



# Draft City of Vancouver Seniors Housing Strategy

*Draft Version as of April 18, 2024*

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## 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 socio-economic status, age, health, and other factors. For this strategy, the terms *senior*, *older adult*, *older persons* and *elder* are used interchangeably and refer to a person who is 55 years of age or older.

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 seniors supportive 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 policies related to older adults progresses.

# 1. Introduction

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 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 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 related 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 the senior-serving community organizations.

## 2. Housing Needs of Older Adults

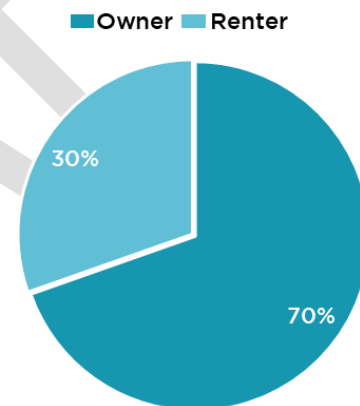
Older adults in Vancouver are a diverse group with different needs, preferences, cultures, life experiences, abilities, and ages. For this strategy, seniors are generally considered to be 55 years or older. However, a nuanced approach to aging needs to be considered as intersecting inequities and barriers can create a younger threshold for aging. 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 seniors and should be supplemented by community and public engagement findings in section #.

### Existing Housing Needs

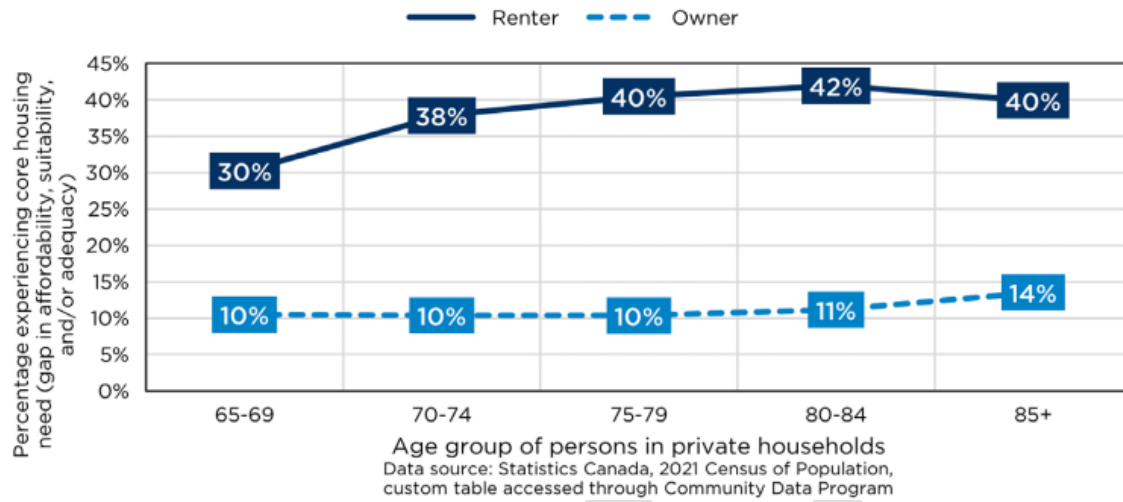
In terms of existing housing tenure, the majority of older adults 55+ are homeowners (70%), with over two-thirds of these residents no longer having a mortgage on their home. Only 30% of older adults 55+ are renters, significantly less than the overall City of Vancouver population, 55% of which are renter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

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



However, though fewer in numbers, older adults who rent experience greater affordability challenges as they age. About 40% of older adults 65+ 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. This compares to about 10% of older adult homeowners.

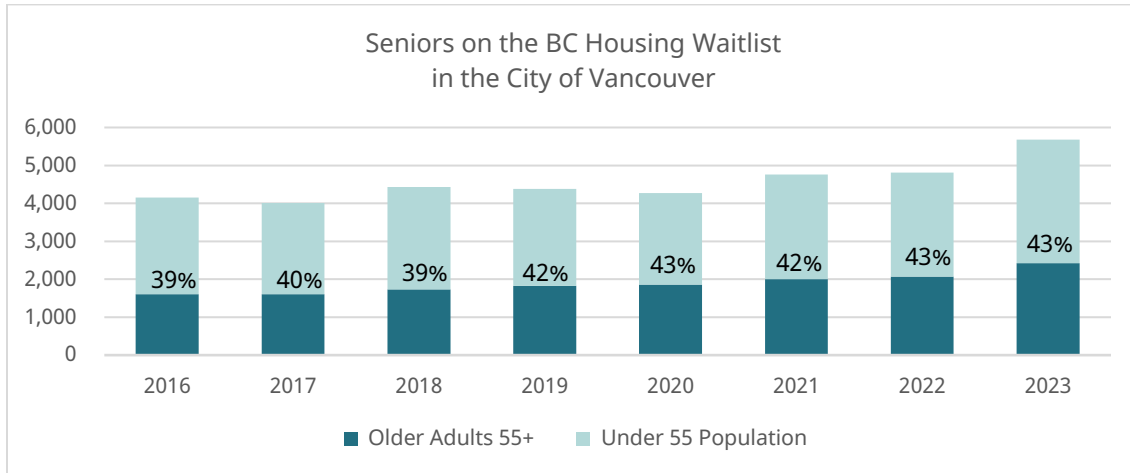
Figure 2 - Vancouver 65+ population in core housing need (2021)



A large proportion of seniors 65+ are low-income in Vancouver. As of the 2021 Census, half of seniors have an after-tax income of less than \$30,400, and one in four seniors make less than \$21,400 annually. Low-income seniors 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 constrained by inadequate income supports. Even with income supplements market rents in Vancouver, which averaged \$1,786 for a one-bedroom unit in 2023, is unaffordable.

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. About 43% of people on the social housing waitlist in the City of Vancouver are 55+, 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 17%, the largest increase seen in recent years.

