integration of significant landscaped nodes along facades;
- Maximum building widths of up to 45.7 m (150 ft.) are generally recommended to improve compatibility with adjacent lower-scale buildings, increase permeability, and allow better cross-ventilation and access to natural light. Projects with larger frontages can be articulated with inset bridge element(s) set back from the building face or with a visually lighter material treatment to suggest two or more distinct building forms;
- Typical clear ceiling heights of 2.9 m (9.5 ft) are generally expected for residential uses. However, in some buildings, ceiling heights may be increased to meet programmatic and operational requirements;
- Massing changes and step backs at upper floors help should be considered to reduce vertical scale and improve transition to lower buildings nearby. Significant landscaped nodes along long facades are also effective to reduce apparent scale, in combination with architectural treatments such as use of colour and materials;
- The primary building entry should be well marked and visually obvious from the street(s);
- Weather protection should be provided at all entrances; and

- Provide seating at the main entrance and at key pedestrian nodes within the site wherever possible, to facilitate socialization for residents and visitors, and serve as resting places for those with limited mobility and physical endurance.

4.1.4 Building Access

Seniors supportive or independent housing and assisted living should be designed to provide safe and easy access to its residents and visitors, including:

- Promote access to the project by designing safe, well lit pedestrian access that is generous and accommodates people with disabilities;
- Include non-glare pedestrian scale security lighting to illuminate outdoor pathways and access to the street where appropriate; and
- Provide an accessible path of travel with appropriate signage for wayfinding from the public sidewalk to all accessible building entrances, throughout common areas, and to parking areas and passenger loading zones for persons with limited mobility.

4.2 Internal Design

4.2.1 Resident-Centred Design

Seniors supportive or independent housing and assisted living should be designed so that it centres the health and well-being of residents through:

- Provision of ground-level community space (e.g., community garden plots, children's playground, coffee shop, and seating areas) where the broader community (people from outside the building) can come in and interact with residents on a regular basis to encourage multigenerational connections;
- Provision of resident amenity space of varying sizes for events and gatherings, such as an art studio, exercise studio, sacred space, town hall, salon, and small seating nodes in circulation spaces to encourage social interactions; and
- Provision of spaces that consider the diversity of residents with regard to culture, ethnicity and gender, such as providing space for religious and cultural practices, ceremonies and events, and providing gender neutral washrooms.

4.2.2 Unit Design

Units should be designed to accommodate aging in place and demonstrate suitability for people using wheelchairs, walkers and other mobility aids. Unit layouts should provide sufficient space for a support provider to enter the unit and carry out their work. In some cases, a resident may require a two-person

assist, requiring additional space within the unit. Some residents require a variety of medical equipment, such as oxygen tanks and multiple mobility aids, which are used frequently enough to require being kept within the unit. Dwelling units must meet the Vancouver Building By-Law's adaptable dwelling unit standards.

4.3 Common Areas

Common areas should be designed to foster social interaction and accommodate activities key to successful seniors supportive or independent housing or assisted living. Sufficient space should be provided for residents of all levels of mobility to move around comfortably and engage in activities. Space should also be provided for guests, visitors, staff, and medical equipment.

The operating plan submitted with the seniors supportive or independent housing or assisted living proposal should include a plan for use and function of all common areas, with special care for ease of access for residents.

4.3.1 Common Dining Room and Kitchen

The common dining room should be designed to accommodate one sitting of residents with mobility aids, and visitors. The combined size of the dining room or dining spaces should be 2 m² (21.5 sq. ft.) per unit. Requests for variation in these guidelines should be accompanied by an operating plan, outlining the proposed meal services and demonstrating seating, access and circulation. Projects should:

- Include an area for the temporary storage/parking of walkers and other mobility aids in or near the dining room;
- Locate fully wheelchair accessible washrooms close to the dining room; and
- Provide an on-site kitchen, which could be shared in cases where seniors supportive or independent housing or assisted living is part of a larger complex.

4.3.2 Common Lounges and Rooms

The project should provide at least 2 m² (21.5 sq. ft.) of common space per unit. Larger common spaces should be centrally located, adjacent to outdoor common space and ideally located at grade level. It is desirable to cluster the amenity space with other common facilities. Smaller common areas and single purpose rooms should also be provided, such as a library or a billiards room, a meeting room, a television room, a recreation room, or a place of worship. Consideration should be given to:

- Locate fully wheelchair accessible washrooms near activity areas. They may be shared with the dining area if located nearby;

- Provide lounges on residential floors in projects with small units, or many units per floor. Lounges are best located near central circulation elements and should consider including small kitchen and built-in storage for games and crafts, which makes them more usable; and
- Locate lounges to maximize natural light.

4.3.3 Laundry

Laundry facilities should be provided for residential use, with consideration for:

- Provision of lounge space adjacent to laundry facilities is desirable, as is locating laundry facilities at several locations instead of one central location;
- Include manoeuvring space for people with mobility aids in front of washers and dryers, and a work surface to accommodate people both sitting and standing where possible; and
- These facilities can be either ensuite or in common laundry rooms.

4.3.4 Reception/Administration

A functional reception or administration space should be included with consideration for:

- Provision of a waiting/rest area with seating near the main entrance. In larger projects, a reception area should also be provided;
- Provision of adequate space for staff providing 24-hour emergency response assistance; and
- Consideration of a health office space to facilitate resident appointments with visiting professionals.

4.3.5 Bulk Storage Areas

The development should be designed to provide usable and accessible storage for large personal items, including:

- Bulk storage areas should be well lit, easy to access, and have electrical outlets. They should be designed and configured to minimize reaching, lifting and bending;
- Storage for large personal items and mobility aids should be available within the building, ideally within the unit or on the same floor for improved access and security; and
- Provision of scooter storage and charging space is recommended. This is best provided in the suite, but an alternative place that allows for easy access by residents such as a Bike Room may also be acceptable.

Note: Residential bulk storage space can be excluded in the computation of the floor space ratio, as outlined in the District Schedules of the Zoning and Development By-law.

4.4 Circulation

4.4.1 The seniors supportive or independent housing and assisted living development should be designed to accommodate movement of individuals including those with mobility, visual and hearing impairments.

- Hallways should comfortably accommodate two-way pedestrian traffic and multiple residents using mobility aids.
- Travel distances from residential units to amenities should be minimized and within a comfortable walking range for an elderly person.
- The circulation system should be designed as separate and distinct from activity areas. For example, direct travel routes from the main entrance to the elevator should not cut through the dining room or other common areas.
- Elevators should be designed to accommodate people with differing accessibility needs.

4.5 Open Space

4.5.1 On site open space should be of an adequate size and designed to accommodate a variety of outdoor activities and experiences for residents, their families, and visitors.

- Common outdoor space should be provided and designed for ease of use, safety and security, such as even walking surfaces, non-slip and non-glare finishes, with a variety of outdoor seating and rest areas. Approximately 25 percent should be protected from sun, wind and rain.
- Wherever possible, indoor and outdoor common spaces should be co-located and adjacent.
- Access to the rooftop to provide outdoor amenity space is desirable where practical. Projections above the roof line for roof deck access should be well integrated with the architectural design.
- Accessible outdoor walking loops are strongly encouraged, incorporating meaningful destinations and seating opportunities at strategic locations.
- Private open space for each unit is encouraged (accessible balconies and patios) and should be designed to maximize light into units.
- On-site gardening using raised beds or other accessible design is encouraged.

- The open space design should provide meaningful space for interactions with staff, visitors, and family including children, within the site and throughout the building including upper-level outdoor spaces.
- Existing trees and significant landscape features should be retained where possible, to provide privacy for ground floor units as well as visual interest for residents and passers-by.

4.6 Parking and Loading

4.6.1 The seniors supportive or independent housing and assisted living development should be designed with adequate and accessible parking, loading, bicycle, and passenger spaces.

- Provide parking spaces in accordance with the [Parking By-law](#). The Parking By-law outlines requirements for parking, accessible stalls, loading, bicycle spaces, and passenger loading. A [Transportation Demand Management](#) (TDM) Plan may also be required.

APPENDIX F
DRAFT LETTER TO PROVINCIAL GOVERNMENT REGARDING THE URGENT
NEED FOR MORE SENIORS HOUSING, CARE AND SUPPORTS

[DATE]

The Honourable Ravi Kahlon
Minister of Housing

The Honourable Adrian Dix
Minister of Health

Mr. Vincent Tong
Chief Executive Officer, BC Housing

Dear Minister Kahlon, Minister Dix and Mr. Tong,

Re: Urgent Need for More Seniors Housing, Care and Supports

On July 23rd, 2024, Vancouver City Council approved the Seniors Housing Strategy. After extensive analysis and engagement with the public and seniors-serving organizations, the Strategy identified an urgent need for more seniors housing, care and supports.

Approximately 30% of older adults aged 55+ rent their homes, with many facing serious affordability challenges and in urgent need of additional rental supports and secure, affordable social, supportive and co-op housing. Without additional supports these older adults are facing an affordability crisis and are unable to afford rent, groceries, transportation, home supports, personal care and other services that may be needed.

There are a significant number of older adults in Vancouver who are on the BC Housing social housing waitlist. As of the last City of Vancouver homeless count, 21% of people counted were over 55 years old and almost half had first experienced homelessness when they were already 55 years or older. The top reason cited for loss of housing by older adults experiencing homeless was not enough income for housing. We need immediate actions and support to deliver housing for seniors experiencing homelessness and to better support low-income seniors who rent. With an aging population, we need to act now in order to prevent a wave of additional older adults from falling into homelessness.

In addition to affordability challenges, some older adults will require health or other supports as they age. This could include temporary home supports after a fall, such as at-home bathing, cleaning, meal prep or health services, or ongoing supports to allow for aging in place. A 2023 report from the BC Seniors Advocate identified that existing home support services are not keeping pace with the growing needs and that the service

remains unaffordable for a large number of seniors. For older adults who require complex care options, there is a shortage of long-term care and assisted living in Vancouver. According to Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH), in 2025 there will be a shortage of just over 300 subsidized long-term care beds and 90 subsidized assisted living units in the City of Vancouver and without further action, this shortage could grow to close to 1,500 long-term care beds and 350 assisted living units over the next ten years due to demographic changes.

The Seniors Housing Strategy identifies a number of ways in which the City of Vancouver will partner and take action within our municipal role to increase the supply of affordable seniors housing and care options. This includes partnering with BC Housing and VCH to deliver more affordable housing and long-term care facilities for older adults, including projects on City-owned land, and streamlining and expediting these projects. However, we need additional support from the Government of BC and are calling on the Province to:

1. Improve the SAFER Program so that it works for Vancouver renters, as recommended by the BC Seniors Advocate in the report *Ageing Matters: Listening to B.C. Seniors*. In Vancouver, this means:
 - A one-time increase of the rent ceiling to \$1,786 to reflect current CMHC average market rents for a one-bedroom in the City of Vancouver,
 - An increase in the maximum income limit of the program to \$45,000 to match the average incomes of older adults paying more than 30% of their income in the private rental market, so that more older adults are supported by the program,
 - A formula for regular annual increases in the rent ceiling to keep up with inflation and rent increases allowable under the Residential Tenancy Act, and
 - A revised SAFER formula that means the sliding scale still adequately supports those at the top end of the income limit, so they are not paying more than 30% of their income on rent.

This action would have an immediate and significant positive impact on older adults in Vancouver by providing affordability relief and by real options in the market for seniors who have to move from their current home, preventing homelessness. While this action will increase the costs to deliver the SAFER program in Vancouver to approximately \$25 million annually, these costs are significantly less than the cost to deliver the social housing that would otherwise be needed. This will create the affordability that is urgently needed today (see Appendix G for additional details).

2. Dedicate funding to move forward with construction of the seven Vancouver Coastal Health-identified priority sites to meet the current shortage of subsidized

long-term care beds and to proactively plan for increasing long-term care needs in the city.

3. Dedicate funding to the delivery of supportive housing units appropriate for older adults currently experiencing homelessness, as well as funding to move forward with the City's SRO Intergovernmental Investment Strategy, with consideration given to ensuring replacement housing meets the needs of existing tenants who are seniors.
4. Eliminate the daily rate to receive at-home supports so all seniors can afford at-home assistance and expand funding for non-profit organizations to deliver mobile support services to older adults living in social housing. These actions will support healthy aging in place, allowing older adults to continue to live independently with a bit of extra support and reduce pressure on assisted living and long-term care systems.

I understand that seniors are a top priority for your government and ministries and am positive that together we can find a path forward to ensure that no seniors will find themselves unable to get into subsidized long-term care or social housing, or at risk of or experiencing homelessness. With the growing population of older adults facing a crisis, the time to act is now.

I look forward to meeting with you to discuss this important topic.

[Signature]

APPENDIX G CITY OF VANCOUVER SAFER ANALYSIS

SAFER Background

The Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) Program was established in 1977 to help make rents more affordable for seniors with lower incomes living in the private rental market. Improvements to the program were made in 2014, 2018 and again in 2024. The benefit is calculated on a sliding scale that gives the most benefit to those with the least income.

According to BC Housing, the program objectives are to:

1. Provide low-to-moderate income seniors in the private market with rental assistance to make renting in the private market more affordable.
2. Provide timely processing of applications and response to inquiries.

In June 2024, the *Review of Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters and the Rental Assistance Program* report found that while SAFER and RAP help make housing more affordable, there is still a significant gap for many recipients. It also found:

- Increasing rents and low vacancy rates are eroding the benefits of both programs for many recipients.
- Current rent ceilings are too low given the current rental market resulting in challenges of affordability.
- The program is not designed to provide enough assistance to make the rental units fully affordable and does not cover the full affordability gap (i.e., those just under the income limit only receive the minimum monthly benefit, even though much more may be needed to allow those households to pay 30% of their income on rent).
- Rent supplements that reduce the affordability gap generally help to improve recipient's quality of life, by allowing focus on other aspects of life such as physical and mental health.

2023 SAFER Program in the City of Vancouver:

In 2023, there were 3,247 older adults enrolled in the BC Housing SAFER program in the City of Vancouver (source: BC Housing: Historical Unit Count Model, February 2024). According to a monthly snapshot provided in March 2023, the average SAFER payment for recipients in the City of Vancouver was \$219 per month per household and their average monthly rent was \$1,113. Accordingly, it is estimated that the 2023 SAFER costs for the City of Vancouver totalled just over **\$8.5 million**.

2024 Provincial SAFER updates:

As a result of the SAFER review report, updates to the program were announced in the spring of 2024. The rent ceiling is increasing to \$931 per household, up from \$803 for a single-person and \$866 for a two-person household. Further, the income eligibility was increased from \$33,000 annually to \$37,240 per household. These changes will increase both the per month SAFER amount received by recipients with rents above \$803 and \$866 and increase the number of eligible households.

As per the 2021 Census, there were approximately 4,250 senior-led households (65 years or older) in Vancouver living in the private rental housing making less than \$40,000 in gross

household income and paying more than 30% of their income on rent. This number has been used as a proxy for 60+ senior-led households with a gross household income of less than \$37,240, which are the parameters of the updated SAFER program requirements. It is estimated these changes could bring annual SAFER costs for recipients in the City of Vancouver to approximately **\$10 - \$13 million**.

Potential changes to meet the needs of older adults in the City of Vancouver:

If the Government of BC were to further improve the SAFER program as proposed in the Seniors Housing Strategy so that it works with existing market rents in the City of Vancouver, it is estimated the costs of the program would increase to close to **\$25 million** per annum.¹ This would provide support to the over 4,900 older adults with incomes of less than \$45,000 and who are paying more than 30% of their income towards rent in the private market, with an average SAFER payment of close to \$430 per month.

Though a significant increase in budget, if a new social housing unit were required for every SAFER recipient it could cost over **\$2.1 billion** in granting and financing. An updated SAFER program would require a fraction of this cost and, more importantly, create immediate affordability for these households. Low-income seniors in Vancouver are especially vulnerable to affordability challenges and homelessness, and increased support through the SAFER program would help to prevent additional homelessness among seniors.

