

DRAFT SENIORS HOUSING STRATEGY

SUMMARY DOCUMENT

INTRODUCTION

Seniors are the fastest growing age demographic in Vancouver. Many seniors live on fixed incomes and will need to consider changing health, accessibility and housing needs as they age. Some older adults and elders 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 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 elders and 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-market 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 piece of the overall goal of becoming an age-friendly city and will continue to evolve. Some areas of seniors housing fall outside of the municipal jurisdiction, such as rent supplements, health care, and other related services. 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.

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KEY STRATEGIES

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

Increasing the availability of social, supportive, and cooperative housing for older adults, as well as expanding long-term care and assisted living options, is essential for older adults to age in affordable, safe, and secure homes. The Seniors Housing Strategy includes policies that promote the development of these housing options within all neighborhoods. This approach will offer opportunities for local residents to downsize or transition to buildings with health supports while remaining in their existing communities, allowing individuals to age in their preferred locations.

Strategy 2: Improve home and building supports for older adults

We heard through public engagement that older adults want to remain in their homes as long as possible. We will collaborate with partners to push for improved access to and affordability of home support services, aiming to decrease reliance on long-term care facilities and enhance overall health outcomes. Additionally, we will advocate for culturally sensitive support within care homes, such as translation services, hiring multilingual staff, offering culturally relevant activities and programming, serving culturally appropriate meals, and ensuring building staff are trained to foster safe environments for Indigenous, LGBTQ2S+, and other marginalized groups.

Strategy 3: Increase supply of seniors supportive housing, rental subsidies, and other services for older adults experiencing or at risk of homelessness

Many older adults experience homelessness for the first time as a senior. We will collaborate with partners to advocate for urgent measures, such as revamping the Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (SAFER) rent subsidy program for older adults, replacing and renovating Single Room Occupancy hotels, and constructing new seniors-specific social and supportive housing. These initiatives aim to prevent older adults from becoming homeless and allow older renters to age in secure and affordable housing options.



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

We heard that many older adults do not know how to access housing or support services, or what is available to them. We will collaborate with senior-serving community organizations and government agencies to ensure that seniors have access to essential information. This will involve raising awareness and facilitating access to various housing programs such as the SAFER rent subsidy program, assistance in applying for social housing or co-ops, utilizing provincial accessible home adaptation programs or seniors renovation tax credits, and property tax deferral options.

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

Recognizing that housing is only one part in creating a city that supports older adults, we will continue to advance other areas of work, such as accessibility and universal design, as outlined in the Accessibility Strategy (2022). Additionally, we will continue advancing broader initiatives related to transportation, service hubs, and resiliency. In planning processes, special consideration will be given to older adults by promoting the development of housing types and services tailored to their needs.



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COLLABORATION IS ESSENTIAL TO SUCCESS

Continued efforts, funding, and collaboration among government and community partners are essential to enhance the lives of older adults with complex housing needs. While some actions, like constructing new seniors social and supportive housing, assisted living, and long-term care facilities, will require time to see results, others such as revamping the SAFER program can bring immediate improvements for older adults who rent their homes.

NEXT STEPS

We want to hear what you think about the above Seniors Housing Strategy directions. Please fill out a brief survey here from April 18th to May 16th.

The Strategy is expected to go to Vancouver City Council for consideration in July 2024. Your feedback will be considered as staff finalize the Strategy and will be summarized as part of the report to Council. You can find regular updates on this webpage: shapeyourcity.ca/seniors-housing.