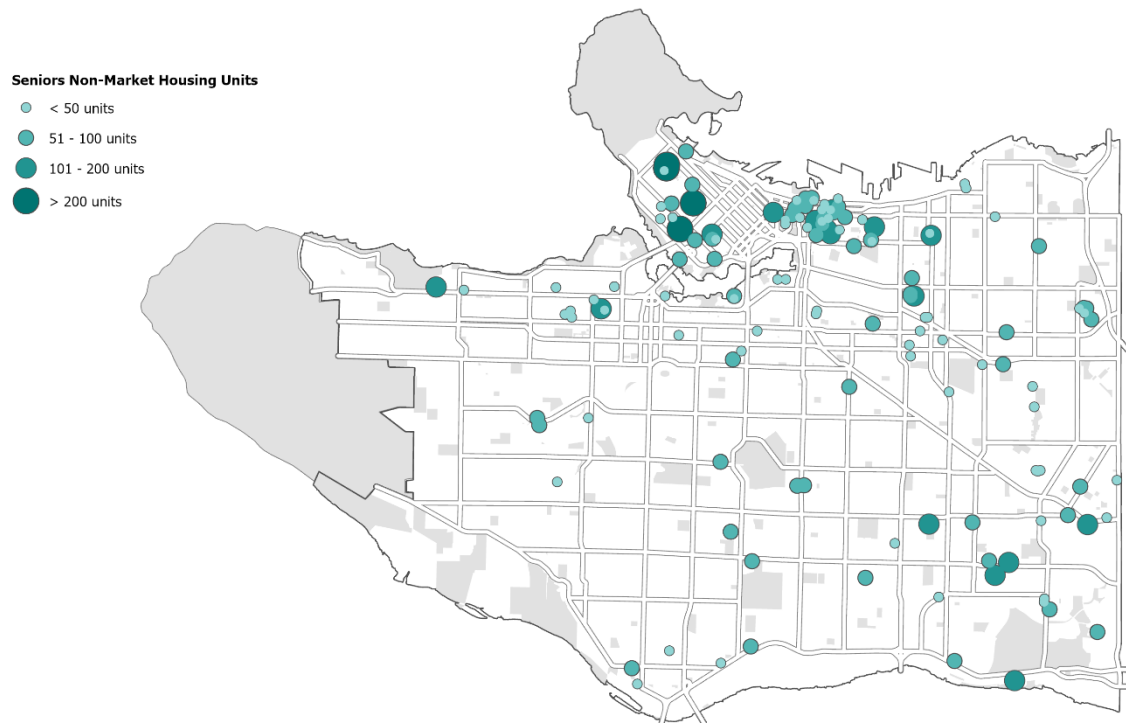
Figure 3 - Seniors 55+ on the BC Housing Waitlist within the City of Vancouver



There are a significant number of older adults 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 social housing for people aged 55+ and general social housing or supportive housing with no age requirements but does not include long-term care or assisted living.

Approximately 30% of non-market housing within the City of Vancouver, or approximately 9,000 units, is restricted to residents aged 55+ (see Figure 4). This type of housing offers affordability and relative stability, however, it does not include at-home or building supports, which are needed for some as they age. We heard from non-profit housing providers that there are not enough supports for older residents with social, physical, and mental health needs. While both paid and non-profit support care organizations exist, high fees and long wait times act as a barrier to accessing these services.

Figure 4 - Locations of Seniors Social Housing (occupancy 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. As of the 2023 City of Vancouver Homeless Count, 21% of people experiencing homelessness were 55 years of age or older. The count found that almost half (47%) of those older adults experienced homelessness for the first time when they were already 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 are socially vulnerable and economically disadvantaged.

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+. Findings from public and stakeholder engagement help to describe these housing challenges further (see Section 3).



## Urban, Rural, and Northern Indigenous Housing Strategy for BC

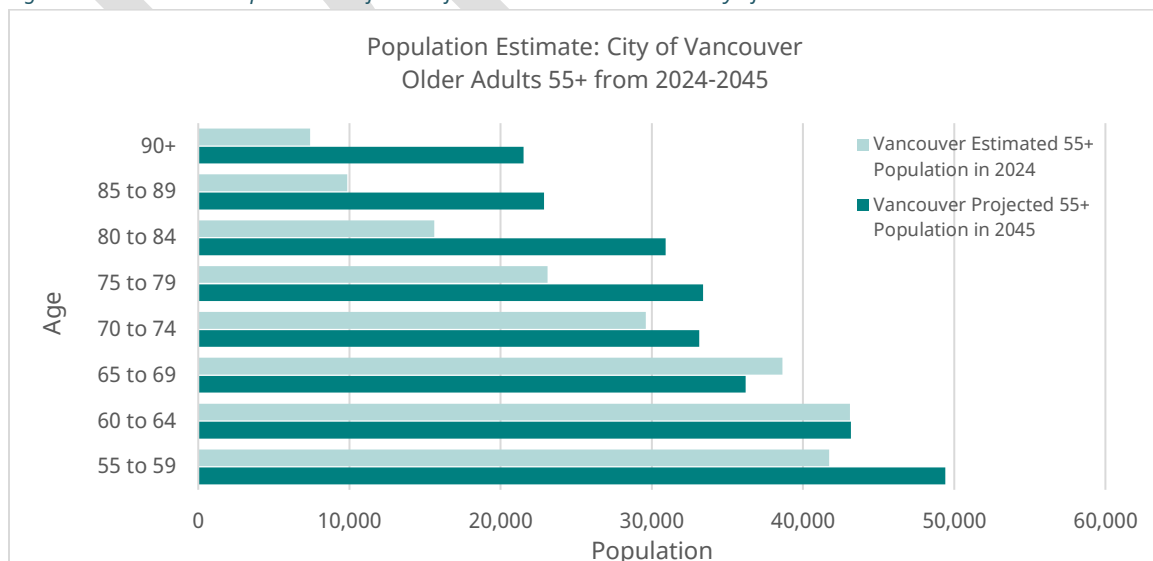
The Aboriginal Housing and Management Association (AHMA) identified a growing elders population and a high number of elders living alone within AHMA housing providers buildings. The report identified the need for greater tenant supports for elders and inadequate funding for these services. Most funding 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 (source AHMA Strategy, 2022).

## 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 high populations of adults aged 80 and over in 2045.

Growing and aging older adult populations means a higher need for buildings with supports, such as assisted living and long-term care, as well as at-home supports. The number of older adults on the social housing waitlist points to the need for more social and non-profit co-op housing, as well as a greater amount of subsidized assisted living and long-term care or low-cost home supports to allow people to remain in their homes as they age. In addition, for seniors 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 seniors are living now.

Figure 5 – BC Statistics Population Projections for Older Adults 55+ in the City of Vancouver 2024-2045



### 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 intensive engagement process to understand their existing housing challenges and future housing needs of older adults. This 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.
- 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.
- Older adults 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 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.