SAFER PROGRAM	COST OF PROGRAM OF VANCOUVER SAFER RECIPIENTS
ESTIMATED 2023 SAFER PROGRAM (\$803 AND \$866 RENT CEILING, \$33,000 INCOME LIMIT)	~ \$8.5 million
ESTIMATED 2024 UPDATED SAFER PROGRAM (\$930 RENT CEILING, \$37,240 INCOME LIMIT)	~ \$10 - \$13 million
<u>ESTIMATED POTENTIAL 2025 SAFER PROGRAM</u> (\$1,786 RENT CEILING, \$45,000 INCOME LIMIT, AVERAGE RECIPIENT RENT OF \$1,200)	~ \$25 million

¹ This estimate assumes the rent ceiling were increased to the CMHC 2023 average market rent for a one-bedroom of \$1,786 for the rent ceiling, and an average SAFER recipient rent of \$1,200 based on previous SAFER average market rents and an assumed increase due to increased rent ceilings. These costs would be expected to increase on an annual basis by approximately 2%, in line with average inflation and Residential Tenancy Act allowable increases. In addition, average rents of recipients of the program would be expected to gradually increase over time, further increases estimated costs.

APPENDIX H ENGAGEMENT SUMMARY

Introduction

The Seniors Housing Strategy involved two phases of public and stakeholder engagement. The first phase was in the spring of 2023 and gathered information on the housing challenges and needs of older adults in Vancouver. It also helped to identify opportunities and partnerships that the City could pursue to improve housing for older adults. The second phase was in the spring of 2024 and asked the public and stakeholders to review the draft Strategy and the related policies to ensure they reflected community experiences and could be effectively implemented.

The Seniors Housing Strategy included significant engagement with older adults aged 55+, also referred to as seniors, elders, or older persons within the Strategy. In addition, we heard from caregivers, seniors-serving organizations, advocacy groups, the private sector and government partners in housing and healthcare. Staff also engaged with the City’s advisory committees including the Older Persons and Elders Advisory Committee, the Renters Advisory Committee, Persons with Disabilities Advisory Committee, and the 2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee.

Phase 1 Engagement Overview

The first phase of engagement reached over 1,500 people, with another 5,400 unique project webpage visits. We engaged residents through a phone survey (available in English, Cantonese, Mandarin, and Punjabi), an online survey (available in English and Traditional Chinese), public pop-ups, citizen-led conversation circles, stakeholder workshops, an ideas fair and community outreach events.

In this first phase of engagement, we asked older adults about their housing challenges, identified current and future housing needs, and asked about potential actions to improve housing. The engagement work was guided with consideration of the diverse life experiences, health, incomes, and cultural needs of the aging population. For a comprehensive overview of the feedback received during the first engagement phase, please see Appendix I.

Seniors Housing Strategy Consultation Timeline



Phase 1 Ideas Fair

City Staff hosted an Ideas Fair on June 20, 2023, which was attended by over 60 stakeholders. The in-person event included a presentation from the Seniors Advocate, Isobel Mackenzie, as well as from engagement consultant Happy Cities, which focused on key findings from the first phase of engagement. We asked participants to discuss and prioritize potential policies and actions to improve housing for seniors and older adults in Vancouver. The event brought together seniors-serving organizations, housing providers, advocacy groups, the Older Persons and Elders Advisory Committee members, and Staff to help shape the preliminary actions and key directions of the Strategy.

Key priority actions to improve housing for seniors in Vancouver that were identified at the Ideas Fair include:

- Building and enabling more affordable social and supportive housing by working in partnership with other levels of government and non-profits.
- Advocating for increased home supports to help seniors to age comfortably in their existing home.
- Advocating for improvements to the SAFER program; and
- Increasing core funding for seniors-serving organizations to better meet the housing needs of seniors in the city.

For a comprehensive overview of the feedback received during the Ideas Fair, please see Appendix I.

Figure 1 – Photo from the Seniors Housing Strategy Ideas Fair (June 20, 2023)



Phase 2 Engagement Overview

The second phase of engagement on the Seniors Housing Strategy launched in April 2024 reaching over 500 people and another 2,600 unique project webpage visits. This phase of engagement used various methods including an online comment form available in English and Traditional Chinese, stakeholder workshops, targeted community outreach events, and virtual

office hours. Staff sent notifications to the housing policy mailing list, organizations that had been involved in the first phase of engagement and used targeted advertising and social media to raise awareness on the draft Strategy.

This phase of engagement focused on informing the public about the draft strategy, listening to concerns, and gathering feedback to guide the final Seniors Housing Strategy. Staff engaged with housing and care providers, both private and non-profit, advocacy groups, seniors-serving organizations, advisory committees, government partners, and with the public through community-led fairs and events. The results from Phase 2 are summarized in the following sections.

Phase 2 Survey Results

Overview

We invited the public and stakeholders to share their thoughts on the Draft Seniors Housing Strategy via an online survey on the City's [Shape Your City](#) platform. The survey was open from April 17 to May 16, 2024, in both English and Traditional Chinese. The brief survey included open-ended questions and a few demographic questions to help us understand who we heard from. Respondents were asked to share their perspective on two key questions:

- 1) Do you agree or disagree with the directions found within the Seniors Housing Strategy? Why is that?
- 2) Do you feel there are any issues or actions we haven't addressed in the Seniors Housing Strategy?

We collected a total of 184 survey responses, with 163 being submitted online and 21 through paper survey. **The majority of respondents (73%) expressed support for the draft Seniors Housing Strategy, 17% had mixed feelings, and 10% disagreed.** Among those who agreed, 56% strongly agreed with the strategy and 17% either somewhat agreed or provided neutral comments. Respondents most noted their support for:

- Actions to meet the needs of seniors across range of income and health needs, and
- Advocacy for more home and health supports to help people age in place.

Those who had neutral views mentioned that they believed the strategy should have been implemented earlier to better address the housing needs of older adults and expressed concerns about specific action implementation. Of those with mixed feelings, they stated their main concerns were that the strategy lacked clarity and specific funding commitments.

Respondents who disagreed with the strategy felt:

- It did not adequately address the housing affordability and availability issues faced by seniors in Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside, and
- Some doubted that the proposed actions would effectively assist vulnerable seniors at risk of losing their homes or those who are already experiencing homelessness.

Key Feedback and Themes

In addition to the above general sentiments, survey respondents expressed additional feedback and support for the draft Seniors Housing Strategy as outlined below.

1. Draft Strategy effectively addresses housing needs and challenges of seniors

We heard that the Strategy is comprehensive, action-oriented, and urgently needed to meet the housing needs of older adults. The Strategy covers a wide range of topics and concerns that were identified in Phase 1 engagement and people support that it prioritizes actions for seniors who need it most, including low-income seniors, seniors with complex care health needs, and marginalized seniors such as 2SLGBTQ+ seniors. Respondents also feel that the Strategy is both timely and vital amidst Vancouver's housing affordability crisis and aging population.

"I strongly agree with the directions found within the Seniors Housing Strategy. This draft outlines the current concerns and points to solutions that are both existing and should be expanded upon as well as ideas recommendations for new initiatives. I believe seniors should be cared for in a respectful manner and this draft addresses ways to implement this."

2. Concerns around Strategy implementation, details, and timelines

Some respondents believe that while the Strategy objectives are ambitious and needed, they are unclear about the execution of the actions. Respondents noted that many of the actions in the strategy require a concerted effort from non-profit organizations, health authorities, and investments from senior levels of governments to be implemented. Some also stated there is a lack of detail around the timeline, monitoring, and partnership agreements to deliver the actions. Some suggest that the City should have specific seniors housing targets to work towards.

"Agree with the stated goal, however, notwithstanding how laudable the statement of the goals are, the implementation process and costs associated with achieving those goals are key to a final approval"

3. Affordability is the top issue for respondents

Survey respondents affirmed that increasing the supply of affordable housing, including social housing and co-op housing options, for low-income seniors in all neighbourhoods is their top priority. Additionally, some respondents noted it is crucial to also provide more affordable market rental options for seniors who do not meet the criteria for social housing. Respondents are concerned with the long social housing waitlists and support advocacy for enhancements to the SAFER program, stating it should take into account the high rents in Vancouver. Housing co-ops are a preferred type of housing for many people and we heard a call for the City to renew leases for co-ops on City land and that the City should advocate for more investments in building co-ops citywide. Some survey respondents suggest the City should incentivize market developers to build specific seniors social housing units.

"I am a single person and make \$38,000 a year and make too much to be considered for SAFER but not enough for market housing. How will you help me? Get going on establishing co-ops and stop talk about it."

4. Residents want more appropriate and affordable downsizing options

Survey respondents stated they need more options to downsize in their local communities. Feedback from the survey highlighted the significant expense associated with renovating their homes to accommodate aging in place, such as installing elevators or chair lifts. Additionally, they pointed out the lack of diverse housing options, particularly the absence of medium density and ground-oriented apartments in certain parts of the city. Encouraging multi-generational, well-serviced neighbourhoods with a range of home sizes and unit types plays a crucial role in fostering age-friendly communities. Some noted that market rental options are too expensive to access for older adults on a fixed income without increased government supports.

5. Older adults prefer to remain in their own homes as they age, and are seeking supports to make this possible

Many respondents emphasized their preference of aging in their own home, community, or neighborhood over relocating to a seniors-specific building. However, older adults need assistance to make this possible. Increased funding for on-site services that offer support in financial matters, social service navigation, community resources, meal preparation, digital literacy, and other areas is essential. Respondents mentioned the Whole Way House model as an excellent way to support vulnerable seniors. Respondents also highlight the need for adult daycare and respite care in Vancouver. They suggested strengthened tenant protections for seniors who rent to better address threats of eviction, redevelopment pressures, and landlord conflicts.

“I agree. I like the idea of more supportive and accessible housing in every neighbourhood. Staying in my area is so important. I know it and have walking and shopping routines, interactions with neighbours and people. I wouldn't leave our house unless it is to a place nearby though I find it would be better to live in a smaller accessible apartment that is wheelchair friendly. I think some support is great but too often it is limited and unreliable from what I see.”

6. There is need for more culturally appropriate and affordable seniors and assisted living options in Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside

Some respondents noted there is significant demand for seniors housing options that are both culturally appropriate and affordable in Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside. They stated that older adults in the area are vulnerable to isolation due to language barriers and lower-incomes, and many experience precarious living conditions in Single Room Occupancy Hotels (SROs) and aging buildings or are experiencing homelessness. We heard that Indigenous or first-generation immigrants who are older adults often encounter structural racism in accessing housing and supports. Survey participants are advocating for more funding to build social housing and to transfer privately-owned SROs and properties into public ownership.

“Disagree. The majority of low-income seniors and those with the most numerous barriers live in the DTES and Chinatown, especially Chinese Canadian and Indigenous seniors. In these areas context and challenges change and evolve so quickly, that impact of the strategy should be monitored like the DTES Plan, every 3 years.”

7. Other Comments

In addition to the above themes, we also heard that:

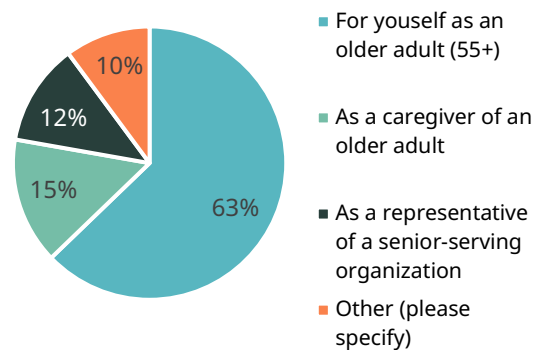
- There is need for better healthcare resources and services in Vancouver. Some respondents noted the lack of action for seniors with disabilities, especially individuals experiencing mental health issues.
- Specific funding is needed for long-term care and assisted living. Long-term care and assisted living facilities are inadequately staffed, and the need for these spaces is continuing to grow.
- There is a lack of trained caregivers/staff working for the healthcare and medical support for seniors. Caregivers should be fairly compensated.
- We need better safeguards for seniors who experience age/racial/gender/belief discrimination.
- Other improvements outside of housing should be made, including to improve walkability, wheelchair-friendly road design, safe transportation options, access to family doctors, more community health resources, etc.

Demographics

Audience

The survey was open to older adults (55+), caregivers, and seniors-serving organizations. 63% of the respondents identified as an older adult 55+, 15% as a caregiver of an older adult, and 12% as a representative of a seniors-serving organization, and 10% selected “other”. The “other” responses consisted mostly of people who are under 55 years old.

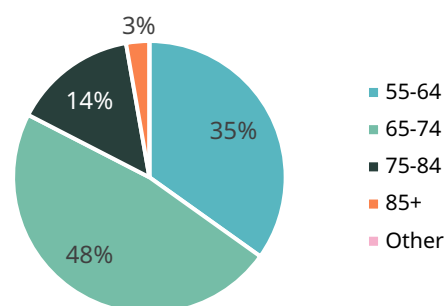
Survey Audience



Age

Among the older adult respondents, a range of age groups were reached. This included 35% of respondents that were 55-64 years old, 48% between 65-74 years old, 14% between 75-84 years old, and 3% 85+ years old.

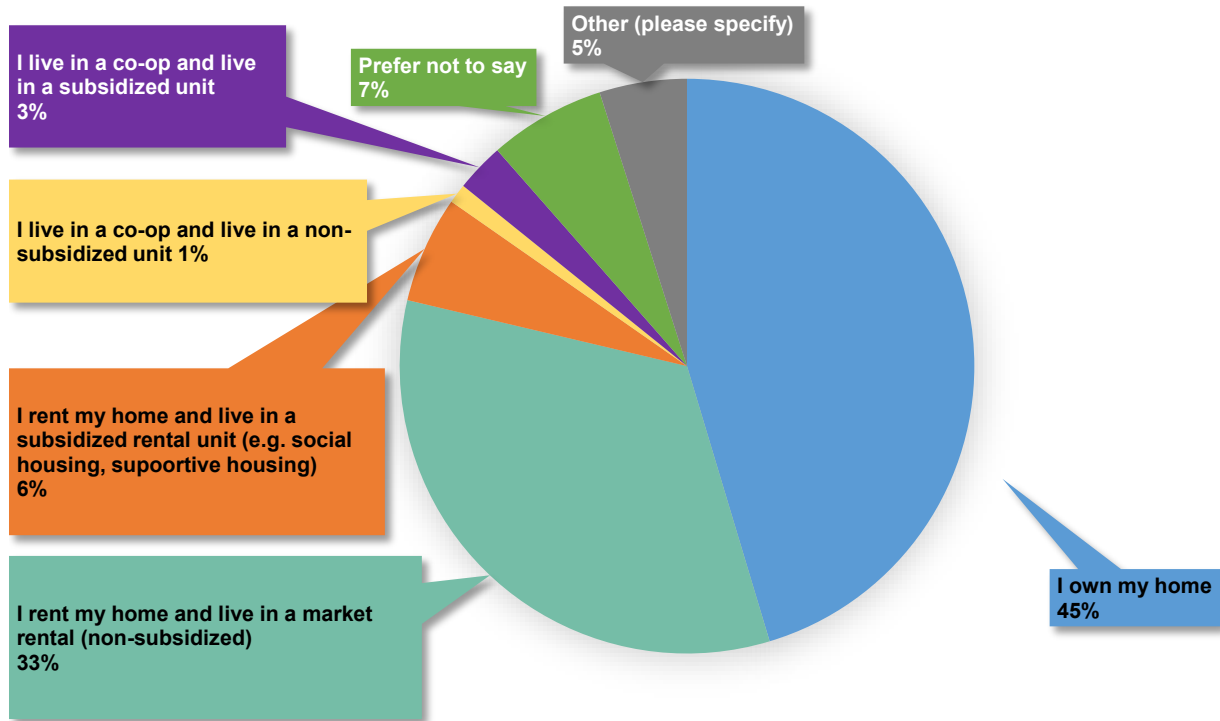
Survey Age Distribution



Housing Tenure

Survey respondents live in a variety of housing situations. Most respondents own their home (45%) or rent in a non-subsidized market rental (33%), with 6% living in a subsidized rental unit, and 4% living in co-op housing. None of the respondents live in long-term care or assisted living residences or are currently experiencing homelessness.