#### **Chinatown Affordable Seniors Housing Inventory Study**

A community-led study 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. *Source: Vancouver Chinatown Affordable Seniors Housing Inventory 2023*

- 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.

## 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 6 - Top challenges from public engagement



### Housing and health supports

- Leaders in the non-for-profit sector expressed a serious lack of mobile 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

*“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

supplements to market renters is grossly inadequate given current area rents. An overhaul to the program is needed, which should include a regulator 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. 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.

#### **Seniors Advocate of BC Home Support Services Report**

The Seniors Advocate of BC 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. *Source: We Must Do Better: Home Support Services for BC Seniors Report 2023.*

#### **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 A: [What We Heard Report](#).

Figure 7 – 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 geared 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 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, 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

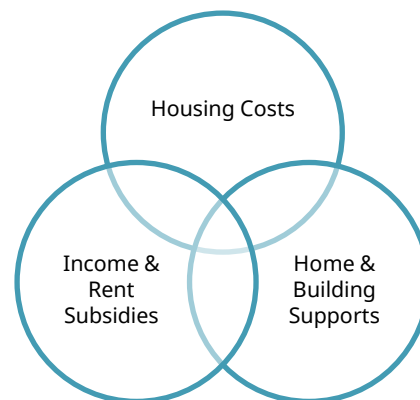
The typical approach to understanding housing affordability, whereas housing costs should be less than 30% of a household's income, does not work as well for older adults. This is because as people retire incomes are likely to decrease and become largely fixed, meaning people are more vulnerable to inflation 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 non-market 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 8 - Connection of housing affordability and supports for older adults*



## Roles and Responsibilities

The housing and supports needed to ensure the well-being of older adults fall under multiple 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 Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters rent subsidy 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 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.

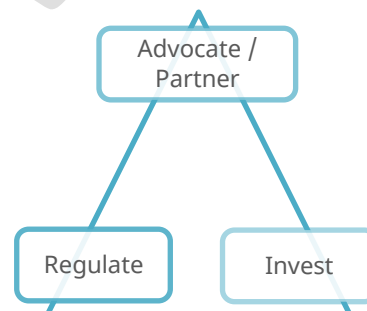


Figure 9 - Municipal roles in seniors housing

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.

## 5. Strategy Goals and 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 10),
- Advocating for the needed health, rental and income supports to enable 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 10 - 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 health needs change (see Appendix B 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. Single Room Occupancy (SRO) replacement and 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 Shelter Aid for Elderly Renters (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-market and other subsidized seniors housing types such as 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 enable more social, rental and strata housing options within Villages, Neighbourhood Centres and Rapid Transit Areas. Private pay 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.

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

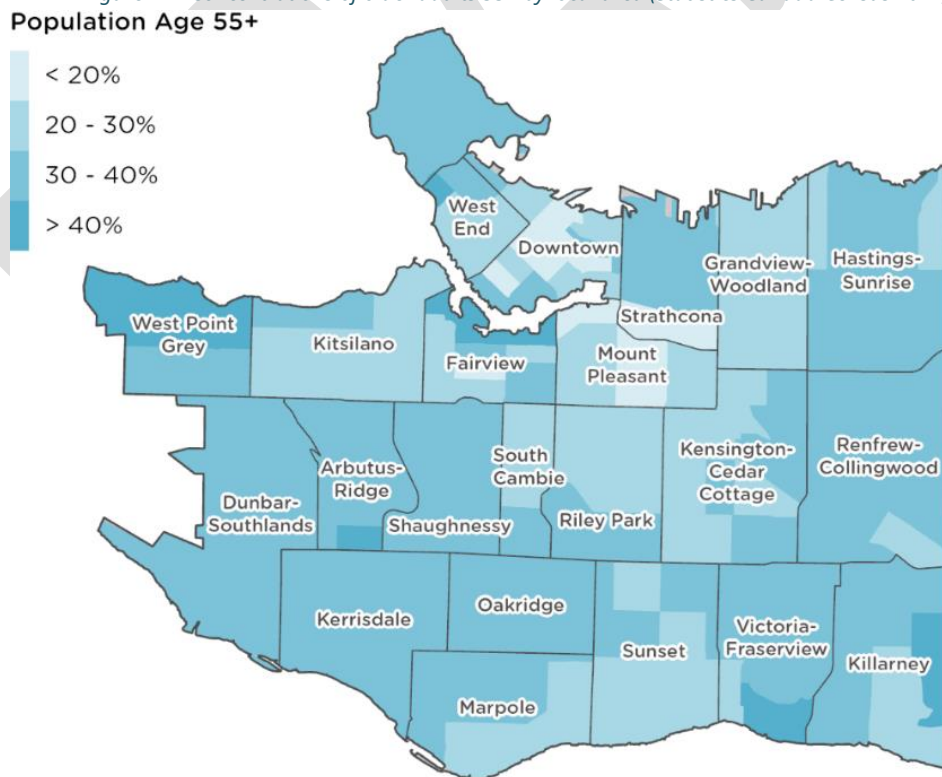
the aging community.<sup>1</sup> In Vancouver, there are several neighbourhoods with a higher proportion of 55+ households, as well as seniors specific buildings that should be considered in future planning processes.

As shown in Figure 11, 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.

### 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*

Figure 11 - Concentrations of older adults 55+ by local area (Statistics Canada Census 2021)

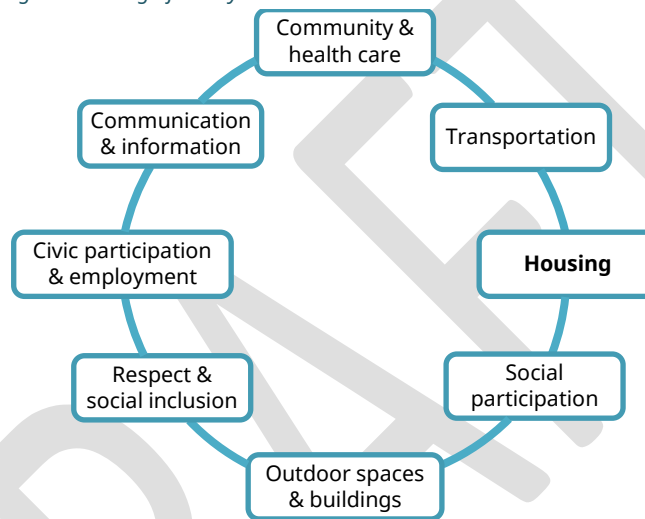


<sup>1</sup> National Institute on Ageing and NORC Innovation Centre, 2022

## 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 12) lists eight interconnected domains linked to the well-being of older people.

Figure 12 - 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 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. Policies and Actions

The following key strategies 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 policies are wide ranging in their scope and implementation timeline. Some 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 Strategies

#### ***Strategy 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. 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 and subsidized options (see Appendix D: Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy).
- 1.2. Implement a Resident Relocation Policy to ensure residents of redeveloping long-term care and assisted living buildings receive added protections (see Appendix E: Resident Relocation Policy).
- 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 (see Appendix F: Seniors Housing Design Guidelines).

- 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. *Explore the development of a campus of care model<sup>2</sup> 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.*
  - 1.4.2. *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.*
  - 1.4.3. *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. Add Seniors Social Housing to district schedules throughout the city to decrease development processing times through the upcoming pre-zoning for social housing work.
- 1.6. Explore enhanced tenant relocation and protection policies for older adults to ensure they are able to access affordable and appropriate housing if their existing home undergoes redevelopment.

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<sup>2</sup> The campus of care model offers a range of housing and care options in one location, from independent housing to assisted living and complex care. Campuses of care 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.

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

Located at Fraser Street and 19<sup>th</sup> 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](http://www.northarmcoop.ca).



## ***Strategy 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 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 temporary home 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 LGBTQ2S+ residents, and other equity-denied groups.

### **Actions:**

- 2.1 Advocate to the Province for the creation of a new fund to support non-profit organizations to deliver temporary home supports to older adults living in social housing to promote aging in place and secure and safe housing.
- 2.2 Support the B.C. 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, 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 LGBTQ2S+ residents, building supports and programs provided in residents' first 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](http://www.wholewayhouse.ca).



***Strategy 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. Rental subsidies through the Shelter Aid For Elderly Renters (SAFER) program needs to be improved to allow older adults to continue to live in their market rental homes. 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 market rents, and a formula for regular annual increases to keep up with allowable rental increases and rental market changes.
- 3.2 Continue advancing the replacement of Single Room Occupancy (SRO) buildings through the SRO Intergovernmental Investment Strategy and improving SRO building conditions for existing residents to ensure secure safe housing for older residents living in SROs.
- 3.3 Continue providing City outreach support to older adults experiencing homelessness as well as funding to senior-serving 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 to ensure appropriate housing options are provided to older adults who are discharged hospital.
- 3.6 Encourage partnerships across the sector to explore and incorporate Seniors Services Society of BC's Temporary Housing Program or other housing models to prevent older adults from experiencing homelessness.

### Case Study: Shelter Aid for Elderly Renter (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 and maximum rent ceilings and no regular built-in inflator within the formula.

**Recent update:** On April 9<sup>th</sup>, the Province announced improvements to the SAFER program and a one-time rental benefit of \$430 receiving the rent subsidy. This 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 the ability to review and amend the rent ceiling annually. It also noted it will launch a public awareness campaign to ensure more seniors are aware of the program.

These are positive improvements to the program; however, more improvements can be made. The existing SAFER formula includes a maximum rent ceiling of \$803 for a single-person household, and \$866 for a two-person household. That is less than 50% of the actual cost of an average vacant bachelor (\$1,528) or one-bedroom unit in Vancouver (\$1,784) as per the 2023 CMHC Rental Market Report. For older adults who have had to move in recent years and have near market rents, the SAFER rent subsidy is inadequate. While the City supports recent changes, additional improvements such as regular increases to the rent ceiling to meet local market conditions and housing needs would allow Vancouver seniors to benefit from the program as intended.



## ***Strategy 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. 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. 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 Explore partnership with the Tenant Resources and Advisory Centre (TRAC) to improve renter knowledge and offer better supports for older adults who rent.
- 4.4 Explore partnerships with BC Non-profit Housing Association and Landlord BC to develop a training program for landlords and building managers on how to best 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](http://www.seniorsservicesociety.ca/shinebc).



## ***Strategy 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 Pending Council direction, 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 Consider Naturally Occurring Retirement Communities (NORCs) when undertaking future area planning processes, including by:
  - 5.3.1 *Using specific engagement methods to reach older adults (e.g., in-person events, paper surveys), and considering opportunities to pair population needs in the development of public spaces, infrastructure and provision of services, so older adults can continue to age in community.*
  - 5.3.2 *Advance planning for more affordable and diverse housing options and services while considering 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 aging in place 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 by researchers from Queen's University 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](http://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, and updated Seniors Housing Design Guidelines.

This strategy and included actions will be reviewed and updated approximately every five years, in line with the broader Housing Vancouver Strategy or Housing Vancouver 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 Annual Progress Report and Data Book and the City's Housing Needs Report, which is updated every five years. 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,
- 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 waiting for 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 A: Seniors Housing Strategy Phase 1 Engagement Summary

[Please find the summary report of what we heard throughout the engagement here](https://www.shapeyourcity.ca/seniors-housing) or at <https://www.shapeyourcity.ca/seniors-housing>.