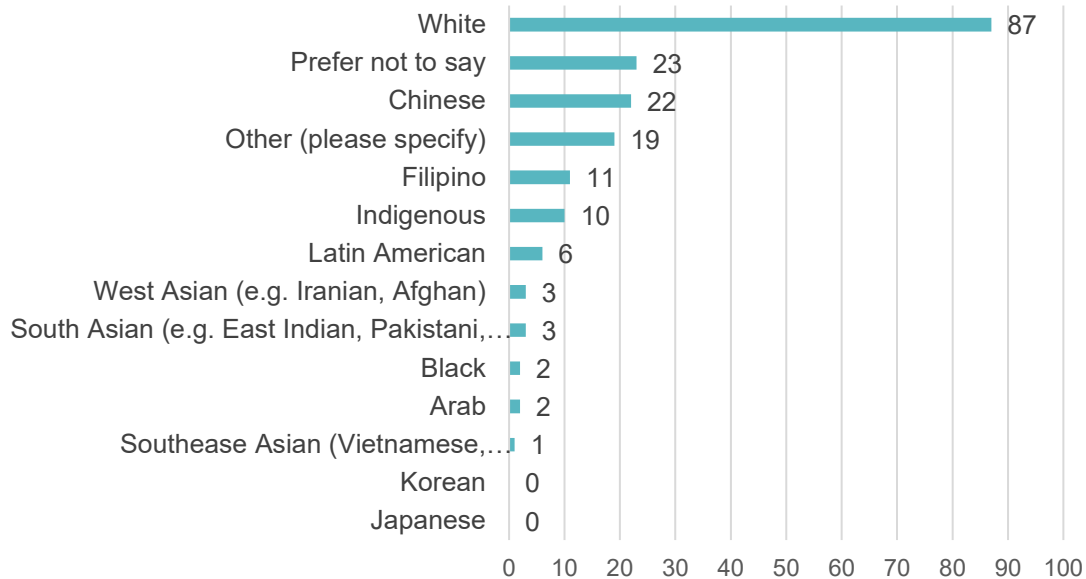
Housing Tenure of Respondents



Racial Identity

In terms of the racial identities of survey respondents, 46% of the respondents self-identified as white, followed by 12% Chinese, 6% Filipino, 5% Indigenous, and 3% Latin American. Several respondents preferred not to say or identified as other.

Racial Identity of Respondents



Phase 2 Stakeholder Results

Overview

In addition to the online survey, paper survey and office hours, Staff also attended and held a number of workshops and events to receive feedback and met with a diversity of stakeholders. Staff met with over 115 stakeholders and public through this outreach, including by:

- Holding workshops for long-term care and assisted living providers, and for non-profit housing providers who serve older adults.
- Presenting to community-led groups and organizations including the Mid-town Service Providers Network, the Tenant Resources and Advisory Centre (TRAC) Renter Sector Roundtable, the South Vancouver Seniors Network Weekly Webinar, Dunbar Seniors Group, Frog Hollow Multicultural Seniors Advisory Committee and the Chinatown Housing Working Group.
- Attending and providing information on the Seniors Housing Strategy at the Qmunity Spring Fling, South Vancouver Seniors Forum, and the Seniors Services Society SHINE conference.
- Meeting with partner organizations including Vancouver Coastal Health, BC Housing, Ministry of Housing, the Seniors Advocate, Tenant Resources and Advisory Centre, Landlord BC, and the Seniors Services Society of BC.

Key Feedback and Themes

Many of the key comments we heard from stakeholders closely mirror that from the public survey, whereas others identified more specific actions needed.

1. Overall support for Strategy, specifically directions to add more affordable housing for older adults and prioritizing older adults experiencing homelessness

We heard a high level of support for the direction to add more social, co-op and supportive housing for older adults. There was also strong support for older adults at risk of or experiencing homelessness. Stakeholders highlighted the urgency of creating these affordable options and supports to prevent older adults from falling into homelessness. This included an interest in exploring new models of housing and senior-specific shelters or other temporary housing options to prevent homelessness.

2. Support for Strategy advocacy to improve housing supports and navigation

Further to adding new housing, stakeholders highlighted the importance of affordable home and social supports to allow older adults to successfully age in their homes. This can include home supports such as meal prep, light housekeeping, tax assistance, technology supports, as well as building supports such as exercise classes and social events. We heard that these supports are crucial to supporting older adults to stay in their homes, whether in ownership, rental or social housing, and have other benefits for their health and well-being. Though programs like this exist, such as United Way's Better at Home and Wholeway House, there is a high level of

demand. Further, we heard home supports provided through health authorities are too expensive.

3. *Added focus on protecting existing rental housing and keeping seniors in their neighbourhoods through protections and SAFER improvements*

We heard that, in addition to adding new housing options for older adults, it is important to focus on protecting existing affordable housing where they live now. This includes supporting non-profits to purchase older market rental buildings through provincial programs such as the Rental Protection Fund. It also means enhancing City tenant protections for older adults through the City's Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy and advocating to the Provincial government for a SAFER program that works with Vancouver area rents. Older adults can't wait for new social and co-op housing to be built and they don't want to leave their neighbourhood and community.

4. *Interest in more multi-generational living options and accessible housing options*

Some stakeholders noted that while older adults have specific housing needs, the housing itself doesn't necessarily have to be seniors-only. There are social well-being and other benefits of multi-generational living that should be considered. Further, we heard that housing accessibility and adaptability is especially important for older adults as they age. It was stated that more work should be done to educate older adults about renovations programs available through the Province and of other programs such as the property tax deferral. Stakeholders were generally happy to hear about other work happening at the City, outside of the Seniors Housing Strategy, to support more affordable housing and accessibility.

5. *Desire to see actions implemented, recognizing the importance of partnerships*

There was recognition from a number of stakeholders that many of the actions identified in the Strategy require partnerships with Provincial and Federal governments and other authorities. People highlighted the urgency of seeing these actions and partnerships move forward, noting older adults need affordable housing and supports now. Some advocated for dedicated funding and programming for seniors housing from BC Housing, and more funding for the redevelopment and development of long-term care at the provincial level.

6. *Concerns that the rezoning policy does not support private-pay seniors housing to the same extent as subsidized non-profit and government-owned seniors housing*

The BC Care Providers Association, which represents non-government care providers, stated that the draft rezoning policy discriminates against the private-pay sector as it does not provide the same flexibility or opportunity for additional heights and density as it does for non-profit or government-owned subsidized care options. The association would like to see the same opportunity for additional heights and density on a case-by-case basis with a negotiated community amenity contribution approach.

City Advisory Committee Feedback Summary

Older Persons and Elders Advisory Committee (OPEAC)

OPEAC has been a key partner in the development of the Seniors Housing Strategy since the initial scoping phase in late 2022. Staff have met with the committee on numerous occasions and received several written pieces of feedback. Some of their key priorities for the Strategy can be found directly in the document in the Engagement: What We Heard section. In terms of feedback on the draft Strategy, OPEAC has indicated a broad level of support for the strategy's actions, goals, and directions, specifically around supporting non-profit housing providers and prioritizing older adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

Some concerns that have been highlighted by OPEAC include the lack of budget, timelines and monitoring of the Strategy, and a desire to include more action-oriented language and specific data. Staff have made a number of these changes within the final Strategy document, including adding income data and a monitoring framework, which identifies approximate timelines and the party or parties responsible for completion the action.

Renters Advisory Committee (RAC)

Staff presented the draft Seniors Housing Strategy to the RAC in March 2024. Overall, RAC was supportive of the emphasis of the Strategy on low-income renter households and confirmed their desire to see continued and greater protections for renter households, and to prevent the loss of affordable rental units. RAC also noted the importance of aging in place and supported moving forward with partnerships to improve knowledge of renters' rights amongst older adults.

Persons with Disability Advisory Committee (PDAC)

Staff attended PDAC housing subcommittee meetings in March and June 2024 to present on the Seniors Housing Strategy early draft and final draft. We heard specific feedback on how to better incorporate older adults with disabilities into the strategy and policies. This included adding data on the number of older adults with disabilities, adding the challenge of finding service providers who use American Sign Language (ASL), and adding in the need for ASL care providers and increased Persons with Disability Assistance into specific policies. Staff made several changes to the final strategy as a result of this feedback.

2SLGBTQ+ Advisory Committee

Staff presented the draft Seniors Housing Strategy to the committee in March 2024. We heard support for the broad strategy directions, with the committee emphasizing the importance of ensuring the 2SLGBTQ+ community is included within the Strategy. The committee affirmed the findings that trans elders face discrimination when going into assisted living and long-term care and noted that harassment can also be an issue if their chosen family is not considered as family by co-op or strata councils. The committee recognized the City's role in advocating and partnering with the Government of BC in stopping discrimination within care settings and are interested in further work around social connectedness and older adults.

Appendix I

City of Vancouver Seniors Housing Strategy

What we heard report

July 2023

Prepared by Happy Cities for
the City of Vancouver



City of Vancouver Seniors Housing Strategy

Summary of what we heard

The City of Vancouver's first Seniors Housing Strategy

The City of Vancouver is developing a Seniors Housing Strategy to better understand and meet the housing needs of seniors, Elders, and older adults aged 55+ in Vancouver. To hear input from the community, the City contracted Happy Cities to engage adults 55+ and seniors-serving organizations in Vancouver.

Who we heard from

We reached about 1,500 people through:

- 200 phone survey responses
- 950+ online survey responses
- 7 pop-up and community outreach events, reaching over 150 people
- 4 focus group discussions, reaching 45 stakeholders
- 9 conversation kits, reaching 65 people
- 1 ideas fair, attended by 60 stakeholders

Directions for further exploration

1. Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing for adults 55+
2. Streamline and improve access to housing and support services
3. Improve housing design standards
4. Prioritize impact and accountability in housing policy
5. Invest in advocacy and partnerships
6. Build complete neighbourhoods

Snapshot of what we heard

- The majority of seniors are satisfied with their current housing situation. However, those who are living in unaffordable or inadequate conditions need immediate action and support. Low-income renters are most vulnerable, and often struggle to navigate the housing system, placing them at risk of homelessness.
- Affordability is the top housing challenge for adults 55+ in Vancouver, with 97% in support of adding more social and supportive housing options for seniors.
- Seniors in Vancouver are a diverse group with different needs, preferences, cultures, life experiences, abilities, and ages. Factors including racism and ageism make it difficult for some seniors to access appropriate housing.
- Most people want to age in place in their current home, but not everyone can access the supports and home upgrades they need to do so. Notably, 16% of people 55+ have not yet considered their future housing options.
- Universal design in new housing is crucial.
- Around two thirds of adults 55+ would consider in-home support services, but existing services lack the resources to meet the growing demand.
- Walkable neighbourhoods are key to supporting wellbeing, social connection, and independence for older adults.

Key challenges identified:



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1. Introduction

Project overview

The City of Vancouver is developing a Seniors Housing Strategy to better understand and meet the housing needs of seniors, Elders, and older adults aged 55+ in Vancouver. This work aims to create actionable policies and identify ways to improve housing for the growing seniors population—with consideration of the diverse life experiences, health, incomes, and cultural needs of the aging population. This project included significant engagement with the community, including seniors and older adults, their families and caregivers, senior advocacy and community groups, non-profit housing providers, and development organizations.



What do we mean by seniors housing?

Seniors and older adults aged 55+ live in many types of housing. Their needs can change quickly as they age. As we develop the Seniors Housing Strategy, we want to understand seniors housing needs across tenures (e.g. market renters, non-market renters, and owners) and types of housing, with a specific emphasis on seniors-focused housing and residences. This includes:

- Seniors non-market housing (including social, supportive, and co-op housing)
- Supports for seniors renting in the market
- Long-term care
- Assisted living

Seniors are the fastest growing age demographic in Vancouver. Many seniors live on fixed incomes and will need to adapt to health, accessibility, and housing needs as they age. Some seniors and older adults will choose to stay in their existing home or community as long as they can. Others may seek out or require seniors' buildings with supports, or will downsize to a more manageable or accessible home. About 70% of seniors and older adults 65+ in Vancouver are homeowners; however, seniors who rent their homes experience greater affordability challenges—with close to half of renters spending over 30% of their income on housing costs. There is also a growing population of seniors and older adults experiencing homelessness, and a number of seniors living in Single Room Occupancy hotels (SROs), many of them in inadequate conditions.

Timeline

- **March to May 2023** | First phase public and stakeholder engagement
- **June 2023** | What We Heard report; Ideas Fair
- **Summer to Fall 2023** | Policy development and drafting the Strategy
- **Winter 2024** | Second phase of public and stakeholder engagement and Strategy refinement
- **Mid 2024** | Final Strategy presented to Council

2. What we did

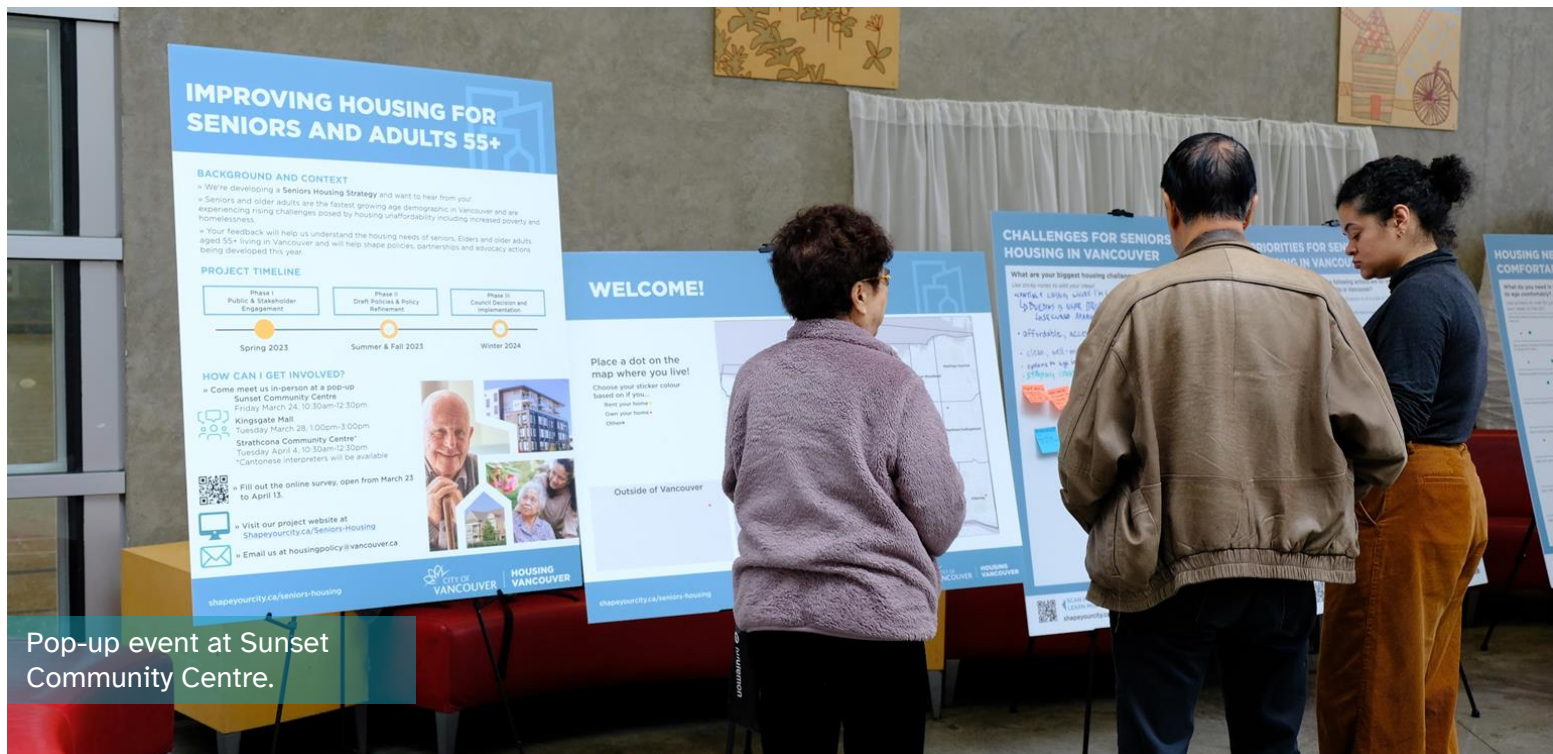
2.1. Promotion

We aimed to create an inclusive engagement process to hear from voices across Vancouver, including homeowners and renters—both market and non-market—from all neighbourhoods. To do so, we:

- Met residents where they are, rather than asking them to come to us
- Offered a variety of easy, accessible, and inclusive ways to give feedback (online, in person, and over the phone)
- Provided translation and interpretation services at several in-person pop-up events and for the surveys (online survey translated to Traditional Chinese; phone survey available in Cantonese, Mandarin, and Punjabi)

We reached out to share information about the project and key messages through:

1. **Social media:** The City of Vancouver and Happy Cities used targeted advertising and social media posts to encourage participation in engagement activities (on Instagram, Facebook, and Twitter).
2. **Posters:** The City displayed eye-catching posters at community centres and libraries.
3. **City email:** The City emailed over 1,500 community members through the Housing Vancouver listserv to announce the project launch, sharing a link to the project page and online survey.
4. **Email invitations:** Over 120 stakeholders were emailed (including organizations and individual representatives from organizations who support seniors and older adults across the city).