### Appendix B: 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.

**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.

## Appendix C: Additional Seniors Housing Maps

Figure 13 - Density of older adults 55+ in Vancouver, Census 2021

### Density of Older Adults 55+

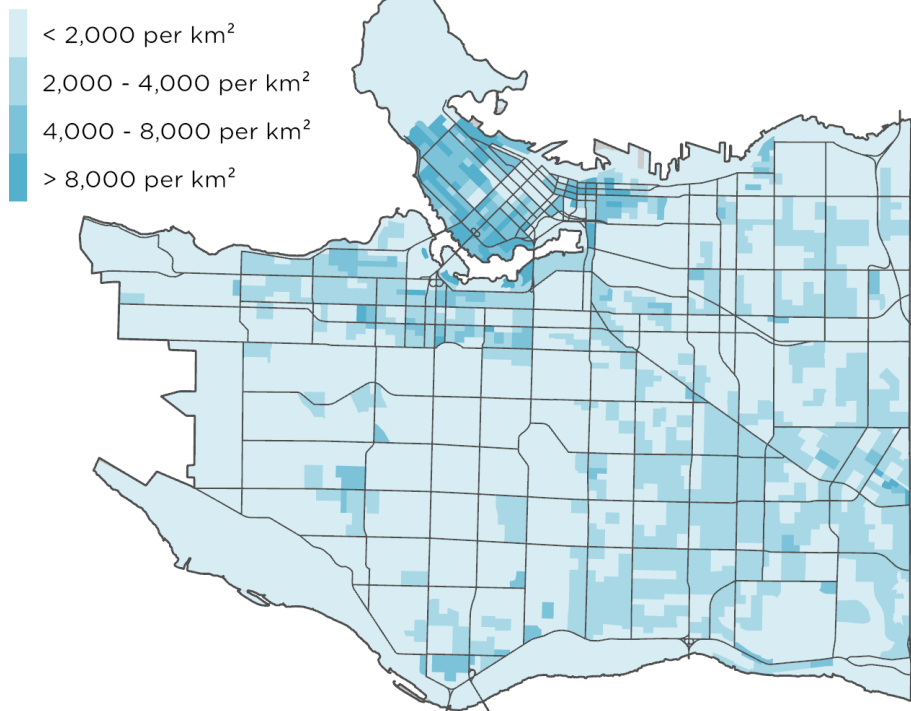
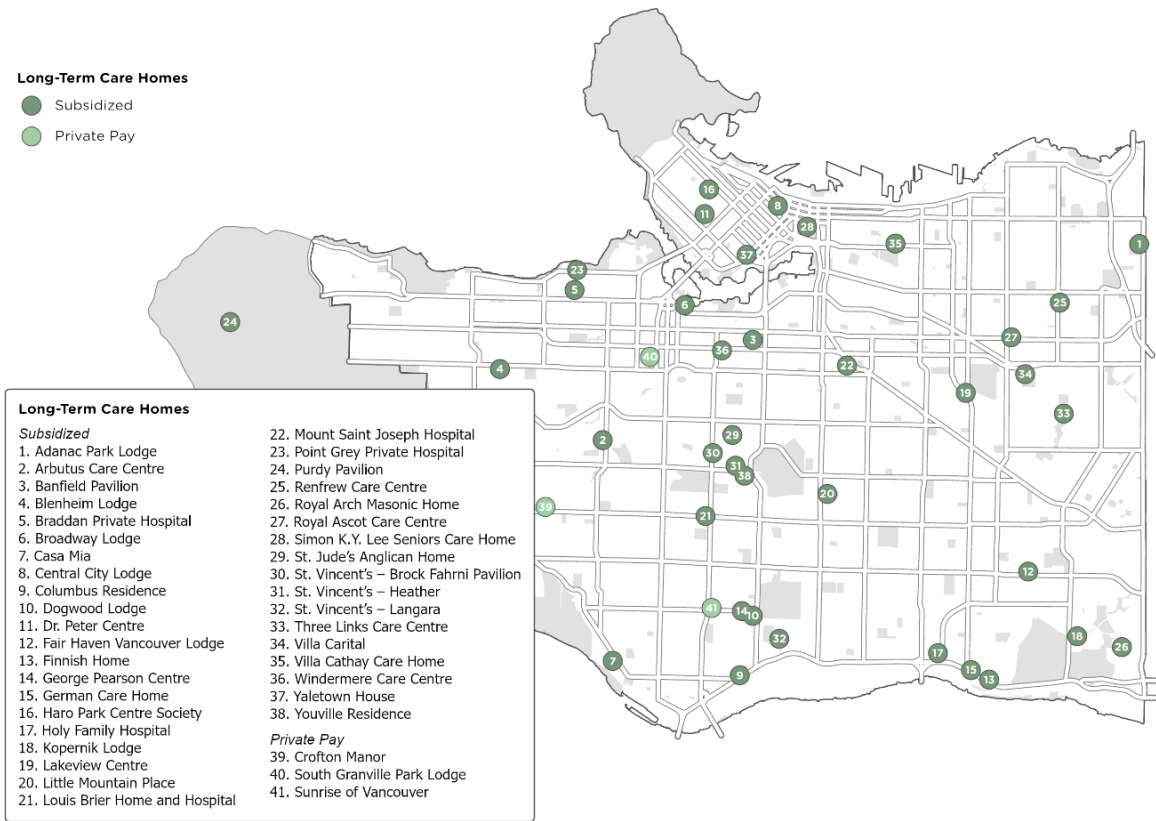
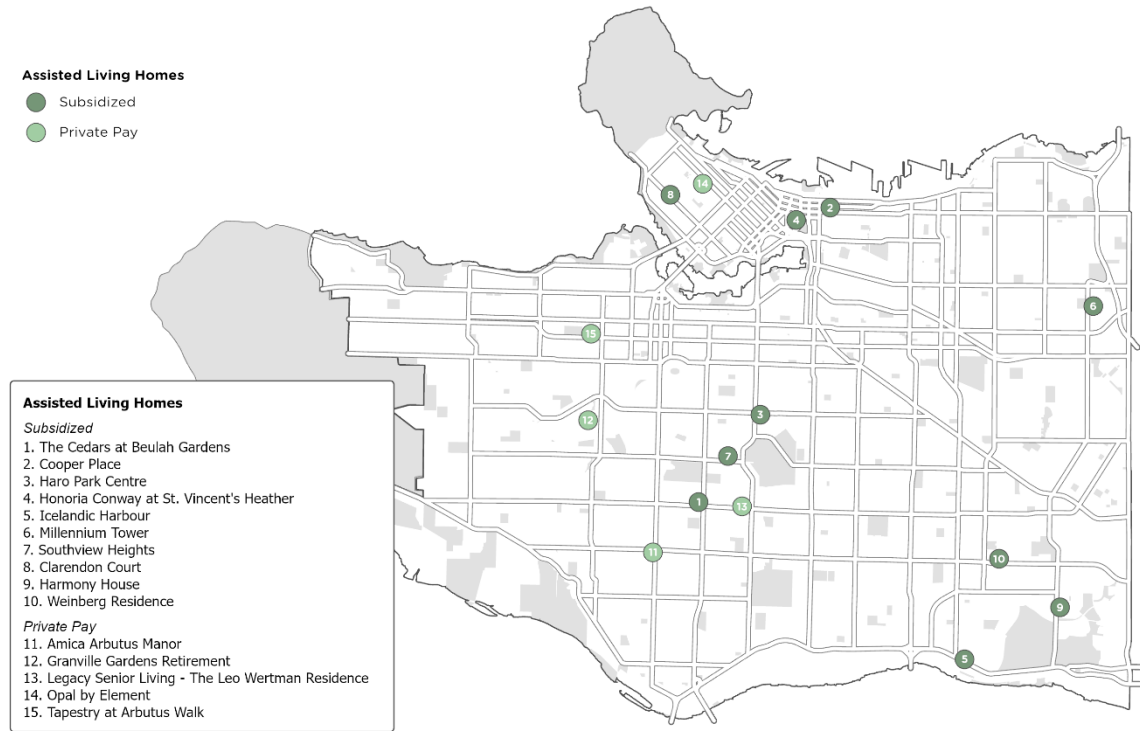


Figure 14 - VCH Funded Long-Term Care Homes (2024)



DRAFT

Figure 15 - Assisted Living Inventory (2024)



DRAFT

## **Appendix D: Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy**

See following pages.

DRAFT

# **DRAFT Policy**

## Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy

*Approved by Council Month Day, Year*

*Last amended XX [Month Day, Year]*

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## 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 appropriate and affordable housing options for older adults, with varying levels of medical and non-medical supports, in neighbourhoods across the city. It also offers more flexibility to 100% non-profit and government-owned seniors housing types 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.

## 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.

Rezoning applications will be considered when all of the following criteria are met.

## 1 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.

## 2 Location and Form of Development

Subject to urban design performance including consideration of shadow analysis, 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:

**Table 1: Location and Form of Development**

Rezoning to Specific Height & Density <sup>1</sup>				
Type	Location	Arterial Street	Local Street	Mixed-use, on Arterials Only
<b>Community Care Facility<sup>2</sup></b>	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
<b>Seniors Supportive or Assisted Housing</b>	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
<b>Seniors Social Housing</b>	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

<sup>1</sup> Additional height and density may be considered for some projects as described in section 2.1. If a project includes more than one allowable type of development, the project may go up to the higher of the two allowable FSRs.

<sup>2</sup> Note 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.

<b>All Seniors Housing Uses within Community Plan Areas</b>	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.
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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).

### 2.1 Additional Height and Density Considerations

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. Additional height and density will 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 units proposed in the development must be rental in tenure or fall within the definition of a community care facility.

In community plan areas (see blue areas of Map A), these projects will be considered for additional height and density where policies already enable redevelopment to apartment forms, with those heights and densities to be determined based on heritage considerations, site context, urban design performance, and a detailed proposal review.

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.

### 2.2 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 with an existing Community Care Facility - Class B, Seniors Supportive or Assisted Housing, or Social Housing apartment building.

### 2.3 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 (C-1, C-2, RR-3A, RR-3B, or CD-1 with commercial 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.

### 2.4 Design Guidelines

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

- (a) Seniors Housing Guidelines: Part A Community Care Facilities, or
- (b) Seniors Housing Guidelines: Part B Seniors Supportive, Independent or Assisted Living.

### **3 Resident Relocation Policy**

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, depending on applicability. Generally:

- (a) The Resident Relocation Policy covers existing community care facilities and assisted living facilities; and
- (b) The Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy covers existing social housing and seniors supportive or independent housing that is rental in tenure.

### **4 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 Rezonings Policy.

### **5 Additional Considerations for Project Proponents**

The below additional requirements should be considered in rezoning proposals.

#### **5.1 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.

#### **5.2 Housing for Families and Unit Mix**

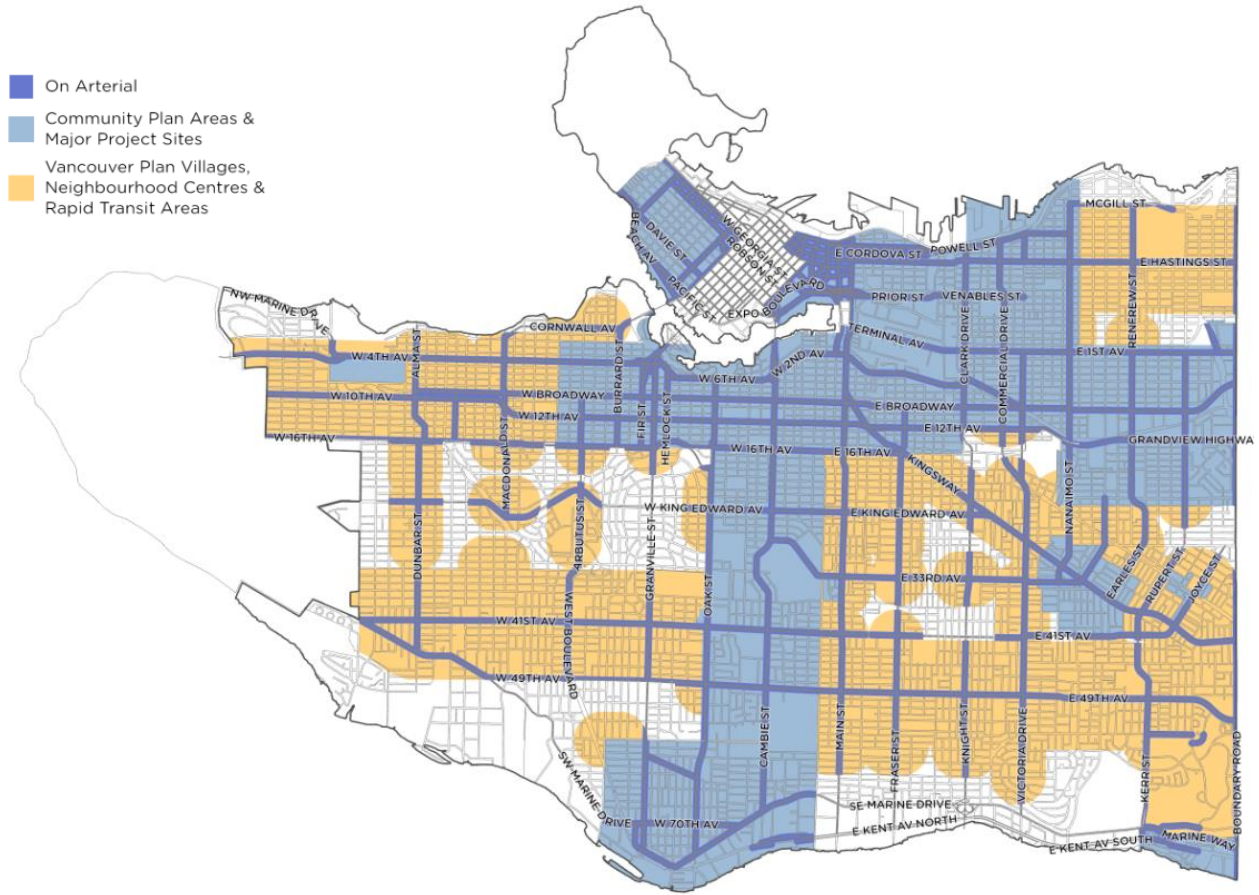
The City's Family Room: Housing Mix Policy for Rezoning Projects will not apply to development applications coming through this policy as the purpose of the policy is to support older adults.