Pop-up event at Sunset Community Centre.

2.2. Engagement activities

We offered five ways for the community to share feedback. These avenues of participation ensured that, regardless of technological abilities, people were able to share their ideas and priorities.



Phone survey: Mustel Group conducted a demographically representative phone survey. We offered Punjabi, Mandarin, and Cantonese translation.

Digital survey: Adults 55+, seniors-serving organizations, and caregivers were invited to fill out an online survey on the City of Vancouver's Shape your City page (www.shapeyourcity.ca/seniors-housing). A printed version of the survey was available at each pop-up, and it was also translated to Traditional Chinese.



Conversation kits: The conversation kits allowed interested individuals to lead a discussion with seniors and older adults and report their findings to the City.

Focus groups: We organized and hosted four focus groups with key stakeholders. Sessions were two hours long each, and took place between April 17 and 27, 2023. Three of these sessions were held online and one in person (at 312 Main in the Downtown Eastside).



Pop-up events: We hosted four public pop-up events in Vancouver. Each event was two hours long, with free beverages and healthy snacks.

- March 24 at Sunset Community Centre
- March 28 at Kingsgate Mall
- April 4 at Strathcona Community Centre
- May 10 at Barclay Manor in the West End

Additional community outreach activities: City staff attended seniors-focused events in the community to share project information and gather public feedback at three additional locations:

- March 15 at the Kitsilano Neighbourhood House Seniors Resource Fair
- April 11 at the 411 Seniors Centre Society Coffee and Conversation drop-in event
- April 21 at the QMUNITY Spring Fling for seniors and older adults in the 2SLGBTQIA+ community (at Creekside Community Centre)

Ideas Fair: The City of Vancouver hosted an Ideas Fair on June 20 that was attended by approximately 60 service providers, community groups, housing providers, academics, and members from the Older Persons and Elders Advisory Committee. Along with presentations from the Office of the Seniors Advocate and the project team, facilitated discussions were held with attendees to prioritize actions and ideas for the Strategy.

In addition to these activities, the City of Vancouver conducted separate engagement with housing providers and operators.

3. Who we heard from

3.1. Participation



Pop-up events

- Most participants spoke briefly with the engagement team, contributing to two to four of the interactive display boards (see Appendix C).
- A smaller number of participants sat down with the team to participate in a sit-down focus group conversation held alongside the pop-up event.

Focus groups and non-profit housing providers workshop

Across five sessions, we heard from 57 participants, representing over 36 organizations, including:

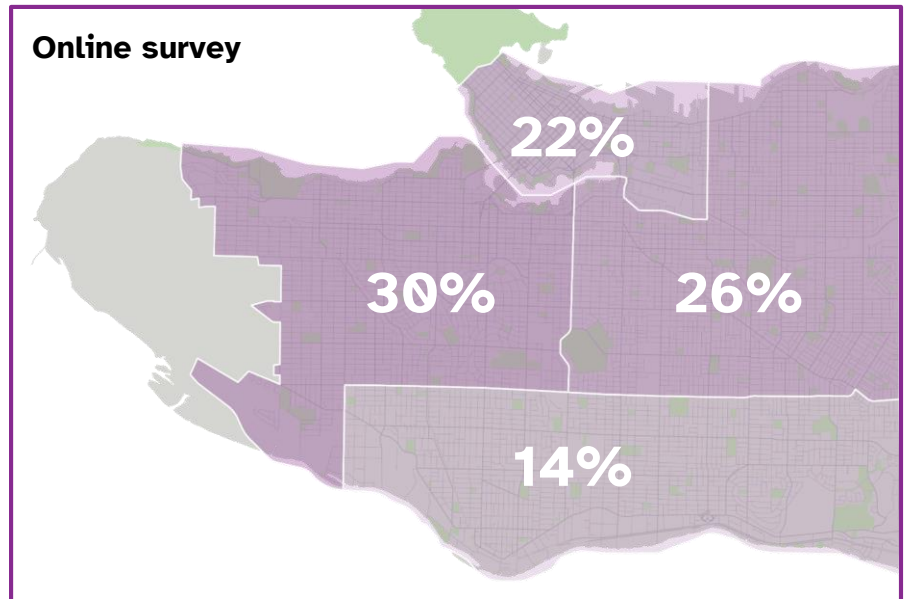
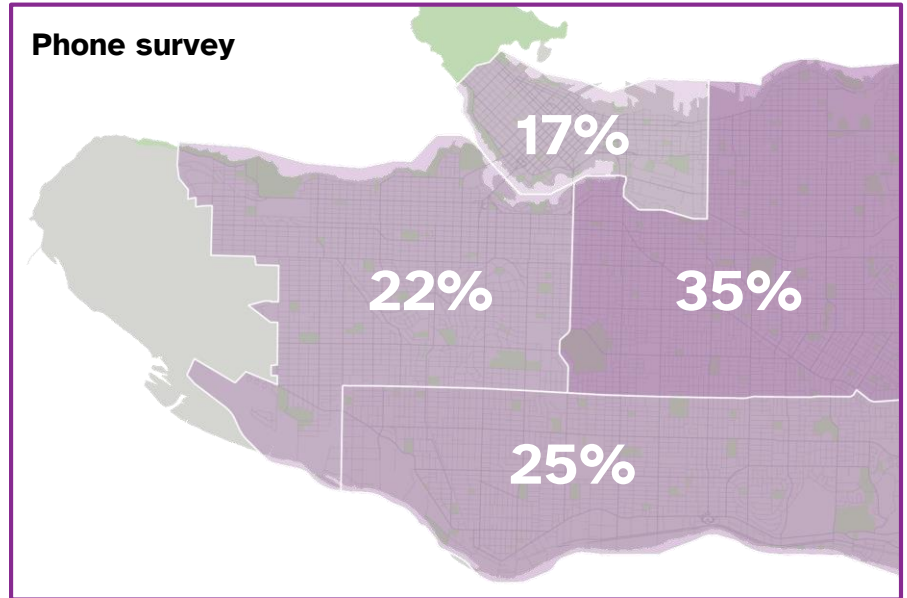
- 411 Seniors Centre Society
- Affordable Housing Societies
- BC Non-profit Housing Association
- Brightside Community Homes Foundation
- The Broadway Group
- Catalyst Community Developments
- Cedar Cottage Neighbourhood House
- Council of Senior Citizens' Organization
- The Chalmers Foundation
- Collingwood Neighbourhood House
- Downtown Eastside Neighbourhood House
- Elizabeth Fry Society
- Fair Haven Homes Society
- Frog Hollow Neighbourhood House
- Gordon Neighbourhood House
- Hogan's Alley Society
- Hopehill
- Jewish Seniors' Alliance
- Kitsilano Neighbourhood House
- Kiwassa Neighbourhood House
- M'akola Development Services
- Mosaic BC
- Mount Pleasant Neighbourhood House
- Simon Fraser University
- Streetohome
- SUCCESS BC
- Tenant Resource and Advisory Centre
- Terra Social Purpose Real Estate
- Tonari Gumi Services Society
- United Way BC
- Vancouver Second Mile Society
- Wavefront Centre
- West End Seniors Network
- Westside Seniors Hub
- Whole Way House Society
- Yarrow Intergenerational Society

3.2. Geography

Through both surveys, we heard from people living in all neighbourhoods across Vancouver.

To make it easy for people to participate and to reach those who are not online, the project team also hosted several in-person pop-ups, focus groups, and community outreach activities across the city, including at:

- Kitsilano Neighbourhood House
- Barclay Manor, in the West End
- Strathcona Community Centre
- Kingsgate Mall
- Sunset Community Centre
- Creekside Community Centre



Interpreting the results of the phone survey vs. the online survey

This report includes responses from both the phone and online surveys. The phone survey is demographically representative, meaning it provides a more accurate sample of the entire population. The phone survey allowed us to dive deeper into analyses to understand the relationships between variables.

The online survey is not demographically representative. However, it reached over 950 people, offering nearly five times as many responses as the phone survey and a comprehensive picture of seniors and older adults living in Vancouver.

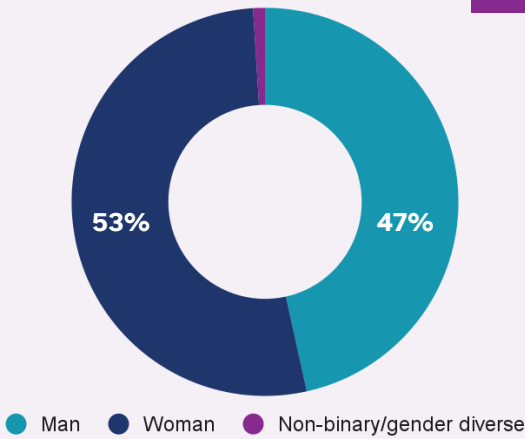
The data is supported by qualitative responses from the conversation kits, focus groups, and pop-up events.

3.3. Demographics

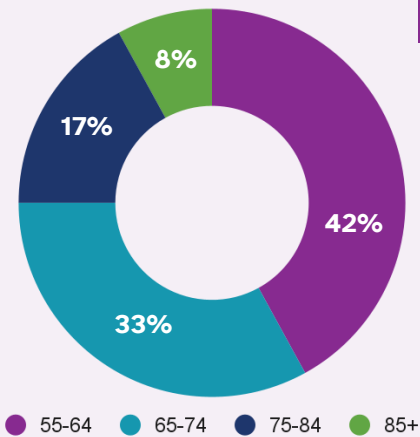
Phone survey

The phone survey was conducted by Mustel Group between February 16 and 28, 2023. In total, they surveyed 200 individuals. The majority of surveys were conducted in English, followed by 19 in Cantonese, and three in Mandarin. The survey participants were largely representative of the general population and survey findings were weighted to ensure it was representative where needed. Demographics included:

Gender



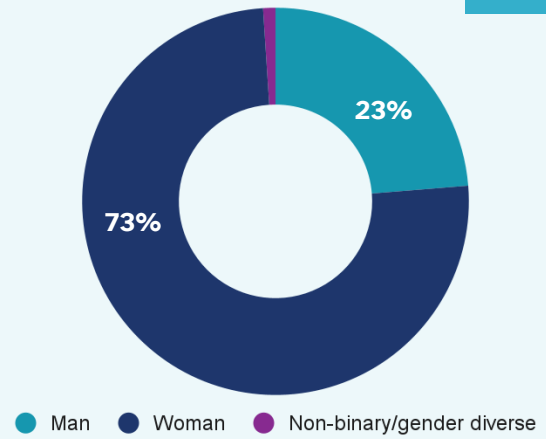
Age



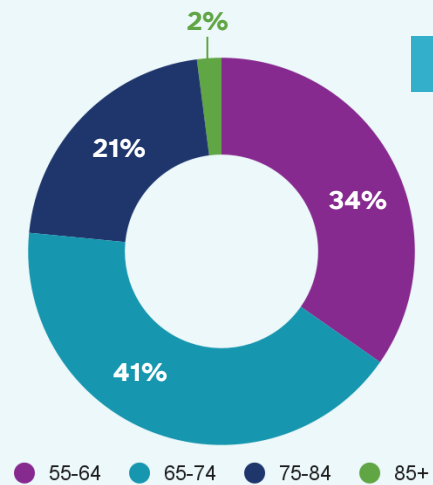
Online survey

A total of 950 responses were submitted to the online survey. The online survey was not demographically representative. Demographics included:

Gender

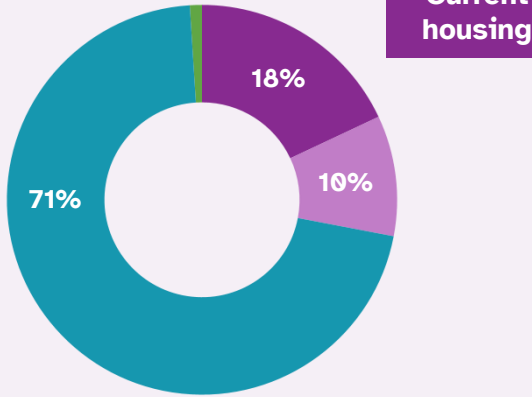


Age



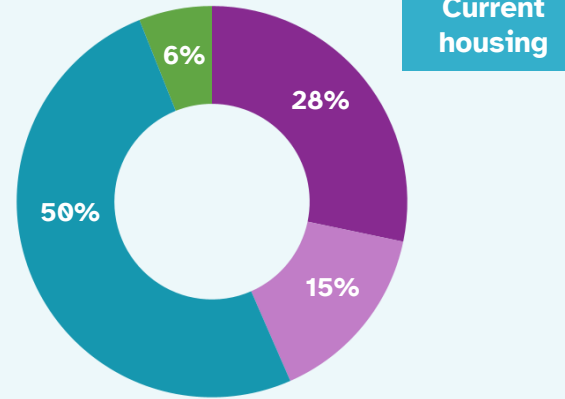
3.3. Demographics

Phone survey



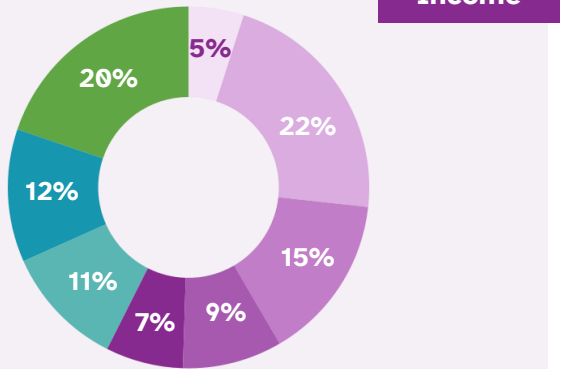
● Rent (market) ● Rent (non-market)* ● Own ● Other

Online survey



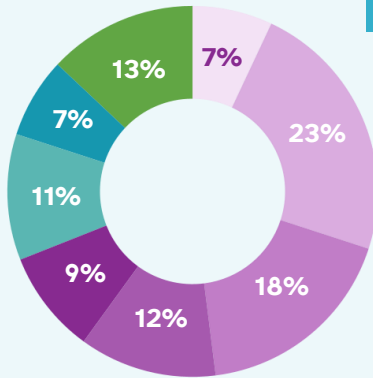
● Rent (market) ● Rent (non-market)* ● Own ● Other

Income



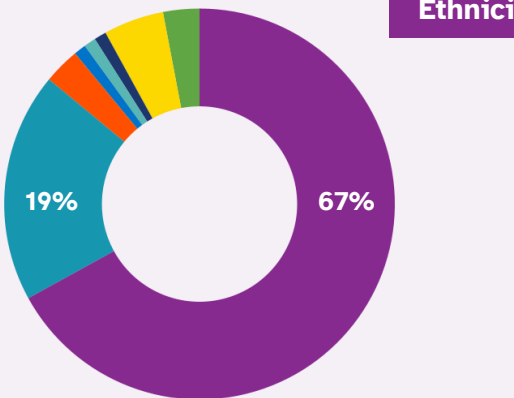
● Under \$20,000 ● \$20,000 to less than \$40,000 ● \$40,000 to less than \$60,000 ● \$60,000 to less than \$80,000 ● \$80,000 to less than \$100,000 ● \$100,000 to less than \$150,000 ● \$150,000 and over ● Prefer not to say

Income



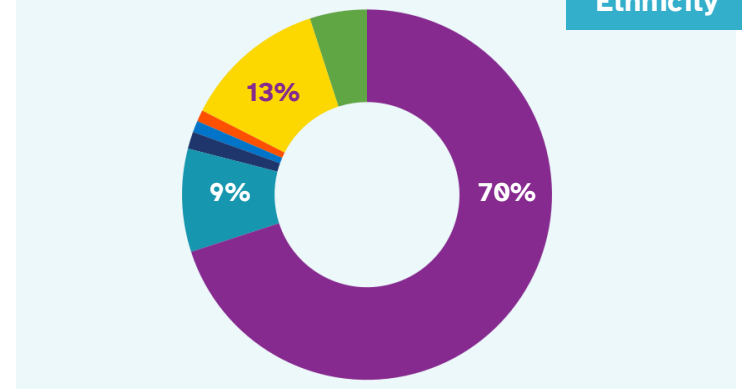
● Under \$20,000 ● \$20,000 to less than \$40,000 ● \$40,000 to less than \$60,000 ● \$60,000 to less than \$80,000 ● \$80,000 to less than \$100,000 ● \$100,000 to less than \$150,000 ● \$150,000 and over ● Prefer not to say

Ethnicity



● White ● Chinese ● South Asian ● Japanese ● Black ● Indigenous ● Other ● Prefer not to say

Ethnicity



● White ● Chinese ● Indigenous ● Japanese ● Latin American ● Other ● Prefer not to say

*In this report, the term "non-market housing" includes social, supportive, and co-operative housing.

4. What we heard

4.1. Current housing

Household types and composition vary across Vancouver. The majority of seniors are homeowners, contributing to high rates of housing satisfaction and stability. However, many older adults who rent—whether in market or non-market housing—said they face significant challenges. We heard that vulnerable seniors—in particular, low-income renters and people experiencing or at risk of homelessness—face the greatest challenges around housing insecurity, affordability, wellbeing, safety, and supports to age in place.

Housing tenure

In line with census data, the majority of people surveyed are homeowners. Less than one third across both surveys are renters, with the online survey reaching more renters (32%) than the phone survey (24%). The majority of renters surveyed live in market units. A very small minority of respondents to the online survey expressed that they are currently experiencing homelessness or living in a shelter. Both surveys found that the majority have lived in their current home for more than 10 years (79% phone, and 61% online). Those who own their homes tend to have lived longer in their homes compared to renters, showing that renting can be associated with shorter tenure and decreased stability.

4x

Renters are four times more likely to have lived in their homes for less than five years, compared to homeowners.

(Online survey)

Housing stability

The majority felt their housing situation is stable, but a significant portion felt it is unstable (22% in the online survey, 12% in the phone survey). Over eight in 10 homeowners in the online survey said their housing is stable (83%), followed by 57% of non-market renters. In contrast, just 34% of market renters said their housing is stable—with renovictions being the top concern among market renters—highlighting the vulnerability of the rental market. A further 18% of non-market renters said they are unsure if their situation is stable or not. Reasons for instability included unaffordable rent, rising costs of living, fear of eviction due to renovations or redevelopment, inability to afford home maintenance costs, lack of accessibility in their home, or actively seeking new housing.

57%

of people living in non-market housing described their housing situation as stable.

(Online survey)

34%

Only one third of market renters consider their housing situation as stable.

(Online survey)

5x

Market renters are over five times more likely than homeowners to consider their housing as unstable.

(Online survey)

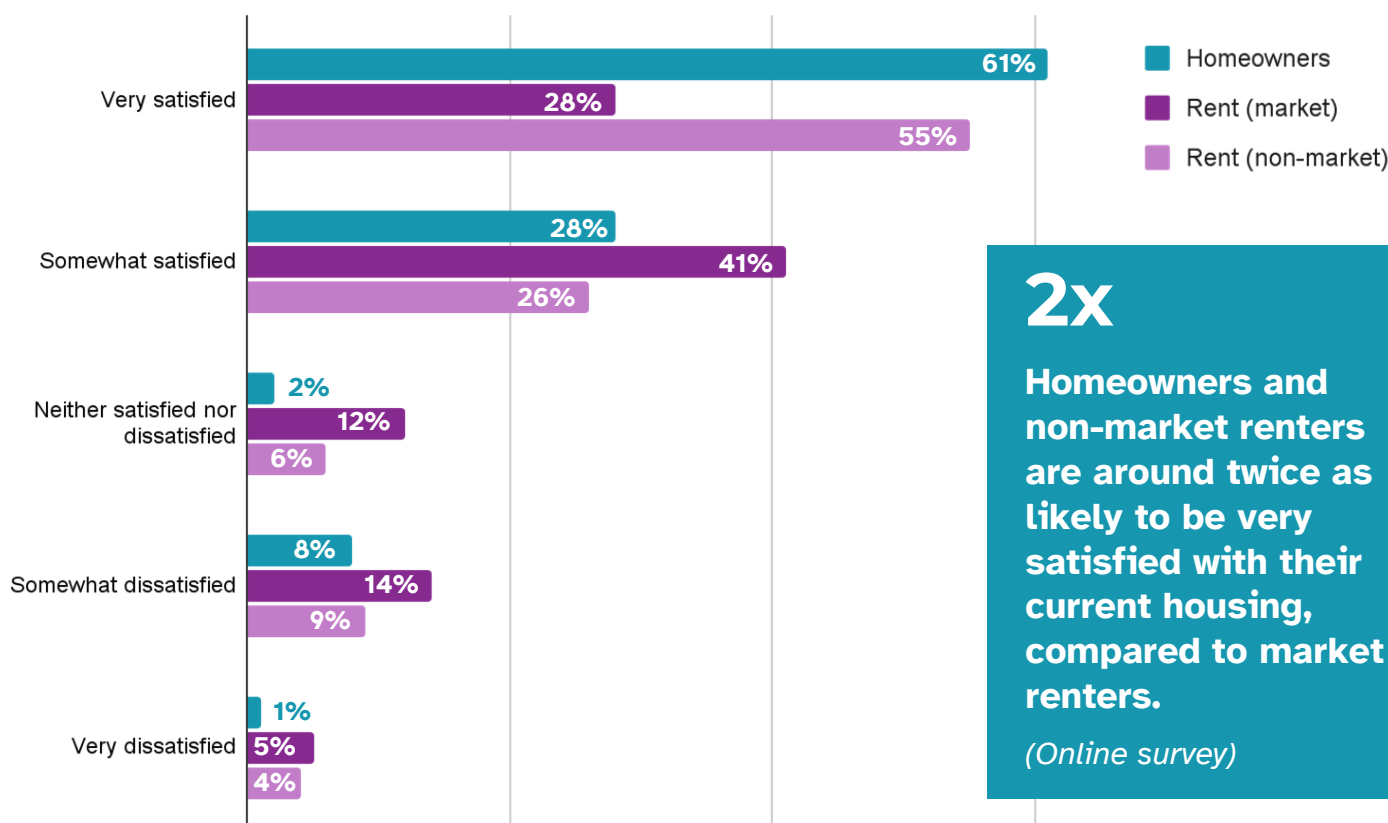
4.1. Current housing (continued)

While most adults 55+ in Vancouver are satisfied with their housing situations, satisfaction varies greatly between homeowners and renters, with market renters being the least satisfied group overall.

Housing satisfaction

The majority of respondents are satisfied with their current housing (84% in the phone survey, 80% in the online survey); however, a small percentage expressed dissatisfaction with their home (10% by phone, 15% online). Overall, owners reported the greatest satisfaction with their current housing (89% in the online survey are very or somewhat satisfied), followed by non-market renters (81% satisfied). Market renters are the least satisfied group overall (69% satisfied, with only 28% very satisfied).

Housing satisfaction, by tenure type (online survey)



Caregiver and seniors-serving organizations survey

In addition to the public online and phone surveys, we surveyed caregivers and seniors-serving organizations on their thoughts about seniors housing challenges in Vancouver and ideas for how to improve it. The survey garnered 74 responses from a diverse range of housing societies, caregivers, service providers, and advocacy groups. The findings closely resemble the public surveys, with respondents highlighting challenges including high rents and home costs, and the need for more affordable seniors housing, at-home supports, and a diversity of housing options to allow seniors to age in their communities. The full results are in Appendix E of the report.

4.1. Current housing (continued)

Housing satisfaction (continued)

When asked about positive aspects of current housing, access to amenities—such as parks, libraries, recreation centres, plazas, and corner stores—emerged as the top choice in both surveys. Approximately four in 10 phone survey respondents and nearly eight in 10 online survey respondents highlighted access to neighbourhood amenities as a positive aspect of their current home. The phone survey found no notable differences among demographic segments.

For those living in non-market housing, the top positive aspect was affordability (mentioned by 78%).

In terms of challenges, the phone survey identified a lack of affordability (16%) and required upkeep or maintenance (15%) as the top concerns. Renters were more likely to mention the poor design of their homes (20%) compared to owners (7%). At the focus groups and the Ideas Fair, some participants also mentioned that low-income seniors often have to rent units in buildings where many people are dealing with mental health and/or substance use issues. This mix of tenants can pose challenges to seniors, as many do not feel safe in these buildings.

77%

of respondents said access to neighbourhood amenities was a positive aspect to their current housing.

(Online survey)

When asked about positive aspects of current housing, neighbourhood amenities rose to the top in both surveys.



Commonly heard factors influencing housing satisfaction:

Positive aspects of current home

- Access to neighbourhood amenities (e.g. parks, libraries, recreation centres, plazas, and corner stores)
- Pleasant yard or outdoor space
- Social connections with neighbours, family, and friends
- Design of the home
- Pet-friendly home

Negative aspects of current home

- Unaffordable housing costs
- Upkeep and maintenance
- Design of the home
- Inability to age in place
- Noisy neighbourhood area
- Lack of connection with neighbours
- Feeling unsafe, whether due to neighbours or housing conditions

4.1. Current housing (continued)

Many seniors who are homeowners live in single detached homes with multiple bedrooms. Around one third of seniors live alone, while others live with partners or family members.

Household composition

Nearly one third of phone survey participants live alone (31%), while four in 10 (42%) online survey respondents live alone. The phone survey reached more intergenerational households, with approximately 28% living with children or grandchildren. In both surveys, a small minority live with other extended family members (such as parents or siblings) or roommates.

The phone survey reached more people living in single detached homes, comprising approximately 51% of respondents (versus one third in the online survey). The online survey reached more apartment and condo dwellers, accounting for 49% (vs. 38% in the phone survey). The remainder live in townhomes, duplexes, laneway homes, or other forms of semi-detached housing.

Homeowners living in single detached homes tend to have more bedrooms in their home than renters. The majority of phone and online survey respondents live in a two- or three-bedroom home, with three-bedroom dwellers most common in South Vancouver.

64%

of senior homeowners live in a three-bedroom home.

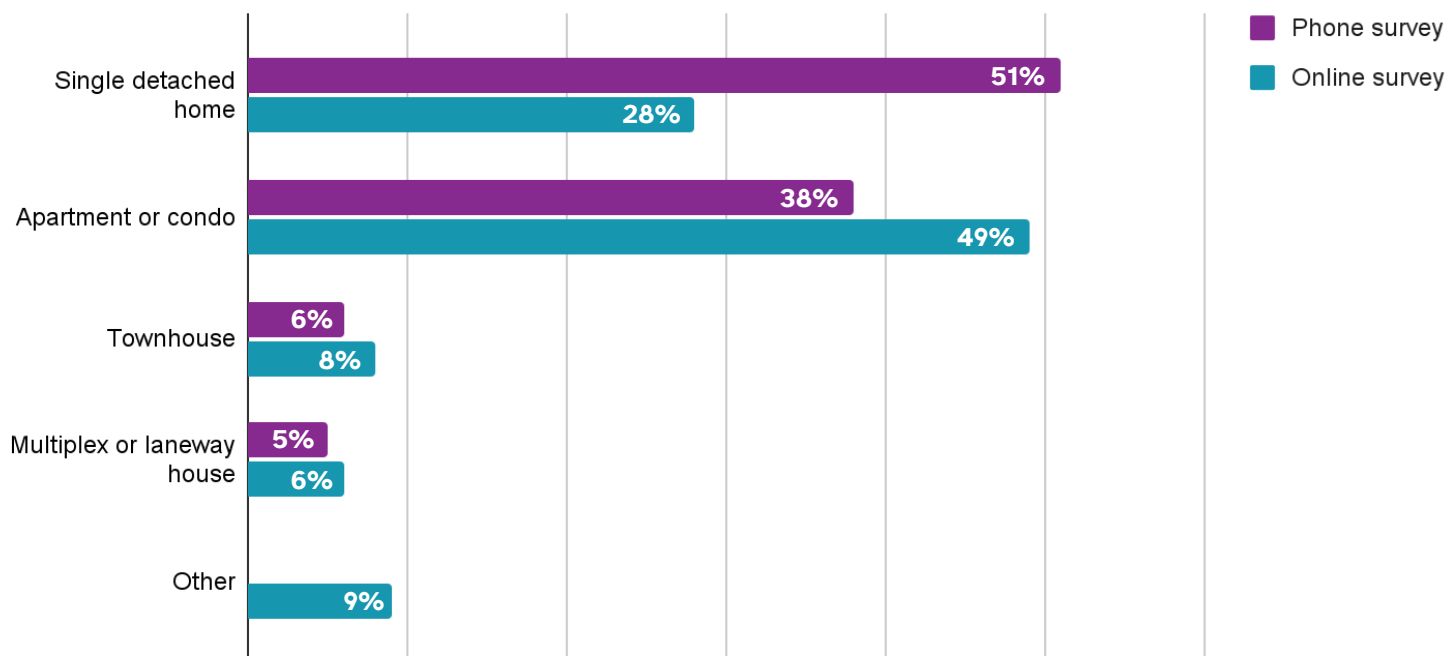
(Phone survey)

31%

of adults 55+ live alone.

(Phone survey)

Dwelling types, by percentage of people surveyed:



4.2. Future housing needs

The vast majority of people want to stay in their current home as long as they can, with in-home support services a popular option for aging comfortably. However, many people feel that their current home is not equipped to support aging in place, due to accessibility, health, affordability, and other challenges.

Aging in place

The majority of people want to stay in their current home for as long as possible (86% of phone survey respondents, and 74% of online survey respondents), regardless of age, location, or tenure.