#### **5.3 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 Rezonings.

# Appendix: Rezoning Policy Map

Map A: Locations of sites that can be considered within the Seniors Housing Rezoning Policy



## **Appendix E: Resident Relocation Policy**

See following pages.

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# DRAFT Policy

## Resident Relocation Policy

*Approved by Council Month Day, Year*

*Last amended XX [Month Day, Year]*

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## 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.

The City of Vancouver's 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 are aging and require updates. These new buildings will allow for better care and will 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. This regulation is overseen by a licensing group at Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) and 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 facilities 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 policy applies to private, public and non-profit owned community care and assisted living facilities and is intended to ensure all types are held to a high standard, similar to public facilities. In addition to the Provincial regulatory requirements, VCH-funded long-term care homes 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. At a high level, these principles include:

- 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.

## Intent

This Policy is intended to ensure residents of long-term care and assisted living facilities are appropriately notified and relocated during the redevelopment or development process. The Residential Tenancy Act and the City's Tenant Relocation and Protection Policy does not cover these uses; however, existing Provincial regulations are 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 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. Vancouver Coastal Health-funded care homes principles for moving residents align with the following Resident Relocation Policy requirements. 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; and
- for conditional approval of development applications for existing community care facilities and assisted living residences.

Community Care and Assisted Living uses 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.

# Policies

## 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.

### 1.1 Eligible households

- (a) All residents residing in an applicable building type at the time of rezoning or development permit application is opened are eligible for this policy.
- (b) Any 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 family contacts should be informed of the development process through a meeting and letter (to meet Section 2.1 below).

### 1.2 Exclusions

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

## 2 Relocation Policies

### 2.1 Communication and engagement with residents

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

- (a) A letter to residents and their family contact prior to public notification of the application.
- (b) A meeting with residents and their family contact 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.

### 2.2 Support with relocation

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

- (a) Arrangement 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 family contact (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 family contact 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 make this impossible or unless otherwise requested by the resident or family contact.

### **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 2.2 (a) for more information on required moving assistance.

## **3 Implementation**

### **3.1 Submissions 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 (RRP) based on the policies set out in this document.

## **Appendix F: Seniors Housing Design Guidelines**

See following pages.

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# **Guidelines**

Seniors Housing, Community Care Facility and Group  
Residence Guidelines

Approved by Council Month Day, Year  
Last amended XX [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 or Assisted Living Guidelines applies to a building or portion of the building used as seniors supportive or assisted housing or 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 guideline 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.

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### **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, which considers the needs of residents, suitability of location, compatibility of siting and form with other adjacent uses, 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.
- 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 differ from and affect adjacent residential neighbours such as parking, noise, and resident turnover.
- Review the applicant's proposal for communicating with neighbours and responding to queries/concerns.

#### **3.1 General Design Considerations**

Design the community care or group residence development so that it is compatible with surrounding uses, with welcoming residential character, and considers long-range policies and anticipating future area changes.

### 3.1.1 Neighbourhood Compatibility

Design community care or group residences to be compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood. Consideration will be given to:

- 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.
- Projects that do not adversely affect the surrounding neighbourhood through traffic impacts, parking demands and servicing requirements.

### 3.1.2 Site Selection

Select sites that will allow for accessible circulation and adequate daylight, including:

- Consider avoiding steeply sloping sites, which require ramps and are less desirable due to site circulation complexity and significant spatial requirements.
- 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.
- Appropriately site and screen service spaces such as loading, recycling, and garbage areas to avoid negatively impacting adjacent properties.

### 3.1.3 Building Form

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

- The fit of the proposed development within the existing zoning district in which it is located, as well as its response to the intent and regulations applying to adjacent sites, if different from the proposal site.
- Any Council-approved plans or guidelines for the area, including long range policies anticipating future changes to the area, recognizing community care facilities and group residences should contribute to City objectives in approved area plans and policies.
- Applications should minimize negative impacts on surrounding developments especially in terms of massing, overlook and shadowing.

### 3.1.4 Architectural Design

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

- High-quality architectural design and a welcoming residential character. 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.
- The primary building entry should be well marked and obvious from the street(s).
- Providing weather protection at all entrances.
- Seating at the main entrance should be provided wherever possible.

## **3.2 Internal Design**

### **3.2.1 Resident Centred Design**

Design the community care facility or group residence development 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) 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 only 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 interactions.
- 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.

## **3.3 Circulation**

### **3.3.1 Design the community care facility or group residence development so that circulation spaces are accessible and effective to accommodate resident needs.**

- Provide 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 as per the Vancouver Building By-Law.

- Provide sufficient space for parking of mobility devices such as three wheeled bikes, power scooters near the building entry and on site.
- Design individual units to accommodate additional space needed for mobility devices throughout the suite, including around the bed and in corridors, with recognition of maneuvering needed for caregiver assistance, ceiling lifts, floor lifts, multiple mobility aids needed by one resident at the same time, oxygen tanks and other equipment such as mobile shower chairs etc.
- Encourage natural light in corridors wherever possible, while mitigating glare.

### **3.4 Open Space**

3.4.1 Design the community care facility or group residence development so that open spaces are usable, promote connection with the natural environment and allow for freedom of movement.

- Design quality outdoor space around the building and on the upper floors.
- 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.
- Provide usable private open space such as balconies and private terraces near each household<sup>1</sup> or grouping of units where practical.
- Wheelchair accessible units should have an outdoor space of at least 1.5 m in diameter that accommodates required turning movements.
- 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. Projections above the roof line for roof deck access should be well integrated with the architectural design.