Most commonly cited barriers to aging in place:

- Health issues
- Mobility challenges and inaccessible units
- Affordability concerns
- Neighbourhood or building redevelopment
- Managing home maintenance and upkeep
- Lack of supports
- Limited services or resources in the neighbourhood

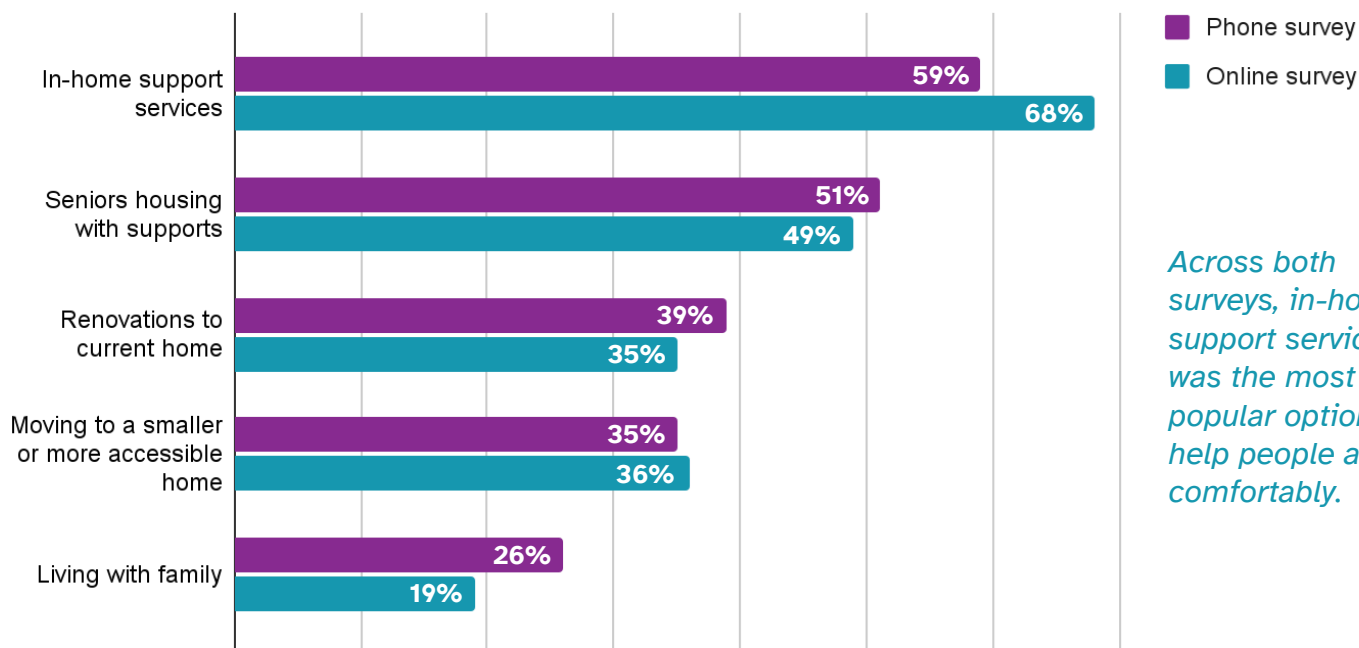
74%

of respondents want to stay in their current home for as long as possible.

(Online survey)

Adults aged 65+ expressed the highest level of concern regarding health issues affecting their ability to age in place, with 40% of phone survey respondents mentioning health challenges, compared to only 15% among those aged 55 to 64. Conversely, among the 55-64 age group, affordability was the primary concern (30%) compared to 8% and 10% among those aged 65-74 and 75+ respectively.

Percentage of people who would consider:



Across both surveys, in-home support services was the most popular option to help people age comfortably.

4.2. Future housing needs (continued)

While many people would consider bringing in housing supports or moving to a home that better meets their needs, a commonly heard theme was that navigating housing options and support services can be challenging. There is a perception that long-term care can be isolating and may place restrictions on visitors, making it difficult for partners to stay together. The phone survey found that 16% of respondents had not yet started considering future housing options. This may pose future challenges—especially considering the long wait times for many seniors and affordable housing options. Through all engagement activities, we heard that there is a need for affordable housing options across neighbourhoods that provide secure tenure for people to age in the right place.

16%

of people have not yet started considering future housing options.

(Phone survey)

31%

cited not being able to age in place as their primary housing challenge.

(Online survey)



Engagement at a community pop-up event.



Focus group discussion at Sunset Community Centre.

“Not knowing where I'm going to end up when I'm older, that's my biggest fear. There's not many options out there.”

—Pop-up attendee and BC Housing resident

4.3. Key challenges

Through all engagement activities, we heard several challenges from older adults, care partners, and seniors-serving organizations. In this report, we have grouped the challenges into eight prominent themes:



Housing affordability



Meeting diverse senior needs



Navigating the system



Housing design



Support services



Housing management and maintenance



Neighbourhood context



Social connection

While not all of these challenges are directly tied to housing, they are closely related to overall seniors health and wellbeing, and important to consider when drafting the Seniors Housing Strategy. These challenges will require partnerships and collaboration with a wide range of stakeholders, including the City, health authorities, community-based seniors services, housing providers, and the provincial and federal governments. The following pages provide an overview of what we heard about each challenge.



Pop-up event at at Sunset Community Centre.

Innovative ideas

Integrated with the key challenges and recommendations on the following pages, we have included several “Innovative idea” boxes—examples of promising housing solutions that we heard from older adults and community organizations during engagement.

4.3. Key challenges (continued)

Housing affordability

Housing affordability was the top challenge identified by participants in the surveys and in focus groups, with older adults and seniors-serving organizations expressing that there are not enough affordable and below-market housing options in Vancouver that meet seniors' needs.

The majority of respondents in both the phone and online surveys (75%) considered their housing costs to be fairly or very affordable when considering other living expenses. However, approximately one fifth felt their housing was not very affordable, and a small percentage found it unaffordable. Renters generally spend a higher proportion of their income on housing compared to homeowners, with market renters being the most likely to have a significant housing cost burden.

The lack of affordable housing options for seniors and older adults, combined with their fixed income during retirement, poses major challenges. Stakeholders emphasized that there is an overall shortage of subsidized and affordable housing options for seniors in Vancouver. Renters specifically expressed that below-market units are still unaffordable for many individuals. Moreover, people felt there has been a decline in the availability of rent-geared-to-income housing units for seniors in B.C. These affordability challenges often force residents to seek housing outside their neighbourhoods or even the city as they age and their needs change.

1 in 5

are currently struggling with housing costs.

(Online survey)

78%

of non-market housing residents said affordability was a key positive aspect of their housing.

(Online survey)

SAFER program

Around one in 10 renters who responded to the phone and online surveys receive SAFER (Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters) from the Province, but many feel the program is inadequate in its current form.

When asked if the SAFER program provided effective support, only 8% felt it was very or somewhat effective. In the focus groups and surveys, many people expressed that the SAFER program is not providing effective support, as market rents are increasing rapidly and the subsidy is unable to keep up.

6x

Market renters were six times more likely than homeowners to find their housing very unaffordable.

(Online survey)

Challenges are greater for renters

- Both surveys found that renters spend more of their income on housing compared to owners.
- In the online survey, market renters were the most likely group to spend more than 50% of their income on housing costs.

4.3. Key challenges (continued)

Meeting diverse senior needs

Seniors are not a homogenous group, but rather encompass a diverse range of people with different needs, preferences, cultures, backgrounds, abilities, and ages.

We heard that it is crucial to recognize the diversity of seniors in Vancouver and avoid categorizing older adults solely based on their age. Failing to understand people's unique needs can lead to misconceptions and wrongly perceiving older adults as incapable. By acknowledging the individuality of older adults, the City can ensure that people receive support and services tailored to their specific needs, fostering a more inclusive environment for all.

This section provides a brief overview of some of the distinct community needs that we heard during engagement. This is not a comprehensive list of all seniors communities in Vancouver.

Seniors experiencing or at risk of homelessness

There is a general lack of affordable units and shelter spaces that are suitable for seniors, placing many at risk of homelessness. By definition, unhoused people are not receiving adequate supports to maintain housing and wellbeing. Immediate action is needed to provide housing for seniors who are experiencing or at risk of experiencing homelessness, and who cannot afford to wait for multiple years on a waitlist for a social housing unit.

Seniors who are experiencing homelessness can face profound feelings of isolation and loneliness. Reaching this demographic is challenging, particularly those residing in shelters or relying on temporary arrangements, such as couch-surfing. Many of these individuals do not have advocates to champion their cause, do not feel supported by the system, and encounter discrimination from law enforcement and other entities.

Reaching 'invisible' seniors

We reached a small portion of older adults experiencing homelessness through the surveys and pop-up events, and engaged with organizations that work with vulnerable seniors through focus groups. However, there are still many 'invisible' seniors who we were not able to reach. Staff from community-based seniors services and non-profit housing operators emphasized that housing challenges are even greater for people who are vulnerable and marginalized in Vancouver's housing system—and who are often under-represented in public engagement processes—including socially isolated people, people experiencing homelessness, racialized seniors, newcomers, people who do not speak English, and more.

The Downtown Eastside offers a strong sense of community for many people experiencing homelessness. Transitioning into supportive housing in a new or unfamiliar neighbourhood can mean losing this vital support network. We heard that housing for seniors experiencing homelessness requires solutions including:

- Dedicated supportive housing tailored specifically to seniors in need of assistance.
- Shelters that cater specifically to seniors.
- Consideration of temporary modular housing that includes accessible units, elevators, and that can accommodate seniors living together.

Unfortunately, people experiencing homelessness have often lost trust in institutions due to past harm. Supportive housing options must be mindful of maintaining residents' dignity and not overly restricting their autonomy.

4.3. Key challenges (continued)

Meeting diverse senior needs (continued)

Seniors with disabilities

Seniors with disabilities face specific challenges in accessing housing and support services that meet their needs. For example, housing for individuals with certain cognitive disabilities and dementia requires careful consideration of building acoustics and noise control to create a comfortable environment. There is also no dedicated housing available for the Deaf-Blind community, such as the Bob Rumble Centre for the Deaf in Ontario. A further challenge is that many seniors with disabilities cannot afford the support services and home renovations they need.

We also heard that older people with disabilities are at risk of social isolation, and can greatly benefit from community support networks. Addressing these challenges requires a comprehensive approach, including accessible housing options, affordable support services, and fostering inclusive and supportive communities.

Innovative idea: Small-scale shared living

Many people supported the idea of small-scale shared home options, where seniors can live communally with 10-12 people. In this type of building, there is also built-in space for caregivers to live or drop in to provide support services. This arrangement can arise if a group of seniors decides to rent a home together; however, it can be challenging to set up and secure a lease for. Some participants shared the idea that the City can further support by identifying buildings that could be leased at lower rates to seniors housing providers.

Local example:

- **Abbeyfield Houses** of Vancouver operates a seniors home in Marpole with 16 rooms and shared kitchen, dining, and living facilities. The building's live-in coordinators prepare meals for residents.

2SLGBTQIA+ seniors

2SLGBTQIA+ seniors have intersecting identities and diverse life experiences. They may fear that they will not be welcome in all housing situations, including long-term care homes or supportive housing buildings. In particular, transgender and non-binary people face higher rates of discrimination, are more [likely to experience poverty](#), and may have specific healthcare needs (such as access to gender-affirming care, or care for HIV-positive survivors).

We also heard that many 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors belong to a “silent cohort”—people who grew up before homosexuality was legalized and faced significant stigma. As a result, some 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors may feel mistrust toward institutions, making it challenging to collect data through surveys or identification.

Currently, there are no care homes catering specifically to 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors, despite the existence of such homes for other communities.

Indigenous seniors and Elders

We heard from a small number of Indigenous older adults through the online and telephone survey. The City of Vancouver has also engaged with some Indigenous-led non-profit organizations through a sector workshop, and continues to follow protocols in engaging with the *xʷməθkʷəy̓əm* (Musqueam), *Sḵw̓x̓wú7mesh* (Squamish), and *səlilwətał* (Tsleil-Waututh) Nations. The City will continue to engage the Nations and urban Indigenous peoples throughout the Strategy process to better understand the specific needs of Indigenous communities.

4.3. Key challenges (continued)

Meeting diverse senior needs (continued)

Cultural communities

Many Chinese seniors who live in Chinatown highly value their neighbourhood, as many have a strong social network and sense of community there. Older adults and seniors-serving organizations in Chinatown mentioned that the various clubs, community events, and informal gatherings located there contribute to a vibrant and connected neighbourhood. For Chinese seniors with language barriers, living in Chinatown brings a sense of comfort and belonging, as they can communicate and meet daily needs more easily in their native languages. The availability of communal spaces and programming in residential buildings was highly valued by Chinatown seniors, as it provides opportunities for socializing, engaging in activities, and fostering connections with fellow residents. These factors contribute to the overall wellbeing and quality of life for seniors in Chinatown.

It is crucial to maintain affordable and liveable housing options for seniors to age in place in communities where they have deep cultural connections, such as Chinatown.

Innovative idea: Seniors outreach programs

Many non-profit organizations in Vancouver that were engaged through this process provide valuable outreach services to diverse seniors, including (but not limited to):

- Wavefront Centre for Communication Accessibility
- Seniors Services Society of BC
- 411 Seniors Centre Society
- Dignity Seniors Society
- Jewish Seniors Alliance
- QMUNITY
- S.U.C.C.E.S.S.
- South Vancouver Seniors Hub
- Tonari Gumi
- Yarrow Intergenerational Society

Racialized seniors

We heard that a primary challenge for Black seniors is the anti-Black racism that many experience in housing. Landlords may subject them to discriminatory practices, such as asking illegal questions during the application process. This discrimination is evident where Black seniors have been turned away from accommodations they had already paid for. It is crucial to acknowledge that Black people, especially seniors, have unique needs that often go unrecognized. Aging in their own community, close to family, and residing in a culturally suitable environment are essential factors for Black seniors—and for many other cultural communities and marginalized groups. We heard that many Black seniors have low incomes, making retirement and accessing suitable housing options even more challenging.

Newcomer seniors and seniors with English as a second language

Language barriers further compound existing challenges faced by many seniors—including navigating the housing system, accessing support services, and interacting with staff, landlords, or otherwise. Seniors who do not speak English can face serious health and wellbeing challenges in long-term care and other housing forms, if there are no staff that speak their language, or if staff cannot accommodate different cultural needs and preferences. Without someone to translate or speak the same language, seniors can experience extreme isolation and loneliness in their homes.

Participants also mentioned that newcomers are not always aware of community-based seniors services. Settlement services have strong connections with immigrant seniors, but are not allowed to support them once they achieve permanent resident status—due to strict eligibility requirements that are tied to funding—leaving some people in a jurisdictional gap.

4.3. Key challenges (continued)

Navigating the housing system

Participants shared that the housing system is difficult to navigate for the people who are most in need. Many people do not know what options are available to them, nor how to apply for supports for themselves or their loved ones.

Waitlists and lack of affordable housing supply

Many people age 55+ are stuck on waitlists for affordable housing, long-term care, supportive housing, and independent living options in Vancouver. People expressed that it is difficult to navigate and find a unit through the BC Housing system. Even if one has the necessary resources, support, and knowledge to navigate the system, waitlists for a unit can be five to 10 years long. Many do not know where to else to turn for help if they cannot access a unit through BC Housing. In the interim, many people are forced to live in homes that do not meet their accessibility needs, or where they do not feel safe—for lack of any other affordable and accessible options. This compromises people’s wellbeing and poses safety and health risks on a daily basis. We also heard that seniors who rent are challenged by the competition for the few units that become available in the private market.

Ageism

Many seniors renting in the market expressed that they have faced discrimination from private landlords, who often prefer younger tenants with higher incomes. Landlords may have concerns about older adults experiencing emergencies, or hold biases around seniors’ abilities to care for the property or afford rent.

“The government doesn’t understand us. They can’t. When you’re in old age and you have nowhere to go, even though you’ve paid taxes your whole life.”

—Pop-up participant



Pop-up event at Kingsgate Mall.

Innovative idea: Mixed-income and intergenerational communities

Many people expressed that mixed-income and intergenerational buildings can help foster connections between seniors, younger adults, and other neighbours. Some buildings can also focus on providing housing and programming for people with particular life experiences, such as seniors who are part of veteran, arts, or faith-based communities.

Local examples:

- At [Co:Here](#) in Vancouver, residents in mixed-income apartments cook, eat, and garden together in their common kitchen, dining hall, and garden. These social spaces support neighbourly connections, care, and health.
- [PAL Vancouver](#) offers social housing units for seniors in the arts community, allowing them to continue their creative pursuits and stay active and engaged. The building includes a rooftop patio and theatre space, which hosts regular community events.

4.3. Key challenges (continued)

Navigating the housing system

Accessing information and resources

Many seniors and adults aged 55+ find it challenging to understand their eligibility for housing programs and access information on available housing options. These challenges are compounded for people who have difficulties accessing or using the internet, or who do not speak English. Many housing applications—market and non-market—require people to navigate competitive online systems. The end result is that many people do not know their rights and cannot access the benefits and services they are entitled to.

People expressed desires for a “one-stop shop”—a single, centralized place and resource they can visit to know all the options available to them and how to apply to each one. For example, specific community groups and organizations may offer housing, but individuals may not know which options apply to them. There is need for education, support, and centralized resources around available housing options, support services, and tenant rights and protections.

“It doesn’t feel like there’s anyone out there who’s listening who can help us. You have to go through the system [to find affordable housing] but the system isn’t working. So you have to live in fear every day.”

—Focus group participant

Flexibility

Flexibility in policies is essential to accommodate rapidly changing needs as individuals age. Restrictive policies in some buildings can further complicate the housing situation, limiting the ability of adult children and parents or couples with different needs to live together. There are also instances where individuals, such as women with trauma and/or people with behavioural challenges, struggle to find long-term care facilities that can provide the necessary support.

Understanding tenant rights

Many renters struggle to find accurate information about their rights. Many seniors feel voiceless and lack advocates when dealing with landlords, creating vulnerability and anxiety around losing their homes.

Some respondents noted difficulties when obtaining actions from the tenancy board during landlord-tenant in disputes.

Additionally, the fear of retaliation from their landlord can prevent seniors from asking for necessary maintenance or upgrades, for fear of losing their unit and having no other affordable options to turn to.

4.3. Key challenges (continued)

Housing design

Accessibility and universal design of housing is crucial for meeting the needs of seniors and older adults 55+.

Accessible, adaptable, and flexible units

People’s accessibility needs can change rapidly as they age. A major challenge we heard is that many people live in units that do not meet their accessibility needs. Some live in older buildings where elevators do not consistently work, and so are trapped in their units if they are not able to climb stairs. Housing for older adults should include features like larger wheelchair- or walker-accessible bathrooms, space around the bed for maneuvering with mobility aids, and accessible kitchens with lower cupboards. Consideration should be given to storage spaces and charging infrastructure for walkers and scooters, as well as avoiding carpeting that hinders wheelchair or walker navigation and poses tripping hazards. Flexible unit design and housing options, such as lock-off units and the ability to easily reconfigure units, can provide older adults with more choices and adaptability as they age.

Emergency exits are another major accessibility challenge, particularly in multi-storey buildings. Participants emphasized the importance of accessible egress standards and mandating accessible emergency exit plans to ensure the safety of all residents. Participants further mentioned that the Rick Hansen Foundation offers guidance in this regard.

Shared spaces

Multi-unit housing should include well-designed social spaces to promote neighborly connections and support among residents, with considerations for services for older adults, such as nurse drop-in hours. Climate mitigation and adaptation measures—such as cooling spaces that people can go to during extreme weather—are also essential, particularly in older buildings with heating and cooling issues.

Health and wellbeing through design

Many aspects of housing design can promote wellbeing and health for older adults. These include, but are not limited to:

- Accessible (and visitable) multi-unit buildings with shared amenities
- Well-ventilated units with access to natural light and views to nature
- A wide range of housing types, including ground-oriented unit options (which some seniors expressed a preference for)

Innovative idea: Co-op housing

Co-operative housing helps build community while offering relatively affordable units, where neighbours are expected to support each other and participate in the building’s daily life. In these mixed-income communities, higher earners subsidize lower earners, and everyone gets help if their situation changes. By increasing the supply of co-op units, cities can create more affordable options for older adults on low or fixed incomes.

At the same time, seniors can face barriers to living in a co-op because of expectations around contributing to the building. For some seniors, the participation demands can be too physically or mentally taxing. Seniors-focused co-op communities are one promising solution.

Local example:

- The new [Fraser Street Seniors Co-op](#) is located on City land. The building includes the [411 Seniors Centre Society](#) offices on ground floor, ensuring that residents have easy access to support services.

4.3. Key challenges (continued)

Support services

The ability to access community or home support services is critical to the wellbeing and health of older adults and seniors, many of whom want to age in place their current home. Many community organizations offer well-used services in Vancouver, but there is more demand than capacity to provide services, and costs can be prohibitive.

The phone and online surveys revealed that a minority of seniors currently access support services (9% in the phone survey, and 19% online). The most common services received are cleaning and food delivery. Nursing care and outreach volunteer services are less prevalent. In both surveys, a significant portion of seniors anticipate needing or wanting at-home assistance with tasks such as cleaning and personal care in the future.

Community-based services and neighbourhood houses

Neighbourhood houses, housing navigators, and community-based seniors services play a crucial role, helping people fill out application forms, file taxes, translate information, and more. The availability and accessibility of these support services across the city are essential for seniors to maintain their independence and overall wellbeing.

At-home care programs—such as Better at Home, Close to Home, and more—are well-used but have long wait lists and limited staff and funding capacities to meet current needs (for instance, the West End Seniors Network program has 100+ people on its waitlist). These needs are anticipated to increase even more in the coming years due to the growing number of seniors in Vancouver.

Health challenges

Many people expressed that it is difficult to access supports until one is in a crisis. Further, seniors who have been in the hospital for an extended period often lack a safe place to return to, whether due to eviction or accessibility needs that their home no longer meets. There are also limited end-of-life services available for seniors.

25%

anticipate needing or wanting some form of home or community support in the future.

(Phone survey)

Challenges we heard:

- Affordability and capacity of support services.
- Respite care options, particularly for seniors caring for a spouse or parent.
- Seniors-specific mental health supports and culturally appropriate supports.
- Ability to access at-home care services as people age and their needs change.

“You want to be proactive, but there’s this gap between your ability to be independent and ask for extra services. You have to be in an emergency situation to get support. People need support before they are in emergencies.”

—Focus group participant

4.3. Key challenges (continued)

Support services

Food security

Food insecurity poses a significant challenge for seniors, particularly those with fixed or low incomes. Many seniors struggle to access nutritious meals, especially if they are left to cook for themselves. Participants expressed that housing options that include meals or food programs can be a viable solution to address this issue. Additionally, initiatives such as bringing seniors to meals at seniors centres or neighbourhood houses can help combat isolation. It is also crucial to consider the delivery of groceries and meals to seniors who may have mobility limitations.

Food programs—including gardening programs and low-cost markets, such as the Kiwassa Green Market—have had a positive impact on seniors' health by offering access to fresh and healthy food. Despite these efforts, many seniors still require assistance with meal preparation, which can be addressed through meal services, such as Meals on Wheels. Some organizations also offer culturally appropriate seniors grocery delivery services, such as those provided by Tonari Gumi Services Society and Yarrow Intergenerational Society. People highly value these services, highlighting the importance of stable funding for community-based and non-profit organizations to maintain and expand these services.

Innovative idea: Homecare and navigation support programs

Homecare programs can help people to age in place longer, helping them to stay and maintain connections to the community they call home. These services are highly popular, but struggle to meet demand, and often have waitlists. Additionally, navigation services are critical to help people find suitable housing options as they age. Greater funding from the Province can help expand these services.

Local examples:

- The [Oasis Senior Supportive Living program](#) partners with private, public, and non-profit housing providers to implement programming for older adults, helping them to maintain fitness, social connection, nutrition, and a sense of purpose. It is currently being piloted in buildings operated by Brightside Community Homes Foundation.
- Run by the Seniors Services Society of BC, [SHINE](#) is a province wide initiative that helps seniors access and navigate housing services and supports. It is jointly funded by the Ministry of Health and the Ministry of Mental Health and Addictions.

Innovative idea: Apps and technology

For older adults (or their family members) who have smartphones and internet access, there is potential to explore technology solutions to help meet daily needs and foster social support. However, supports and information for seniors must also be accessible through in-person, phone, and print avenues, as not all older adults are comfortable using or able to use technology.

Local example:

- A new, community-based app called [Tuktu](#) helps seniors, families, and others find resources (such as groceries, meals, travel companions, and social companions).

4.3. Key challenges (continued)

Housing upkeep and maintenance

Renters and homeowners both face challenges around the accessibility and upkeep of their homes as they age. Support with home upgrades and maintenance can help people age in the right place and maintain a sense of independence and community.

Renters

Seniors in rental housing can live independently for longer with both homecare support and assistance with unit upgrades. One solution identified is to hire live-in managers in buildings with a high proportion of seniors, whether they are seniors-specific buildings or Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs). These staff would be available to provide immediate support and assistance when needed. In terms of unit upgrades, participants emphasized that the City should preserve existing rental stock by supporting building owners to retrofit units—through incentives, grants, or otherwise. This may include identifying buildings that require upgrades to maintain safety.

One major challenge is accessibility in multi-storey buildings. Many people shared that they live in buildings where the elevators do not reliably work, leaving people stranded in their units. It is crucial that building owners repair and maintain elevators in older buildings where many seniors reside—as is common in the West End.

People living in older rental stock and affordable, lower-cost, or single-room occupancy (SRO) units often face challenges with maintaining a healthy living environment, whether due to pests, mould, or poor temperature regulation. These issues can exacerbate respiratory problems and lead to health complications. Seniors living in social housing and SROs often face additional safety concerns, particularly in buildings where seniors live alongside other vulnerable population groups, such as those with substance use issues.

Owners

Homeowners face challenges with home upkeep as they age, in areas such as snow removal, indoor and outdoor upkeep, and minor maintenance tasks. Further, as people age, their accessibility needs often change. Grants and assistance to help people renovate their homes would greatly help seniors age in place. These grants could be used for retrofitting mobility and safety equipment, such as stairlifts, personal alert devices, and security features. Homeowners expressed that they often do not know where or how to start thinking about upgrading their unit, and would benefit from more information about available grants and solutions that meet their needs.

Fear of renovictions

Many people in rental housing avoid asking for upgrades or renovations for fear of being evicted, with 40% of market renters in the online survey citing fear of renovictions as a source of housing instability.

Further, people who have lived in their units for a long time often pay considerably less than surrounding market prices, and cannot afford to move to a more accessible or better-maintained home. Incentives and grants should support building retrofits and upgrades, while protecting the tenancy of a building's existing residents.

It is important to ensure that protections consider seniors' unique needs. Some people noted that the right of first refusal policy for tenants in the Broadway Plan area does not adequately meet some seniors' needs. Asking an older adult to move twice within a short time frame can be prohibitive due to health challenges and the physical demands of moving.

4.3. Key challenges (continued)

Social connectedness

Social connection is crucial to supporting wellbeing, and can help reduce isolation among older adults.

Social connectedness emerged as a critical theme across all engagement activities. Participants emphasized a desire for easily accessible programming within their homes or buildings, particularly for those with mobility or health challenges. Connections with neighbours create opportunities for mutual support, and are particularly valuable for seniors who don't have family support networks. This need for social connections with neighbours has been amplified by the COVID-19 pandemic and recent extreme heat events, where isolated seniors face increased health risks. In the online survey, market renters were the most likely group to report challenges in connecting with neighbours in their current home.

Social connections can be fostered through building design, at-home programming, and through community-based programs. In multi-unit housing, building design can facilitate interactions between neighbours, such as by creating social spaces like courtyards, community gardens, and shared activity spaces. Participants also noted that resident connectors or tenant engagement staff made a significant difference in some buildings, enabling connections with neighbours through organized social activities.

Many people shared that community-based programs—such as recreational activities at community centres and coffee houses hosted by organizations like the Vancouver Second Mile Society and 411 Seniors Centre Society—play a key role in providing affordable social activities and building community ties.



Intergenerational connections

Older adults highly value intergenerational connections, expressing that these relationships foster the sharing of skills, knowledge, and life experiences. Multi-unit buildings with intergenerational residents make it possible for younger people, families, seniors, and older adults to help each other out.

Innovative idea: Homesharing

Many participants expressed the desire to access programs that help seniors share their home with a vetted student or person in need of rental housing. The majority of older adults in Vancouver own their homes, and many live in multi-bedroom houses alone. People felt that they would like to rent out their extra bedrooms to someone younger—who is in need of modestly priced housing—and who can help out with cleaning, shopping, or other minor household upkeep tasks. Governments can support policies and frameworks to make this process easier and safer for homeowners, and/or provide incentives for homeowners to participate.

Local examples:

- [Spaces Shared](#) is an online platform that matches vetted guests with hosts who have spare rooms.
- The Metro Vancouver [HomeShare](#) program connects SFU students with adults 55+ who have a spare bedroom to rent.

4.3. Key challenges (continued)

Neighbourhood context

Neighbourhoods play a key role in supporting the wellbeing and independence of older adults, including their ability to age in the right place and feel safe.

Walkability

People that we engaged highly valued having access to daily needs within walking or rolling distance from their home. In both the phone and online surveys, the majority of seniors felt that their homes provide them with access to their daily needs. From the phone survey, three quarters reported that their home provides them with access to their daily needs, with those living Downtown most likely to feel this way. In the online survey, two thirds said that their home provides access to their daily needs, with no significant differences between renters and homeowners.

To help seniors maintain satisfaction with their housing and connections to their community, it is essential to design walkable neighbourhoods with supportive features such as accessible sidewalks, clear signage, and frequent seating. In particular, social housing and rental housing should be located near to primary services and amenities. Dependable transportation, such as HandyDART, is appreciated, but there is room for improvement in terms of service reliability. Finally, indoor and outdoor community gathering spaces with programming for older adults and accessible design can foster social connections and enhance the overall wellbeing of seniors.

Safety and wellbeing

In specific areas, including Chinatown and the Downtown Eastside, people expressed concerns about the closure of businesses that cater to Chinese seniors.

There is also need to address public safety concerns—including noise disturbances, occasional violence, and the presence of individuals with substance use challenges. Solutions should offer support and safe housing options to those most in need, and avoid criminalizing poverty and homelessness.



Innovative idea: Campus of care

Many people expressed that the current long-term care model is broken, while other older adults said they would only live in long-term care as a last resort. The campus of care model is one alternative solution. The City can support smaller, community-based seniors affordable housing and care hubs that include intergenerational programming, support services, health clinics, and more as an alternative to the long-term care model. People felt that these community hubs can help make aging less isolating. The [Vancouver Chinatown Seniors Affordable Housing Inventory Report](#) envisions Chinatown as a “‘campus of care’ where seniors can continue to live in the community as they age, without being disrupted from the familiar neighbourhood they have always known.”

Local example:

- [Haro Park Centre](#) in the West End follows a campus of care model.

4.4. Actions to improve housing

During the surveys and pop-up events, we asked participants to rate the importance of five proposed actions to improve housing for adults 55+ in Vancouver (listed below). Across all engagement activities—including both surveys and at the pop-up events—there were high levels of support for every proposed action. The top priority identified was adding more social and supportive housing, followed closely by support for seniors to stay in their current homes.

Percentage of people who rated each action as fairly or very important (online survey)

97% Support adding more seniors' social and supportive housing with daily life supports

95% Support adding more supports for seniors to age in their current home (e.g. renovation grants, home support services)

92% Support improving accessibility and design in new housing

90% Support adding more supports for seniors who rent their home (e.g. higher rent supplements, stronger tenant protections and rights)

90% Support adding more housing options for seniors to downsize in their neighbourhood

Ideas Fair: Prioritizing actions and key directions for the Strategy

The City hosted approximately 60 service providers, community groups, housing providers, academics, and members of the Older Persons and Elders Advisory Committee at the Seniors Housing Ideas Fair. The event marked the end of the Strategy's first phase of public engagement and a move to the next phase of policy development.

The session included a presentation from the Seniors Advocate of British Columbia, Isobel Mackenzie, and a summary of engagement findings from the project team. Attendees stated the engagement findings shared largely reflected their organizations' experiences. We then asked attendees to prioritize Strategy directions and actions.

Top priority actions included:

- Building and enabling more affordable social and supportive housing by working in partnership with other levels of government and non-profits.
- Advocating for increased home-supports to help seniors to age comfortably in their existing home.
- Advocating for improvements to the SAFER program; and
- Increasing core funding for senior-serving organizations to better meet the housing needs of seniors in the city.

Full results from the Ideas Fair can be found in Appendix G.



Participants discuss actions to improve seniors housing at the Ideas Fair.

5. Recommendations

5.1. Putting what we heard into action

Throughout engagement, people continuously underscored the urgency of tackling the housing crisis for seniors and older adults in Vancouver. The current housing crisis among older adults is a result of policy choices. While policy and funding for seniors housing are not only at the municipal level, the City has a key role to play in areas such as zoning, affordable housing, design guidelines, incentives for home upgrades, support services, education, and more. A key focus for the Seniors Housing Strategy should be to recognize and prioritize solutions for the most vulnerable residents—including renters, people on low incomes, and people experiencing or at risk of homelessness.