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<sup>1</sup> A household is 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 Design the community care facility or group residence development so that parking and loading is adequate, accessible and appropriate to the surroundings.

- Provide parking spaces in accordance with the Parking By-law. The Parking By-law outlines requirements for parking, disability stalls, passenger loading and bicycle parking. Relaxation of off-street parking requirements may be considered in conjunction with a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan. Further relaxations may be considered where heritage preservation is a factor.
- Design access to parking and loading to mitigate impacts on neighbouring uses and traffic circulation and to allow for privacy for funeral care.

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## **4 PART B: SENIORS SUPPORTIVE OR SENIORS INDEPENDENT HOUSING OR ASSISTED LIVING**

Seniors supportive housing, seniors independent housing and assisted living is 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.
- 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 or 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.
- promote a sense of community within the development.

- be compatible with the surrounding neighbourhood.

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 Neighbourhood Compatibility**

Design seniors supportive or independent housing or assisted living to be compatible in density, scale, and architectural character with the surrounding neighbourhood. Consideration will be given to:

- Projects that contribute to the objectives outlined in approved area plans and policies and enhance overall character of the neighbourhood.
- Projects that do not adversely affect the surrounding neighbourhood through traffic impacts, parking demands and servicing requirements.

### **4.1.2 Site Selection**

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

- 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.
- Consider avoiding steeply sloping sites, which require ramps and are less desirable due to site circulation complexity and significant spatial requirements.

### **4.1.3 Building Characteristics**

Seniors supportive or independent housing or 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. High-quality architectural design is expected of all developments, including:

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

#### 4.1.4 Building Access

Design seniors supportive or independent housing or assisted living 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 designed to accommodate people with disabilities.
- Include non-glare pedestrian scale security lighting to illuminate outdoor pathways and access to the street where appropriate.
- 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 as per the Vancouver Building By-Law.
- Provide level or roll-over thresholds (flush or bevelled) at all doors, including balcony doors.

## 4.2 Internal Design

### 4.2.1 Resident-Centred Design

Design seniors supportive or independent housing or assisted living 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) 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.
- 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

Design units to accommodate aging in place and demonstrate suitability for people using wheelchairs, walkers and other mobility aids. Dwelling units must meet the Vancouver Building By-Law's adaptable dwelling unit standards. Consideration will be given to:

- The unit design should accommodate, as a minimum: a bed (not a Murphy bed or a sofa bed), a dresser, two chairs, a desk, and space for personal furnishings.
- The unit design should include closet space of adequate size to store clothing, including outerwear and seasonal wear, and miscellaneous household effects. Hanger rods and shelves should be adjustable. Adequate circulation space should be provided at the closet doors to permit access and manoeuvring.
- Bulk storage space within the unit is desirable, see Section 4.3.5 for more information.
- The unit should be of adequate size and design to allow for a support provider to enter the unit and carry out their work while the resident is in the unit.
- The bathroom should be designed to accommodate mobility aids and enable a support provider to assist the resident.
- Walls should be reinforced to facilitate grab bar installation.
- Services should include outlets or connections for TV cable, telephone, and emergency call system.
- Thermostats in individual rooms are encouraged.

## 4.3 Common Areas

Design common areas 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.

Note: For seniors supportive or independent housing, see the Zoning and Development By-law for allowable common area floor space exclusions.

### 4.3.1 Common Dining Room and Kitchen

Design common dining room to accommodate one sitting of residents with mobility aids, and visitors. The combined size of the dining room or dining spaces should be 2 m<sup>2</sup> (21.5 sq. ft.) per unit. Requests for variation in this guideline 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.
- 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 m<sup>2</sup> (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.
- Locate lounges to maximize natural light.

#### 4.3.3 Laundry

Provide laundry facilities 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.
- These facilities can be either ensuite or in common laundry rooms.

#### 4.3.4 Reception/Administration

Design a functional reception or administration space, including through:

- 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.
- Consideration of a health office space to facilitate resident appointments with visiting professionals.

#### 4.3.5 Bulk Storage Areas

Design development 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.

- 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 Safety Features**

4.4.1 The building's life safety systems should provide a safe environment for its residents, by taking into account the age of the residents and their evolving physical and cognitive states, as well as compliance with all applicable codes, such as Vancouver Building By-law.

Staff review will include, but may not be limited to, safety features such as the following:

- Provision of visual fire alarm signals in the units and the building, in addition to audible signals.
- Provision of a fire safety plan that includes staff assistance to residents in case of emergency.
- Provision of adequate emergency lighting (10 lux).
- Provision of at least one elevator designed to fire fighters' specifications in buildings above three storeys, to assist with evacuation. Note: This will require installation of an emergency generator, as well as ongoing maintenance and monitoring.

## **4.5 Circulation**

4.5.1 Design seniors supportive or independent housing or assisted living project to accommodate movement of individuals including those with mobility, visual and hearing impairments.

- Hallways should be at least 1.5 m wide (5 ft.), to comfortably accommodate two-way pedestrian traffic, and accommodate use of mobility aids by multiple users. They should be well lit with clearly marked exits with floor lighting.
- Travel distances from residential units to amenities should be minimized and within a comfortable walking range for an elderly person, not to exceed 30 m (98 ft. 5 in.).
- Design the project so that the circulation system is separate 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 various disabilities.

## **4.6 Open Space**

4.6.1 On site open space should be of an adequate size and designed to accommodate a variety of outdoor activities and experiences for residents.

- 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 of the area 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 on site.
- Private open space for each unit is encouraged (balconies, patios) and should be designed to maximize light into the unit.
- On-site gardening using raised beds or other accessible design is encouraged.
- 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.

## **4.7 Parking and Loading**

4.7.1 Design parking to be safely and easily used by older adults. The number of on-site parking spaces should be adequate to serve residents, staff, and visitors.

- Provide parking spaces in accordance with the Parking By-law. The Parking By-law outlines requirements for parking, disability stalls, passenger loading and bicycle parking. Relaxation of off-street parking requirements may be considered in conjunction with a Transportation Demand Management (TDM) Plan.
- Provide parking for persons with disabilities near the main entrance and incorporate a covered drop-off area when provided at grade.

- Ensure continuous accessible paths of travel from all parking areas to building entries.
- Design access to parking and loading to mitigate impacts on neighbouring uses and traffic circulation.

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