People emphasized that there is a wealth of evidence and actions that the City—with support from other levels of government, community foundations, and community-based seniors services—can take to address this crisis and house some of its most vulnerable residents. Participants also noted that, in terms of taxpayer dollars, it is far more expensive to care for unhoused people than it is to provide supportive housing.

By prioritizing actions to improve housing options for older adults and seniors in Vancouver, the City can ensure that people can live in dignified, healthy, and supportive environments as they age, creating more inclusive and social communities for all residents. The Strategy must acknowledge and respect the diversity of seniors, including considerations around the distinct housing needs of cultural communities, racialized groups, 2SLGBTQIA+ seniors, Indigenous seniors and Elders, and others.

“Before the City can improve seniors housing, it needs to take stock first. It needs to understand the role it has played as a bystander, and the impact this inaction has had on the number of evictions, renovictions, displacements from the City of Vancouver, and homelessness among seniors. There are actions the City could have taken, and now needs to take. Otherwise we will continue seeing older adults leaving the city because housing is inadequate. The housing crisis hits vulnerable populations hardest, including older adults. The City must support vulnerable seniors and renters who still remain here.”

—Focus group participant



5.2. Directions for further exploration

This section presents directions for further exploration for the Seniors Housing Strategy, based on what we heard from community members and stakeholders engaged during this process.

Some actions are directly related to the supply and design of housing, while others are closely related—such as ideas around support services and location of seniors housing in relation to neighbourhood amenities. These directions represent what we heard during the engagement process, and represent action areas that City staff should explore further as work on the Seniors Housing Strategy moves into the policy development stage.

Organizing the Seniors Housing Strategy

Several participants recommended an equity approach to the Strategy. Recognizing that people with various, intersecting identities have different needs, it is important to prioritize addressing the needs of the most vulnerable residents first. For example, people experiencing and at risk of homelessness, and people living in very low-quality housing, need immediate help. There are urgent actions required to house people in the short term, as well as wider systemic changes that will take longer to implement.

The Strategy can also include values or principles to promote wellbeing in housing for seniors—such as dignity, equity, autonomy and choice, safety, social connection, belonging, and more.

Directions

Through engagement with the community, we identified six future directions to explore that can improve housing for seniors and older adults in Vancouver. These ideas will be carried forward and further developed as the Seniors Housing Strategy is drafted. In creating the Strategy, it is important to ensure that older adults, seniors, and community organizations are involved at all stages of development and implementation.

The six directions identified through this engagement process are:

- 1. Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing for adults 55+**
- 2. Streamline and improve access to housing and support services**
- 3. Improve housing design standards**
- 4. Prioritize impact and accountability in housing policy**
- 5. Invest in advocacy and partnerships**
- 6. Build complete neighbourhoods**

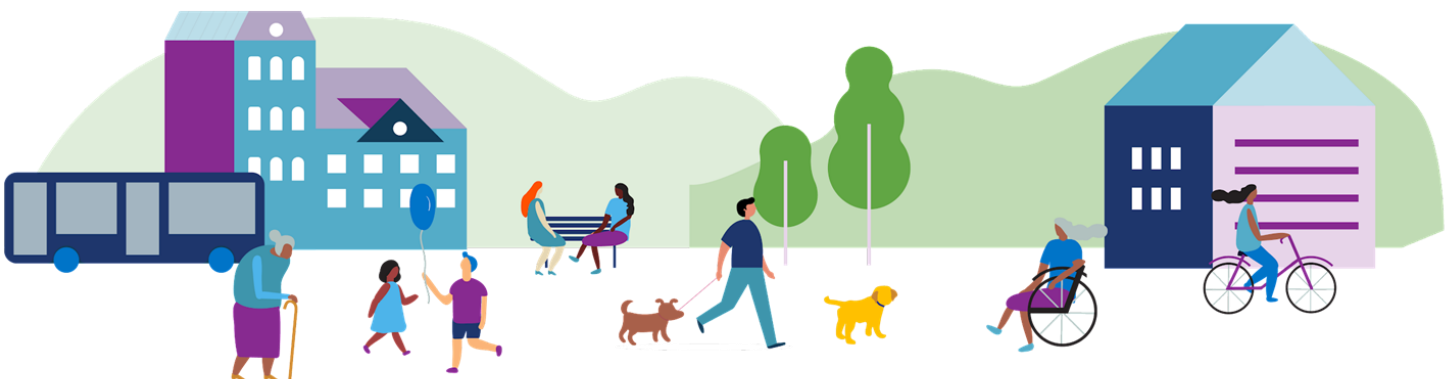
Each direction is detailed on the following pages.

5.2. Directions for further exploration

1. Increase the supply of affordable and supportive housing for adults 55+

The City of Vancouver can promote collaboration across governments and learn from cities that have successfully implemented innovative housing models to increase the quality and quantity of housing for older adults—particularly for renters and people with low incomes, who face the greatest challenges in finding affordable housing. Actions to explore include:

- **Streamline the development application process** for non-profit housing developers. By simplifying and expediting development processes, the City can encourage the construction of more affordable housing options.
- **Support non-profit organizations** who work with seniors **to develop new housing** by providing knowledge and resources to help them undertake the housing development process. One solution can be to increase its provision of affordable, long-term leases to nonprofit housing providers on City-owned land.
- **Maximize the use of vacant land** for new housing projects. For example, the City can develop a policy that sets a deadline for developers and landowners to utilize empty land or complete construction after demolition.
- **Explore new pilot sites** that create intergenerational, flexible, and affordable housing. These pilot sites can serve as models for pre-approved building solutions that can be deployed more rapidly. For example, pilots could look at adding housing in low-density neighbourhoods or developing apartments that foster social connectedness through the design of common spaces.
- **Prioritize development that creates intentional community** through incentives and regulation. This housing could focus on mixed-use or intergenerational buildings to support residents of all ages to be resilient and socially connected.



5.2. Directions for further exploration

2. Streamline and improve access to housing and support services

To help people find the right housing and supports, the City can advocate for and help implement streamlined processes that meet people where they are and make it easier to navigate the system. In improving access to housing services, the City should support and collaborate with existing community-based organizations. Actions to explore include:

- **Centralize housing information and services** to help seniors know their housing rights and options and plan for their future housing needs. These services could include a City-run physical drop-in location that acts as a knowledge resource for housing information, guidance, and immediate assistance for tenants who have been evicted.
- **Collaborate with community-based organizations to create neighbourhood service hubs** that disseminate resources, provide services or referrals, and serve as centres for social activities and community connection. While neighbourhood houses already fulfill much of this role, the City can provide further support to help ensure that resources are distributed throughout Vancouver, reaching people in the places they already frequent and without requiring them to travel far distances to access information. These hubs can also support emergency preparedness among older adults in their community.
- **Advocate for and support community-based organizations to conduct seniors outreach services.** Outreach is essential to reach ‘invisible’ seniors and help meet people where they are at—particularly those who have mobility challenges, language barriers, or are socially isolated. The City can support by offering and coordinating resources, such as office space and consolidated information. There is potential for neighbourhood service hubs to act as a base for outreach services to vulnerable seniors who are not currently receiving support.
- **Advocate for consistent, core funding for community-based organizations** from all levels of government to help address operational challenges for organizations operating on short-term grants and terms. Long-term, consistent funding will help increase organizational capacity to expand program offerings, serve more seniors, retain staff long term, and supplement volunteer hours with more paid staff.
- **Ensure housing information, services, and supports are accessible** by accommodating diverse language needs, accessibility needs, and varying levels of digital literacy among seniors.
- **Encourage non-profit and for-profit building operators and landlords** to work with community organizations to get resources to tenants living in their buildings.
- **Advocate for an integrated approach** to providing housing and related support services. Participants mentioned that because funding is separated into different streams, it is difficult to meet the holistic needs of individuals. A case management approach was suggested by some groups to help reduce referrals, which can be difficult to navigate and access.

5.2. Directions for further exploration

3. Improve housing design standards

To address the current housing gaps in terms of accessibility and liveability, the City can promote stronger building design standards. Actions to explore include:

- **Improve accessibility standards for new buildings and developments.** Building on its Accessibility Strategy and its Building By-law, the City can strengthen guidance around universal design in housing, including accessible and adaptable units, to increase the supply of housing that meets the needs of people of all ages and abilities.
- **Create design standards that reflect best practices around aging in the right place, social connectedness, resilience, health, and safety.** Incentivized or regulatory guidelines can help encourage the inclusion of best practices in new developments.
- **Equip housing with cooling measures for extreme heat.** Strategies include installing air conditioning in more affordable units, promoting cross-ventilation and daylight in courtyard buildings, and creating community spaces that can serve both as emergency preparedness hubs and social spaces.
- **Explore technology solutions to improve safety for seniors.** Consider pilot programs, which could be completed in collaboration with other levels of government, to increase safety for seniors, such as providing low-cost or free emergency buttons for seniors who live alone.

Innovative idea: Dementia-inclusive planning and design

Dementia-friendly communities benefit all community members, while helping reduce stigma and increase awareness around living with dementia.

Local example:

- Researchers from the Simon Fraser University Department of Gerontology engaged municipal planners, advocates, and people with lived experience to create **Dementia-inclusive Planning and Design Guidelines**. The Guidelines include strategies and actions that cities and developers can implement to ensure that the built environment supports comfort, safety, and accessibility for older adults living with dementia.



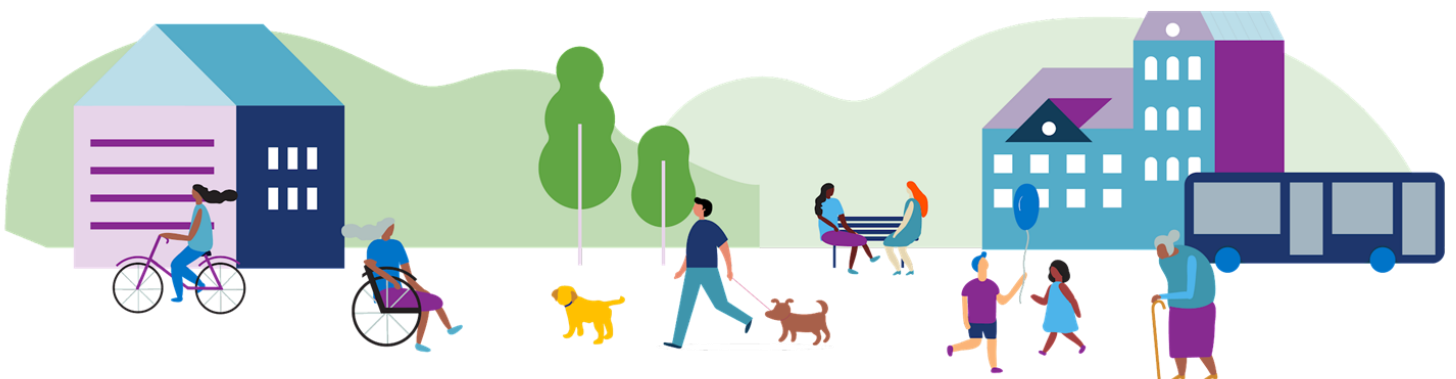
Photo of community input shared at a pop-up event.

5.2. Directions for further exploration

4. Prioritize impact and accountability in housing policy

To address the current challenges with housing processes, the City should explore partnerships and advocate for better communication, transparency, and engagement. Actions to explore include:

- **Use an equity lens to identify priority action areas** that provide relief for the most vulnerable, considering diverse needs such as cultural sensitivity, racialized seniors, people with physical and mental health challenges, and people with disabilities.
- **Ensure clear communication around the roles, resources, and responsibilities of different housing actors**, including the City, B.C. Housing, non-profit housing providers, landlords, and other organizations.
- **Conduct equitable engagement and consultation** that includes seniors, reduces barriers for people to participate, and considers best practices to meet the needs of an aging population. Report back to those consulted in several languages, and ensure that people can see how their feedback was incorporated. These practices can help build public trust and support, particularly among those who are vulnerable and not seeing solutions to their challenges.
- **Identify clear reporting and accountability outcomes in future housing strategies** to ensure that public processes and policies have the intended positive impacts.
- **Ensure that strategies are coordinated with existing municipal policies and plans** to avoid confusion, reduce silos, and ensure accountability. For instance, new neighbourhood plans should refer to the Seniors Housing Strategy, and the Seniors Housing Strategy should build on existing policy around accessibility.
- **Fund a temporary housing program** for people who get evicted or have recently been discharged from the hospital. Beyond shelters, this type of housing would provide a temporary unit where people can live while they figure out their next steps.



5.2. Directions for further exploration

5. Invest in advocacy and partnerships

To best address the current challenges facing seniors and adults 55+, the City should explore new partnerships and advocate on the behalf of Vancouver residents with different levels of government. Actions to explore include:

- **Facilitate and support partnerships among community-based seniors services**, including non-profit organizations, housing providers, and neighbourhood houses. The City can play a convening role to connect these organizations and help them provide better services.
- **Partner with local community organizations, housing providers, and health authorities** to address systemic health and housing barriers facing seniors and older adults. In particular, the City should explore partnerships with organizations including Vancouver Coastal Health, B.C. Housing, and the B.C. Non-profit Housing Association.
- **Advocate to the provincial and federal governments** to provide more funding for new affordable and supportive housing units.
- **Advocate to the provincial government** to increase SAFER rates so that qualifying residents do not have to pay more than 30% of their income on rent. Participants expressed that the maximum SAFER amount a person can receive is not adequate to live in Vancouver in the current market. Some would like to see the program have an inflator built in, and increase income limits so that more people can access SAFER.
- **Advocate to the provincial government** to reduce or remove home and community support user fees. This could help alleviate the demand for supportive housing and long-term care beds, which are much more expensive to provide.
- **Work with the Province, health authorities, and other municipalities to reform the long-term care model.** For instance, the City can help promote a pivot towards smaller care facilities and hubs that are integrated within neighbourhoods and offer community-based solutions.
- **Advocate to the federal government** to increase the Old Age Security Pension (OAS) and the Guaranteed Income Supplement (GIS).
- **Work with the Province and housing providers to study and understand the successes and challenges of buildings with mixed populations.** Currently, many seniors living in B.C. Housing or in lower-end market rental buildings live together with people who have mental health and/or substance use challenges, and expressed concerns with this model, due to safety and other challenges.

5.2. Directions for further exploration

6. Build complete neighbourhoods

Participants highly valued the ability to access shops, services, and community spaces nearby to their homes. The City can help support social connection, improve access to essential services, and support people to age in the right place by ensuring older adults can walk or roll to meet daily needs. Actions to explore include:

- **Create neighbourhood gathering spaces** in neighbourhoods, particularly where there are high concentrations of seniors or naturally occurring retirement communities (NORCs). The City can ensure that zoning allows for third places such as restaurants, coffee shops, and parks in neighbourhoods of all scales.
- **Encourage missing middle density** by removing exclusionary zoning policies that primarily allow single detached homes in residential neighbourhoods. Instead, the City can legalize denser housing forms with modest unit sizes that are more attainable and easier for older adults to maintain.
- **Colocate seniors' housing**, across the spectrum, with community centres, neighbourhood houses, libraries, public plazas, and programming—all of which can help offer opportunities for seniors to engage with and get involved in their communities. Through zoning, the City can allow a greater mix of land uses and services near to multi-unit housing and seniors buildings.
- **Create design standards to promote accessible streets and paths** for older adults and people with disabilities, including guidance around frequent placement of seating, seating design, accessible sidewalks and intersections, signage, and more.

Innovative idea: Integrate affordable housing with neighbourhood houses

Co-locating affordable seniors housing with community services and hubs can help increase access to supports and build social connection.

Local example:

- **[Red Oak Place Housing](#)** is operated by Kitsilano Neighbourhood House on Vancouver's West side. There are 15 one-bedroom units for low-income seniors (55+) located above the Neighbourhood House and its Daycare. Tenants at Red Oak Housing are at the centre of an intergenerational and active community, with close access to programs, events, and activities.



